

ABSTRACT

This thesis is based on a study of classical Pali texts and of materials gathered during a year spent in a village in central Ceylon. The material consists in particular of interviews with monks living in nearby village monasteries. My notes of these interviews, which cover more topics than could be discussed in the thesis, are reproduced in Appendix One, and some of my printed materials are summarily presented in Appendix Two. The circumstances of my field work are detailed in the last part of the Introduction.

Factually, the thesis aims to give an account of the religious beliefs and ethos of Sinhalese (Kandyan) Buddhist villagers, expressed as far as possible in their own terms. As explained in chapter 1, Buddhism is a system of belief almost exclusively concerned with liberation from this world. It is therefore necessarily accretive, requiring supplementation by beliefs concerning other matters. Beliefs about Gods and demons and how they can help or hinder human beings which to a Western observer fall within the domain of religion are not seen in these terms by Buddhists. These are therefore only examined in so far as they are relevant to the understanding of Buddhism. Issue is taken, on the other hand, with the Western interpretation of Buddhism as an essentially non-religious philosophy. Chapter 2 introduces the terms used by my informants in talking about their beliefs and institutions. The arrangement of chapters 3 to 8 is in some measure due to the formulation of the Buddhists themselves: they consider Buddhism in terms of the Three Jewels, which are the Buddha, the Doctrine,

and the Order of monks, while their doctrinal emphasis is on the operation of karma and on ethical questions. Chapter 3 deals with the Buddha, chapter 4 with karma and the arrangement of the universe, chapter 5 with some problems in the doctrine of karma, chapter 6 with ethics, and chapters 7 and 8 with problems primarily concerning the Order.

On the theoretical level the thesis is largely concerned with the interaction of belief and behaviour as an agent of religious change. My problem and concepts are presented in the first part of the Introduction. Although the general tenor of the thesis is to show that Sinhalese Buddhism has been remarkably conservative, if it is compared with the Pali Canon and its commentaries, there have been changes, and I suggest that some at least have arisen because of discrepancies between what people say and what they do: behaviour has affected doctrine, which in turn has affected behaviour. There are still in the religion as observable to-day discrepancies between what people say and what they do; the thesis attempts to record both statement and performance, and suggests further that statements may vary with the context.

Finally the thesis proposes that an acquaintance with Ceylonese Buddhism as a living system may provide insight into the workings of early Buddhism as described in the classical texts. In particular the last chapter suggests that scholars relying on texts and preconceptions have over-drawn the distinction between monks and laity as moral agents, and between Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism as ethical systems.

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CONTEMPORARY SINHALESE BUDDHISM

IN ITS RELATION

TO THE PALI CANON.

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I dedicate this imperfect draft to my informants, with gratitude and respect.

Siyalunamaṭa nivan sāpa lābēvā.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AN	Anguttara Nikāya
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DN	Dīgha Nikāya
J	Jātaka
JAS	Journal of Asian Studies
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
Mhv	Mahāvamsa
MN	Majjhima Nikāya
OUP	Oxford University Press
PTS	Pali Text Society
SN	Samyutta Nikāya
Vin	Vinaya Pitaka
Vv	Vimāna-vatthu
VvA	Vimāna-vatthu Atthakathā

(1)

Pronunciation and transliteration of Sinhalese
(with remarks on Sanskrit and Pali)

The full Sinhalese alphabet contains all the letters used in Sanskrit (and therefore in Pali) with a few additions, but many of these letters occur only in words loaned from Sanskrit. The Sinhalese pronounce Sanskrit and Pali much as do European scholars. A given letter has generally the same phonetic value (pronunciation) in Sinhalese, Sanskrit and Pali.

Sinhalese vowels follow a phonetic pattern close to English vowels minus the diphthongs. Sinhalese a, ä, e, ä, ē, approximate respectively to the vowels in English bun, ban, Ben, bard, bad, and the first element in bane; however in an unstressed syllable a is a central vowel, just as happens in English (compare the vowels in man and postman), and ä is pronounced short. Stress is very light and is as far back as English pronunciation would tolerate, tending to fall on a long syllable (i.e. on a long vowel ^{or a vowel} followed by more than one consonant). The Sanskrit vowel r is pronounced as in American cur, long or short. In Sanskrit and Pali the vowels e and o are invariably long, and the convention is not to mark them.

Of the consonants, g is always hard, c is like English ch, j as in English, n̄ (palatal n̄) like English ny (as in onion). T̄ and d̄ are pronounced further back than English t and d, but not as the true retroflexes found in other Indian languages; t, d are true dentals, like those letters in French and Italian. The distinctions between Sinhalese n̄ and n, l̄ and l are historical only. y is as in English yes. ś and ṣ occur only in Sanskrit loanwords; in Sanskrit they are pronounced much like English sh, but in Sinhalese this is ignored (except by pedants) and both are pronounced as s. H after another consonant denotes

aspiration, not a change in quality (English hothead not bother); this too occurs only in Sanskrit loanwords, and tends to be ignored in Sinhalese pronunciation. N, n, m are pronounced very lightly indeed. M is a pure nasal like standard English ng in singing; in colloquial Sinhalese any final nasal is so pronounced.

The letter which is here transliterated sometimes as v, sometimes as w, may strike the English ear as either, but falls in between English v (a labiodental fricative) and English w (bilabial semi-vowel): it is a bilabial fricative. The exception to this is that in final position it is pronounced as a semi-vowel, i.e. pav is pronounced like the first syllable in English power. By scholarly convention the transliteration is v, but the English administration represented the letter as w, which is the custom in Ceylon to this day.

The scholarly system of transliteration which is standard for all three languages has been consistently used so far as is feasible without undue pedantry. Apparent inconsistencies may be due to switching between languages, especially in the reproduction of orally gathered material, since speakers tend to make free use also of parallel Sinhalese forms (e.g. Pali: Mahāsena; Sinh: Mahasēna or Mahasen).

INTRODUCTION: AIMS AND SCOPE OF THIS THESIS

I. THE PROBLEM: RELIGIOUS CHANGE

This is intended as a contribution ^{to} the empirical study of religion, and in particular to the study of religious change.

Religion is studied in many different ways, characteristic of different academic disciplines. Theologians customarily study their own religion, which they accordingly meet on its own terms, and discuss problems posed by and within this historically given framework of ideas. When they carry the study of other religions beyond polemics the result is usually called comparative religion. This vague term can of course always be applied to studies of any type which compare two or more religions, but the study which is now called comparative religion is practised and organized principally by theologians. Philologists study the texts which form the basis of at least the most famous religions, and speculate about their origins and what the authors meant. Religious historians study past religious doctrines and institutions where these are accessible through documentary or perhaps archaeological evidence. Sociologists and anthropologists of religion describe and discuss, usually with some stress on their behavioural aspects, existing religious practices and institutions; if any difference is made between the two disciplines it is usually held to be that sociologists study literate, social anthropologists illiterate societies, or that sociologists study larger or more differentiated communities than anthropologists, or that sociologists are more likely to concentrate on organization, anthropologists, on more informal behaviour. Social psychologists who work on religion are like sociologists and social anthropologists in that

they too study the religions of contemporary social groups; but they probably concentrate more on the ideas and attitudes of their subjects. Other psychologists of religion deal with the religious attitudes of individuals in various ways; at one extreme are behaviourists, who will study only religious behaviour, with a marked disinclination to include in this category verbal utterance. At the other extreme are psychoanalysts and other more philosophically oriented psychologists, who are very interested in the words and notions of their subjects, but share with the behaviourists a reluctance to use their subjects' terminology or indeed conceptual framework in the discussion of religion - unless of course the subject should happen to hold the same views as they do themselves.

It may be objected that this classification by subject matter is naive, because I should have classified these studies by method, certain methods being typical of the humanities (e.g. the philologists) and others of the social sciences. I have not done so because I believe that scholarly research advances by only one method, shared by the humanities, the social and the natural sciences: the method of hypothesis and falsification, of theory and test, of conjecture and refutation; the method which has been formulated and explained by K.R. Popper.¹ Metaphysics, with which theologians are concerned, are not usually amenable to this method; at the other end of my list, the theories of

1. Originally in Logik der Forschung, Julius Springer, Vienna, 1935, re-published (translated and amplified) as The Logic of Scientific Discovery, Hutchinson, London, 1959. For a simple and succinct statement see also Popper's paper "Science: Conjectures and Refutations," republished in Conjectures and Refutations, Routledge, and Kegan Paul, London, 1962. On classification by subject matter see the remarks in Popper's paper "The Nature of Philosophical Problems and their Roots in Science," republished in the same book, pp. 66-7.

psycho- analysts and psychiatrists tend to wander over the border into philosophical speculation or degenerate into technological rules of thumb; but the method of conjecture and refutation is characteristic of all the disciplines listed in between; and in so far as studies in them are duly characterized by this method they constitute what in the first line I called the empirical, or might call scientific, study of religion. The method, then, is only one; the means - documents, interviews, experiments - are infinite, whatever the researcher can lay his hands on as he does his best to test his old hypotheses and to formulate new and better ones which may lead him towards the truth.

Again, it may be objected that my classification is jejune and uninteresting. With this objection I agree; indeed, to elicit it was one of my reasons for drawing up the list. Academic boundaries are artificial: the realities are the problems. Problems have a way of crossing these boundaries; while chasing one the hapless researcher may wander, alone and unarmed, into the territory of a foreign and possibly hostile discipline. If he keeps quiet he may escape unobserved; if he is fool enough to raise his voice he will be apprehended, and must throw himself on his captor's mercy. I am in this unfortunate position. By education a philologist, far less of a historian, and devoid of anthropological training, I have been chasing the problem of religious change, and found myself far from home, deep inside the territory of the social sciences, far from Oxford libraries in a village in central Ceylon. The bulk of this thesis consists in the presentation of a year's field work, the very stuff of anthropology; and my problems and conjectural explanations are of the type which hitherto have interested mainly those trained in the social sciences.

In extenuation of my presumption let me plead that some eminent

anthropologists of religion say that they are dissatisfied with the limitations of much work in their field, limitations imposed by the tradition that anthropologists study only what they can observe at first hand. This especially hinders the study of social change: an anthropologist who goes out to observe a society naturally produces what is called a synchronic study in which the society, including its religion, has its picture taken at one moment and is thus presented as if static. Very rarely can an anthropologist revisit a society to see for himself how it changes; moreover anthropology itself is still so young that few communities have been systematically observed twice even by different people. Further, as Professor Evans-Pritchard has pointed out in a series of lectures at Oxford,¹ by an unfortunate chance most of the people who have had interesting ideas about the anthropology of religion were not themselves field-workers and lacked detailed and accurate knowledge of any society on which they might have tested their hypotheses: Tylor, Durkheim and Lévy-Bruhl are celebrated examples. Even Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowski, who did field-work themselves, did not possess comparable data collected in one society at different times, and so lacked material for diachronic studies; this lack may have decisively influenced their own lines of interest, which virtually ignored the problem of social change. In the absence, then, of data collected in the field, the student of social change must rely on glimpses of the past to be found in myths and folk-lore, and on the more conventional written sources. Professor Evans-Pritchard has invited anthropologists to become historians; and this gives heart to the philologist turned anthropologist.

Let me now return to my list of approaches to religion. Another

1. See also his "Theories of Primitive Religion", OUP, Oxford, 1965.

reason I had for drawing it up was indeed heuristic. There are several distinct senses in which a religion may be described; some of these correspond to the academic distinctions made in my list, and some do not. "Jesus Christ is the son of God" is a theological or metaphysical statement. "According to the Bible Jesus Christ is the son of God" is a philological statement; a still more precise one would be to quote the Bible in Greek. "People have believed Jesus Christ to be the son of God" is a historical statement, and in a sense "85% of the present inhabitants of Cremona believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God" could be called a historical statement too. Where does this leave the other social sciences? The academic distinctions between sociology, anthropology, and psychology do not accurately correspond to different ways of talking about religion; yet within the subject-matter of these disciplines logical distinctions can and should be made. The ones I would like to make, and use throughout this thesis, are between what people say they believe and say they do, and what they really believe and really do. What they really do I shall call simply religious behaviour. What they say about their beliefs and practices I shall call "cognitive". What they say may of course vary according to circumstances, but though this point is of great practical importance in field-work, it is not theoretically important. For our present purposes I will assume that people who say what they believe are speaking the truth; yet there may still be something more to find out about their beliefs. What people really believe I am aware to be ultimately unknowable; but this does not mean that it is nonsense to talk about it. Only a pure behaviourist refrains from making inferences from what people really do to what they are thinking or feeling. If a lapsed Roman Catholic states that he has lost all belief in God, and yet is seen to cross himself at a moment of crisis, we infer from his actions that he

is operating on an ideological system which differs from his explicit or conscious beliefs: he behaves as if he still believed in God. In old-fashioned terms it is the religion of the heart, not the head. So I propose to call it "affective"¹ religion. However, whatever my terminology, behaviourists and other adherents of scientific creeds may still balk at my entertaining such a category at all. In answer I would remind them that most religions include ethics, which involve a value system, which I wish to study: and in ethics the tensions between the cognitive and the affective belief system and value system are notoriously acute. Someone may tell us quite seriously that he esteems a certain virtue, and yet act in a contrary manner without apparent sense of guilt or incongruity. In such cases we speak of unconscious hypocrisy, or say he is deceiving himself (all concepts unacceptable to a behaviourist who is plainly, though unconsciously, not at home in politics). Nothing depends on terms, and I shall be glad to use such everyday words as "hypocrisy"⁽²⁾ but by using also the expression "affective ethics" I shall try to keep their logical standing clear.

Much confusion has arisen from statements which ignore these distinctions. Let us take an example. A Catholic² theologian may make the statement, "The souls of the dead do not return to this world, but are in Heaven, Hell or Purgatory;" and other theologians may concur: i.e. the statement is theologically correct. A corresponding empirical statement which looks correct is, "According to Catholic doctrine the souls ... Purgatory;" the philologist could produce chapter and verse. All too

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1. "Affective ... 2. Pertaining to the emotions, opp. to intellectual ... 1623". Shorter O.E.D. Unfortunately I cannot use the word "intellectual" instead of "cognitive" for what people state about their religion, because it has misleading overtones.
 2. This term covers of course not only Roman Catholics, but also the many Anglicans who would accept it.

often, however, "According to Catholic doctrine ..." is taken as equivalent to "Catholics believe that ..." But if this substitution is made we have to ask, "Which Catholics?" Our interlocutor may be a historian and correctly specify a certain group. But if he is merely a non-specialist, or even a theologian, he may rashly answer, "All Catholics." Then we have to jog his memory and ask, "What about ghosts?" Undoubtedly many Catholics admit to a belief in ghosts. This is their cognitive position. Others may say they do not believe in ghosts but tell stories of experiences they declare to be inexplicable in any other terms; the cognitive position of these people is inconsistent. Other professed unbelievers may refuse to sleep in what they are told is a haunted bedroom - in that case their behaviour is inconsistent with their cognitive position, and we may say that affectively they believe that ghosts exist or at least might exist. Having reminded ourselves of the importance of ghosts to many Catholics, we may look back at the doctrinal position of Catholic theology, and see that things are not quite so simple. There are no ghosts in the Bible in the sense of spirits of dead people,¹ so those who consider the Bible to be the foundation of their religion, and yet believe in ghosts, are unorthodox or inconsistent by this criterion. Yet in the Book of Common Prayer there is a form of ceremony for exorcism, which is still occasionally used, and I have established by questioning that Anglicans generally consider the entities exorcised to be not devils, as happens in the New Testament, but ghosts, euphemistically known as "spirits of the departed."² I have just mentioned the inconsistent

1. Except the ghost of Samuel, summoned by the witch of Endor (I Samuel 28). But this passage is theologically contentious, especially among Catholics, who are not committed to a literal interpretation of the Old Testament. Certainly ghosts are not part of the general Biblical scheme of things.

position of a Catholic who in effect states that he does and does not believe in ghosts: is there a parallel inconsistency in doctrine, in Anglican theology? Being no theologian I put this question to the Archbishop of Canterbury at a public meeting in Oxford in December 1963. Referring to recent exorcism performed by the Bishop of Exeter which had been reported in the Times, I asked His Grace whether Anglicans believed in ghosts. He replied that belief in the spirits of the departed and their return to this earth was neither accepted nor rejected by Christian doctrine. So even the theological statement at the beginning of this paragraph was not so impeccably correct as it seemed.

The Archbishop's reply illustrates another point: while individuals are frequently inconsistent in their statements of beliefs, the theologies of the highly organized religions are rarely if ever inconsistent on matters of importance. There are two ways, apart from critically arguing the matter through to a (possibly negative) conclusion, in which they avoid contradictions at difficult points. One way is to declare the matter a mystery inaccessible to human reason: this is a solution beloved of Protestants, but in contrast not available to Theravāda Buddhists, who claim, as the Buddha claimed, that their doctrines are founded entirely on reason. The other way is to ignore the problem altogether, either by never taking cognizance of it, or by explicitly stating that it is not their concern to come to a decision. Inevitably there must be problems of which any system of thought takes no cognizance; but these are more likely to concern the philosopher than the empirical inquirer whose subjects have never heard of them. Refusal by a religion to come to a decision on certain points is a more important phenomenon in our present context. The Archbishop's comment on ghosts is one example. Mutatis mutandis the same reply might have been made by a Buddhist cleric: whether or not you believe in ghosts

is irrelevant to whether you are a "good" or orthodox Buddhist, and the same incidentally is true of whether you believe in gods (see Chapter 1). Perhaps the most celebrated exponent of the undecided question was the Buddha himself. On one occasion¹ he refused to answer a monk who asked him whether the world was eternal, whether it was finite, whether the soul and the body are identical, and whether an enlightened man in any sense existed after death. The Buddha replied that he had never promised to answer these questions; anyone who refused to lead the religious life till they were answered would be like a man wounded by an arrow who refused to have it removed till he knew the name and caste of the man who shot it; his teaching was merely the practical way to release from misery. At another time² he condemned as idle speculation a far longer list of metaphysical questions.³ ~~This refusal to pontificate on what he regarded as inessentials was what we might expect of a man who asked his listeners~~

1. M.N. Sutta 63 (Cūla Mālunkya Sutta).
2. D.N. Sutta 1 (Brahmajāla Sutta).
3. Whether the soul or the world was eternal, whether the world was spatially finite, whether there were other worlds, whether the soul or the world arose without cause, whether there were beings who originated without natural causes (i.e. gods and spirits), whether good and bad actions (karman); entail good and bad results, whether the soul (Skt.: atman; Pali: attan) existed after death and in what form, whether a Tathāgata (man who is "thus-gone", i.e. as dead - enlightened?) existed after death, and whether and in what form "salvation" (nirvāna) is possible in this life. For a fuller account see E.J. Thomas, The History of Buddhist Thought, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1933, pp. 74-5. Not all of these questions are in fact left undecided elsewhere in the Pāli canon; it is stated that the soul does not exist, that ethical actions do entail appropriate results, and that nirvāna is possible in this life if one follows the Noble Eightfold Path leading to the cessation of suffering. On the undecided questions see Ninian Smart, Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy, Allen and Unwin, London 1964, pp. 33-37. Smart shows that the Buddha rejected these questions not only as "tactically unwise" but also as "wrongly put" in that their formulation was misleading.

This refusal to pontificate on what he regarded as inessentials was what we might expect of a man who asked his listeners not to take any doctrine on trust or authority but only to accept what they themselves found reasonable; it certainly has been very influential in the history of Buddhism, and goes far to explain why Buddhists vary so much in some areas of belief and take little interest in others: they are not covered by the Buddha's doctrine. Religion provides a framework for interpreting reality. On certain points a religion is specific; these we usually call dogmas; other points are undecided. Religions are dogmatic on different matters, and Buddhism has rather few dogmas altogether.

I have so far discussed religion in general terms without attempting to define it. This does not really matter, because everyone knows what I have been talking about, and problems of definition are essentialist problems, essentially trivial.¹ But I cannot entirely fail to mention a matter so controversial. For a long time it was stated or assumed that religion was essentially characterized by belief in God or gods, but it was then objected (e.g. by Durkheim²) that Buddhism, or least Theravāda Buddhism, lacked this belief, so on empirical grounds another definition seemed to be needed. Moreover, on theoretical grounds sociologists wished to broaden the definition to include institutions. With this I have some sympathy. It seems to me an unnecessary duplication of terminology to

1. For an explanation and repudiation of essentialist definitions see especially K.R. Popper, The Open Society and its Enemies, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 2nd ed. 1952, chap. 11, sec. II.

2. E. Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, trans. J.W. Swain, Collier Books, New York 1961, pp. 45-47

focus on the belief or ideological aspect of religion and so to define it that it coincides with theism, the first meaning of which given in the Shorter O.E.D. is "Belief in deity or deities". So far as concerns Buddhism the whole controversy has illustrated the confusion caused by not observing the logical distinction between the cognitive and the affective level. It is probably (arguably) not true that Theravāda Buddhism as a philologist sees it, as a set of doctrines found in texts, involves belief in gods. Although the Buddha himself believed, so far as we can tell,¹ that supernatural beings exist, it can certainly be argued, and is indeed believed by Sinhalese Buddhists, that this is not a part of his teaching, any more than the proposition that, say, animals exist. If we now inquire what Buddhists believe, we find that most of them do indeed believe in supernatural beings. But my landlord, a Sinhalese Buddhist villager, emphatically stated that he believed in neither gods nor demons, nor did he ever behave in such a way as to make me doubt his assertion. But, he called himself, and was admitted to be, a Buddhist. He believed in the Buddha. What this involves will be discussed at greater length in chapter 3, where I will suggest that for Sinhalese the Buddha is cognitively human but affectively divine. Unfortunately even this does not settle the matter finally, because in this context the categories of human and divine do not correspond to those of natural and supernatural; it is not I think possible to translate "supernatural" precisely into Sinhalese, for the Buddha is believed to have had superhuman attributes which we, but not the Sinhalese, would consider contrary to the laws of nature. Whether a definition which equates religion with theism holds on the cognitive level

1. The case is not clear-cut. See J. Masson, La Religion Populaire dans le Canon Bouddhique Pāli, Bureaux du Musée, Louvain 1942, especially pp. 11-12.

is therefore controversial; the only level on which I think it certainly holds is the affective: Sinhalese Buddhists behave, at least with regard to the Buddha, as if they believe in a supernatural being.

Faced with these complications I for my part am content to leave the definition of religion to the practitioners themselves. Sinhalese Buddhists do call Buddhism (Buddhāgama) a religion (āgama), so I will not gainsay them;¹ similarly I would allow that there was a religion wherever a group claimed bona fide that it had one.² I would merely note that a religion combines certain systems, or structured sets of associated phenomena, of which some systems are more important in one religion and some in another. Dr. Percy Cohen's list seems exhaustive: 1) cognitive system³ 2) moral system 3) ritual system 4) symbolic system 5) affective system 6) social system. None of these systems are peculiar to religion (as Ruth Benedict pointed out in her slightly different analysis), but their concurrence is probably shared only by a few political creeds, e.g. Communism, which apparently for this very reason, some desire to call "religions".

What religion however does not include is magic, and I had better explain here how I propose to demarcate magic from religion on the one hand and science on the other. Very simply. Science admits of falsification, which religion and magic do not. The difference between magic and religion is that between a spell and a prayer: magic is a technique or technology, which is to say that if correctly performed it must effect the desired result; religion requires aid which must be asked for and cannot be compelled

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1. What they mean by this is explained in chapter 2.
 2. This seems to be the logical result of adopting conventionalism as distinct from essentialism.
 3. Dr. Cohen's lucid uses of the words "cognitive" and "affective" are of course slightly different from my own, as I have been concerned to express a different type of classification. My "cognitive religion" I might call in Dr. Cohen's terminology the "expressed cognitive system", my "affective religion" I might call the "implied cognitive system".

Let me reiterate that this is no definition or exhaustive description of religion, but merely an ad hoc distinction - a statement of where I consider magic to stop and religion to begin: the Sinhalese Buddhist monk in his own language does not consider that it is "religion" to ask for anything.

Since writing the above I have read with admiration Professor Melford Spiro's sensible and witty paper, "Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation".¹ Spiro is led by his acquaintance with Theravāda Buddhism in Ceylon and S.E. Asia to remark that Buddhists are not in fact usually atheists. Moreover he points out that even if they - or other large groups of people - were atheists, this need not debar us from defining religion in theistic terms, as there is no a priori reason for making the definition so broad as to cover everyone. In fact a narrower definition may be more interesting and prompt research. Spiro thinks it useful to have a working definition of religion - and for his purposes it is, as he wants to discuss religion in general. (He shows himself to be, like Popper but unlike most famous anthropologists, both a deductivist and a conventionalist.) He finally (p. 96) defines religion as "an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings", a more precise, if less elegant, reformulation of the old-fashioned view. If a definition of religion is called for I am glad to accept this one, with the small modification that I would except magic by the criterion explained in the previous paragraph.

Having explained my own concepts I had better say why I am interested in religious change (and, as a corollary, in religious conservation), and

1. In Michael Banton (ed), Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion, Tavistock Publications, London 1966, pp. 85-126.

how I propose to deal with it. It is difficult to establish causality within the field in which the social sciences are interested, because chicken-egg situations are so often cropping up; the association of two phenomena is noted, but in the absence of controlled experiments it is hard to say which has causal primacy. Perhaps this is one reason why theoreticians of the social study of religion have been much preoccupied with the problem of the origin¹ of religion itself. Unfortunately the origins of most religions, and therefore of religion itself, are lost in the past, so that answers to this historical question must be speculative and untestable. Thus the problem seems to be insoluble; the apparently divergent answers have really been answers to different questions. Intellectualist answers like Tylor's have in fact been attempts to explain the origins of belief systems; sociological answers, like those of Durkheim and Malinowski, have been attempts to explain the origins of moral and social systems; etc. etc. True, each theoretician laid claim to explaining religion as a whole by asserting the causal primacy of the system they had explained; Ruth Benedict, for example, inherited from Marx and Durkheim the theory that beliefs were mere rationalizations of, i.e. caused by, religious behaviour. All these claims were demonstrably exaggerated, and there seemed to be no reason for giving one system any primacy over the other; rather they came to be viewed as potentially completely independent, as in Cohen's formulation above. Recently however there has been a resurgence of intellectualism in a tradition which owes most to Tylor among anthropologists and Weber among sociologists. This tradition focuses on the idea that people often really do things -

1. For those who work with the hypothesis that social institutions (e.g. religion) owe their origins to the need for them, investigating religion's function is much the same as investigating its origin.

perform ceremonies, found and support institutions, undertake moral acts -- because of what they believe to be the case. At the same time researchers have realized that while we cannot get back to the origins of religion itself, we can look at the origin of bits of religion, i.e. religious changes. When we have historical evidence for beliefs in former times, we may be able to document changes in a belief system; and when we know about a change in a belief system we can speculate on its causes. This is why it seems important to study religious change and why such change can best be studied in societies long literate, and best of all in societies following religions based on books.

It may seem paradoxical that the social study of religion should concentrate on the rational, but Popper, the begetter of what he calls the "rationality principle", has shown that there is no other way. The rationality principle is the zero principle, the basic assumption of the social sciences; it is the principle that in so far as behaviour is amenable to social study, it is the behaviour of people acting in what they conceive to be their best interests. Its application to the sociology of religion has been expounded by I. Jarvie in his interesting and provocative book The Revolution in Anthropology.¹ If we see a man in an agricultural community oppressed by a drought enter a special building (called, maybe, a church), get on his knees, fold his hands and start muttering, we may assume that he is insane, in which case we can offer no further testable explanation of his conduct, or that he thinks his actions may bring rain. And if that

1. Routledge, London 1964. This paragraph and the next I owe mainly to Jarvie's book, especially to section 4 of chapter 4 (i.e. pp. 111-4). Jarvie in turn is developing some of Popper's ideas. The ideas which I am conscious of owing are the rationality principle (alias situational logic), methodological individualism and social change as unintended consequences. ~~For sources with full exposition of these ideas see the bibliography.~~ The example of the man praying for rain is also taken from Jarvie's book.

is what he thinks we must assume that some entity is capable of giving him rain, and that that entity, which begins to look rather human in its emotions, will be placated by his suppliant posture and humble gesture, and listen to his words. The rationality principle refers to rationality in behaviour in a situation (which includes a set of given beliefs). It does not apply directly to the situation, or to the beliefs included in the situation, although the question of the rationality of those beliefs may be raised: a belief is rational if it is a good solution, in a given intellectual situation, of some problem it tries to solve. Conduct is rational if it consists in using what seem appropriate means to attain given ends: the man praying for rain is acting rationally. What are given to him are the beliefs that make those means seem appropriate and the ends he wishes to attain; in this case that rain should fall. The sum of all the ends a man considers desirable is his value system; the sum of his beliefs is his belief system. Ultimately values cannot be derived from facts (nor facts from values); but frequently a man's beliefs about facts and his values have a common historical origin. Some of his beliefs about facts he gained from his own experience, and many of these he holds critically. The rest of his beliefs, both about facts (what is the case) and about values (what is desirable) he derived from other people, usually his parents and teachers; this of course applies also to his beliefs about mundane and trivial things, but important for us are only his beliefs about metaphysics and ethics, which together constitute his religious belief system, and which are all untestable.

Social changes come about as the unintended or the intended consequences of the actions and utterances of individuals. Religious change is not often an intended consequence: when it is, the individual who brings it about is usually said by sociologists to have charisma, a term invented by Weber which stands in lieu of an explanation. However, even

these "charismatic" individuals bring about many changes which they do not intend, and the greater their influence the more unintended consequences of their actions there are: Jesus Christ is surely not accountable for the whole of Christianity. Most social changes therefore are the unintended consequences of other social changes. Moreover, the exceptions just mentioned need not worry us unduly, for people only become charismatic a posteriori, because their ideas have affected other men.¹ (This shows that the sociological concept of charisma is quite distinct from the Christian theological concept of a special favour vouchsafed by God,² which is the original meaning of the word. The theological concept is unaffected by my argument, as the grace of God does not depend for its existence on human recognition.) Even a religious innovator must offer people something they want; a man who preaches suicide will only be listened to in times of exceptional misery. This shifts the question back to what people want, their ends, aims, or values, the sum of which we call a value system. The relation to each other of values in a value system may be hierarchic or preferential. In a hierarchy of values only certain things are desirable for their own sakes; and other things are good or desirable as means to these higher-level values.³ Preferences, on the other hand, have no rigid structure (there is an infinite number of possible preferential choices), and, especially at the lower levels, tend to be ad hoc. Just now I prefer strawberries to raspberries, an ad hoc preference which

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1. What I am saying does not in any way imply that the ideas of charismatic leaders are not true or good - it is a matter of common experience that the truth or excellence of an idea has never been a guarantee of its acceptance. If someone accepts a true or good idea this fact as such requires congratulation, not explanation.
 2. Shorter O.E.D. under "charism", which is merely the Anglicized form of the Greek word Weber adopted.
 3. I owe the entire structure of this argument to a conversation with Karl Popper, though for its expression I take full responsibility.

may change by the next meal; but unless I am unusually gluttonous or misanthropic I always prefer friendship to good food. Even among hedonists only the very sophisticated will claim that they value friendship only as a means to happiness, and in practice it is highly doubtful whether anyone goes through life making these calculations (i.e. "If I help that friend will I increase my happiness?"), so the value attached to friendship in our society does not seem to be hierarchically subservient to any higher-level aim or value. Therefore it is safe to say that most contemporary western intellectuals have^a plurality of values. However the value systems of most religions are doctrinally, and perhaps cognitively, hierarchically structured, at least at the higher levels. A Christian may express the view that the attainment of Heaven is the summum bonum, the one highest-level aim to which all other aims are subservient. Below Heaven in this hierarchy he might put the three cardinal virtues, faith, hope and charity, and all other values would be subsumed under these. (A modern Protestant might say that these virtues too are valued "for their own sakes"; but as the practice of these virtues must by Christian doctrine invariably lead towards Heaven this does not destroy the hierarchy). This forms an interesting contrast to Buddhism. A cornerstone of Theravāda Buddhist doctrine is that nirvāna is the summum bonum.¹ As nirvāna is a kind of extinction it precludes the practice of virtues (it is beyond good and evil) such as charity, which is admitted as a means, a subsidiary goal, but not as part of the end itself. Some early Buddhists obviously found this unsatisfactory: they developed the

1. This doctrine is curiously up-to-date in my part of the world. In An Atheist's Values, O.U.P., Oxford 1964) Richard Robinson writes (p. 17) of our search for "the good": "So we come to hope for a panacea, something that will permanently remove all misery for ever ... Alas! There is no such panacea. Or, rather, there is, but it is death. Death is the only permanent cure for dissatisfaction and misery. While we live we are liable to them." In Buddhist cosmology to attain nirvāna is the only possible escape from rebirth, i.e. death.

doctrine of the Bodhisattva ideal. In contrast to the Pratyekabuddha ("Enlightened singly"), who seeks nirvāna for himself alone, the Bodhisattva ("He whose essence is enlightenment") takes a vow to attain nirvāna, but once it is in his grasp pauses on the brink and will not enter until all other creatures are similarly advanced. Out of his infinite compassion he denies himself the supreme bliss but works in the world to bring others towards it. Love has replaced nirvāna as the ideal. This at least is the accepted view of the distinction between Theravāda and Mahāyāna ethics; whether it is correct will be considered in the last chapter.

The high-level aims shared by members of a community we call the ethos of that culture. (Like the aims of which it is constituted, the ethos may be discussed on either the cognitive or the affective level). Ethos - and the differences in ethos between different cultures - has especially interested the anthropologist Geoffrey Bateson. I too find it very interesting. Unfortunately ethos is so general a thing that it is elusive: it is difficult to observe it in the field or to describe it. The best we can usually do is to characterize it by negative example: an English gentleman would never kick a dog or a lady.

We can now see what changes when a religion changes. A religious action is based on a belief about facts and directed to certain aims. Either the belief or the aims may change. What does not change is the relation between these two: that the action based on the beliefs and directed to the aims follows the rationality principle. If it does not it is not amenable to systematic study. We can also see why the religion changes: as the consequence, usually unintended, of the changed situation which has been brought about by individuals. The types of explanation I am therefore looking for will become plain if I quote, as briefly as possible, three examples from my field-work.

The first is an example of changing beliefs. There is a widely held hypothesis, to which I also subscribe, that many of men's beliefs about the invisible world mirror their experience of this world. This applies especially to the power structure. Central Ceylon a couple of hundred years ago had, in the precise sense, a feudal social structure, and numerous political divisions and sub-divisions. The gods were conceived on the same pattern: each god was the main god, i.e. overlord of a certain territory, and had a retinue of lesser gods who were in charge of lesser territories within his; these in turn had their retinue, and so on down to village level. When the British conquered central Ceylon in 1815 they at first left the structure of authority unchanged at all but the highest levels, merely substituting government officials for local noblemen, and imposing a far more comprehensive central control. The correspondence between the divine and the human political structure is explicitly recognized by some Sinhalese themselves - in the modern terminology: an old monk with no western-style education told me in so many words that a certain god was like the Government Agent (G.A.), a lesser one like the District Revenue Officer (D.R.O.), etc. etc. However, an unintended consequence of the British conquest, with its abolition of feudalism and its centralization of authority, as well as of improved communications within the island, is that local gods are losing their authority, i.e. their interest for the villagers, to the extent that some of their shrines are falling into disuse; and even of the four gods who were said to have jurisdiction over the island three are greatly declining, one greatly increasing in authority, so that political centralization may eventually bring about a local monotheism. This trend has probably been hastened by the fact that since Independence politicians have deprived the administrative civil service of much of its power and autonomy; even the

G.A. (the senior administrator of a province) counts for less than he did under the British. A more up-to-date villager, telling me of the gods' arrangements, said that they have a sort of parliament.

My second example is one of changing aims. It was the aim of the Buddha to attain nirvāna, a mystical release from normal states of consciousness; it is attained in life, and someone who has attained it is not reborn: he escapes from the wheel of rebirth, to which all creatures are tied. Rebirth the Buddha considered misery; the peace of nirvāna was the only good worth having. But most Sinhalese villagers do not want nirvāna - yet. They are like St. Augustine who prayed "Make me chaste and continent, O Lord - but not yet."¹ They say they want to be born in heaven; some of them would even like to be reborn in a favourable station on earth. They fear, as their Teacher did not, the extinction of sensation, and want to go on feeling. Moreover, though they will probably utter the impeccably orthodox sentiment that life is suffering, most of them plainly do believe - and say so when they are not speaking in a religious context - that people with wealth and power are happy. This shifting of an aim, from nirvāna to heaven or even to earth, is thus explicable in terms of higher-level changed aim - wish to go on living, and a changed belief - that rich people, or at least gods, are happy. The next step is to inquire why the higher-level aim and the belief have changed; but this would take me too far afield just now. An unintended consequence of the Buddha's teaching might be that it made life seem worth living!

My third example is an illustration of what might be a changing ethos; it is very similar to one given by Jarvie (p. 114). Many Sinhalese with

1. "Da mihi castitatem et continentiam, sed noli modo." Confessions VIII, 7.

the aim of temporal advancement have changed their religion in the last 500 years. They became Catholics to avoid being murdered by the Portuguese, Protestants to placate the Dutch, Protestants again to please the British. Recently many Christian Sinhalese have been changing back to Buddhism for similar reasons. However, once a man has changed his religion, he and his children are exposed to the whole ideology of that religion, so that gradually the entire ethos of the family may change. In this case a man's ethos, i.e. highest-level aims, have changed as the unintended consequence of his, or his father's, rational pursuance of lower-level aims.

II. WHY CEYLON?

I have said why I think religious changes are worth studying, what they are, and in what terms I propose to explain them; but I have not yet said why I chose to study Sinhalese Buddhism. The methodological reasons are these. I mentioned a while back that to study religious change we have to be quite sure what the present religion, which we can now see, has changed from; and as the detailed and systematic observations of social scientists are a recent event in history, our best hope lies in studying religions based on books, i.e. scriptures. I am not confusing history with philology: I do not claim that these books tell us what the mass of adherents to the religion at that time believed. But they do tell us what their authors believed. In some celebrated cases, e.g. the Bible, the authors of the scripture were unfortunately not the founders of the religion, but for our problem this does not matter too much, as it is Jesus Christ's doctrine as reported in the Bible which has been influential. All the religions usually reckoned as "world religions" have been founded on books. Further, a great number of splinter groups within religions, known to sociologists as sects, have been founded on

books, especially in western society. Some of these, notably Protestant sects, have been admirably studied by sociologists since Weber: Bryan Wilson's book Sects and Society¹ is an illustrious example. However, the study of sects has its own problems, which are not mine: I am interested rather in the broader religions, which sociologists call churches, which are found in societies at large. The problems of studying Christianity in any given society are especially complex, as no religion has moved through so many cultures and undergone so many upheavals. I do not know Hebrew, Arabic or Chinese, so I cannot adequately study the doctrines of Judaism, Islam, Taoism or Confucianism. The problems of Hinduism are again peculiar: although there are scriptures the authority of which all must acknowledge, namely the Vedas, they are so ancient, their scope is so limited - for they are a collection of hymns and sacrificial formulae - and their interpretation so obscure that their relevance to what people believe is negligible; moreover, only a minority of Hindus ~~are~~^{have been} allowed access to them. There are innumerable other texts, but some, like the Upanishads,² are esoteric, while only a very few possess an authority not confined to certain sects or strata of the population;³ to make matters worse, the chronology of Hindu scriptures is totally obscure.

Buddhism has the advantage of a well-established chronology. We know that the Buddha lived in N.E. India and died there at the age of 80 after preaching for 45 years. It is fairly certain that he died in 486 or 483 B.C., which would mean that his Enlightenment, which is when

1. Heinemann, London 1961.

2. The Upanishads are properly part, the latest part, of Vedic literature, and therefore must be acknowledged by all to be divinely inspired; but the study of their metaphysics is vouchsafed to few, their comprehension maybe to fewer.

3. The scripture with most influence on Hindu society has undoubtedly been the Laws of Manu.

Buddhism can be said to have started, took place in 531 or 528 B.C. The Buddhist era however is dated from the Buddha's death. But by the Buddhist era, used in Ceylon and thence adopted by other Buddhist countries, the Buddha died in 544/3 B.C., some sixty years earlier. The discrepancy is believed to have arisen in the eleventh century, the dark ages of Ceylon, when Tamil invasions smashed the ancient civilization and many cultural traditions were lost. Of the two kinds of Buddhism, Theravāda and Mahāyāna, the latter is very heterogeneous: moreover the only Mahāyāna country in which field work is now practicable is Japan, the furthest from the Indian sources and the last to be converted. Theravāda Buddhism has the further advantage of a unitary body of acknowledged scripture, the Pali canon; Pali is an ancient Indian language closely related to Sanskrit. Three countries, Ceylon, Burma and Thailand, are the principal bearers of the Theravāda tradition. Of these Burma and Thailand were once Mahāyāna countries; they adopted Theravāda through contact with Ceylon. Ceylon has further advantages from my point of view. It is an island, so that the influences which have entered it can be comparatively well isolated and identified. It has a written chronicle, of varying but sometimes considerable excellence, which enables us to follow the fortunes of the Sinhalese people from the very start, or at least from their conversion to Buddhism in the third century B.C., and which, being the work of monks, contains much information on Buddhism. Most of the commentaries on the Pali Canon were composed in Ceylon, which in ancient times was a centre of Buddhist learning. (The chronicle and commentaries will be discussed in chapter 1.) The Sinhalese, who form the great majority of the inhabitants, have always been preponderantly Buddhists, so that in an important sense there is an uninterrupted tradition of over two thousand

years.¹ Finally, Sinhalese is a language descended from Sanskrit and Pali, so that any conceptual shifts of terms used in the texts in those languages should be fairly easy for me as a Sanskritist to spot, being undisguised by translation; moreover, I expected I could learn Sinhalese more easily than Burmese or Thai, which are structurally unrelated to Sanskrit. So Ceylon it was; and this work is about Ceylonese Buddhism.² To explain why I chose to study it on the ground in the way I did, I must first give a brief sketch of Ceylonese history, geography and economy, which will further serve as a background to my findings.

III. THE HISTORY, GEOGRAPHY AND ECONOMY OF CEYLON

The history of Ceylon can conveniently be divided into two main periods, ancient and modern, with the dividing line drawn at 1505, when the Portuguese arrived in the island as the first European colonial power. The ancient period can then be sub-divided into two unequal parts, the Anurādhapura and the Polonnaruva periods, which are named after the capital cities of the time. The Anurādhapura period is from the 4th century B.C. to the late 9th century A.D.; the Polonnaruva period properly ends in the thirteenth century, after which there is another period of political instability, the capital shifting from place to place.

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1. My learned (though partial) predecessor, Bishop R.S. Copleston, wrote in the opening chapter of his Buddhism Primitive and Present in Magadha and Ceylon, (Longmans Green, London 1892, p. 4), "... the Ceylon branch of [Buddhism], though small, is perhaps the best [the student] could study, or at least the one to study first. For it is confessedly among those which have least diverged from the primitive stock, and it has a far longer continuous history than any other."
 2. Ceylon, an English corruption of the word Sinhala, is the name of the island and the modern nation. Sinhalese is the name of a language and of the people who speak it. There are Ceylonese who are not Sinhalese (see the next section); excepting only a few individuals they are not Buddhists, so that Ceylonese Buddhism effectively coincides with Sinhalese Buddhism.

Although the Amurādhapura period is always recalled as the golden age of the Sinhalese nation and Sinhalese Buddhism, many of the distinctive institutions of modern Sinhalese Buddhism came into being during the Polonnaruva and immediately subsequent periods.¹ For most of the modern period the island was politically divided in two, and the political division acquired cultural importance. The European powers ruled only in the coastal areas, and were based on Colombo on the west coast, with important ports at Jaffna and Galle, at the northern and southern ends of that coast. The Portuguese were ousted by the Dutch in 1658, the Dutch by the British in 1796. Meanwhile in the mountainous interior the Kandyan kingdom maintained its independence till it surrendered to British treachery in 1815. The British restored independence to a unified Ceylon in 1947.

Independent Ceylon has preserved the British administrative division of the island into 9 provinces, each divided into 2 or (usually) 3 districts. Most of these divisions, even down to district level, are good approximations to the boundaries of sub-cultures in this amazingly diverse island, but only a few need concern us here.

The four principal cities are still Colombo, Kandy, Jaffna and Galle. The Central Province, in the centre of which is Kandy, was the core of the Kandyan kingdom, which comprised roughly this province and the four provinces adjoining it. Kandy is called in Sinhalese simply "The City" (Nuwara). The English name is a corruption of the Sinhalese phrase "On the mountain" (kandē or kandē uda). It lies at 1600 feet above sea level in the midst of very hilly country. To the south of Kandy the mountains are far higher; the plateau at Nuwara Eliya, only 25 miles as the crow flies and 48 miles by road, is at 6000 feet. The passes down to the coastal plain from this

1. For instance the Dambadeni Katikāvata of 1266 outlines the principles on which the Sangha is still organized.

eminence are precipitous and spectacular; those to the west and east of Kandy are hardly easier - hence the city's impregnability. To the north however the hills decline rather more gradually till they give way to the plains of the North Central Province, in which lie both Anurādhapura and Polonnaruva. This area was the principal seat of the ancient civilization, but after its devastation by the Tamils it relapsed into sparsely populated and malarial jungle, in which condition it remained till this century, when archaeological interest, nationalist sentiment, and above all the need for cultivable land led to systematic jungle clearance and restoration of the ancient irrigation system. Although the Europeans made Colombo the focal point of all communications systems, so that the east coast is now the most backward and inaccessible, in ancient times this was not so: it was on the east coast that Mahinda landed when he brought Buddhism to Ceylon in the third century B.C. Perhaps the last famous visitor to arrive from that side was Robert Knox (see below) in 1660, when the west coast was already developed but in European hands. A lesser centre of the ancient civilization was in the now totally undeveloped South-east: it was to here that the Sinhalese had to retire when beaten by Tamil invasions, and from here that the Sinhalese national hero, Duṭugāmuṇu, marched up the east coast, some way inland, to defeat the Tamils - a march he would have difficulty in repeating to-day.

Village agriculture is concerned mainly with the growing of rice, locally known as paddy, which is the staple food. In the 5 months which it takes to grow, rice requires to stand in non-stagnant water. There are two monsoons, the S.W. from May to September and the N.E. from October to January. Little rain from the S.W. monsoon clears the central mountain Massif, so that the north, the eastern coast and the south-east depend on the rain which falls in three months. The Sinhalese who lived in these

areas in ancient times built huge reservoirs (vāva), locally known as tanks, and irrigation canals (āla), which are justly considered a wonder of the ancient world: modern technology cannot improve on them. The type of paddy cultivation which depends on such a tank has been exhaustively described by E.R. Leach in his study of a village in the North Central Province.¹ In the west, south-west and centre of the island, where there is a likelihood of rain for 9 or 10 months in the year, no such system of water conservation is necessary, although there used to be some tanks, of unknown antiquity, even in the hills round Kandy; one in the village where I worked had its bund (dyke) permanently breached in the 18th century. Much of the land in this wetter half of the island is now used as plantations of tea, rubber and coconuts, the cash crops on which the country's exports depend. Rubber and coconuts are commoner in the low country, while the higher the hills the better the tea. Most of the higher land in the centre of Ceylon was appropriated by the British in the nineteenth century to plant first coffee and then tea; as a labour force they imported Tamils from South India, whose descendants and relations still work on them to-day. The cultural isolation of the plantations on the slopes from the villages in the valleys is amazing, though it has been exaggerated by politicians: I found few Sinhalese villagers in the area who could not speak at least a little Tamil, and no doubt also the reverse is also true.

Most of the hills in the Kandy District of the Central Province, where I worked, are not so high nor the valleys so steep as in the most famous tea country, but there is hardly an inch of flat ground. This and the lush vegetation amid which the houses stand make for rather diffuse settlements, in which often one house can barely glimpse the next through ~~the~~

1. E.R. Leach, Pul Eliya, C.U.P., Cambridge, 1961.

the trees; sometimes a small group of cottages form a little hamlet, maybe even with its own shop, as a distinct unit within the larger village. Since the British eradicated malaria in the Second World War population pressures have been very severe - $3\frac{1}{2}\%$ per annum growth for the country as a whole. Thus the rice-growing villages of farmers, some landless and all under-employed, sprawl out so that the boundaries between one and the next are often hard to discern, and political or administrative units may not coincide with traditional parish limits. A village (gama) is therefore capable of various definitions, but by traditional criteria it consists of an area of land, an estate, all of which originally, in fact or fantasy, belonged to the families of the founders of the village. It still consists in a fairly compact body of land holdings (with bits taken out by estates, roads, or government colonies), but many of these are nowadays owned by absentee landlords. These holdings are part rice fields (kumburu)¹ and part dry land (goda), which is usually known in English under the rather misleading title of "village gardens". In fact this goda is not cultivated, but on it grow all the types of fruit a villager uses; on it the livestock graze, and houses are built. The commonest plants provide coconuts (pol), which are the basis of all local curries, king coconuts (tambili), many kinds of bananas (kesel), jak fruit (kos), breadfruit (del), betel leaf (bulat) and areca nut² (puvak) which are chewed together, limes (dehi), pineapple (anasi), various condiments and spices which are in daily use, and finally the kital palm. From the sap of its flower is made a delicious brown sugar called jaggery (hakuru); no wonder

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1. This is often known in English as betel-nut, which confuses foreigners. It grows on the areca palm, but is used wrapped in a betel leaf. Villagers, especially men, tend to add a smear of (the mineral) lime (hunu), which besides being very caustic combines with the other ingredients to produce a red dye which stains the mouth.
 2. Also called wet land (mada bim, literally 'muddy ground'), as the opposite of goda bim.

the villagers despise the sugar-cane (uk gas) which also grows wild. (Nowadays it is cheaper to buy ordinary imported sugar.) This same sap, like that of the ordinary coconut palm, can be drunk at various stages of fermentation, as toddy (rā) or arack (arakku). Very rarely a house may have a cultivated vegetable garden, but most vegetables are grown in a hēna, a casual cultivation of otherwise unused land, which is usually cleared by burning. The hēna used to be cultivated - illegally - on Crown lands, but the scope for this is nowadays much restricted, and there is very little unused land to be had even for rent, so most vegetables are bought at the market, by those who can afford them. The most important vegetables, from the villagers' point of view, are chillies (miris), onions (lūnu), and lentils (parippu). The livestock in a Kandyan village is mostly chickens (which supply eggs and meat) and goats (which are eaten but not milked); water-buffaloes are used to draw ploughs and are never killed, but their milk is sometimes used for making curd, and is served with jaggery to monks and other honoured guests. Other cattle are rare (on beef-eating see chapter 6, p. 337), and for milk, which is always used in tea, most depend on tins of milk powder, or government supplies. Cheese is not eaten, butter an exotic luxury. Pigs are almost unknown in the hill country, and most villagers have never seen a horse or a sheep. Nearly every house has a dog, and cats are common; those who can afford to feed their domestic animals tend to give them rice and other human foods. A rich man in the village where I stayed owned an elephant, which was tethered to a tree outside his house when not working for hire.

Most houses are solidly built of cemented bricks covered with plaster and whitewash. They have cement floors. Windows are always barred, usually have shutters and occasionally glass. Roofs are of red tiles or corrugated iron sheetings; ceilings are rare. There are internal

walls, partitioning the building into three or four rooms; older or grander houses may have an open or half-open verandah in front. Almost all houses are bungalows. Kitchens are usually in a lean-to against the back of the house; cooking is on wood fires and there are no chimneys. Every house has a separate earth privy in a building of its own. The very poorest houses are of wattle and daub, with roofs of cadjan (plaited palm fronds). (This is much commoner in the dry zone.) There are cemented wells which the local council builds for drinking water, and more informal unwallled wells for bathing, though river bathing is preferred as more fun.

The rice fields are terraces formed from the hillside; each step is surrounded by a low mud dyke (niyara) just wide enough to walk along. Small gaps (vakkada) in these dykes keep the water moving down the hillside. The rice is a cheerful light green. The valleys with streams sparkling through them; above these the dark and varied vegetation dotted with red tile roofs; above these again the hills terraced in shimmering yellowy green, lined with mud paths along which move a few figures in white and bright colours; further up still the higher hills, their redder earth almost hidden by dark green tea bushes; and at the back of all the mountains blue in the distance: this vista, combining natural grandeur and comprehensible humanity, is the most beautiful I know.

A small but important feature of such a landscape is likely to be a cluster of buildings round a huge peepal tree and an object shaped like a dome with a spire, between ten and forty feet high, washed white or pale blue. The Bo tree, under which the Buddha attained enlightenment, and the stūpa, which contains a relic indicate the presence of a Buddhist monastery, where dwell one or more monks and novices, dressed in bright robes of yellow, orange, or even red. These people and institutions

are representatives of an ancient religious tradition; let me now attempt to summarize its history.

The main primary source for the history of Ceylon in general and the Sinhalese in particular is the Mahāvamsa, a Pali verse chronicle composed in four instalments, the first in the sixth century (Amurādhapura period), the second in the thirteenth, the third in the fourteenth and the last in the eighteenth century.¹ In the European edition (ed. Wilhelm Geiger)² only the first part is called the Mahāvamsa: the three latter parts form the Cūlavamsa; but the consecutive numeration of the chapters is preserved. The whole work is written by Theravāda monks, so naturally it is especially concerned with religious history; indeed, its identification of the fortunes of the Sinhalese with those of Buddhism is the main intellectual source of modern Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism. The quality varies, especially with the distance of events described from the times of writing, but archaeological corroboration fills us with admiration for the oldest part; although it contains many miraculous incidents these are mostly to be regarded as embellishments of the true events. For the ancient period there are many other literary sources in Pali and Sinhalese, notably histories of relics; also much epigraphic and other archaeological evidence. For the modern period there are also literary sources by Europeans; justly the most celebrated is the first book ever written on Ceylon in English, maybe still the best and certainly the most entertaining: Robert Knox's An Historical Relation of the Island

1. The work has been continued since, but for modern times there are many other and in part more reliable sources.

2. Mahāvamsa 1908, Cūlavamsa vol. 1 1925, vol. 2 1927, all published by the Pali Text Society, London. The same publishers produced Geiger's translations: Mahāvamsa 1912, Cūlavamsa vol. 1 1929, vol. 2 1930.

of Ceylon, first published in 1681.¹ Knox (1641-1720) was a merchant seaman whose ship put into harbour on the east coast of Ceylon after a storm late in 1659; in 1660 he was captured with his father the captain, and several companions by King Rājasimha II (1635-87), who collected European prisoners, whom he maintained in comfort and honour in various villages - probably over a thousand of them in the course of his reign. Knox made good but never settled down, and escaped in 1679. Religion is the facet of Sinhalese culture he seems to have understood least well - he always kept his Bible with him - but even so his information is invaluable to us.

The outstanding secondary source for the history of Ceylonese Buddhism is the Rev. Walpola Rahula's History of Buddhism in Ceylon,² but unfortunately, as the sub-title tells us, this covers only the Anurādhapura period. Space does not allow me to discuss this invaluable work, which should be consulted by all serious students of Buddhism. The Rev. Rahula reports the conclusions of two articles on heterodox traditions by the highest authority on Ceylonese antiquities, Prof. S. Paranavitana, "Pre-Buddhist Religious Beliefs in Ceylon"³ and "Mahāyānism in Ceylon".⁴ He also makes full use of Prof. G.P. Malalasekera's The Pali Literature of Ceylon,⁵ which deals with this aspect of Buddhism up to modern times. Unfortunately there are no other secondary sources of comparable usefulness available for the post-Anurādhapura period, i.e. the last thousand years; Wilhelm

1. Reprinted MacLehose, Glasgow 1911, with an introduction by James Ryan, and Maharagama, 1958, as vol. VI of the Ceylon Historical Journal, with a valuable introduction by S.D. Saparamadu. Both editions include Knox's short Autobiography.

2. Gunasekera, Colombo, 1956.

3. J.R.A.S. Ceylon branch vol. XXXI no. 82, 1929, 302-27.

4. Ceylon Journal of Science, Section G vol. ii, 1928-33, pp. 35-71.

5. R.A.S., London, 1928.

Geiger's The Culture of Ceylon in Mediaeval Times,¹ (which appeared posthumously, edited by Heinz Bechert) is a fine harvest of facts gleaned from the chronicles, but its synchronic approach obscures the course of development, and on Buddhism it is altogether disappointing.

The Sinhalese nation was allegedly founded by Vijaya, the grandson of a lion (Skt.: simha), a ne'er-do-well from N.W. India who landed in Ceylon on the day the Buddha died. The island was at that time inhabited only by spirits and demons. More prosaically, it was probably inhabited by Vāddas, a people anthropometrically and culturally distinct from the Sinhalese; a few Vāddas can still be distinguished among the inhabitants of the jungles of eastern Ceylon. Anurādhapura was founded by Pandukābhaya² in the 4th century B.C. His grandson, Devānampiya Tissa, was a contemporary of the emperor of India, Asoka (ruled c. 269- c. 230), who was a convert to Buddhism. Asoka sent religious ambassadors to countries as distant as Egypt and Macedonia, and after the third Buddhist council, which was held under his auspices, monks were sent to all the outlying regions and border countries round India to preach Buddhist doctrine. To Ceylon was sent one of Asoka's own sons, Mahinda. According to the chronicle he was accompanied by four other monks, a novice, and a lay disciple. A single monk performs the lower ordination ceremony, by which a layman enters the Order as a novice, but five monks are the quorum needed to perform the higher ordination ceremony (upasampada) by which a novice becomes a monk; if such a quorum cannot be mustered no ordination can take place, the line of succession is broken, and after a time there are no more monks. Mahinda's group was therefore the smallest possible

1. Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1960.

2. The names of historical figures in the ancient period are given in Pali, except where otherwise stated.

paradigm community of male Buddhists. The Buddhism which Mahinda brought was of the Theravāda school, which has its scriptures in Pali; these scriptures, the Pali canon, were at that time not yet written down, but Mahinda and his followers presumably brought them in their heads. Tradition has it that they thus brought the commentaries too, and that Mahinda translated these into Sinhalese. Mahinda received as a gift from the king, who was the first Ceylonese convert, a park in Anurādhapura in which to found the Mahāvihāra ("Great Monastery"); he then ploughed a furrow round the city as a parish boundary (sīmā), and by this token established Buddhism in Ceylon.¹ The Mahāvihāra was to become the bastion

1. Monks within a sīmā regularly perform certain ceremonies together, notably the uposatha, a mutual confession which should take place every fortnight. Normally a sīmā encloses only the grounds of a monastery, and has no further relevance to the laity; but in this case the king said the city should be included, so he had something like a parish boundary in mind. By establishing a sīmā Mahinda was establishing the sangha, the Buddhist community of monks, and establishing Buddhism in this very precise sense. Rahula (Op. cit., p. 54) is of course quite right to say, "The idea of the 'establishment' of Buddhism in a given geographical unit with its implications is quite foreign to the teaching of Buddha ... Nowhere had he given injunctions or instructions regarding a ritual or a particular method of 'establishing' the Sāsana Buddha's doctrine. Buddhism is purely a personal religion." Some confusion has arisen because the Mahāvamsa, which was composed after the rise of Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism, refers here (XV.180) and elsewhere to the establishment of a sāsana, a broad term; but in the Dīpavamsa passage (XIV.22) on which this is based it is the establishment of a sanghārama (monastery) which is discussed. Another source of similar date, Buddhagohosa's introduction to the Samantapāsādikā, varies the story further in the nationalist direction, for it has Mahinda tell the king (I.102) that the roots of the sāsana would go deep in Ceylon only when a son born in Ceylon to Ceylonese parents studied the Vinaya monastic rule-book in Ceylon and recited it there, and has such a ceremony of establishment performed later on in the shape of a Vinaya recitation by the king's nephew. The fact that texts of the fifth century A.D. tend in their presentation to ignore the fact that Buddhism (like any other religion?) is "purely personal" does not allow us to assume that Mahinda 700 years earlier was going beyond the impeccably orthodox procedure for setting up a monastery, and does not necessitate the Rev. Rahula's hypothesis that "This notion of establishing the Sasana or Buddhism as an institution in a particular country or place was perhaps first conceived by Asoka himself" (op. cit. p. 55). (His corroborative statement that Asoka was the first king to adopt Buddhism as a State religion is dubious.) As he goes on to say, "Although the two versions differ in the letter they agree in the spirit ... the establishment of the Sasana is ultimately reduced to the establishment of the Sangha which is not possible without a sīmā and the recital of the Vinaya."

of Theravādin orthodoxy for more than a thousand years, and it is in this tradition that Ceylonese monks, especially those of the Siyam Nikāya (see below), stand today. The commentaries and chronicles which survive from the Anurādhapura period were probably all written there (see chapter 1). Mahinda had his sister Sanghamittā, who was a Buddhist nun, bring from India a branch of the sacred Bo tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment, and it was planted with great ceremony, and saplings distributed over the island. Sanghamittā also established in Ceylon the Order of nuns, for only a nun can admit a woman to the Order. Asoka sent as relics the Buddha's begging bowl and various of his bones, of which the right collar-bone was enshrined in Ceylon's first stupa, the Thūpārāma. Both the tree and the stupa stand in Anurādhapura to this day.

In the second century B.C. Tamil invaders from South India ruled in Anurādhapura over the Sinhalese, who were apparently already Buddhists. There was a Sinhalese kingdom in western Ceylon, called Dakkhinadesa,¹ and a third in the south-east, called Rohana. From Rohana a national revival was led by Dutthagāmaṇī (101-77 B.C.), who proclaimed that he was fighting not for a kingdom but for Buddhism and put a relic in his spear; monks were in the army, though they left the Order for the occasion, and the war ended when Dutugāmuṇu, as he is known in Sinhalese, slew the Tamil king in single combat at the gates of Anurādhapura. These events are the recorded beginning of Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism. From now on Sinhalese kings were regarded as defenders of the faith, and Buddhism acquired official trappings. Dutugāmuṇu erected in honour of Buddhism enduring monuments of his reign. But within forty years of his death

1. Later called Māyā. See Geiger, Culture of Ceylon, p. 9. My statement is an over-simplification, but far less of one than Rahula's map (end-paper, op. cit.), which includes the western lowlands in Malaya; Geiger shows that Malaya was a geographical name for the hill country, not a political division.

Ceylon suffered civil war, invasion, and a famine so severe that people resorted to cannibalism. The Mahāvihāra was abandoned and many monks fled to India. Those who were left feared that the oral traditions would be lost, and so about 30 B.C., for the first time in history, they wrote down the Pali canon, with commentaries (presumably in Sinhalese). King Vattagāmaṇī-Abhaya (27-17 B.C.), who reconquered Anurādhapura from the Tamils, gave to a monk from another part of the country who had helped him a new monastery called Abhayagiri; this distressed the monks of the Mahāvihāra, who expelled the monk. However he and his followers refused to accept the expulsion, and thus arose the first schism in the Ceylonese Sangha. Within a few years this schism acquired a doctrinal rationale: the Abhayagiri monks accepted the teachings of Dhammaruci, a monk of the Vajjiputra sect in India, who taught for instance that there is a personal entity which survives transmigration (puggalavāda), as against the contrary theory (anattavāda) of the Theravādins. Abhayagiri monks then studied both Theravāda and Mahāyāna, while the Mahāvihāra monks were conservative and regarded them as heretical. Kings favoured now one, now the other, often both and occasionally neither.

Late in the third century Mahāyāna monks came to Ceylon from India. Their teachings¹ were suppressed, but found favour at Abhayagiri in the reign of King Mañāsena (334-61), who was himself converted to them. At one point he even had the Mahāvihāra demolished and the premises sown with beans, but he later repented. In his reign is the first mention of a

1. Pali: Vetullavāda; Skt.: Vaitulyavāda. For a discussion of the term and a summary of the probable nature of these teachings, which seem to have been based on scriptures in Sanskrit, see Rahula, op. cit., pp. 87-9. For a collection of all evidence concerning Mahāyāna in ancient Ceylon the above-quoted article by S. Paranavitana, "Mahāyānism in Ceylon", is still not superseded.

Bodhisattva image, which the king had made by his son, who was skilful at carving ivory; in his reign too the famous tooth relic was sent from India, though it arrived only after the king's death. This relic became the palladium of Sinhalese royalty till the British conquest of Kandy in 1815, and it was worshipped by Dudley Senayake^{an} on his election as Prime Minister in 1965. Under Mahāsena also was crystallized a further division in the Sangha. A group of monks including one Sāgala had in the reign of Mahāsena's father left the Abhayagiri Vihāra, disturbed by the introduction of Mahāyāna. After a revolt against the Mahāyanists Mahāsena built for a follower of Sāgala the Jetavana Vihāra. For the rest of the Anurādhapura period the Sangha was divided into these three Nikāyas: Mahāvihāra, Abhayagiri and Jetavana. A Nikāya does not correspond to a sect or a denomination: the institution is clerical only, and its characteristic is that monks of more than one Nikāya will not perform ceremonies (ordination, uposatha etc.) together; customs and teachings (Sinh. sirit zirit) may also differ but need not do so. In ancient times however the doctrines of the Nikāyas usually did differ: after Mahāsena the Mahāvihāra was Theravāda, the Abhayagiri Mahāyāna, and the Jetavana alternated. Ceylon was naturally influenced by Buddhist developments in India. Indian chronology is uncertain, but Mahāsena's reign must have been roughly contemporaneous with the rise of the Yogācāra school of Buddhism in India, which brought irrationalist doctrines and magical practices. In the sixth century, when the great Buddhist logicians lived and disputed in India, a Theravādin monk came from India and defeated the Mahāyanists in public debate. In the seventh century, when the Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsiang recorded great veneration in India for Buddhist learning, there was so much interest in Ceylon in the Abhidhamma (Buddhist systematic philosophy) that one king before setting out for war asked his general to request his queen to study

the Abhidhamma, preach it and transfer its merit to him.¹ In the middle of the ninth century Indian Buddhist Tantrism (Vājiriyavāda) came to Ceylon, and though its esoteric doctrines diverged very widely from Theravāda it seems to have been influential even at the height of the Polonnaruwa period, /over 300 years later.² There are other telling signs of Mahāyāna influence on the official religion of the later Anurādhapura period, culminating in a tenth-century inscription³ which declares that the Buddha promised that none but Bodhisattvas could become kings of Ceylon.

In the second century B.C. and fifth century A.D. there were periods when Tamil invaders ruled in Anurādhapura, but even they professed Buddhism, or at least followed Buddhist customs, and they do not seem to have occasioned any cultural discontinuity. However, with the rise of Pāṇḍyan power invasions from South India became more frequent and more severe, and the Sinhalese and Tamils were repeatedly at war. Polonnaruwa, further from India, was a royal seat for the first time in the late seventh century, and the capital gradually shifted to there; the last king to rule in Anurādhapura died in 896. Already the Tamil Hindus must have been exerting cultural influence, for in the late 8th century King Mahinda II feasted brahmins and gave them sweetened milk to drink, a Hindu practice. Similar activities are recorded in the ninth century. This is not surprising, as by no means all relations with Tamils were hostile: already in the seventh century there were Tamil ministers, who are recorded to have built Buddhist monasteries. There were peaceful Tamil colonists who intermarried with Sinhalese families, probably at all social levels; some

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1. Rahula, *op. cit.*, p. 106, referring to Mhv. XLIV, 108-9.
 2. See for instance P.E.E. Fernando, "Tantric Influence on the Sculptures at Gal Vihara, Polonnaruwa", *Univ. of Ceylon Review* vol. XVIII nos. 1 & 2, 1960, pp. 50-66.
 3. The Jetavanārāma slab inscription of King Mahinda IV (956-72).

Sinhalese kings had Tamil wives. Moreover the Sinhalese kings themselves used Tamil mercenaries called Velakkāras. Finally in 1001 A.D. the Cola dynasty from South India, at the height of their power, having already held Anurādhapura for some years, captured and ruled in Polonnaruva. The Sinhalese were confined to the mountains and the south, squabbling among themselves, while the Tamils sacked all the monasteries, and pillaged and destroyed the premises of luxury and religion. In this period much of ancient Ceylon was lost. When Vijaya-Bāhu I reconquered the throne in 1065 it was no longer possible to hold a higher ordination ceremony, as there were not five monks left to form a quorum, so he had to send to Burma for some monks to establish a new line of succession. The Order of nuns had died out completely, and this could not be reinstated, as there were no Theravādin nuns elsewhere, so that Order became extinct forever. Even after Vijaya-Bāhu's restoration the Velakkāras were so powerful that not only did they mutiny and sack Polonnaruva, but under one of his successors they were in control of the Temple of the Tooth there, probably operating a "protection racket".¹

Parakkama-Bāhu I (1153-86), known as the Great, decisively defeated the Tamils and even invaded the Indian mainland. The cultural activity of his reign has led Malalasekera justly to dub it an Augustan age. The buildings both religious and secular erected by him and his successor still astound the visitor to Polonnaruva. There was great production of scholarly literature in Sanskrit, Pali and Sinhalese. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries were probably the only period when Sanskrit was used in Ceylon. Its rise, due perhaps to Mahāyāna influence within Buddhism and Tamil influence on society, had a lasting effect on the Sinhalese language, which

1. A.L. Basham, "Background to Parakkamabāhu I", Ceylon Historical Journal vol. IV, 1954-5, pp. 19-20.

since this period has been the prevailing literary medium. Modern Sinhalese is full of Sanskrit loanwords (i.e. tatsamas) with Sinhalese grammatical endings, but has, so far as I know, no Pali loanwords at all. This applies equally, and most remarkably, to the religious terminology, which is either "pure Sinhalese"¹ (i.e. the mediaeval, un-Sanskritized language, also called Elu) or Sanskrit, also known as "mixed Sinhalese".² Linguistically almost the only thing which is Pali about Sinhalese "Pali Buddhist" is the sacred texts, which are still normally used in the original.³

Parakkama-Bāhu held a council to reform the Sangha and establish the true doctrine. The Mahāvamsa⁴ records that at this time "In the villages belonging to the Sangha the good morals of monks consisted only in their supporting their wives and children". Senior monks of the three Nikāyas were convened, and after such discord the king himself, with the aid of three learned monks, decided the points at issue in favour of the Mahāvihāra; he accordingly suppressed the other two Nikāyas in 1165. The Sangha was thus organizationally unified for the first time in more than a thousand years.³ Polonnaruva fell in 1215. Under the pressure of Tamil attack and internal discord the Sinhalese kings of the next three centuries moved their capital from place to place, generally down the west side of the island and into the mountains. Parakkama-Bāhu II (1236-71) imported monks from the Cola country in S. India and established harmony between

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1. I shall refer to it, more accurately, as "old Sinhalese".
 2. E.g. a monk's official title in Sinhalese is Sthavira, the Sanskrit form; or Terunnanse, teru being the same word in Elu; only when speaking or writing English does a Sinhalese person use the Pali equivalent Thero.
 3. Pali is also used in certain categories of proper names having a connection with religion, e.g. monks' given names (Dhammaratana, Nanatiloka) and names of sacred places (Anurādhapura, Nāgadīpa).
 4. Mhv. LXXVIII, 3-4.

the two teachings (ubhayasāsanam)¹, so we infer that though the Abhayagiri and Jetavana Nikāyas had formally been extinguished some monks still held to Mahāyāna doctrine. This however is the last occasion on which we hear of them. It is interesting that Theravāda Buddhism flourished in S. India at this period. Parakkama-Bāhu IV (c. 1302-46) appointed as his teacher a monk from the Cola country, who taught him all the Jātakas (stories of the Buddha's previous births), which were then translated from Pali into what is still the standard Sinhalese version; the translation is ascribed to the king himself.² In 1411 the Chinese invaded the west coast and carried off the king. This was probably the last Sinhalese contact with Mahāyāna Buddhists till recent times. The Chinese installed Parakkama-Bāhu VI (1412-67), who ruled at Kottē, near Colombo, and was the last king (till George III) to rule the whole of Ceylon.

When the Portuguese arrived in 1505 the island was politically divided in much the way that was to persist till reunification came under the British: one king ruled at Kottē, another at Kandy. King Dharmapāla of Kottē³ was converted to Catholicism and became Don Juan Dharmapāla; he lost all power, and at his death in 1597 the line was finally extinguished, and with it all pretence of political independence for the low country. The Kandyan Kingdom, after the brief reign of Rājasimha I (ruled 1580-91), who though a Sinhalese made Saivism the court religion and persecuted Buddhism,⁴ remained independent till 1815, and preserved a Sinhalese Buddhist cultural identity, but till the reign of Kīrti Srī Rājasimha

1. Mhv. LXXXIV, 9-10.

2. Mhv. XC, 80-83.

3. From this date on the names of historical figures are given in Sanskrit.

4. His motives were probably not religious but political: monks had been plotting against his life. See P.E. Pieris, Ceylon and the Portuguese 1505-1658, Tellippala; American Ceylon Mission Press, 1920, pp. 94-5.

(1747-81) Buddhism does not seem to have prospered. In the intervening period no noteworthy works of Sinhalese or Pali literature were written. Moreover, within just over 150 years Kandyan kings sent abroad three times for monks to come and reestablish the higher ordination in Ceylon. The first two missions, received by Vimala Dharma Sūrya I (1592-1604) in 1596¹ and by Vimala Dharma Sūrya II (1687-1707) in 1697,² came from Burma, had curiously short-lived effects. According³ to an eighteenth-century source⁴ these two missions were invited not in order to initiate a genuine religious revival but to legitimize the claims of incumbents to their temple lands. These incumbents, who had taken the lower ordination, claimed thereby the status of novices, but some of them kept their lay names and many were not even celibate. During the captivity of Robert Knox (1660-79) those who thus made no pretence of observing the monastic rules were known as ganinnānsēs, and wore not yellow but white. This class, half way between monk and layman, was a phenomenon unique in Ceylonese history.

In 1697 only one monk could be found to converse in Pali with the visiting monks from Burma. It was a pupil of both of this monk's pupils who instigated the revival of Buddhism in the mid-eighteenth century. Valivita Saranamkara⁵ founded a renaissance of Pali and Sinhalese literature; soon the most learned man of his time, he rapidly became the most influential,

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1. See Mhv. XCVII 8-15 and P.E.E. Fernand^d "The Rakkhanga-Sannas-Curnikava and the Date of the Arrival of Arakanese Monks in Ceylon", Univ. of Ceylon Review, vol. XVII, nos 1 and 2, 1959, p. 46.
 2. See Mhv. XCIV 15-22 and D.B. Jayatilaka, "Sinhalese Embassies to Arakan", JRAS (CB) XXXV (1940), 1-6.
 3. I owe much of the rest of this paragraph and of the next to Mr. Kithsiri Malalgoda, who is currently (1968) preparing for Oxford a D.Phil. thesis entitled "Sociological Aspects of revival and change in Buddhism in nineteenth-century Ceylon".
 4. Gammulīe Ratanapāla, Simhala Vimānavastu Prakaranaya, 1770.
 5. On Saranamkara the main source in English is Kotugama Vāchissara, "Valivita Saranamkara and the Revival of Buddhism in Ceylon", (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, London, 1961), which uses the two contemporary biographies.

and deserves to be called the father of modern Sinhalese Buddhism. His patrons, oddly enough,¹ were members of a Tamil royal line from Madura who ruled in Kandy after 1739. Applications for monks were this time made to Siam; two embassies failed, but the monks who arrived in response to the third held a great ordination ceremony in Kandy in 1753 at Malvatta, Saranamkara's monastery. They made a sīmā there and a new sīmā at Asgiri, Kandy's other main monastery, and then toured the country on similar errands. Saranamkara received the title of Sangharāja ('King of the Order') and founded the current lines of pupillary succession at Malvatta and Asgiri. Shortly afterwards the king put these two monasteries formally in charge of all other monasteries in the country, and ordered that only they could hold higher ordination ceremonies. They are still the headquarters of the Siyam Nikāya throughout the hill country, which is to say of the largest body of monks. Siyam Nikāya monks in the low country have headquarters elsewhere, but this is purely a matter of convenience. The founding in the nineteenth century of the other two Nikāyas of to-day, the Rāmañña and the Amarapura, will be discussed in chapter 8.

When the British acquired Kandy in 1815 Buddhism ceased at last to be the state religion, but by the Kandyan Convention they guaranteed that "Buddhism and the Agama [religion] of the Devas [gods] were inviolable" and monasteries were allowed to retain their property and exemption from tax. In 1848 a Buddhist monk was executed by the British for allegedly taking part in an abortive revolt, but this was an isolated incident. In 1880 Col. H.S. Olcott of the Theosophical Society, intrigued by newspaper reports of a public disputation in 1874 in which a Buddhist monk had defeated a Methodist missionary, visited Ceylon and founded the Buddhist

1. Kīrti Śrī Rājasimha (1747-81), to the praise of whose religious works the last two chapters of the Ālāvamsa are devoted, remained a Saivite all his life. Clearly his patronage of Buddhism had strong political motivation.

Theosophical Society, which set up ^tis own schools in competition with Christian schools and started a new stream of Buddhist development - but this is another story, best left to chapter 1.

There are at present some 17,000 Buddhist monks in Ceylon, in a population of $10\frac{1}{2}$ million of whom $7\frac{1}{2}$ million are Sinhalese and 7 million Buddhists. The other Sinhalese are Roman Catholics whose ancestors were converted under the Portuguese; almost all of these live along the west coast. Of the Sinhalese $2\frac{1}{2}$ million are officially classed as Kandyans. The other elements of the population are as follows. There are over a million Tamils known as "Ceylon Tamils" or "Jaffna Tamils" whose ancestors came over in ancient and mediaeval times; they live mainly in the north of Ceylon and along the east coast, and the great majority are Saivite Hindus. There are about a million Tamils known as "Indian Tamils" or "Indians" whose families were imported by the British to work on tea plantations; they mostly live in the hill country and are predominantly Saivite Hindu, though a sizable minority has been converted to Christianity, mostly Roman Catholicism. There are half a million Muslims, also known as "Ceylon Moors", who are scattered throughout the island - mostly engaged in trade; their origin is not quite clear, but their ancestors were probably Arab merchants in the middle ages, and some of them at least must have arrived via South India, as they speak a dialect of Tamil; but they have intermarried a great deal with the local population, and in Sinhalese areas are usually bilingual. Of the smaller minorities, the Burghers, of mixed European and Ceylanese descent, are Christians, and live in towns (mainly Colombo) where they have white-collar jobs, or on estates as planters; there is a sprinkling of Malay Muslims, descendants of mercenaries employed by kings of Kandy; other Indian immigrant groups pursue trade in Colombo; and the few remaining Vaddas, speaking their archaic Sinhalese dialect,

live in the jungles on the eastern side of the mountain massif, where no doubt their relations have imperceptibly merged with the rest of the population.¹

IV. FIELD WORK AND PRESENTATION

* ... in case it be said that we have only described the facts in relation to a theory of them and as exemplifications of it and have subordinated description to analysis, we reply that this was our intention.²

Evans-Pritchard.

With this general background provided, I can now return to my practical problems and how I tried to solve them.

To get a good understanding of Sinhalese Buddhism I decided I should follow the traditional method of anthropologists: to live in a village and talk to villagers as much as possible in their own language. The first problem that then arose was which village to choose. On this point many people were helpful to me, but none more so than my friend and teacher Ananath Obeyesekere. His article "The Great Tradition and the Little in the Perspective of Sinhalese Buddhism"³ had filled me with admiration and stimulated my interest in this field. Before setting out for Ceylon I was lucky enough, through the intermediacy of Professor E.F.C. Ludowyk, to meet Dr. Obeyesekere in England. We decided that Buddhist traditions would

1. The figures for the main religions in 1891 were: 1,877,043 Buddhists; 723,853 Hindus; 302,127 Christians; 211,995 Muslims. This shows no great change in proportion, but notice how the population has exploded over the last 75 years. According to the same census there were 9598 monks; of whom about half belonged to the Siyam Nikaya. The preponderance of the Siyam Nikaya to-day is even more pronounced.

2. E.E. Evans-Pritchard, The Nuer, O.U.P., Oxford 1940, p. 261.

3. J.A.S. vol. XXII no. 2, 1963, pp. 139-153.

best be studied in the Kandyan area, which had had the shortest period of European rule and suffered the least social disintegration through culture clash; that for similar reasons I should not be in or too near a large town; that I should study in a village with a monastery of the Siyam Nikāya, both because this sect predominates and is therefore more typical, and because it has good claim to be the bearer of the direct tradition (see the previous section). Dr. Obeyesekere further impressed on me that I should not choose a place too remote: such a place would again be quite untypical by reason of its very inaccessibility; he had himself worked in an area so remote that the first Buddhist temple in the village had been founded within living memory; moreover, unnecessary physical hardship would only hinder research, and we might find it convenient to be within a couple of hours' reach of the amenities of Kandy; it would also be an advantage to be within reach of the University of Ceylon at Pēraḍeniya, only 4 miles from Kandy. We therefore determined that I should look for a village between five and fifteen miles out of Kandy, with a Siyam Nikāya monastery at least fifty years old, inhabited by monks without western education. (This last requirement is very easy to fulfil: it was formulated merely to guard against the exceptional.)

When my wife and I reached Kandy the person who helped me as much in practice as Gananath did in theory was Dr. Das Vithanage. Through a friend of his I got from Malwatte monastery a list of six villages which seemed to answer my basic requirements; then Das nobly devoted several afternoons to driving us round to see them and explaining our mission to the local people. His geographical expertise was invaluable: he dissuaded us from one village which had seemed promising by pointing out that in December so much rain would fall there that the steep mud paths to the outside world of roads and buses might become impassable for all but the very nimble.

(I am not nimble.) It was entirely through Das and his family that we were able to find and to choose "our" village, which I shall call Mīgala.

Mīgala is about twelve miles by winding road from Kandy, quite near a small market town which lies on the road. It contains an eighteenth-century monastery of the Siyam Nikāya, but there is evidence that monks lived in the area even before the time of Christ. Whether they have done so ever since it is impossible to tell. When we arrived the monastery housed three monks and three novices, but much of the time the youngest monk was away at university and the novices at school. The temple served also the village which lay adjacent to Mīgala further away from the main road. The official administrative unit of Mīgala sprawled across the main road, and therefore its population of some 800 households included many families of Muslims (Ceylon Moors, Tamil-speaking), Tamils ("Indians", speaking a different dialect of Tamil), and low-country Sinhalese, who lived near the road where they mainly had shops. Within what one might call the village proper, away from the road and near the temple, the only speakers of Tamil as a first language were a few squatters who played no part in communal life. There were however several Sinhalese immigrants from other parts of the country, and a large family of Malay Muslims, who though they spoke Malay at home were equally fluent in Sinhalese, and were accepted as part of the community - the children were regular visitors to the temple; and well liked by the monks. This "village proper" did not contain very much paddy land; most of those villagers who owned or share-cropped paddy land did so on the other side of the main road, which had obviously cut through the original village estate.

The next problem was to find somewhere to live, which was not quite as easy, as most of Ceylon suffers from an acute housing shortage. Das Vithanage again came to our rescue by knowing the superintendant of an

estate near the village, who was most kind and arranged to accomo^mdate us in an empty bungalow. This proved an invaluable base for operations. I started to make daily visits to the village, and soon had a stroke of luck: at the village temple I met a schoolmaster who spoke English and said he lived near a house very close to the temple, which had just been vacated. He arranged with the landlord for us to move in, loaned us some of his furniture, and for the next ten months became my adviser, guide, occasional interpreter and lifelong friend. The estate cottage we were able to keep as a storehouse for our books and excess luggage, and as an occasional retreat when we wanted to be free from interruption; we usually went there for two days in the week, though when visitors came we were there for longer periods; for the last month, when my wife had returned home, I moved down into the village altogether. In one of our days on the estate we usually went to Kandy, my wife for shopping and I on to the University, where I attended Dr. Obeyesekere's lectures. Most of what I know or understand of Sinhalese society in general and religion in particular I owe to him, so that it is no longer possible to acknowledge each individual debt; this declaration must stand for the entire thesis.

The problem of rapidly learning the Sinhalese language was a hard one. For our first six weeks in Kandy, before we had found a village, we received invaluable daily instruction from Mr. B.L. Fernando of St. Anthony's College, Katugastota; but this was too far from Mīgala for us to continue with the lessons. Our difficulties were then acute, especially because we could not get hold of a Sinhalese-English dictionary. Had it not been for the linguistic skill of our schoolmaster friend, to whom we would take our problems when he came home in the evening, our progress would have been slow indeed, though some of the villagers were most helpful and patient in their efforts to teach us to speak. The only Sinhalese-English dictionary

in existence which has half the words we needed is Carter's, published in 1924;¹ for several months we could not get a copy, till Dr. Obeyesekere discovered our trouble and lent us his. In the meanwhile I went for daily lessons to the temple, where the young monk home from university read with me booklets published for use in Buddhist Sunday schools. This was hard going, as his English was inadequate for explanation, but here my Sanskrit was of some use and I usually was able to grasp the meaning at last. This exercise was very good for my religious vocabulary (bana bhāsāva). With the acquisition of Carter and the passage of time my Sinhalese became sufficiently fluent, after about seven months spent in the village (with a little time off for seeing the rest of Ceylon), for me to conduct interviews.

In asking people their opinions I was always very much aware of two dangers. The more obvious one is that people will tell you what they think you like to hear. The Sinhalese are deeply courteous, and do not consider it a virtue to tell unpleasant truths. The answer to any leading question is therefore likely to be "Ov" ("Yes"). This word, ov, which we translate "yes", in effect has rather the meaning, "I have heard"; it must not be taken as an answer to a complex or unusual question without further probing and corroboration. The less obvious danger is to force people to give an answer to something they would otherwise never think about. It is not that the question may be inappropriate, or phrased in the wrong terms; what I have in mind is rather that a question may un-naturally enlarge a man's cognitive position by forcing upon him a new thought. Such a question would be, "What god or sort of god would you like to be reborn as?"; for although most villagers say they want to be

1. Charles Carter, A Sinhalese-English Dictionary, Wesleyan Mission Press, Colombo, 1924.

reborn as gods, they have never thought about it more specifically. If the man X replies, "As Kataragama", this is certainly of interest, but it would be misleading to record "X wants to be reborn as Kataragama", unless the question - and indeed the whole assessment of the situation - were recorded too. This difficulty is to some extent unavoidable, as no field-worker can sit around for ever waiting for people to bring up subjects spontaneously and display the contents of their minds before him unasked; but one must exercise caution. Sitting around would be ideal; but it is too slow in practice. I had to conduct interviews.

I did however feel that I should sit around for a time till I got some idea of what would be the right questions to ask about religion. After seven months I drew up a list of questions I thought I could profitably ask of monks, and these became the backbone of my set interviews. I added some questions as I went along, as I hit on interesting points of controversy; other questions I came to spend very little time on - though for the sake of uniformity I did not entirely drop them - as I perceived that the answers were standardized. Why did I choose to interview monks? Firstly, because this was considered a much more natural activity than to interview laymen, who would have wondered what I was up to; monks were not surprised that someone should want to talk to them about religion, and indeed some of them were quite flattered that an Englishman should have come so far to do so. Connected with this is the more important and rather obvious second reason: monks have many more opinions on religious topics than do most laymen. The list of religious questions I could have asked a layman which he might himself have asked, leaving aside those to which answers would be completely standardized, would be very short. Thirdly, monks are a clearly definable class, so that if I interviewed all or nearly all the monks in a certain area my study would be exhaustive in

at least one respect, and even if I failed in my wider aims I would have done one thing thoroughly. Finally, interviewing the monks gave me a pretext not merely for travelling round the area in general, but in particular for visiting all the temples and thus making without too much extra effort a survey of local religious art and iconography. It was plainly convenient to interview monks in an area roughly centred on Mīgala; I made it my goal to interview all the monks in the same parliamentary constituency, as this seemed to be about the number I would have time for. In the event I nearly succeeded in my aims but I was extremely hard put to it, because there turned out to be many more monasteries in the area than the map recorded. But even for this limited aim I should ideally have had much more time, because sometimes monks were out when I called, or not well, or something cut short the interview. Almost all the major gaps in my interview material are due to mishaps of this kind. I managed to visit every monastery with a resident incumbent, but not to interview every monk. I was also in some difficulty where there was more than one monk in a monastery, as it was virtually impossible to interview them separately. Plainly I could not ask a monk, once his colleague had expounded a point of doctrine, whether he agreed; and even my biographical questions, which I sometimes felt were a trifle impertinent, sounded to me too pressing if asked of more than one person present. My usual solution, imposed by circumstances, was to interview the incumbent, (except in cases where he was absent or senile, when a junior monk spoke instead), and to slip in questions about the other monks, if any, who were usually the incumbent's disciples and in whom therefore he took a paternal pride; concerning the novices almost all my material came via the teacher, for only in a very few cases did I get a chance to interview a novice direct, and even then they tended to be shy and embarrassed.

I have appended the results of these interviews to this thesis as Appendix One. While interviewing I did not fire off the questions one after another in an invariable order, but tried to make the conversation flow as naturally as possible. I have however written up the interviews in a fairly standardized format so that they can be surveyed and compared more easily. I should perhaps stress that the interviews were conducted quite without interpreters (though during three of them bilingual friends were present). The statements recorded are those of the monks themselves; in the few cases where they are those of others present this fact is noted. Thus when I have recorded that a certain number of people came to the temple on a certain holy day this is the monk's statement, unless otherwise noted, and I make no claim that this is true or false.

At first it seemed to me that my thesis should consist of this interview material, and the descriptive notes which go with it. However, they would be rather meaningless to readers of a cultural and intellectual background so far from that of a Kandyan monk unless I explained the assumptions on which the questions and answers rest. To do this would require a large part of the thesis as it now stands (especially chapters 2 and 4). Moreover, the work would become unduly descriptive, with too little connection to the problem situation of western academics. Accordingly I have framed my thesis with regard chiefly to the intellectual issues involved, and have drawn on the interviews wherever relevant, without exhausting the material they contain. In particular I have neglected certain areas which they cover, such as politics, which are separable from my main concerns and the inclusion of which would make this thesis unduly long.

For the record: I was in Ceylon from early August 1964 to late August 1965, on a Treasury Studentship financed by the British taxpayer. I lived in the village for ten and a half months, of which I was away for

about one and a half months on visits to other parts of Ceylon; odd days I also spent on the nearby estate. Throughout my stay I visited Buddhist occasions and festivals in the area, and on one occasion accompanied the villagers on a pilgrimage. My wife was with me for almost the whole period and without her help and her cooking most of what I did would have been impossible.

The last 1500 years. But Indian in 1500 years old, in the 1500 years, and that is I mean by articles?

I mentioned in the introduction that Buddhist came to Ceylon in the days of the Indian emperor Ashoka, about 250 B.C. This was the Theravada Buddhism. The accounts of Theravada Buddhism given there, which is well substantiated in the time of the Buddha himself, and the first part of the written nearly a thousand years after the Buddha's death, are the accounts of those traditions for the early period, especially where traditions were in Ceylon, is controversial. The later part concerning the history of the growth of the religion, and the development of Theravada Buddhism, that they show agreement with Buddhist scriptures, and that they show the history of the development of the Theravada tradition which has been well substantiated in the early part of the Buddha's life, and the later part of the development of the religion, it is certain that in India's early history had occurred, that there were different groups and different groups which were very different, and that they were very different in their own way of life, and that they were very different in their own way of life, and that they were very different in their own way of life.

1. The Buddha's teachings (the Dharma) were the foundation of the religion in Ceylon, and they were the basis of the development of the religion in Ceylon.
2. The Buddha's teachings (the Dharma) were the foundation of the religion in Ceylon, and they were the basis of the development of the religion in Ceylon.

CHAPTER 1

SINHALESE BUDDHISM - ORTHODOX OR SYNCRETISTIC?

Let me at the outset state a general conclusion. I found the Buddhism which I observed in Kandyan villages surprisingly orthodox. Religious doctrines and practices seem to have changed very little over the last 1500 years. But Buddhism is 2500 years old, so why do I say 1500 years, and what do I mean by orthodoxy?

I mentioned in the introduction that Buddhism came to Ceylon in the days of the Indian emperor Asoka, about 243 B.C.¹ This was Theravāda Buddhism. The contents of Theravāda Buddhist oral traditions go back uninterrupted to the time of the Buddha himself, but we only have accounts written nearly a thousand years after the Buddha's death,² so the accuracy of these traditions for the early period, especially before Buddhism came to Ceylon, is controversial. To enter this controversy lies outside my present scope, and so does the adjudication of Theravādin claims that they alone represent true Buddhist orthodoxy, and that other sects are heretics. But whatever we make of the Theravādin accounts which tell how three Buddhist councils within a couple of centuries of the Buddha's death established the scriptural canon and expelled heretics, it is certain that in Asoka's day schisms had occurred, that there were different sects and different (though perhaps only very slightly different) scriptures, and that from some of these sects was to grow Mahāyāna Buddhism, which became so influential in India, Tibet and the Far East.

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1. Malalasekera's arguments (op. cit. pp. 17-18) for the existence of Buddhism in Ceylon before this time repose much trust in the earliest part of the chronicles and rest on dubious inferences.
 2. Excepting the Cullavagga passage mentioned below; tradition may be right in claiming that this was written down in the first century B.C.

Theravādin orthodoxy rests on the texts of the Pali Canon; it is so defined by Theravāda Buddhists themselves, in so far as they are sophisticated enough to pose the question. More precisely, we may add, it rests on the Pali Canon as interpreted by the ancient commentaries, an interpretation which is accepted without question in Ceylon and with only very minor disagreement by most western scholars. At first glance scriptural authority thus seem to be two-tier; but this picture is rather oversimplified, because the Canon itself contains ancient commentaries, and its chronology is largely problematic. The Canon is called in Pali the Tipitaka, because it consists of three Pitakas ('baskets'): the Vinaya Pitaka (monastic rules), Sutta Pitaka (sermons consisting in turn of five Nikāyas,¹ of which the first four contain the sermons and the last miscellaneous texts, many of them in verse), and Abhidhamma Pitaka (systematic philosophy). Buddhists believe a passage at the end of the Vinaya Pitaka (Cullavagga 11 & 12) which says that two councils of monks were held, one just after the Buddha's death and one a hundred years later, and that at the first council were composed the Vinaya and Sutta Pitakas, in their final form.² The passage, being a part of the Vinaya Pitaka, contradicts its own literal accuracy by mentioning the second council. Most other texts in these two Pitakas claim to be, and therefore according to Buddhist tradition are, the very words of the Buddha; but even in the four Nikāyas,

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1. This use of the word "Nikāya" has nothing to do with the one mentioned in the introduction.
 2. The considerable body of modern scholarship concerning these councils has been summarized and probably consummated by André Bareau, Les Premiers Conciles Bouddhiques, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1955. On the general history of early Buddhist literature E. Frauwallner, The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature, ISMEO, Rome, 1956, is now indispensable. Bareau decides that the first council was probably not a historical event, though the second was, and Frauwallner's independent conclusions are in harmony. The most comprehensive and up-to-date work on early Buddhist history is Etienne Lamotte, Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien, Bibliothèque du Musée vol. 43, Louvain 1958.

the collection of sermons setting out the Buddha's teachings, there are some sermons attributed not to Buddha but to disciples. Some of these are said to have been delivered in the Buddha's lifetime; but a few explicitly state that the Buddha is dead, or refer to events after his death.¹ Part of the Abhidhamma Pitaka is said by Theravādin tradition to have been compiled at the Third Council, held c. 247 B.C. under the auspices of Asoka, and whether or not such a council took place scholars agree with this relative chronology, and go further by assigning to the whole Abhidhamma a date when Buddhism was already organized and scholastic. Without discussing the dates of the miscellaneous texts (Khuddaka Nikāya) of the Sutta Pitaka, of which scholars consider some as likely to be the Buddha's words as anything, some to be certainly much later, and some to be based perhaps even on pre-Buddhist material, we have found a measure of agreement between religious and scholarly opinion: the Pali Canon as we have it was not all compiled at one time. Therefore, we may add, it cannot reflect the state of the Buddhist religion at one given moment; nor indeed is it likely that so large and heterogeneous a body of material should be entirely free from contradictions.

Whatever its origins,² the Pali Canon must have existed more or less as we have it now in the time of Asoka, when Mahinda brought it over to

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1. The contents of the 34 sermons (or, better, discourses), of the Dīgha Nikāya and the 152 sermons of the Majjhima Nikāya are listed in E.J. Thomas, The Life of the Buddha as Legend and History, Routledge, London, 1927, pp. 257-271, where an asterisk denotes a sermon attributed to a disciple. Examples of sermons delivered after the Buddha's death are the Subhāsutta (DN sutta 10) and the Madhura Sutta (MN sutta 84). ^{In the} Anguttara Nikāya (III.57) is a story about King Munda of Magadha, who according to the Mahāvamsa (IV.2) was fifth in a line after the Buddha's contemporary, King Bimbisāra.
 2. Frauwallner has shown (op. cit.) that a large part of the Vinaya Pitaka, including a biography of the Buddha on which all subsequent biographies are based, was composed about 110 years after the Buddha's death, and presupposes a good deal of earlier material. The precision of his deductions, which place some Buddhist scriptures nearer to the events they purport to describe than can securely be done for the Christian gospels, is unlikely soon to be improved upon.

Ceylon. An Asokan inscription lists seven texts, five of which we can identify in the Canon we know, though mostly under different titles, which suggests that the other two also may be in our Canon. Among the sculptures at Bharhut and Sanchi (2nd century B.C.) are pictures of stories in the Canon. These are far the oldest records of the Canon physically to survive: the Pali Canon was not even written down till the first century B.C., and of course no manuscript from that era exists.

That Mahinda and his colleagues brought the Pali Canon (in their heads) to Ceylon may be a slight oversimplification, but cannot be far from the truth. We owe the story to the great commentator Buddhaghosa, who wrote in the early fifth century A.D. Buddhaghosa adds that they brought commentaries in Pali, which Mahinda translated or recomposed in Sinhalese. If Pali originals of the Sinhalese commentaries ever existed, they had been lost before Buddhaghosa's time. The Mahāvamsa (XXXVII) says that Buddhaghosa came from north India to the Mahāvihāra in Anurādhapura because in India the commentaries (atthakathā) had been lost; his teacher told him that the Sinhalese commentaries were the genuine work of Mahinda, and he should translate them into Pali. His first work in Ceylon was the Visuddhimagga¹ (The Path of Purity), an exhaustive summary in Pali of Buddhist doctrine, still the best work of its kind.² He then wrote commentaries in Pali on most works in the Canon.³ The Sinhalese

1. The best edition is that in the Harvard Oriental Series, edited by H.C. Warren and D. Kosambi (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1950).

2. "There is no other compendium of Buddhism known at all like it, in consistency and completeness; and in the absence of any other such, it is just to assume that it was first in Buddhaghosa's mind that the Buddha system obtained its final shape. He identified himself with the Anuradhapura school of Buddhism, became its chief light, and gave to its traditions the form which they have ever since retained." Copleston, op. cit., pp. 352-3.

3. On the Vinaya Pitaka as a whole and also on the Pātimokkha, which is part of it; on the four Nikāyas (Ēiḡha, Majjhima, Anguttara, Samyutta), the Suttanipata, Khuddaka-pāṭha and Dhammapada (though the authorship of these last three commentaries is disputed) of the Suttapitaka; on the whole of the Adhidhamma Pitaka.

books on which these commentaries are based have perished, because he superseded them. Though he may at first have intended only to translate them he in fact edited and systematized them. He quotes nearly every earlier work of Pali literature known to have existed. His interpretations are mutually consistent. To this day Buddhaghosa's Buddhism is in effect the unitary standard of doctrinal orthodoxy for all Theravāda Buddhists, whether or not they are educated enough to be aware of the problem.

The authors of the Pali commentaries on the parts of the Canon which Buddhaghosa did not treat do not conflict with him, so the commentarial stand-point is unified and homogeneous. We know very little about these other authors, but they probably were contemporaries of Buddhaghosa or lived slightly later. The two more important ones are Buddhadatta¹ and Dhammapāla.² Tradition has it that Buddhadatta was born in the Cola kingdom but became a monk at the Mahāvihāra; there is an unlikely story that he was on a ship going back to India when he met Buddhaghosa on his way out. Dhammapāla wrote in S. India and was probably a Tamil too; "he states . . . that he follows the traditional interpretation of texts as handed down in the Maha-Vihara"; and "it is quite likely that he had the advantage of studying the Tamil commentaries (of which we know that at least two existed) as well".³ A further anonymous author wrote the Pali version of the Jātaka commentary which has come down to us; the Jātakas are stories of the 550 previous births of the Buddha; their Pali verses are canonical, but the prose parts, which carry the story forward so that without them the verses are mostly unintelligible, rank as commentary and for a while

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1. Author of a commentary on the Buddhavamsa and works on the Vinaya and Abhidhamma.
 2. Author of a commentary on the Thera- and Therī-gāthā, Udāna, Vimānavatthu, Peta-vatthu, Itivuttaka, and Cariya-piṭaka; also of sub-commentaries on Buddhaghosa.
 3. Malalasekera, op. cit., p. 113.

existed only in Sinhalese, like the other commentaries.¹ The author says that he follows the traditions of the Mahāvihāra at Anurādhapura. The other two authors² of commentaries whose names are known also lived at Anurādhapura and wrote in the same tradition.³

Though the Pali Canon is strictly the only sacred work and the supreme authority, there is another book which though neither Canon nor commentary has in Ceylon received the kind of fame and respect usually reserved for sacred books. This is the Mahāvamsa, the Pali verse chronicle of Ceylon, mentioned in the introduction. The first part of it was written in the late fifth century by a monk called Mahānāma who lived in a monastery at Anurādhapura belonging to the Mahāvihāra. Like the commentaries it was based on much Sinhalese written material, which has long since disappeared. It was based also on another similar Pali chronicle, the Dīpavamsa, which was written also in Anurādhapura, perhaps by nuns,⁴ about a century earlier, which makes it the oldest work written in Ceylon to have survived. But the Mahāvamsa follows it so closely, quoting long passages verbatim, and at the same time is so superior, that the Dīpavamsa is comparatively neglected. Both chronicles are - luckily for us - predominantly histories of the Buddha's teaching (sāsana), and focus throughout on episodes of religious interest, beginning with mythical accounts of the Buddha's visits

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1. The retranslation of the Jātaka stories into Sinhalese in the early fourteenth century, a landmark in Sinhalese literary history, is mentioned in the Introduction, p. 42.
 2. Mahānāma, who commented on the Pāṭisambhidāmagga, and Upasena or Upatissa, who commented on the Niddesa.
 3. The commentaries and their authors are most conveniently listed by Adikaram on pp. 1-2 of his Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon, (2nd. ed. Gunasena, Colombo 1953). This learned work is entirely based on the commentaries, and contains much information not elsewhere available in a European language.
 4. This interesting conjecture is that of Hugh Nevill, made in the introduction to his catalogue of his Manuscript collection, now in the British Museum. It is reported by Malalasekera, op. cit., pp. 136-7.

to Ceylon. The earliest date for which the Mahāvamsa is authoritative may thus be fixed by the most sceptical at the fourth century A.D., by the sanguine at the third century B.C. (Mahinda's mission to Ceylon), and by the pious during the lifetime of the Buddha himself. The chronicles are not primarily expositions of doctrine (~~though~~ ^{albeit} each chapter ends with ~~a pious verse reflecting expositions of doctrine (though each chapter ends with a pious verse reflecting on the vanity of worldly pomp or some such orthodox sentiment)~~; and though they afford fascinating material for the history of Buddhist ideas, they plainly do not form a touchstone of doctrinal orthodoxy as I have defined it; but they give accounts of religious practices and especially festivals which are rather outside the scope of the Canonical literature. So though we may not be able to call a practice Canonically orthodox, because the Canon does not mention it, we may often say that it stands in an orthodox tradition if it occurs in the Mahāvamsa. And it cannot fail to strike a modern observer that many festivals described in the ancient Mahāvamsa, as well as in its continuations, differ little, except in scale, from festivals in Kandyan villages to-day. This then is what I meant when I said at the beginning of the chapter that I found the Buddhism which I observed orthodox: that the doctrines of the villagers would have been approved by Buddhaghosa and that most of their religious practices would have been familiar to him and his contemporaries. But I also said that I found this orthodoxy surprising. Why so? I suppose it is unusual for the religion of a society to change so little over 1500 years; certainly it is unusual for societies of which we have the records. But my surprise was caused rather by the frequency with which I had been told, by books and by people, that Sinhalese village Buddhism was corrupt. "Corrupt" was the word generally used by laymen; in academic circles this word sounds too pejorative to be respectable, and

is replaced by "syncretistic", or some periphrasis. One example, from a noted authority: Sir Charles Eliot wrote, "At present there may be said to be three religions in Ceylon; local animism, Hinduism and Buddhism are all inextricably mixed together."¹ Let me examine this belief that village Buddhism is corrupt, and explain why I think it is mistaken.

Sinhalese villagers have been judged corrupt Buddhists because they say and do things which the judges think are incompatible with what is said in the Pali Canon. In particular, most Sinhalese believe gods and demons to exist and make offerings to them under various circumstances. (The relevant beliefs are described in chapter 4). The judgment that this is corrupt Buddhism is based on a misunderstanding which has arisen because the original people to make it were westerners, raised in a Christian culture, whose background made them think of religion as god-centred. The problem of God is central to the Semitic, the monotheistic religions: it is essential that there is only one God, and all other gods are false gods, which means that they do not exist. It is true, though almost ludicrously inadequate, to say that Christians, Jews and Muslims consider God the most important thing in the universe. Buddhists with whom I talked, however, will admit the existence of the Christian God with perfect indifference,² just as they would no doubt admit the existence of any other god proposed

1. Hinduism and Buddhism, vol. III, Edward Arnold, London, 1921, p. 42. To multiply instances is unnecessary, but it is noteworthy that this view was held even by the foremost scholar of Sinhalese culture. Geiger, in 'Culture of Ceylon in Mediaeval Times, following the arrangement of the indices at the end of the second volume of his translation of the Cūlavamsa, divided his section on religion into three: I Popular Religion; II Hinduism; III Buddhism. (All refer to the religion of Buddhists.) It would of course be possible to set up criteria, probably of a historical nature, for such a division; but Geiger offered no clear criteria, and his assignment of a belief to one or the other category seems largely arbitrary, except that beliefs about supernaturals are virtually confined to the first two categories. Even "particularly Buddhist deities" (p. 178, para. 165) appear under Hinduism!

2. They will not of course accept all the claims made on his behalf.

to them; gods are not a problem in Buddhism. Some Buddhists recognize this explicitly: one old monk said to me, "Gods are nothing to do with religion." Gods are powerful beings to be supplicated for worldly goods; Buddhism, as we shall see in the next chapter, is concerned with ethics, future lives, and release from worldly existence. An ordinary Buddhist layman is no more concerned to accept or deny the existence of some new supernatural being than a western layman is concerned to accept or deny the existence of some newly discovered type of nuclear particle or natural force. Both are just facts of life.

A Buddhist who acknowledges gods can thus be cleared of the charge of doctrinal incorrectitude. But of course some gods are much more important to him than others. These gods figure in what any casual western observer would call his religion; they come under any western academic definition of religion, including Spiro's "... interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings", which I discussed in the Introduction. I explained there that I prefer the conventionalist use of terminology, to call something a religion if it is so called by its own practitioners. But I would also like to deny that the Sinhalese Buddhist religion, in any sense of the term, is syncretistic. I take it that we talk of cultural syncretism when elements from different cultures combine or fuse to produce a composite which is not normal or not acceptable in either culture. There is of course no dividing line between what is syncretism and what is not, because syncretism has no "essence"; but it seems to make sense to say that the culture of an Englishman who goes to dinner in an Indian restaurant is not thereby syncretistic, whereas the culture of an Englishman who preserves some English habits but refuses cutlery and eats all his food with his right hand is: he has broken the unwritten rules of his original culture, without entirely adopting a new one (a feat which is rarely possible).

Syncretism is a concept easier to apply with clarity to a system of ideas like Buddhist doctrine, both because there the rules are mostly written and explicit, and because strict logical incompatibility can occur between ideas but not between behaviour patterns.

It is claimed that Sinhalese religion is syncretistic when Buddhists acknowledge "Hindu gods", by which is meant gods of whom they have learnt from Hindus. (This theory is implicit in an article by E.R. Leach - and in its very title: "Pulleyar and the Lord Buddha: an aspect of religious syncretism in Ceylon".¹) Let us leave aside the question of whether these gods are part of Sinhalese Buddhist religion, for we can at least agree that they are part of Sinhalese Buddhist culture. I still deny that the presence of Hindu gods in Sinhalese Buddhist culture is a sign of cultural syncretism. Buddhism has always acknowledged Hindu gods. This is not surprising because the Buddha, as Indians like to point out, was a Hindu, just as Christ was a Jew. (This does not mean that it makes much sense to think of Buddhism as a kind of Hinduism; the analogy with Christianity holds.) However much speculation may be devoted to dividing the Pali Canon into layers of authenticity, no rationalist western scholar has ever reached a bedrock stratum of "primitive Buddhism" in which no gods and demons play a part. This statement will be amplified in chapter 4; suffice it here to say that supernatural beings were as much a part of the Buddha's universe as they are of a Buddhist villager's universe to-day.²

As Sinhalese Buddhism (like Buddhism in ancient India) has throughout its existence been geographically adjacent or even intertwined with Hinduism it is natural that theological (in the strict sense) developments accepted by the Hindus, and in particular by Tamil Hindus, have been accepted by

1. Psychoanalysis and the Psychoanalytic Review Vol. 49, no. 2, pp. 80-102.

2. The evidence is collected by J. Masson, op. cit.

Buddhists also. Over the ages the personnel of the Sinhalese pantheon has somewhat changed; contact with Tamils has brought the relative newcomers Kataragama and Pattinī into prominence, but some old-timers like Vishnu, whom the Buddha is believed to have made the guardian of Buddhism in Ceylon,¹ are still powerful. What applies to these "Hindu" gods applies equally to the lesser beings, the demons etc. of Eliot's "animism". In contrast the structure of the pantheon, which is brilliantly described in Obeyesekere's article, has changed little; the kinds of change which have occurred are suggested in the introduction. But the status of the whole pantheon in its relation to the Buddhist religion has changed not at all. The traditional Sinhalese Buddhist framework for interpreting reality has remained unaltered.

It will be seen that my argument against the alleged syncretism of Sinhalese Buddhism has two levels. On the lower level I am claiming that the presence of "Hindu" or "animist" supernaturals in the Buddhist's universe is not a novel or syncretistic feature, but has always been the case. This is a historical and textual argument. Argument on this level should be sufficient to refute the charge; but the argument on the higher level is theoretically more interesting. I mentioned that Buddhist villagers will acknowledge the existence of the Christian God. I have never known a Buddhist actually to pray to this God for health, wealth, or other benefits in their life; but if one did so I should still not consider his religion syncretistic; because such a prayer would still be consonant with Buddhist doctrine. This higher-level argument, the point I especially

1. Mahavamsa VII, 5. The text refers to Uppalavanna (he whose colour is like a blue lotus'). Whether this god has always been the same as Vishnu is not relevant here. The text actually says that the Buddha prophesied that his teaching would take root in Ceylon and asked Sakka to guard the country, whereupon Sakka entrusted it to Uppalavanna.

wish to make, is doctrinal and logical. So long as Buddhists continue to treat gods as a kind of supermen, able to grant favours to suppliants, but still ultimately of limited life and powers and subject to moral law, their beliefs are not syncretistic. Belief in gods like this is not logically (or otherwise) incompatible with Buddhist doctrine. Who the gods are is irrelevant to this point. That Sinhalese Buddhists have adopted gods from Hindus rather than from Christians is an accident of historical contiguity. Despite invasions and wars, relations with Tamil Hindus have been more intimate than with the European Christians. The period of friendliest contact with Europeans was probably the late nineteenth century, and under these circumstances Christianity began to influence Buddhism to the point of genuine religious syncretism. Copleston reports that during Buddhist festivals in Colombo walls would exhibit the slogan, "God bless our Lord Buddha".¹ This is syncretism, because it shatters the Buddhist framework. But I saw no such slogans; they are now only part of history.

The Buddha's teaching was limited to what he thought conducive to enlightenment. Most people have broader interests, so Buddhists are almost bound to have other beliefs besides those of Buddhist doctrine. To sum this up in a word, Buddhism in real life is accretive.

Evidently I could not be further from agreeing with an observer like Paul Wirz, who has written of Ceylon,² "In reality, it is the same here as in other Buddhist countries; only very few comprehend the true Buddhist dogma in its real profoundness; the rest are Buddhists in name only, among them also a great part of those who wear the yellow gown ... They are too deeply rooted in their old conceptions and customs ... " In another recent

1. Op. cit., p. 478.

2. Exorcism and the Art of Healing in Ceylon, Brill, Leyden, 1954, p. 236.

book which deals with the subject of contemporary Sinhalese religion, the American sociologist Professor Bryce Ryan says that, "Pure Buddhism is a philosopher's abstraction."¹ While I have tried to show in my Introduction that the concept of pure Buddhism can be meaningful, and in this chapter what I mean by it, it is doubtless to passages such as the above that Professor Ryan is referring.² The reader may be wondering what "the true Buddhist dogma" is which Dr. Wirz comprehends "in its real profoundness" while it eludes so many Buddhist monks. Clearly I cannot give a definitive answer to this, but I think I can indicate what Dr. Wirz has in mind, and the matter is worth a digression because Dr. Wirz's remarks are typical of a view of traditional Buddhism by no means confined to scholars and Europeans, but common also to English-educated Sinhalese.

Buddhism was discovered for the West mainly by British missionaries and Civil servants in Ceylon in the nineteenth century. George Turnour,

Schopenhauer
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1. Sinhalese Village, Univ. of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida, 1958, p. 90.
 2. I am sympathetic to the tenor of Ryan's remarks on Buddhism, and often agree with their substance, but elsewhere I feel that he over-simplifies rather drastically. He writes (op. cit., p. 90), "... non-Buddhist supernaturalism in the form of planetary influences, wood sprites, sorcery and ghosts is ubiquitous. To some extent Lord Buddha has been integrated with these complex bodies of supernaturalism. To a greater extent the supernaturalism stands as distinct systems of thought superficially rationalized to the agnostic, rational, and metaphysical concepts of pure Theravāda." Reference to Obeyesekere's article may suggest that some of the superficiality belongs to the author, not to the villagers and their ideology. Lower on the same page Ryan writes: "Folk supernaturalism does not have its roots in Buddhism, nor is it considered "Buddhism". It is a world of power, elements of which may well antedate the Buddha Himself but have not been incorporated in His teachings." The reader of my foregoing argument will see that I heartily agree with all this, provided that the first half of the first sentence is to be taken on the doctrinal, not on the historical level. I fear however that the "roots" do refer to history, in which case the statement is false, because the "folk supernaturalism" has always been associated with Buddhism, i.e. believed in by Buddhists. This failure to distinguish sharply between the historical (what has been the case) and the doctrinal (what the books say) levels of religion lends a certain imprecision to even such apparently simple remarks as the one quoted in the text. That is perhaps inevitable when religions are studied with no historical perspective.

a civil servant, pioneered the study of Ceylon history when he discovered, edited and translated the Mahāvamsa, the first important Pali text to be published.¹ But it was the missionaries who took more interest in Buddhism, in order to know their enemy better. In particular the works of a Methodist minister, the Rev. Robert Spence Hardy,² were important sources for western knowledge of Buddhism, and were excerpted by encyclopaedias of religion.³ The missionaries decided, with some justice given their own frame of reference, that Buddhism was an "atheist creed",⁴ since they were told that the Buddha was not a god. This information was seized on by western rationalists, atheists and agnostics, who were delighted to hear of a religion which was atheistic, and even claimed to be rational; Buddhism as they understood it seemed an ideal ally in the fight against Christianity. Indeed, Bishop Copleston, Bishop of Colombo, writing in 1892, saw in Buddhism's "alliance with Western scepticism" one of its few hopes for survival!⁵

In the meanwhile two Ceylon civil servants moved into the forefront of Buddhist and Pali studies. R.C. Childers began to publish Pali texts in 1869, and from 1872-5 compiled the first western Pali dictionary. T.W. Rhys Davids, probably the most influential Pali scholar of modern times, founded the Pali Text Society for the publication of Pali books in 1881;

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1. Turnour entered the Ceylon Civil Service in 1818, and was in it till his early death in 1843. He published his edition of the Mahāvamsa in 1836 and identified the King Piyadasi of the Asokan inscriptions, which had just been deciphered by James Prinsep, as Asoka.
 2. His two most important books were Eastern Monachism, 1850, and A Manual of Buddhism, 1853, both published in London by Partridge and Oakey. The latter consists mainly of translated Buddhist texts.
 3. E. G. James Gardner, The Faiths of the World, Fullerton, Edinburgh, 1858, who says (p. 42), "The Buddhist system is essentially atheistical".
 4. The words used for instance by Hardy in his introduction to The Legends and Theories of the Buddhists, Williams and Norgate, London, 1866.
 5. Op. cit., p. 426.

his book Buddhism, first published in 1877¹ and many times reprinted, may be said to mark the close of the pioneer period of Buddhist studies. Rhys Davids was an excellent scholar, but he naturally stressed the rationalist elements in Buddhism, because they formed the most striking contrast both to Christian, and, in Buddhist eyes, to other Indian traditions. I suspect that he also found them the most sympathetic. Buddhism became familiar to the educated public when in 1879 Sir Edwin Arnold published The Light of Asia;² this long poem on the Buddha, while presenting Buddhism in the way usual at the time, suggested an analogy between the Buddha and Christ which doubtless contributed to its popularity.

In their campaign against Christianity English secularists and free-thinkers soon found some curious allies, less sympathetic but more militant than the Buddhists of Ceylon. The president of the National Secular Society, Charles Bradlaugh, sponsored and gave lectures on comparative religion to disprove Christianity's claims to uniqueness. In 1874 Mrs. Annie Besant heard him lecture on similarities between the stories about Krishna and about Christ. She joined the N.S.S., and soon became Bradlaugh's chief assistant and companion, and co-editor of the National Reformer, the N.S.S. newspaper. In 1882 Mrs. Besant devoted considerable space in the National Reformer to first criticising and later attacking the Theosophical Society, which had been founded in New York in 1875 by Madame Blavatsky, a Russian, and Col. H.S. Olcott, an American, and in 1879 had moved to India. One of the earliest theosophist classics was entitled Esoteric Buddhism,³ and the movement was sometimes referred to as Buddhist Theosophy, though it had in it no more of Buddhism than of divine wisdom. Early in 1889 a

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1. By the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London.
 2. Published by Trubner, London.
 3. A.P. Sinnett, Esoteric Buddhism, Trubner, London, 1883.

leading member of the N.S.S. contributed a series of articles also entitled "Esoteric Buddhism" to the National Reformer, and Mrs. Besant, who had studied the book of that name, lectured on "Buddha: His Life and Teachings".¹

In the same year, to the infinite distress of Bradlaugh and her other rational friends, she was converted to theosophy; when Madame Blavatsky died in 1891 she became the leader of the movement,² and held this position till her death in 1933. In 1891 theosophy was described by her friend William T. Stead as "the natural child of the marriage of Christianity and Buddhism".³

Mrs. Besant visited Ceylon for a week in November 1893 (when she was on her way to India for the first time), and received spectacular welcomes in Colombo, Kandy and Galle. The arrangements had been made by Col. Olcott.

Col. Olcott himself first landed in Ceylon on 17th February 1880, a day which is still locally celebrated as "Olcott Day". (There are so far as I am aware no longer any special festivities, but articles on Olcott appear in the newspapers.) On this occasion he stayed for 5 months. His influence on Buddhism was in the first instance organizational. He founded the Buddhist Theosophical Societies, which ran schools which emulated and competed with the schools of Christian missionaries. (These schools remained under the B.T.S. until the government's takeover of schools in 1961.) Olcott drew up a "Buddhist catechism", and encouraged Buddhists to celebrate Wesak (the anniversary of the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death) with songs modelled on Christmas carols. It was Olcott who gave the impetus which before long resulted in the founding of further

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1. Arthur H. Nethercot, The First Five Lives of Annie Besant, Hart-Davis, London, 1961, p. 302. From this book comes all my information on Mrs. Besant.
 2. Nominally Olcott was still President of the Theosophical Society.
 3. Quoted in Nethercot, p. 384. On the next page is recorded a public debate between Mrs. Besant and a clergyman on "Theosophical Symbols", with Prof. Rhys Davids in the chair.

Buddhist institutions to parallel Christian ones: the Young Men's and Young Women's Buddhist Associations, and the Buddhist Sunday Schools (dahan pāsāl) at which monks teach the village children religion from books provided by the Y.M.B.A. The latest example of Buddhist imitation of Christian institutions occurred in 1966 with the introduction of the pōya weekend: the weekly holiday of Sunday with Saturday afternoon has been replaced by the pōya day (full moon, half moon or no moon) with the preceding half-day. This alone will suggest how much modern political Buddhism owes to Col. Olcott. Perhaps it also owes something more directly ~~to~~^{to} the Christian missionaries.¹ In 1929 Sir Hugh Clifford, Governor of Ceylon 1925-7, wrote in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,² "A great revival of Buddhism in the last 20 years is political rather than religious. Christian practice has prompted Young Men's and Young Women's Buddhist Associations, and Islam the doffing of shoes on entering Buddhist Temples. Simultaneously the broad toleration of other faiths, which from the earliest times has been so marked and so notable a feature of pure Buddhism, has shown a tendency to be replaced by vulgar abuse of tenets of other creeds of a kind with which the more ignorant types of Christian Missionaries "to the heathen" have unhappily made the world familiar." Is it entirely a coincidence that of Ceylon's Prime Ministers since independence the least demonstratively Buddhist, Sir John Kotelawela, was the only one not educated at a Christian mission school?

From his first visit to Ceylon Olcott took back to Madame Blavatsky in India a young disciple, Simon Hevavitarana, later known as Anagārika.³

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1. The other influences on political Buddhism, such as western political ideologies, lie quite outside my present scope.
 2. Article "Ceylon", in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 14th ed. London & New York, 1929, vol. 5, p. 179.
 3. Anagārika is a title meaning 'homeless'; it applies to a layman who dedicates his life to Buddhism.

Dharmapāla. Though he spent most of his adult life in India, running the Mahā Bodhi Society, which he founded, Dharmapāla exerted crucial influence on the formation of modern Buddhist ideology in Ceylon. In 1893, under the auspices of Mrs. Besant, he represented Buddhism at the World Parliament on Religions in Chicago. At that time Prof. Max Müller wrote to him in a letter, "You should endeavour to do for Buddhism what the more enlightened students of Christianity have long been doing in different countries of Europe: you should free your religion from its later excrescences, and bring it back to its earliest, simplest, and purest form as taught by Buddha and his immediate disciples. If that is done, you will be surprised to see how little difference there is in essentials between the great religions of the world. And this must be done with perfect honesty. Nothing not quite sincere or truthful should be tolerated. Nothing has injured Buddhism so much in the eyes of scholars and philosophers in Europe as what goes by the name of Esoteric Buddhism. Madame Blavatsky may have been a dear friend to you, but Truth is a dearer friend."

Here then meet the two streams of Western thought which have deeply influenced English-educated Buddhists in Ceylon: theosophy, and "the scholars and philosophers of Europe" seeking Buddhism's "purest form as taught by Buddha and his disciples". Modern Buddhist fundamentalist movements and institutions, such as the Vajirārāma in Colombo, plainly owe much to the preconceptions, as well as the researches, of scholars like Max Müller and Rhys Davids. The editions and translations of the Pali Text Society are more used than any indigenous materials by Sinhalese scholars. Several Europeans, especially Englishmen and Germans, have gone to Ceylon to become monks, and passed their lives there with great reputations for holiness. They probably owe their first acquaintance with Buddhist texts to the late nineteenth-century translations of Rhys Davids or Karl Eugen Neumann, and

have contributed the results of their own western education to the current of Buddhist ideas. One community of these monks, headed till his death by a learned German, the Rev. Nānatiloka, is very near to the place where Dr. Wirz stayed. Most recently a German disciple of the Rev. Nānatiloka, the Rev. Nānapoṅṅika, has from his Forest Hermitage in Kandy helped to found the Buddhist Publication Society, which distributes Buddhist pamphlets throughout the world; since 1958 they have published more than a hundred Wheel booklets and Bodhi Leaves. At first these were all in English, but some are now appearing in Sinhalese. The scholarship of the Rev. Nānaponika is unimpeachable and his piety renowned; my purpose is merely to indicate the direction of his influence. At least half of these missionary publications are the works of Englishmen or Germans, many of them reprints of old works, going as far back as The Light of Asia, which Mrs. Besant read in 1879.

The aim of this excursus has been to suggest that there are in Ceylon to-day broadly two types of Buddhism, the traditional and the modern. It is not surprising if those Sinhalese Buddhists who have been educated in English are themselves uncertain under these circumstances about the validity of indigenous traditions, and tend to cull their own Buddhism at least as much from western sources as from local clergy and customs; and this may be said with equal force of the Buddhist nationalist movements and organizations which have arisen within the last ten years, always under educated urban inspiration and leadership. I disagree with those Europeans, like Copleston and Clifford, who consider the last hundred years to have produced a Buddhist revival: it was the previous hundred years, the period in which the three modern Nīkāyas were founded (see introd. p.44 and Chapter 8, pp.410-4), in which Sinhalese Buddhism revived; this other Buddhism is something new. When I say that Sinhalese Buddhism is orthodox it is not to these

recent movements that I refer; indeed, I wonder whether they are not heading towards the first genuine syncretism in Ceylonese Buddhist history.¹

It may seem disappointing that a work professedly on religious change should devote its first chapter to saying that there has been little change. Little, but not none: we shall see that there has been enough change to merit an examination. But this relative changelessness has its compensations. For if the Buddhism we can observe to-day is like the Buddhism of the Pali Canon it follows, obviously, that the Buddhism of the Pali Canon was like what we can observe to-day. The Buddhism of the Pali Canon is at least 1500 years old; how much older it may be we can only surmise. The Sinhalese Buddhist villager to-day may have a religion quite like the Buddhist villager nearly 2500 years ago. With this exciting thought let us examine that religion.

Answers Sinhalese inhabitants of Nilgala and surrounding villages as they explained them to me; in particular the beliefs are those of the local monks (see Introduction, sec. 4), whose answers to my questions are reproduced more or less verbatim in the appendix. Detailed and systematic introductions to Sinhalese Buddhist doctrine have been published in both English and Sinhalese, notably in books which are used as text-books in Ceylonese schools. These books are authoritative in the sense that they are written by

1. This chapter was written before the appearance of Heinz Bechert, Buddhismus, Staat und Gesellschaft in den Ländern des Theravāda-Buddhismus: I. Allgemeines und Ceylon, (Band XVII/1 der Schriften des Instituts für Asienkunde in Hamburg), Frankfurt am Main/Berlin, 1966. Bechert's large and excellent book deals extensively with the new Buddhism referred to above. The second half of the volume is devoted to the organization of Buddhism and its political role in modern Ceylon, mainly since Independence; the first half includes a lengthy description (pp. 37-108), more general in character, of "Buddhist modernism" (as he aptly calls it), including the movement's intellectual and organizational origins. Although this section refers to all Theravāda countries, it is Ceylon which plays by far the most important part in it. I am in very substantial agreement with Bechert's presentation, and warmly recommend his pioneer work to the interested reader; in particular the footnotes are a mine of invaluable source material.

THE BASIC VOCABULARY OF BUDDHISM

In this chapter I shall try to assemble the elementary facts about Sinhalese Buddhism and to introduce those technical terms which are indispensable. To give some understanding of how a Sinhalese Buddhist sees his own religion I shall preface my exposition with remarks on the Sinhalese words used to denote the main religious attitudes, thus revealing certain contrasts with, for example, the vocabulary of English Christianity.

The beliefs, behaviour, institutions and language which I shall describe in the rest of this work, and which for convenience I refer to as Buddhist, are those of the Kandyan Sinhalese inhabitants of Mīgala and surrounding villages as they explained them to me; in particular the beliefs are those of the local monks (see Introduction, sec. 4), whose answers to my questions are reproduced more or less verbatim in the appendix. Detailed and systematic introductions to Sinhalese Buddhist doctrine have been published in both English and Sinhalese, notably in books which are used as text-books in Ceylonese schools. These books are authoritative, in the sense that they are written by learned and distinguished Ceylonese monks; they will doubtless mould the thinking of this and future generations. They are essentially summaries of the doctrine of the Pali Canon as understood by Buddhaghosa. Among such works I cannot too highly recommend the Rev. Narada's The Buddha and his Teachings.¹ My interest however was to find out what a group of people actually believe, so I shall not refer to the Ven. Narada's book, but use the information given me by the monks and villagers themselves. Though I am mainly in-

1. No publisher, Saigon, 1964.

interested in Buddhist beliefs and ethics, these cannot be described or understood without some reference to Buddhist institutions physical and social, so I shall insert such descriptions at places where they may not too much disrupt the argument.

I am concerned with religious beliefs. But does our very concept of religious belief correspond to a concept of the Sinhalese?

The Sinhalese for 'religion' is āgama. Āgama is a Sanskrit word which in Sanskrit usually means 'tradition', 'sacred tradition' or 'sacred text'. It is not surprising that a people whose religion depends on writings should use for religion a word which used to connote texts. In Sinhalese however the word is fully naturalized and no longer has this connotation except by etymology; it translates 'religion' very well. Buddhism is Buddhāgama, Hinduism Hindu āgama, Islam Muslim āgama etc.¹

The adjective derived from āgama is āgamika, meaning 'religious', but it is not very idiomatic, nor is there an idiomatic word for 'secular'. These meanings are expressed by a periphrasis such as Āgama vaśen, 'by way of religion', 'to do with religion', and melova vaśen, 'to do with this world'. Ames has written an interesting paper² in which he discusses Sinhalese religion in terms of Durkheim's categories of the profane and the sacred. He claims that these categories exist in the Sinhalese terms laukika and lokottara. It is perfectly true that these two words would be fair translations of 'profane' and 'sacred' respectively: laukika

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1. It is possible that this use of the word āgama is due to western influence. Mr. A.J. Gunawardana tells me that the idiom āgamata giya (literally "He went to religion") means "He was converted to Christianity". This leads me to suspect that the Christian religion is the prototype for this use of āgama. The word Samaya, which is sometimes said to translate 'religion', is totally alien to the spoken language. If it is true that the only idiomatic word for 'religion' is modelled on Christian usage, this is very much grist to my mill.
 2. M.M. Ames, "Magical-animism and Buddhism: A Structural Analysis of the Sinhalese Religious System" pp. 21-52 in E.B. Harper (ed.) Religion in South Asia, University of Washington Press, Seattle 1964.

literally means 'of the world', lokottara 'above the world'. But these terms are pure Sanskrit, and purely learned; I have never heard them used in conversation, and to most villagers they are not even intelligible. The sacred-profane dichotomy is not conceptualized by ordinary Sinhalese - which is far from saying that he does not know what is religion and what is not.

'Religion' is easy to translate into Sinhalese: 'belief' is a little harder. The verb 'to believe' or 'to believe in' is most often translatable by adahanavā. But adahanavā has a wider meaning. Geiger's Etymological Glossary of the Sinhalese Language¹ gives as translations 'believe in', 'trust in', 'worship'. This covers what seems like a whole range of religious attitudes. In the right context adahanavā does adequately translate 'to believe': Buddhāgama adahanavā - '(to) believe (in) the Buddhist religion'; Buddhāgamaya attamayi kiyalā adahanavā - '(to) believe that the Buddhist religion is the very truth'. But unfortunately there is no noun which corresponds to adahanavā as 'belief' corresponds to 'to believe'. ^{Adahitma} ~~Adahitma~~ will sometimes do, but it is basically a verbal noun, 'believing'; it is awkward and unidiomatic in the plural. Adahilla is a more literary word, and is specialized to denote not beliefs but acts of worship and devotion. Thus if one needs a noun to express 'beliefs' one will be forced to fall back on a more general word. Adahasa (which is etymologically unrelated to adahanavā) most usually means 'intention', but it can lose the volitional element and mean 'idea' or 'opinion'; mataya, slightly less colloquial, means 'opinion'. So in asking a Sinhalese his 'religious beliefs' a noun phrase would be āgama gāna adahas, or āgama gāna mata, 'opinions about religion'. But we can improve on this by turning

1. R.A.S. Ceylon Branch, Colombo, 1941.

to verbs. Adahanavā comes from Sanskrit śraddhā; the Pali noun saddhā derived from this appears frequently in the Pali Canon as a commendable quality, and it has usually been translated 'faith'. But in her regrettably unpublished thesis for the University of Ceylon, ~~"The Role of~~ "The Role of the Miracle in Early Pali Literature", Dr. E. Ludowyk Gyömrői shows that this translation is a bad one. Faith is a Christian concept; faith should lead to the acceptance of doctrines which have not been accepted by reason. Christianity admits that it contains doctrines which man will have to take on trust. But Buddhism makes ^{no} such admission: not only are all the truths it teaches intelligible to human beings, but doctrines should even be rejected if reason finds them wanting. Saddhā written in religious context might therefore be better translated 'confidence'; it is the confidence that Buddhist doctrine is correct, the confidence indeed that permits the issuing of such a challenge. It is trust, but not irrational or uncritical trust.

The point that emerges from this etymologizing is that Buddhism and Sinhalese do not make a distinction between faith, i.e. taking something on trust, on the one hand, and any other kind of belief on the other. The word which corresponds semantically in Sinhalese to Pali saddhā is viśavāsa, which means 'trust' or 'confidence' in any context. It can be transformed into a verb by adding karanavā:mata viśvāsa karanavā, '(to) trust me'. Viśvāsa karanavā can always function as a synonym of adahanavā in the sense of 'believe': Buddhāgamaya viśvāsa karanavā, '(to) believe in Buddhism'.¹ But unlike adahanavā it is not confined to religion: Engelantē hima vātenavā kiyā mama viśvāsa karanavā - 'I believe it snows

1. The most idiomatic word for 'believe in' in such a context is piliggannavā which literally means 'accept': mama Buddhāgamē piliggannavā, 'I believe, in, accept Buddhism'. The verbal noun from this root, piligganīma, 'acceptance', will likewise be the best translation for 'belief' in such a context.

in England." Faith or "fiduciary" belief is not distinguished from any other belief, however obviously rational. A better way, then, of asking a Sinhalese Buddhist about his religious beliefs will be, "Āgama gāna mona-vāda adahanne?" or "Āgama gāna mokadda viśvāsa karanne?" - "What do you believe about religion?"

Even these sentences, however, though linguistically unexceptionable, still sound a trifle unusual. This is because culturally the only religious beliefs which matter are the true ones: Buddhist doctrine - Dharma. (This is the Sanskritic form; Pali dhamma and old Sinhalese daham or dam are confined to special contexts.¹) Dharma can be and has been translated in a thousand ways: 'righteousness', 'truth', 'the Way', etc. It is best not translated at all. The scope of dharma will be explained in the next section; it does not cover all a Buddhist's beliefs, but if asked about his religious beliefs he will take the question to refer to dharma.

For an investigation of the belief system of a religion I have selected the term 'belief' as crucial in English, and the words adahana-vā, viśvāsaya, and dharmaya (which is more limited in scope) as covering this semantic area in Sinhalese. Is it possible to decide on a similarly central concept for a religion's action system? I think English 'worship' and Sinhalese vandinavā will serve our purpose well: one is regularly used to translate the other, but their differences are again instructive.

Christianity is theocentric, Buddhism is not. Christianity is based on a concept of personality, that of Jesus Christ; for Buddhists the Buddha and his personality are extremely important, but their religion is based on a doctrine. There is a corresponding contrast between the attitudes of Buddhists and Christians to the founders of their respective religions. Of course I am talking here of their cognitive attitudes,

1. The actual village pronunciation of dharma is dharuma; it is so spelt by uneducated people. Similarly, karma is pronounced karuma.

the attitudes they express in words; whether their affective attitudes, their true feelings are similarly contrasted is a question which cannot be approached through language, but which I shall return to at the end of the next chapter. If a Christian were to be asked some such curiously vague question, as, "How do you stand to Jesus?", typical answers would be, "I worship him", "I adore him", "I love him", "I trust him". The answers all speak as of someone still existent, which according to Christian doctrine Jesus is, in that he is God, who is eternal. That Jesus is God also makes it possible to say "I believe in him". No one will say "I believe in Julius Caesar": he lived, is dead, and that is that. The Buddha is in the same case as Julius Caesar. We shall see that affectively he may be something more; but cognitively he is a dead man. The most we normally do for a dead man is to revere his memory, and that is just how Buddhists, if asked, claim that they view the Buddha. Perhaps they do love him in the way that Christians love Jesus Christ; but they never say so. The nearest they get to it is taking joy (prīti) in contemplation of the Buddha or in making offerings before his relics; but these are still the joys of pleasant thoughts, or even, as I was told, the pleasure of looking at the beautiful flowers which are being offered.

The typical verb for a Buddhist's attitude to the Buddha is vandinavā. In Ceylon this is taken as an exact translation of "worship", which can be most misleading.¹ The verb has two meanings, a physical gesture and

1. To illustrate in lighter vein the confusion about "worship" explained below I reproduce in its entirety a news item from the Weekly Times of Ceylon dated 26 August 1966, which reached me as I was writing this chapter.

MMC won't 'Worship' Mayor.

KURUNEGALA, Aug. 21.

At the monthly general meeting of the Kurunegala Municipal Council, presided over by the Deputy Mayor, Mr. Noel de S. Seneviratne, Mr. A. H. Weerasinghe said that he was not prepared to address the Mayor as "Your Worship" as he had not worshipped any mortal.

He said he would address the Mayor as "Your Lordship" or "Your Honour" but not as "Your Worship".

The Deputy Mayor: "You may address the Mayor in any form in keeping with the dignity of the house. "Your Worship" means a form of respect to the office and also does not mean that one is expected to worship the Mayor."

a mental attitude. In the first place it denotes any respectful gesture of salutation. The least such gesture is merely to place the palms together in the Indian gesture called in Sanskrit añjali, which is like the Christian gesture of prayer. There are even gradations in the position of the hands - the higher the hands the greater the respect. Before a superior this is accompanied by bowing the head or the body, squatting or kneeling. When kneeling one may unclasp the hands for a moment and bend one's forehead to touch the ground, or the foot of the person saluted. Complete prostration I never saw practised by a Sinhalese, but it is used by Tamils before their gods, and gets the same name in Sinhalese. Vāṇḍinavā is the name of such a gesture in any context. Applied to the mental attitude which is obviously supposed to correspond to this physical gesture, namely reverence, the word is strictly religious: to use it of an attitude towards a layman is extreme, and clearly metaphorical. Accordingly the least misleading interpretation of the Buddhist's claim that he vāṇḍinavā is to say that he 'reveres' the Lord Buddha, and that when he is in a temple or in front of an image in his own home he behaves accordingly.

I wrote towards the end of the previous chapter of the influence of the west on Buddhism. Those remarks supplied the historical, the above lines the conceptual background to the curious judgements on Buddhism which were made to me by some of those people, even in the village, whose education had brought them in touch with western thought. I mention these judgements here to contrast them with the traditional attitudes. The western misunderstanding of Buddhism as atheistic explains the statement (in English) of a Sinhalese estate clerk that Buddhism is "not a religion but a practice". Later in my stay the news that Buddhism is not a religion reached almost every villager, many for the first time. The Ministry of Education published a new primer for teaching Buddhism in schools,¹ intended

1. Buddhadharmaya. Mul pota. Education Dept., Colombo, 1965.

for study by 6-year-olds, no doubt the first book in a projected series. In the first paragraph of the introduction occurs the sentence, "The Buddhist religion is not a religion" ("Buddhāgamaya āgamayek no vē"). This is immediately amplified: "In the Buddhist religion there is no religion limited to offerings and devotions. The Buddhist religion¹ is a way of life." ("Puda pūjā, adahālivāḷaṭa sīmā vū āgamayek Buddhāgamayē nāta. Buddhāgamaya jīvana kramayeki.") Didactically this may be admirable, but the amplification was not enough to avert attention and wrath from the simple statement that Buddhism is not a religion, a statement which through the very exigencies of the Sinhalese language stands in a self-contradictory form! There was a political storm: the Marxists who were in the coalition government had obviously infiltrated the Ministry of Education; this was part of their campaign to abolish Buddhism. Some of those who started these charges may have been disingenuous, but the Sinhalese villagers who heard them may be forgiven if not only the 6-year-olds were unable to grasp the sophisticated claim that their religion was no religion.

The youngest monk in Mīgala temple was in much the same current of opinion as the writers of the textbook. (The fact that the monk considered himself a Marxist, however little he knew about Marxism, suggests that the political charges against the text-book may not have been quite groundless.) This monk had spent the last ten years of his life being educated in the Low Country, and had just got his B.A. from one of the two monastic universities near Colombo. During these ten years he had never returned to the village for more than a few days. Intellectually he no longer had anything in common with the villagers or with his two elder colleagues; when I appeared he seized me like a vulture swooping on a lump of carrion.

1. The word which I translate three times as 'The Buddhist religion' is more neatly rendered 'Buddhism'. My translation is literal to served the point I am making.

It was not so much that I was a link with the outside world: his intercourse with me was his chance to demonstrate his superiority, while to me he could air his contempt for his surroundings. One day I appeared with a small book, Bauddha Adahilla ('Buddhist Devotion'), a religious pocket book so popular that in its various editions it must have reached the majority of the literate Buddhist public, at least among the middle classes. It contains all the Pali verses which a layman is supposed to know or need, with Sinhalese translations and explanations.¹ I asked him if he had read it. He told me with great emphasis that he had never even looked at it. That was all just visvāsaya; true Buddhism was the darśanē - philosophy. The young monk later told me that all the worshipping etc. - what might be summed up as 'popular Buddhism' - was a Mahāvāna accretion. After six months he had made himself so unpopular - not through his views on religion, which he prudently kept to himself, but by his arrogant and insolent behaviour - that he was more or less forced to leave the village and return to Colombo.

Warned by his fate, let us approach the subject through the categories of the villagers themselves. To give a succinct account of an interlocking system is difficult. I shall try to summarize very briefly what classes of Buddhists there are and what they believe. I shall conclude the chapter with a general description of the physical context of village Buddhism, namely the temple. In subsequent chapters I shall expand on details of this summary.

The most frequent religious act of Buddhists is the recitation of a few lines in Pali. Many Buddhists recite them daily in private; their

1. The table of contents of my copy of Bauddha Adahilla is reproduced in Appendix 2. It is edited by K. Nanavimala Thero, Gunasena, Colombo 1955.

recitation begins, and often punctuates, every public religious occasion.

Here they are, with approximate translation.

Namo tassa Bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa.

Worship to the Blessed arhat¹ truly fully enlightened. (Three times.)

Buddham saranam gacchāmi.

I go to the Buddha for refuge.

Dhammam saranam gacchāmi.

I go to the Doctrine for refuge.

Sangham saranam gacchāmi.

I go to the Order for refuge.

Dutiyam pi Buddham saranam gacchāmi.

And a second time I go to the Buddha for refuge.

Dutiyam pi Dhammam saranam gacchāmi.

And a second time I go to the Doctrine for refuge.

Dutiyam pi Sangham saranam gacchāmi.

And a second time I go to the Order for refuge.

Tatiyam pi Buddham saranam gacchāmi.

And a third time I go to the Buddha for refuge.

Tatiyam pi Dhammam saranam gacchāmi.

And a third time I go to the Doctrine for refuge.

Tatiyam pi Sangham saranam gacchāmi.

And a third time I go to the Order for refuge.

Pānātipātā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.

I undertake the precept to abstain from taking life.

Adinnā-dānā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.

I undertake the precept to abstain from taking what is not given.

1. Arhat is a Buddhist technical term meaning any enlightened person.

Kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.

I undertake the precept to abstain from wrong conduct in sexual desires.

Musāvādā veramaṇī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.

I undertake the precept to abstain from telling lies.

Surāmeraya majja-ppamāda-tthānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.

I undertake the precept to abstain from intoxicating liquors which occasion heedlessness.

The first line is a salutation to the Buddha. The next 9 lines are the Three Refuges (tisarana) thrice repeated. The last five lines are the Five Precepts (pan sil).

A person who takes the Three Refuges and Five Precepts is thereby a Buddhist layman. There is no ceremony for conversion to Buddhism beyond the recital of these lines, so anyone who says these words and means them can rightly call himself a Buddhist. To go so far and then to keep the precepts is considered sufficient for great religious progress. A Buddhist layman is called an upāsaka (feminine = upasikā), - at least in religious discourse; in lay idiom the term is generally reserved for people of notable piety. The five precepts should be recited daily (at least), and kept always.

The status of upāsaka denotes a religious attitude, a certain relationship to the Dhamma. An upāsaka is also supposed to support those of higher religious status than himself (principally monks), and by virtue of this relationship to the Sangha he is called a dāyaka ('giver'). This sounds like a function. It is possible for a dāyaka not to be an upāsaka (i.e. for a non-Buddhist to make gifts to monks etc.), though of course this is not normally envisaged. However, dāyaka is also a status. When an English parson would refer to his 'parishioners', a monk calls the laymen in his village not upāsakayo but dāyakayo.

Buddhists have the custom (no doubt it is pre-Buddhistic) that certain days are holier than the rest. These days, called pōya days, are the quarter days of the lunar month: full moon, no moon, half moon. They are holy in that order; all the crucial events in the Buddha's life are believed to have happened on full moon days. Theoretically on any day, but by custom only on pōya days, a layman may take the Eight Precepts (ata sil). These are the Five Precepts with this addition:

Vikāla-bhojanā veramaṇī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.

I undertake the precept to abstain from eating at the wrong time.

Nacca-gīta-vādita-visūka-dassana-mālā-gandha-vilepana-dhārana-
mandana-vibhusana-ttānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.

I undertake the precept to abstain from ~~seeing~~ dancing, music vocal and instrumental, and shows; from wearing garlands, perfumes and unguents, from finery and adornment.

Uccāsayana-mahāsayana veramaṇī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.

I undertake the precept to abstain from high beds and big beds.

The sixth precept means no solid food after mid-day. The seventh means dressing in plain white, with no more ornament than maybe a rosary of brown beads as a necklace. The eighth means sitting or lying only on mats on the ground. Traditionally it has been customary only for elderly people to take the Eight Precepts, except perhaps once a year at Wesak, the full moon in May, the anniversary of the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death. Hence those laymen taking the Eight Precepts are commonly known as 'laywoman mummy' and 'layman daddy' - upāsikammā and upāsakappucci were the local terms.

There is a further stage possible for laymen: the Ten Precepts (dasa sil). These ten are formed by splitting the seventh into two, and adding

Jātarūpa-rajata-patiggghana veramaṇī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi.

I undertake the precept to abstain from accepting gold or silver.

In fact, although to do so is theoretically possible, no one takes the Ten Precepts for a limited period of time. They involve the same abstentions as those practised by the clergy, so men of such piety are likely to enter the Order, unless they are too old to make the break. Laymen (male) who take the Ten precepts (dasa sil upāsakayō) wear white. They may be 'home-dwelling' (gedara inna or grhastha) or 'homeless' (anāgarika). Anagarika Dharmapala (see pp.71-2) was a 'homeless' layman, but I have never heard of a villager's becoming one. Nor did I meet even a grhastha dasa sil upāsaka, but I heard of two in my area, probably elderly widowers. On the other hand, the Order of Nuns (bhiksuni saṅgha) being extinct, to take the Ten Precepts is the highest religious status a woman can attain. Such women shave their heads and wear yellow. There are a few urban communities of them, but in villages they are infrequent and usually solitary. On the edge of Mīgala were two, who lived in adjacent caves. Though one of them was not old, they were known as upāsaka māṇiyō, māṇiyō being an extremely honorific word for 'mother'.

On entering the Order (mahāna vīma) one becomes a novice. Novices are usually boys, and known as 'little monks' (poḍi hāṃuduruvo or puñci hāṃuduruvo).¹ A novice has to take and keep the same Ten Precepts. Even a monk has to do no more: he has to submit to 227 rules, but these rules are an elaboration, not an extension, of the precepts, and their detailed application to the life of a monk. Monastic life has its duties and even its rites, but most of these can be avoided by becoming a hermit; in the way of morality the Ten Precepts sum up all that is asked of a Buddhist. Monks and novices wear robes of some yellow or orange (no significance attaches to the shade). There are various words for monk, most of

1. The Pali word for novice, sāmaṇera, is occasionally used in a formal context. Poḍi hāṃuduruvo, which is of course informal, can also refer to a junior monk.

which have the honorific ending vahansē - literally 'sandal-shadow', but the meaning has been forgotten. Related to the Pali bhikkhū is bhikkhun-vahansē. A rather surprising word for 'monk' is sanghaya (+ vahansē), which in form is merely Sinhalese for sangha, the Order, which indeed is its usual meaning in the literary language. But the common words in the village, for both reference and address,¹ are svāminvahansē and kāmuduruvo, both meaning 'lord', but no longer used to denote temporal power.

The objects of the three refuges are the Three Jewels (triratna, teruvan): most people asked to explain Buddhism (Buddhāgama) would begin here. The Buddha is the founder of the religion, the Dharma is the truth he discovered, the Sangha is the vehicle for preserving and propagating that truth.

For the moment the Buddha and the Sangha require no further explanation than to say that doctrine views the Buddha as a human being who is now dead but whose relics may be venerated, and the Sangha as other human beings who are supposed to emulate him and are venerated for this reason. But the Dharma must be further discussed. I have said that if you ask a Buddhist his religious beliefs he will assume you are talking of Dharma. But these beliefs operate in a context of other beliefs, of more basic assumptions. This is true both logically and historically: the Buddha grew up in a Hindu society and accepted many Hindu assumptions. A few words about these assumptions are necessary.

The universe is full of living beings, in hierarchically ordered strata. Men are somewhere in the middle (and have their own hierarchically ordered strata - castes). Above them are various classes of gods and spirits, below them are animals, ghosts and demons. Above this world are heavens, below this world are hells. By and large, power, well-being and length

1. These are really the same, as polite address is in the third person. I disregard the vocative forms which are sometimes used.

of life increase as one goes up the scale. So does the power and inclination to do good. But at all levels there is death, the ineluctable reminder of the unsatisfactoriness of life. Death supplies the mobility between the different levels. Everywhere, constantly, are death and re-birth. One's station at birth is determined by karma. Karma is a Sanskrit word simply meaning 'action', but it has acquired this technical sense. It is the principle of "Be done by as you did", a good action will improve your station, a bad action depress it. One's karma may affect one's fortunes in other ways besides one's station at birth, but this is its most important effect. All this is accepted by all kinds of Hindus and by Jains - by all the major Indian religious systems. However, Buddhism was the first system completely to ethicize the concept. For Buddhists karma consists solely of actions morally good or bad, not of other actions such as ritual.

Karma is the most powerful, large-scale system of causation. (Buddhists do not believe that any creature, however exalted, has the power to override karma.) Operating within this system are others, which affect the details of specifically human affairs. Such systems are astrology and the (free-will) activities of supernaturals. These or similar systems are again accepted, with or without inconsistency, by the other major Indian systems. In Sinhalese Buddhist ideology these systems fit into each other without inconsistency, as will be explained in chapter 4.

The belief system described so far is not dharma; it is just the outline of a cognitive map of the universe, a map which the Buddha and his followers have not called in question. Taking all this for granted, the Buddha saw the truth - the Dharma.

In one formulation there are Four Noble Truths. They are

1) Unhappiness.

- 2) The arising of unhappiness.
- 3) The destruction of unhappiness.
- 4) The path leading to the destruction of unhappiness.

1) The word I have translated as unhappiness is Pali dukkha, Sanskrit duḥkha, Sinhalese duka. Dukkha notoriously lacks an English equivalent, though the concept is not obscure. It is simply the opposite of sukha (in Sinhalese of sāpa), which means 'well-being'. Unfortunately 'ill-being' is not an English locution. Translators have used 'suffering', 'unsatisfactoriness', etc. etc. 'Frustration' would be philosophically accurate, but sounds too petty. 'Unhappiness' is also inadequate because it is only mental, not physical. Armed with this apology, I shall use dukkha.

In the Buddha story dukkha is symbolized by an aged man, a sick man and a corpse. But it is far wider than the positive ills of disease and death. It is anything that crosses us, it is not getting what we want. It even exists for the normally content, because he wants to go on living, but must face the prospect of death. Death shows that all goods are impermanent (anicca). In this sense dukkha exists even in the highest heaven and for the greatest god. The Sinhalese often say "jīvitē dukayī" - "life is suffering" or just "life is sad".

2) Dukkha exists because of desire: it is desire's corollary. If we have no wants we shall suffer no disappointments. There are many words in Pali for this desire: a common one is taṇhā - thirst. The usual one in Sinhalese is āsāva. This derives from Sanskrit āśā, which is often translated 'hope'. It is desire, notably the desire for life, which gives the impetus for rebirth.

3) The destruction of unhappiness is consequently the destruction of desire. Those who cease to desire life will not be reborn, and experience no more dukkha. They, and they alone, experience liberation (moksa) from

the wheel of rebirth, i.e. phenomenal existence (samsāra), and attain nirvāna. Etymologically nirvāna means 'blowing out'. It is indescribable, being beyond the realm of words, which describe the world we know; it is defined negatively. The Sinhalese usually talk of 'seeing' or 'gaining' nirvāna (nivan dākinavā or labanavā); it is an intuition, a sudden awareness, a mystical state. Enlightenment comes during the course of a lifetime; one who has it is an arhat (Sinhalese rahat, respectfully rahatanvahansē). An arhat lives out the fated span of his physical life; its end is called parinirvāna (Sinhalese pirinivan).¹

4) The path leading to the destruction of unhappiness is the Noble Eightfold Path. Rough translations of its eight constituents are 1. Right views. 2. Right resolve. 3. Right speech. 4. Right action. 5. Right livelihood. 6. Right effort. 7. Right mindfulness. 8. Right meditation. These eight are often summarized as sīla, samādhi, pañña. Sīla (morality) covers nos 3-5, samādhi (meditation) nos. 6-8, pañña (wisdom) nos. 1 & 2.² Each of these three is to some extent a pre-requisite for the next. Nos. 1 & 2 come both at the beginning and at the end: intelligence and motivation are needed to make a start; at the end they ripen to the true wisdom of Enlightenment.

The Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path are described in the Buddha's first sermon.³ This short text makes one other point, with which indeed it begins. Because to see the Truth one must steer between indulgence and mortification of the senses, Buddhism is the Middle Path.

The path described by Buddhist doctrine is ethical, intellectual and

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1. In Pali literature parinibbāna is sometimes a synonym of nibbāna (technically called sa-upādi-sesa); but modern Sinhalese usage, to which I have conformed, confines it to the death of an arhat (technically a-upādi-sesa).
 2. MN I.301.
 3. Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, SN.V.420.

mystical. The innovations of the Dharma are very simple, and consist mainly of a recipe for action. This is easy to grasp. None of the doctrines I have written of so far would be unfamiliar to a villager. He could probably not list the Four Noble Truths or the constituents of the Noble Eightfold Path; he might not even know the titles of the doctrines. But the substance of the argument he would know; indeed he could probably express most of it himself if occasion arose. If asked to describe his religion he will mention most of what I have mentioned, from the Three Jewels on, probably with some more detail on the Buddha and on good and bad deeds. The Buddha I shall deal with in the next chapter. Before I say more on good and bad deeds there is one metaphysical question to be disposed of. It is too difficult for many villagers to hold views on it, but it is a necessary logical link for a basic understanding of Theravāda doctrine, so I had better dispose of it here.

What is it that transmigrates? Buddhist philosophy (abhidamma) revolves round anicca, dukkha, and anatta, which are said to be three facets of the one truth. Dukkha and anicca I mentioned above under the first Noble Truth. Anatta is Pali for 'non-self'. In philosophy it came to be applied to everything, as a denial of essence, but originally it was merely a denial of the existence of a soul, an immortal part in living beings. Theravāda Buddhism is anātmavāda - the doctrine of no soul; this much is known to innumerable people who could not explain it. Most monks however can explain that ātman, self, is merely the name of an aggregate of mind and body which dissolves at death; it has no independent existence. What survives is karma, the effect of actions. If I may supply my own illustration, every act for good or ill is like a boomerang, which comes back at you. Whether you throw the boomerang is a matter of free will, but once it is thrown consequences must follow. Buddhist

doctrine holds that if I die before the boomerang gets back someone else will have been born in my place and reap those consequences; moreover the nature of that someone is conditioned by what I was.

Plainly this is a rather subtle and difficult doctrine. The Buddha himself is supposed to have realized that his teaching was "against the current".¹ Even so, this doctrine understood only by the few has permeated the language. Sinhalese has no word for soul, in the sense of an immortal part or adjunct of a human being. The Sanskrit word ātma is still in use but it has acquired the meaning of 'life-span'. 'I shall not do it in this life' - "mē ātmē dī". "We met in a previous life" - "issara ātmē dī."

I asked the incumbent of Nigala temple about ātma and rebirth. We have no ātma, he said, because ātma implies something changeless, and we change all the time. Even if we become gods we shall still be constituted of the five components (skandhas); we shall have lost only the name of man (mānasyanāma). We use the word ātme, and talk as if it existed, for convenience (paḥasu pinisa). This is the realm of conventional truth (sammuti satya); ultimate truth is different ("paramārtha satya venayi"). The being who is born is neither the same as, nor different from, the one who died: he quoted the Pali "Na ca so, na ca anyo" ("Both not he and not another"). The relation is like that between caterpillar and butterfly.

The doctrine of no-soul, anātmavāda, is canonical according to the interpretation of Buddhaghosa.²

1. For references see W. Rahula, What the Buddha Taught, Gordon Fraser, Bedford, 2nd ed. 1967, p. 52.

2. In the canon the locus classicus is the Anattalakkhana Sutta, SN III. 66. It is believed that it was the Buddha's second sermon and that on hearing it his first five disciples attained enlightenment. On anātmavāda and the question of what transmigrates see Thomas, Buddhist Thought, pp. 98-106. In an attempt to avoid technicalities and give a clear picture I have slightly oversimplified the evidence there collected. In doing so I am following a monk (27) who told me ~~that~~ it is not I who am reborn, but someone else (vena kenek) with my karma. For a full and beautifully lucid exposition of anatta see chapter VI (pp. 51-66).

But does not death nevertheless mark a decisive break? The doctrinal answer is no: our thought and even our bodies are changing at every moment. The element of continuity is precisely karma, the force of past actions; karma not merely binds one life to the next but one collection of the skandhas to the collection existing in the next moment. Just as a man can remember what he did yesterday, he can, with training, remember what he did in a former life; the difference is merely one of degree.

Although there were probably not more than half a dozen monks in my area who could have expounded the argument stated in the previous paragraph, I am sure all would have assented to it. It is the doctrinal position which everyone claims to accept, however little they are able to articulate it. On the other hand, people certainly talk as if they conceived a series of lives in terms of survival of the personality; terms such as, "My next life", sentiments such as "We must have met in a former life", are freely expressed. In other words, a Buddhist seems to think of rebirth in very much the way that the concept first appears to a westerner brought up with the idea of a soul which survives death. Is the Buddhist then not being logically inconsistent? I think not. If it is merely conventional truth (sammuti satya) to talk of "I" when in reality (paramārtha vāsen) I am nothing but a series of groups (skandhas) strung together on the string of karma, why should it not be equally permissible to use convention to talk of "my next life"? Logical inconsistency can only arise between cognitive positions; on the cognitive level the Buddhist is being consistent.

note 2. p. 92 cont.:

in RAhula's What the Buddha Taught. Rahula, a Sinhalese monk, combines the authenticity of indigenous tradition with scholarship matured at universities both east and west. He deals specifically with the arguments of modern scholars who claim that Theravādin tradition has perverted the Buddha's meaning. I myself find this claim that on so essential a point the Buddha has been misunderstood by all his followers somewhat "against the current".

Where the clash may, and I think does, come is between the cognitive and the affective level. Despite the doctrine that we are but a series of groups connected by actions, people do in fact think of themselves as having a more or less stable and concrete existence. From this it is a short step to conceiving this existence as extending beyond death. That people affectively believe that they will survive death and be reborn cannot, by the nature of what I called affective beliefs, be demonstrated directly; but I think it can be inferred from other statements and actions. Moreover, I think that this affective belief in personal survival, clashing with the cognitive belief in merely karmic survival, is the basis for a whole system of affective religion which diverges from official doctrine. I shall return to this in my last chapter.

It would have been misleading to leave the impression, even in a summary, that villagers grasp all the subtleties of orthodox doctrine on karma and rebirth. It would be equally misleading to leave the impression that nirvāṇa is their immediate religious goal. I doubt whether this would be true of anyone I met, cleric or lay. Whether interested in nirvāṇa as an ultimate goal or not, people set their sights on whatever they consider the most desirable rebirth. What makes for a good rebirth is merit (pin), and what makes for a bad rebirth is demerit (pav). Pav is usually translated 'sin', but 'demerit' brings out its neat opposition to pin.

Pin and pav are conceptualized as quantifiable and (in a sense - see chapter 5) transferable. If you ask a villager how he acquires pin or pav the commonest answer will be, by keeping or breaking the Five Precepts. The Five Precepts are however negative: there is a list of Ten Good Deeds, which is not canonical but widely influential. In an unmethodical way this list subsumes the precepts and includes all possible ways of earning pin. The Ten Good Deeds (dasa kusala karma) are listed in a Pali stanza:

Dānam sīlañ ca bhāvanā
Patti pattanumodanā
Veyyāvacca apacāyañ ca
Desanā suti ditthiju.

These were paraphrased forme by a monk as:

Giving (material), keeping morality (i.e. the precepts), meditating, giving (transferring) merit, rejoicing in (another's) merit, giving service, showing respect, preaching, listening to preaching, right beliefs (samyak drstiya-visvāsaya). In an admirable article¹ J.F. Dickson gives a succinct explanation (pp. 203-7) of each of these terms; I could not improve on his account, and refer to it the reader who would like a fuller preliminary description before I deal in chapters 5 and 6 with specific problems arising from the list. The term pinkama literally means 'act of merit', and so could apply to any item in this list; however, as Dickson remarks (p. 207), idiomatically the term is only applied to the outward manifestation of merit-earning - the public, not the private event.

Canonical Buddhism is a religion for the individual: excepting only a few simple ceremonies for monks it neither prescribes nor contains any ritual. From the beginning there were inevitably religious occasions of a public nature, i.e. involving more than one person: the two typical occasions are feeding monks and preaching, which very often go together. No ritual was laid down for these occasions, but already in the Canon, which

1. "Notes Illustrative of Buddhism as the Daily Religion of the Buddhists of Ceylon, and Some Account of their Ceremonies before and after Death", J.R.A.S. (Ceylon Branch) vol. VIII no. 29, 1884, pp. 203-236. (The pagination is corrected by an erratum slip to pp. 297-330, which is how it appears in the table of contents, but to minimize confusion I cite the page references as printed.) Though there are a few points at which Dickson seems to me to be describing ideal rather than actual ceremonies, I find his article so good that I have hardly touched upon the things he has already described, and hope that his work can be read as a complement to mine. He is unique among ethnographers of Sinhalese Buddhism in reproducing in full (with English translations) the Pali texts used in the ceremonies he describes.

after all consists mainly of sermons and is full of invitations to meals, they are described in uniform language and the procedure is plainly standardized. In modern Ceylon any public Buddhist occasion is called a pinkama. The typical pinkam are still feeding monks (dānē - the word literally means 'giving' but has become a technical term) and preaching (bana), plus one related to bana, a particular kind of recitation of sacred texts called pirit. The morning meal is called hīl dānē, the (main) mid-day meal daval dānē, the evening snack gilampasa dānē. Hīl dānē should be given at about 7 a.m., daval dānē at about 11.30 (to be over by noon), and gilampasa normally between 5 and 6, but gilampasa may also be served just before the beginning of a pinkama in the early part of the night.

For a dānē or bana the ritual is usually scarcely more elaborate than in Canonical times. There are however other pinkam, of various degrees of canonical authenticity, and indeed villagers apply the term to any public activity in which monks take part: when just before the national election sixty monks gathered at Mīgala temple and walked in procession to the town council grounds to hold a political meeting, this was a pinkama too.

Most big pinkam take place at the temple, and in order to give a general picture of what a pinkama involves I shall conclude this outline with a brief description of the physical setting of Sinhalese Buddhism. Most villages \ominus and the proportion is increasing - contain what, following Ceylonese practice, I call a temple. The language of Christian culture is again misleading. The essential of a Buddhist temple, the fact by virtue of which it is in use, is that one or more monks live there. The building in which the monks live, which is normally an ordinary bungalow like a layman(s), is called a pansala. Typically a temple consists of a group of features, but any or all of these features may be absent except the pansala. When there is nothing but a pansala, which in practice means

that the temple is new or inhabited only part-time, the temple as a whole is called an āvāsaya; otherwise, i.e. normally, it is called a vihāraya. The properly equipped temple of a certain village, e.g. Mīgala, is in conversation always referred to as e.g. Mīgala vihāraya. Formally however the vihāraya usually has some given Sanskrit name, and this almost invariably ends in ārāmaya: e.g. "Śrī Saddharmārāya" - "The Blessed Temple of the True Doctrine". The average number of monks in a temple in the Mīgala area is two, though single monks are very frequent. There are usually anything up to four novices, but they spend most of their time away at school. (An educational establishment for monks is called a pirivena.) A temple servant (ābittaya) also often lives in the pansala.

The principal common features of a vihāraya, besides the pansala, are: a building containing religious art, including at least one sculpture of the Buddha; a peepal or sacred fig tree, locally known as a Bo tree; a relic mound, in English usually called a stupa; a preaching hall; and a building for monks to perform their communal rites (vinayakam). Of these only the first two were virtually constant features in the area where I worked, though the third, the stupa, an almost invariable feature of Low Country temples, was also very common. The first contains, the second and third are themselves objects of veneration.

The building containing religious art (for which I can find no better English than the awkward locution 'image-house', a literal translation of paṭimāghara, its Pali name) is, confusingly, also called a vihāraya, or vihāragedara or vihārage (gedara and ge are usually interchangeable synonyms meaning 'house'). It is of varying size, ornamentation and complexity. A Buddha image, often over life size and invariably seated or lying, is opposite the entrance door of the innermost shrine, and before it is always some kind of ledge or table on which offerings, principally flowers, can

be laid. In theory, and usually in practice, the image contains a relic. Anyone who comes to the temple for religious purposes comes to pay his respects before this image. There are other statues, usually including Buddhas and gods, and the walls are painted with similar figures and with decorations. Almost invariably the entrance to the vihāragedara or to the shrine room (sometimes to both), and often the main Buddha image too, is framed by a makara torana ('sea-monster arch'), a traditional arrangement of highly stylized motifs surmounted by a monster's head, en face, with mouth agape.¹

The Bo tree (Bō gaha, Bōdhinvahansē), is the kind of tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment (bōdhi, old Sinh. bō); moreover many trees are claimed to be grown from cuttings of the Bo tree at Anurādhapura, which is itself grown, according to the Mahāvamsa, from a cutting of the original tree. It is usually surrounded by a parapet (bāmma), which includes a ledge or altar (mal āsana) for offerings of flowers. Many of these trees are old and magnificent, and I suspect that often they have determined the situation of the temple.

The stupa has many names. Stūpa is itself Sanskrit. Old Sinhalese is dāgaba, which indicates precisely what it is, a 'relic-container'. Another old Sinhalese word, now confined to proper names, is sāya (derived from caitya). The words I found mostly used were caitya² and vehera.

1. On the form of the makara see A.K. Coomaraswamy, Mediaeval Sinhalese Art, no pub., Broad Campden 1908, p. 84. A makara torana is illustrated in plate VIII A (not VII A, as stated in the text) of the same work. For a fascinating discussion in a pan-Indian context of the origins and symbolism of the main motifs involved, see F.D.K. Bosch, The Golden Germ, Mouton, The Hague 1960. Bosch gives further bibliography on the makara in art in his footnote to p. 21.

2. Caitya is a pre-Buddhist Sanskrit word. It derives from a Sanskrit root meaning 'to pile up', and its basic meaning is 'burial mound'. However, in old literature caitya (and its Pali equivalent cetiya) can refer to any sacred spot, such as a sacred tree. In Sinhalese the meaning of the word has again contracted, and it refers only 'the stupa'.

(Vehera is merely the old Sinhalese form of vihāraya, another specialization of this versatile word!) The stupa probably existed in India in pre-Buddhist times as a burial mound. When the Buddha died his relics were distributed and buried in such mounds, and it soon became the custom to build them for other holy monks (arhats) too.¹ In Ceylon they are invariably built of solid masonry (with a small sealed chamber in the centre for the relics), and their shape is standardized. On a base, usually circular or octagonal, rises a dome, topped by a cube (haraskotuva) from which rises a thin spire which is usually of bronze. Modern stupas do not approach the scale of the ruins of Anurādhapura and Polonnaruva; in villages they range from perhaps fifteen to forty feet in total height. By a stupa again it is usual to build at least one flower-altar.

The preaching hall (bana maduva or bana gedara) is a simple building, usually square with walls only to half height so that people outside can see and hear what is going on inside. The central part of the floor is slightly raised; here monks sit (though laymen may do so too), and the monk who is preaching has a special chair, or one covered with the richest cloth available.

The building for monastic ceremonies, called a pōya gedara, may be of any sort, and often one of the other buildings is used for this purpose. Normally, a pōya gedara is enclosed, as acts of the clergy are private.

Most buildings are washed white or blue, and red-tiled roofs are common. In the hill country most temple premises are on a series of terraces, surrounded by foliage, and during a pinkama people stream up and down the steps. Ideally at the temple they wear white, but many wear their ordinary clothes

1. This practice is obsolete, in that it is generally believed that there are no more arhats, but the tombs of monks, which contain their ashes, have the form of a small stupa.

of any colour, usually bright. The monks of course wear their robes which range from yellow through orange to red. The flower offerings and five-coloured Buddhist flags add to the gaiety. Pinkam are noisy: specialists provide a lot of drumming (on drums called hēvisi and bera) and playing on a piercing wind-instrument not unlike an oboe (called a horanāva). Proceedings are punctuated by cries from the crowd of 'Sādhu', which means 'good' or 'holy', and is used rather like the Christian 'Amen'; but it tends to come in ^atriple burst of 'Sādhu sādhu saaa', which feels more cheerful, like 'Hip hip hooray'. Both monks and the vihāra fixtures are treated with decorum, which is not the same as solemnity. The decorum extends to the treatment of certain other Buddhist objects. The preaching chair (dharmāsana) has just been mentioned. When preaching a monk has a special kind of fan (vatapāna) with a decorated handle, which he sometimes holds to conceal his face. When I was given such a fan and had it in my house the villagers insisted that it be placed high up, and did not like my wife to handle it. But an even more sacred object is a manuscript of a sacred text (bana pota). (By mass production printed books - and pictures - have been largely desacralized, though a village neighbour did put a tattered book of religious verse (kavi) which he lent us on the flower ledge just below the picture of the Buddha.) The times are past when, probably under Mahāyānist influence,¹ sacred texts inscribed on metal would be buried in stupas; but the palm leaf manuscripts are kept wrapped in rich cloths, and when they are taken out for bana or pirit they are borne, like relics, on a man's head.

1. In theory the line of Buddhas has no known beginning or end. But in practice, as will appear, the Buddha Dipankara (see below, p.) is reckoned as the first. Three Buddhas before Dipankara are named at the end of the Mahāyānist sutras, e.g. the Mahāvastu, p. 12, 13, 14.

1. S. Paranavitana, 'Mahāyānism in Ceylon', pp. 44-45.

CHAPTER 3

THE BUDDHAI. THE BUDDHA'S BIOGRAPHY

Gotama Buddha, under whose teaching (sāsane) we live, was the twenty-fifth in the line of Buddhas.¹ The twenty-sixth will be Maitrī Buddha and we do not know who or how many will come after him. The first Buddha was called Dīpamkara, and it was on seeing him that our Buddha, who in that life was a young brahmin ascetic called Sumedha, made the vow that he too would become a Buddha. A being who makes such a vow is called a Bodhisattva (Sinh.: Bōsat). The 550 lives which our Buddha lived as a Bōsat before he was born as Gotama are the subject of the book of Jātaka stories. The introduction to this book is called the Nidānakathā. It begins with the story of Sumedha, and then gives the life of Gotama (his family name), both before enlightenment, when he was a prince called Siddhārtha (Sinh.: Siduhat), and the first two years after it, when he can properly be called the Buddha. The relationship of the Nidānakathā to other biographies of the Buddha, which are in Sanskrit or based on Sanskrit originals, was long in doubt. Recently Frauwallner has shown that all the biographies probably derive from a lost one composed little more than a century after the Buddha's death. Therefore, although nearly all current Sinhalese beliefs about the Buddha's biography are based on the Nidānakathā and closely related texts (see below, p. 130), the main points of the story

1. In theory the line of Buddhas has no known beginning or end. But in practice, as will appear, the Buddha Dīpamkara (see below, p.) is reckoned as the first. Three Buddhas before Dīpamkara are named at Buddhavamsa XXVII. 1, (p. 66) and Nidānakathā v. 247 (J.I.44) = Madhuratthavilasini p. 131.

are of extremely ancient origin.

Sinhalese Buddhists to-day say the same as the Canon. The Buddha was a man; his status was human, not divine. He was of course the best possible man in every respect, a man of superlatives: born in the best caste, living the most comfortable life, capable by destiny and talent of ruling the world as a temporal monarch. He had a wife and son. By leaving all this he therefore made the greatest possible renunciation. In his search for the truth he then underwent the most extreme austerities. Even after his enlightenment he was just a man. It is true that he performed some miracles, or rather wonders (for miracles imply the humanly impossible), and had marvellous powers; but these wonders are effected by the power of truth, the truth which it is open to any man to realize, and the powers likewise are those of any arhat - indeed some of the more trivial ones, such as levitation, may be attained by meditation even before the final goal of nirvāna has been reached.

Siddhārtha was 29 when he renounced the world. He spent 6 years as an ascetic, seeking the truth, and found it at the age of 35. After seeing nirvāna he spent 45 years helping others to the same realization, and entered parinirvāna when he was 80. Since then he is dead. Being dead he is of course powerless for good or ill. He cannot hear prayers or aid suppliants. Moreover, even if he could it would not help very much. The Buddha was concerned only with spiritual goods, salvation; worldly goods he renounced. Each man has to work out his own salvation by his own effort. Man is a free agent, and makes his own karma, which determines where he will be reborn. The important things are not in the gift of any power in the world - except the free will of the individual himself. In the Canon's account of the Buddha's last days¹ we read the Buddha saying

1. Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, (sutta 16). DN II.

that one should rely only on oneself, only on the Dhamma;¹ his last words were, "Compounded things by their nature decay; be attentive in your efforts".²

This is the cognitive position, which is not affected by a slight oversimplification which I have made. Buddha means "enlightened" in Sanskrit and Pali, so strictly speaking anyone who has seen nirvāna is a Buddha. Monk 9 explained to me that strictly there are three kinds of Buddhas. Those usually referred to as Buddhas, the twenty-five plus, are samyak sambuddha, 'truly fully enlightened'. (Recall the formula: Namo tassa Bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa.) They are lōttara, ^{vu}supramundane. Of course strictly speaking all Buddhas are ipso facto lōttara, ^{vu}having risen above the world of transmigration ("samsāra lōkin uttara velā"), but by usage (vayavahāra) only the samyak sambuddha get this title. Such Buddhas found a sāsanē, they teach. Then there is the pratyekabuddha (Sinh. passabudu), "enlight^ened by himself". He realizes nirvāna for and of himself alone ("tamangē nivan avabōdha pamanayi"). Like the samyak sambuddha they reach nirvāna without the help of a doctrine ready at hand, for they are born in periods when there is no sāsanē ("Budu sāsanē lōkē pavatina nāti kālak^a āti vennē"); but they do not find one themselves, so they help no one. They mostly occur in the Himalayas and such remote regions. By definition none exist now. Finally there are those who become enlightened (buddha) as disciples (srāvakayā vasen) under the samyak sambuddha - the ordinary arhats, if we may so speak. All these three types of Buddhas are still normal human beings, and do not further affect the argument; we will revert to reserving the title Buddha for the samyak sambuddha like Gotama. The pratyekabuddha will hardly occur again, and the srāvaka buddha will be simply called an arhat.

1. DN II. 100.

2. DN II. 156.

The cognitive position is logically coherent and canonically correct. Very little occurs which cannot be rationalized in terms of these beliefs. However, the Buddha has long since become the victim of a personality cult; and throughout recorded history behaviour towards him has been such that we may well question whether affectively he is viewed as no more than a historical personage long dead. Even the cognitive position, expressed in words is not quite consistent.

The question whether Buddhists really view the Buddha as the mortal founder of their religion or as a being with at least some of the attributes of the Christian God (such as eternal life, omnipotence, and responsiveness to prayer) is the one that has most interested western observers, and I shall return to it at length in the second half of this chapter. The subject is a large one, but to arrive at a tentative answer it will be sufficient to focus attention on behaviour towards Buddhist images. This behaviour will turn out at times to be discordant with the cognitive position just stated. However, before we go on to examine these divergencies, and then to establish the Buddha's position in affective religion, more can and should be said about the cognitive position. For it would do violence to my chosen method of taking full account of the villagers' own views were I to restrict my statement of their beliefs about the Buddha to the one fact, most elementary from their point of view, that the Buddha was mortal. So the rest of the first half of this chapter will be devoted to what villagers know (or believe they know) about the Buddha. (I use the word "know" because they do; I do not wish to imply by it any agreement or disagreement on my part.)

To indicate the state of knowledge about the Buddha I offer two kinds of evidence. Every image-house (vihāraḡedara) is adorned with paintings and sculpture which depict incidents from the Buddha's life, and in some

cases his former lives, and the lives of previous Buddhas. Most of the image-houses I saw were the works of local craftsmen; some, especially the more recent, were the work of craftsmen from the Low Country (usually around Mātara in the extreme south). Villagers do not customarily pay a great deal of attention to the art in their temples - certainly details of artistic finesse or even of iconography have no meaning for them - but they naturally have some idea of the incidents represented.

My other evidence is the pair of thin paper-back books which together form the primer for the bottom class, children about 5 years old, of a Buddhist Sunday School (daham pāsala). These equivalents to Sunday Schools were started about the turn of the century by the Young Men's Buddhist Association (Taruna Baudha Mandalaya), which publishes the books used. (It still owns the rights to most of them, but those for the first five classes are owned by the government's Department of Culture.) Books are supplied free to all registered schools. These can be run by anyone, but in practice they are normally run by a monk at the village temple with or without the assistance of other monks and local schoolmasters. They are free and the books are loaned to the children. The children sit for annual exams set by the YMBA, and receive appropriate certificates. There were daham pāsala attached to about half the temples I visited; they meet on Sundays, but since I left the government has substituted for the western weekend the pōya day and the half-day preceding it, so they now meet on pōya days. In Mīgala the daham pāsala was the concern of the chief monk, who took great pride in it. Children came from four villages, and most of the younger children in Mīgala attended. The chief monk claimed that when I enrolled (in the bottom class) I was the 518th pupil, but I think attendance rarely exceeded three hundred. The senior class was mostly taken by the monk, all the other classes by senior children. The lower

classes, which were larger, were sub-divided by sex. The classes spread across a grassy space at the foot of the stone steps leading up to the temple which served as a kind of village meeting-ground for the rare organized game or visit of the government film unit; they occupied a permanent school-type building also used for meetings of the village council etc., and a shed which will no doubt be replaced in due course by something permanent; but the roof space was inadequate for the masses of children. Proceedings were supposed to last from 9 to 11, timed by an alarm clock the monk had carried down from the monastery. He would administer the Three Refuges and Five Precepts; the children then divided into their classes and took turns in reading out the lesson. In our class we read through the lesson twice and then answered in writing the questions on it given in the book; the teacher corrected our answers. There then was recitation of Pali or old Sinhalese verses, also from the books which had to be learned by heart, and the class usually managed to get away before the two hours were up.

The pattern of the textbooks for the lower classes was that for each class there were two volumes which we used on alternate weeks. The arrangement of my books was typical: the first volume contained the chapters on the life of the Buddha, in fact on his life till he became Buddha (i.e. saw nirvāna), and some Pali stanzas which everyone has to know, with their explanations in Sinhalese; the second book had five Jātaka stories and a selection of moral stanzas in old Sinhalese by a fourteenth century poet. In Appendix ^{Two} ¶ I give a translation of the first two chapters of the Buddha's early life, to give some idea of their flavour, the full table of contents of the primers of the two bottom classes, and a list of the other daham pāsala books in use at our temple. The wide circulation of these books, which pass from hand to hand, can be judged from the fact that of the first

disciples and attain enlightenment under a
 grade primer which we were using the first volume was the third edition,
 of 27,500 copies, printed in 1960, and the second volume was the fifth
 edition, of 20,000 copies, printed in 1961.

It will make for clarity if I begin by summarizing without comment
 the best known incidents concerning Gotama Buddha. If any reader finds
 that I have omitted a detail, or even a whole story, which he considers
 crucial, or introduced something unimportant, I can only apologize. That
 my selection should to some extent be arbitrary is inevitable, and I have
 tried to justify my choice by the documentation which immediately follows
 the summary. Finally I give some brief indication of the ancient sources
 on which this documentation rests. Well over half my summary is concerned
 with the life of Gotama before he became Buddha; this disparity reflects
 the ancient sources which the Sinhalese artists and authors have used.

1) SUMEDHA. He became a Bodhisattva in the time of the (first?)
 Buddha, Dīpamkara, when he was a young brahmin ascetic called Sumedha.
 Dīpamkara was visiting a city with his monks, and the inhabitants were pre-
 paring the way. Sumedha offered to prepare a muddy stretch. He had not
 finished making it dry when Dīpamkara Buddha appeared, so he threw himself
 prone in the mud so that Dīpamkara Buddha and his monks could walk over
 him and thus avoid the puddles. On seeing Dīpamkara Buddha he made a re-
 solve that he too would become a Buddha. Dīpamkara Buddha stopped before
 him and prophesied that after countless ages he would become a Buddha called
 Gotama.

2) THE OTHER BUDDHAS. He performed great services for twenty-three
 more Buddhas after Dīpamkara Buddha, and all prophesied that he too would
 become a Buddha. These Buddhas before our Buddha are collectively known
 as the twenty-four (sūvisi) Buddhas. The next Buddha will be Maitrī Buddha.
 All the Buddhas have similar biographies; e.g. they have two chief male

disciples and attain Enlightenment under a particular tree which becomes sacred to them.

3) JĀTAKAS. The future Gotama Buddha lived through many lives as a Bodhisattva, accumulating the perfections (dasa pāramī or pāramitā) which are essential to a Buddha. These lives are the material of the Jātaka stories. Many Jātakas are well-known, but none better than the story of his last human birth before Buddhahood, as King Vessantara. King Vessantara practised the perfection of giving (dāna pāramitā) by bestowing on suppliants not only his wealth but even his wife and children. However, all was restored to him within his lifetime.

4) THE GODS' INVITATION. Like every Buddha, Gotama was born in one of the lower heavens called Tusita, and when in due course the gods there requested him to be born on earth to become a Buddha he had to consider the right time, place, continent, family and mother. Our Buddha decided to be born then, while the term of human life was 100 years, at Kapilavastu (Sinh: Kimbulvat) in India in the family of Suddhodana, king of the Śākyas, from his chief queen Mahāmāyā.

5) CONCEPTION. At the Āsala full moon pōya (in July), ten lunar months before Wesak, Mahāmāyā was observing ata sil and sleeping alone. She dreamt that a white elephant carrying a white lotus in his trunk entered her right side.

6) BIRTH. Exactly ten lunar months later Queen Mahāmāyā was on her way to the city of Devadaha where her parents lived, planning to give birth there. On the way she turned aside at a grove of sal trees called the Lumbini grove. There the birth-pangs came upon her, and she gave birth standing, holding onto a branch. The future Buddha descended spotless from the womb, and was caught by gods. He took seven steps and exclaimed,

"I am supreme in the world. This is my last birth."

7) ASITA. A wise old man called Asita or Kāla Devala (both mean 'black') heard of the prince's birth and asked to see him. When he saw him he smiled and then wept. Asked the reason, he said he smiled because this child would become a Buddha, but wept because he realized that he would not be alive to see it (he was going to be reborn in a formless heaven). Having left the palace Asita told his nephew to renounce the world in expectation of the time when he could become a monk under the Buddha.

8) KONDAÑÑA'S PROPHECY AND THE NAME-GIVING. For the name giving ceremony King Suddhodana invited a hundred and eight brahmins. The eight wisest brahmins examined the prince's body, and seven prophesied that he would become a universal monarch or a Buddha, but the youngest, Kondañña, said that he would surely become a Buddha after seeing an old man, a sick man, a corpse and an ascetic. Kondañña later became one of his first disciples. The name given was Siddhārtha, meaning "he whose purpose is fulfilled". (Siddhārtha is the correct Sanskrit form, Siddhattha the Pali, Siduhat the Sinhalese.)

9) PLOUGHING FESTIVAL. Once at a ploughing festival, while his father was ploughing, Prince Siddhārtha sat under the shade of a rose-apple tree and meditated. He attained the first trance (a technical term of Buddhist meditation) and the tree's shadow did not move away, whereupon his father worshipped him.

10) EDUCATION. At his studies Prince Siddhārtha was outstanding, but he took no lessons in the use of arms, and the rumour spread among his warrior kinsmen that he would be useless in war. Accordingly he arranged a demonstration at which he strung and shot the most difficult bow.

11) MARRIAGE. Prince Siddhārtha at the age of sixteen was married

to Princess Yasodharā, the daughter of King Suppabuddha of Devadaha, his mother's brother. He was then officially installed as heir apparent (yuvarāja).

12) THE THREE PALACES. King Suddhodana did not want his son to renounce the world, so he kept him in the royal park, into which he allowed no old or sick men, no corpses and no ascetics. He built his son three palaces, one for each season, and here the prince lived surrounded by every luxury.

13) THE FOUR OMENS. When he was twenty-nine years old the future Buddha asked to go out to a park with his charioteer Channa. On the way he met an old man. Channa explained the sight to him, and told him that he too was subject to aging. At this Prince Siddhārtha lost his inclination for amusements and returned home. In the same way he saw a sick man and then a corpse. On their fourth excursion they saw a man who had renounced the world and looked serene. This sight filled Prince Siddhārtha with joy and he resolved to renounce the world himself. He proceeded to the park, where he received a message that Yasodharā had borne him a son. At this he remarked, "Rāhula is born" (Rāhula is supposed to mean a bond, though this popular etymology is incorrect), so his son was called Rāhula.

14) THE GREAT RENUNCIATION. That evening Prince Siddhārtha sat thinking in his palace while slave girls danced and sang before him. He fell asleep, whereupon they too lay down just as they were and slept. During the night, the prince awoke and saw them lying around; he was disgusted, and resolved to renounce the world instantly. He summoned Channa and had him prepare the royal steed Kanthaka. He went to Yasodharā's bed-chamber and from the threshold gave her a last look as she lay sleeping, holding Rāhula to her. Then he rode out of the city on Kanthaka, while Channa clung to the horse's tail. Māra, a wicked god, tempted him to stay and become a universal

monarch, but he paid no attention,

15) HAIK-CUTTING. By morning the Bodhisat^tva had travelled thirty leagues and reached the broad River Anomā. He spurred Kanthaka across in one bound. On the sands of the opposite shore the Bodhisat^tva dismounted and cut off his hair with his sword. The great god Śakra took the hair to heaven where it is kept in a stupa called the Siluminisāya. He also took off his royal garments and replaced them with mendicant's robes, supplied by the great god Brahmā. He sent back Channa and Kanthaka, and went on alone. Channa later became a monk, but Kanthaka died of a broken heart and was reborn in heaven.

16) SELF-MORTIFICATION. The ascetic Siddhārtha began to beg for his food. He visited the city of Rājagṛha, capital of Magadha, where King Bimbisāra offered him the kingdom; he refused, but promised to come back to that kingdom first when he had found Enlightenment. He meditated under the direction of two teachers, but finally left them dissatisfied. With five other ascetics, headed by Kondañña, he undertook the most rigorous asceticism, starving himself until he nearly died. But he decided that this too was useless, and started taking proper food again. At this his five disciples left him in disgust.

17) SUJĀTĀ'S MILK-RICE. After taking a proper meal he went and sat at the foot of a banyan tree called Ajapāla ("goatherd"). A merchant's daughter called Sujātā had prepared an offering of milk - rice for the guardian deity of that tree. When her maid saw Siddhārtha she thought he must be the tree-deity making himself visible, so she fetched Sujātā who came and offered the rice in a golden bowl. The Bodhisat^tva went and bathed in the River Nera^ñjarā. Then he divided the milk-rice into forty-nine parts, and having eaten it all he launched the bowl in the water, wishing that if he was that night to attain Buddhahood the bowl should be carried

against the current. It swam upstream.

18) BATTLE WITH MĀRA. That night, the full moon night of Wesak, his thirty-fifth birthday, the Bodhisattva sat comfortably cross-legged at the foot of a peepal tree, vowing not to get up till he had attained Enlightenment. Now Māra brought up all his hosts of demons to scare the Bodhisattva but though all the gods fled in terror to the corners of the earth the Bodhisattva meditated unmoved on his ten perfections, so nothing was able to touch him. As he was alone Māra then sought to confound him by boasting of his own past charity. All the demons gave witness that Māra had given alms, and he challenged the Bodhisattva to produce a witness himself. The Bodhisattva said he had given alms in his birth as Vessantara and called the earth to witness. The earth spoke in witness, and Māra fled with his hosts, leaving the Bodhisattva victorious.

19) ENLIGHTENMENT. The Bodhisattva then meditated through the three watches of the night. In the first watch he acquired omniscience about the past, in the second omniscience about the present, and in the third he understood the chain of dependent origination which reveals the origin of suffering. At dawn he attained nirvāna, at which the earth quaked and many marvels were seen.

20) THE SEVEN WEEKS. The Buddha remained where he was for seven weeks, deep in meditation. Each week was signalized by a different event. In the fifth week the three daughters of Māra tried to seduce him by appearing to him as beautiful women, but he did not look at them. At the end of the seventh week two merchants, Tapassu and Bhalluka, passed and gave him alms. They took refuge in the Buddha and the Dharma, thus becoming the first upāsakas.

21) INVITATION TO TEACH. The Buddha doubted his ability to teach what he had realized, but the great god Brahmā begged him to teach. On

consenting he wondered to whom he should preach first. He thought of his five disciples, who were now in the Deer Park at Benares. On his way there he met an ascetic called Upaka, whom he told of his enlightenment. Upaka said "It may be so", and went on. The Buddha reached Benares on the full moon day of Āsala.

22) FIRST SERMON. When his five former disciples saw him coming they did not intend to rise for him but he concentrated his benevolence on them till they were affected, so they paid him the usual respects. He preached to them the first sermon, "The ^Turning of the Wheel of the Doctrine" (Pali: Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta; Sinh.: Damsakpavatum Sūtraya)¹ On hearing it K^oṇḍañña entered the path to nirvāna, as the other four did in the next three days. On the fifth day he preached the sermon "On the Non-Existence of the Soul" (Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta),² and all five attained nirvāna.

23) RAINY SEASONS. The Buddha preached for forty-five years. Most of the time he was travelling with some of his monks, but each year the rainy season, which lasts three lunar months starting on Āsala full-moon day, was spent at one place. There is a list of where they were spent. Two were in heavens, one of them preaching to his mother who had died ten days after his birth and been reborn in the Tusita heaven, the other, the seventh, expounding the abhidharma to the gods of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three (Pali: Tāvatisa; Sinh.: Tavtisa Divalova).

24) VISIT TO SĀKYAS. During the first year of his ministry the Buddha paid a visit to the Sākyas at Kapilavastu. As many of them doubted his abilities he caused rain to fall on only those who wished to get wet, and made marvellous phenomena appear in pairs. He ordained his half-brother Nanda by a trick, and when Yasodharā told Rāhula to go and ask his father

1. See chapter 2, p. 91.

2. See chapter 2, p. 93.

for his inheritance he ordained him too. King Suddhodana was distressed, so the Buddha promised that in future no one should be ordained without the parents' permission.

25) DEVADATTA. The Buddha was subject to various hostile attacks, but he always quelled them as he had quelled Māra. His great enemy was Devadatta, a son of King Suppabuddha, who became a monk but created schisms, and even plotted against the Buddha's life; he sent a rutting elephant against him, but the elephant fell worshipping at the Buddha's feet. The Buddha explained that Devadatta had been ~~his~~ enemy in many previous births.

26) DISCIPLES. The Buddha's two principal disciples were Sāriputta and Moggallāna (Sinh.: Sāriyut and Mūgalan). His personal attendant was Ānanda. Other famous monks included Upāli, who had been a barber and became the greatest authority on the rules of monastic discipline, and Mahā Kassapa ("Kassapa the Great"; Sinh. (= Skt.) : Mahā Kaśyapa). A monk called Sīvalī sometimes attended the Buddha on journeys because he was always able to find food. There is a list of eighty famous monks. The greatest dayaka was Anāthapindika (Sinh.: Anēpidu) who bought for the Order the Jetavanārāma at Śrāvastī by covering the ground with gold coins; in this grove the Buddha then spent many rainy seasons. The greatest dayikā (female dayaka) was Visākhā.

27) VISITS TO CEYLON. During his life Buddha paid three visits to Ceylon, (see p. 140).

28) DEATH. The Buddha entered parinirvāna at Wesak at the age of eighty. He became ill after eating pork at a dānē offered by a smith called Cunda. In a grove at Kusinārā he lay on his right side between two sal trees and died while meditating, surrounded by hosts of men and gods. After his cremation his relics were distributed by a wise brahmin called Drona (Pali: Dona).

I visited thirty-two temples with finished examples of religious painting and sculpture. (The four āvāsa without a completed image-house and the three temples where the image-house was under reconstruction are here excluded.) Usually, but not necessarily, the religious art is confined to one image-house; cases where this is not so will not be differentiated, and my remarks apply to whole temple complexes. Of these thirty-two art complexes, nineteen were I think by Kandyan artists only, eight I think only by Low Country artists, three by both and two not ascertained. For economy of space, effort and expense scenes are far more frequently painted than sculpted. (Statues are themselves invariably painted in bright colours, but by "painted scenes" I mean mere paintings.)

The favourite large-scale themes of Kandyan artists are the twenty-four (sūvisi) previous Buddhas and the seven weeks (sassatiya) passed by the Buddha immediately after his Enlightenment. There are fourteen representations (two in one temple!) of the sūvisi; of these all but three are paintings, and all but one of the sculpted sets are by Kandyans. (The exception is doubtless an imitation of the sculpted sūvisi in an older temple in the same village belonging to the rival Nikāya.) There are nine representations of the sassatiya, seven by Kandyan artists and two by Low Country artists; those by the Kandyans are paintings, those by the Low Countrymen sculpted tableaux. If we define a cycle as more than two connected or similar scenes, and except the sassatiya, only ten temples had cycles depicting Gotama's life; of these six were by Low Country, four by Kandyan artists.

Among the scenes depicted there is the preponderance which my summary reflects of scenes before Enlightenment, though this is not as striking as in the written sources reported below. What however is striking is that, sassatiya apart, pictures of the Buddha's life are relatively in-

frequent material for the Kandyan artists, and among the temples decorated by Low Countrymen there are but two (and one of these is dubious,¹) in which the enlightened Buddha is depicted by a painting. Low Country artists show Gotama in paintings until Enlightenment, but then they seem to switch to sculpted tableaux. My sample is too small to draw firm conclusions, but the evidence does suggest a strong traditional preference for showing the enlightened Buddha as a statue. This reminds us, both that it is his Enlightenment which made Buddha worshipful (in contrast to Jesus, who is sacred from birth), and that the Buddha image, at least as an object of devotion, originated as a relic container, a function which a two-dimensional painting cannot fulfil.

Let me now give a census of the themes depicted, disregarding form (i.e. whether painting or sculpture) and craftsman's origin. The numbering of the subsequent paragraphs repeats the numeration of my summary of Gotama's life.

1) There are no depictions of Sumedha except as part of the sūvisi (see next para.).

2) i) As stated, there are 14 depictions of the twenty-four previous Buddhas. When painted they are shown seated; when sculpted, standing. The twenty-four figures are identical. Usually they are differentiated by the worshippers kneeling, very small, to their left. These worshippers represent the future Gotama Buddha renewing his vows as a Bodhisattva before

1. There are three paintings of the Buddha preaching Sūtra, Vinaya and Abhidharma, in an image-house dated 1928. The incumbent told me that this was the year the building was begun (though usually the date inscribed on a temple building is the date of completion), and that the art work had been finished in 1948 by a Low Countryman. Though I have listed the temple as Low Country work it seems perfectly possible that it was begun by a Kandyan, and that the paintings of the Buddha preaching were either his work or executed according to his plan.

1. *Art and Architecture in Ceylon*, Trübner, London, 1871-77. Reprinted Luzak, London, 1950.

each Buddha. In most of these incarnations our Bodhisattva was human, but e.g. in the time of Paduma, the eighth Buddha, he was a lion.

ii) There are standing statues of Maitrī Buddha, who is identifiable by his tall headgear in which sits a small meditating Buddha. This iconographic detail shows the representation of Maitrī to be descended from representations of Avalokiteśvara, a Bodhisattva of Mahāyānist provenance, statues of whom, similarly identifiable by a small Buddha seated in the headgear, have survived from the late Anurādhapura period. Maitrī Buddha is always painted white and holds a lotus. In temple 24 is a cycle of eighteen paintings depicting Maitrī's life. The incidents are all repetitions, with new proper names, of the listed incidents in Gotama's life. The cycle begins with Maitrī in the Tusita heaven, and ends with his first sermon. Maitrī Buddha will be mentioned again in ~~the next~~ ⁷ chapter ₁ under eschatology.

3) Temple 24 has a series of ten paintings, one for each of the ten perfections, illustrated by an appropriate Jātaka. The titles give the names of the perfections in Sanskrit and the titles of the stories in the original Pali. I add a translation of the perfections, and the numbering of the Jātakas in the standard western edition.¹

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| i) Dāna pāramitāva. | Perfection of liberality. | Sasa Jātaka (316) |
| ii) Śīla pāramitāva. | Perfection of morality. | Sankhapāla Jātaka (524) |
| iii) Naiskrāmya pāramitāva. | Perfection of renunciation. | Cūlasutasoma Jātaka (525) |
| iv) Prajñā | " " " wisdom. | Sattubhastha Jātaka (524 ⁴⁰²) |
| v) Vīrya | " " " energy | Kalanduka Jātaka (127) |
| vi) Kṣānti | " " " patience | Kṣāntivādī Jātaka (313) |
| vii) Satya | " " " truthfulness | Mahāsutasoma Jātaka (537) |

1. Jātaka ed. Faus bōll, Trübner, London, 1877-97. Reprinted Luzac, London Luzac, London.

- viii) Adhiṣṭhāna pāramitāva. Perfection of perseverance Temiya Jātaka (538)
 ix) Maitrī " " " kindness Ekarāja Jātaka (303)
 x) Upeksā " " " equanimity Lomahansa Jātaka (94)

Another temple (33) has embarked on a similar series, but completed only four pictures:

- i) Dāna pāramitāva Vessantara Jātaka (547)
 ii) Śīla " Sasa Jātaka (316)
 iii) Naiskrāmya pāramitāva Makhādeva Jātaka (9)
 iv) Prajñā pāramitāva Sattubhastha Jātaka (402)

This choice of Vessantara and Sasa Jātakas to represent the perfection of dāna and śīla respectively is much more orthodox.

There is a general tendency for those Jātakas which are canonically associated (see below) with the acquisition of a particular pāramitā to be more widely known. Here is a census of how many times each Jātakas is shown, disregarding the fact that many are depicted by whole cycles of paintings (see especially temple 24 and the Vessantara cycle in temple 12).

Seven times: Vessantara J. (547)

Six times: Dahamsonḍa J. (not canonical - see below).

Thrice: Sasa J. (316).

Twice: Cullapaduma J. (193), Sattubhastha J. (402), Sāma J. (540)

Telapatta J. (96), Temiya J. (538), Khantivādi J. (313), Culladhammapāla J. (358).

Once: Guttila J. (243), Makhādeva J. (9), Vidhurva J. (545), Kunāla J.

(536), Mahāsutasoma J. (537), Ekarāja J. (303), Lomahansa J. (94), Kattahari J. (7), Sankhapāla J. (524), Cūlasutasoma J. (525), Kalanḍuka J. (127).

Total: 41 depictions of 21 different stories.

There were also a couple of scenes which looked like Jātakas which I could not identify.

4) The scene in which the gods request the Bodhisattva, seated at

ease in their midst, to be born on earth is depicted six times. Suddhodana and Mahāmāyā (there called Mahādēvī) each have one individual portrait.

5) There is one picture of Suddhodana's Āsala festival; there are two of Mahāmāyā's dream; there is one of the royal couple asking astrologers the meaning of the dream.

6) There are ten representations of the birth. The sky is full of gods. The scene is depicted at the moment when the Bodhisattva has taken the seven steps; to mark each step there is a lotus, and he is standing on the last. One cycle precedes the birth with the queen and her party setting out for Devadaha. Two show the return to Kapilavastu.

One extraordinary painting of the baby in his mother's arms must be modelled on a madonna and child.

7) There are three paintings of Kāla Dēvala (as he is called) making his prediction. The nephew appears in only one version.

8) There is only one picture of the name-giving. This is surely because it would be difficult for the artist adequately to differentiate this episode from the previous one.

9) There are three paintings of the Bodhisattva attaining the first trance at the ploughing festival.

10) There are two paintings of the Bodhisattva drawing the bow before a crowd of amazed relatives.

11) There are five paintings of the Bodhisattva's marriage, which is depicted as the simple Sinhalese rite: the bride and groom stand holding hands.

12) The three palaces are not I think specifically depicted, as this episode lacks action.

13) One version shows the Bodhisattva setting out for the park, and meeting all the four omens (pera nimiti) in turn; one version merely shows

the ascetic whom he sees on the fourth occasion, and goes on to show him walking in the park, while a god in the sky offers him yellow robes.

14) The Great Renunciation lends itself to portrayal in three separate scenes.

i) Siddhārtha awakes to find the dancing girls asleep and repulsive. Shown once.

ii) Siddhārtha gazes on his sleeping wife and child. Shown

five times. Usually the Bodhisattva is shown standing

at the door with a calm expression, but in one picture he

is walking away with what can only be described as a sneer.

Maybe this is due to a maladroit executant.

iii) The Bodhisattva leaves the city on his horse. This is

shown six times. In the sky in front of him invariably

appears Māra alias Vasavatti, tempting him to return. In

this episode Māra is coloured green.

15) This episode is especially popular with artists, and divides into two scenes:

i) The leap across the Anomā River, shown five times.

ii) The Bodhisattva cutting short his hair, shown nine times.

Most representations include Śakra catching the hair and turban in mid-

air, and some have a picture of the Siluminisāya in heaven. Some add

the god Brahmā on the other side of the picture, bringing robes. According

to one version the Siluminisāya is likewise balanced by the Saluminisāya,

a heavenly stupa in which are kept the clothes the Bodhisattva discarded

on this occasion. There are also two separate depictions of the Silumin-

isāya and the Saluminisāya, which might be considered the heavenly proto-

types of our man-made stupas, and one of the Siluminisāya alone.

16) The six years of asceticism are represented by two scenes:

- position. i) The encounter with Bimbisāra. This is shown once. There is also a pair of separate portraits of Bimbisāra and the king of Kosala, the other main kingdom where the Buddha preached.
- ii) Extreme ascetism, shown twice. The Bodhisattva is seated cross-legged in meditation, utterly emaciated. The Bodhisattva's two teachers are nowhere represented.
- 17) Sujātā offering the milk-rice is depicted six times. The Bodhisattva is shown twice launching the bowl upstream on the Neranjara River.
- 18) The battle against Māra is shown in five versions; the scene gives the artist ample scope for the exercise of the imagination in creating hideous monsters. In two of the representations the Bodhisattva is shown calling the earth to witness; a small female figure, shown from the waist up, rises up from the ground in front of him. I was told that one of these was intended to represent Mahākāntāva ("the great lovely lady"?) sinking into the ground, but I think this explanation cannot be right. I suspect that it is Mahikāntāva, which ^{means} ~~could mean~~ "Lady Earth".
- 19) The actual moment when Gotama became the Buddha is not represented as an episode in his life, though it could be said to constitute the first part of the sassatiya (see below). On the other hand this moment furnishes the paradigm for the samādhi pilima ("meditation image"), in which the Buddha is shown in a symmetrical pose, legs crossed, hands folded in lap, eyes closed or half-closed. Successful samādhi pilim convey a great tranquility. This seated samādhi posture is the commonest one for a Buddha statue, the one opposite the entrance to the shrine, which contains or is supposed to contain the relic. The Buddha was perhaps first shown seated, and the famous stone seated Buddha on the Outer Circular Road at Anurādhapura, which may be the most ancient Buddha image to survive, is in the samādhi

position. A samādhi pilima is not normally thought of as representing the Buddha at a particular moment in his life, but it seems to me possible that it originated as a representation of the Enlightenment.

In an image-house a samādhi pilima usually has its back against a wall, in which case the wall is painted with a large halo (budu rās) in white, yellow, orange, red and blue. Such a halo may also be attached to a Buddha image in some other position.

20) As mentioned above, there are nine representations of the sassa-tiya. The events of the first six weeks are listed in a Pali stanza recited to me by the incumbent of temple 18.

Pathamaṃ bodhipallankam Dutiyam ca animisam¹

Tatiyam caṅkamanam settham Catuttham ratanāgaram

Pañcamam ajapālanam, Mucalindena chatthamam.

First the cross-legged pose of Enlightenment; second unwinking; third the most excellent ambulatory; fourth the house of jewels; fifth Ajapāla(na); sixth with Mucalinda.

1 i) The Buddha remains in samādhi without moving for a whole week.

ii) Without blinking he contemplates the bodhi tree.

iii) He makes a jewelled ambulatory in the sky up and down which he walks in meditation.

iv) Similarly, he makes a jewelled house.

v) On return to earth he goes back to sit, for the next three weeks, under the banyan tree where Sujātā saw him. The three daughters of Māra try to tempt him. They are depicted as seductive women playing musical instruments.

vi) During a storm the Buddha is sheltered by the supernatural

1. My informant said "anibbisam", but the emendation^e is certain from the evidence of the Pali texts and of Sinhalese inscriptions in other temples.

serpent king (nāgarāja) Mucalinda, who puts his great hood over him. The Buddha is shown sitting on the snake's coils, half enveloped in the five-headed hood.

vii) The visit of Tapassu and Bhalluka, which occurred at the end of the seventh week, is not always included in it. In such cases the Buddha may again just be shown in meditation, or the cycle may be limited to six weeks, the main samādhi pilima in the shrine perhaps standing for the seventh.

21) There is one certain representation of Mahā Brahmā asking the Buddha to teach; a tableau which I was told represented Brahmā worshipping the Buddha might be a second. There is one painting of the Buddha on the way to Benares meeting Upaka.

22) There are eleven representations of the first sermon. It is a favourite subject for a tableau, in which the five disciples sit in front of the Buddha, facing him, and gods protrude from the walls all round, arriving on clouds to listen.

23) One temple depicts in order the places where the Buddha spent the first twenty rainy seasons.

There are several preaching scenes depicted, often as companion pieces to the first sermon. The favourite (six times) is the Buddha expounding the abhidharma in the Heaven of the Thirty-three. Three tableaux, which can be classed here, show the Buddha about to ascend a ladder into heaven, attended by Śakra and Mahā Brahmā, to preach to his mother. One scene shows the Buddha preaching Vinaya to monks; one preaching scene was not identified.

24) One scene shows the conversion of Nanda, one the meeting with Rāhula, a little boy with snake-turban who tugs at his father's robe.

25) Temple 16 has a tableau which seems to be a conflation of several

of the Buddha's encounters with his enemies, and its details were not clear to me. The elephant turned back by the Buddha could have been Nālāgiri, the elephant sent by Devadatta, or Māra's elephant Girimekhala. It is definitely Nālāgiri who bows down overcome in temple 29, where a series of tableaux shows the Buddha victorious over a succession of more or less hostile opponents, and probably also in temple 24. All these elephants are white. White elephants apart, the hostile opponents who are shown yielding to the Buddha are the Jain Satyaka (twice), the bandit Angulimāla (twice), the demon Ālavaka, and Cincā mānavikā, who falsely accused the Buddha of making her pregnant. Devadatta himself seems never to be represented; maybe there is a hesitancy to depict a wicked monk.

26) i) The Buddha's two chief disciples, Sāriputta and Moggallāna, are shown in almost every temple, invariably as a pair (I counted 26 pairs, one per temple). They are known as the Buddha's right-hand disciple (dakṣiṇatsav) and left-hand disciple (vamatsav) respectively, and flank the Buddha's image accordingly. Sāriputta always has a pink, Moggallāna a blue face; otherwise they are represented like any other monks, and always mirror each other in every other respect. Generally they flank the main Buddha image in the shrine, especially so if it is a seated image, and they usually are shown facing or inclined towards this image in a reverent posture.

ii) The other two disciples who fairly often have statues to themselves are Ānanda and Mahā Kassapa. Neither of them seem to have any iconographic peculiarities, so it is hard to tell them apart. A monk told me that Mahā Kassapa could be distinguished by his size, but I found this unreliable. To make matters worse, both are especially likely to be portrayed standing near the feet of a Buddha who is entering parinirvāna (see para. 28 below), and the monk in this scene was identified for me now as one, now as the other. In the canonical account of the Buddha's death

Ānanda figures prominently; Mahā Kassapa arrives after the Buddha has died, and worships his feet as the body lies on the pyre. Either the iconographic tradition has intentionally conflated the two events, which is unlikely, or one of the two disciples was originally meant and it has been forgotten which. It seems more likely that the person represented is Ānanda, as there is no sign of a pyre; in that case the position near the Buddha's feet would be a mere coincidence. If I count under Ānanda, those statues accompanying the parinirvāna which were identified for me as Ānanda, and the others as dubious, leaving to Kassapa only his isolated representations, the totals are six statues of Ānanda, three of Mahā Kassapa, and three dubious.

iii) The only other disciple to rank a statue is Sīvalī (one). In an avāsaya with no image-house but a shrine at one end of the room, I noticed a framed picture of Sīvalī as the only wall-decoration. Because he is connected with a constant food supply Sīvalī is usually considered a patron more appropriate for laymen than for monks.

iv) There are two pairs of portraits of Anāthapindika and Visākhā.

27) It will be noticed that there are no representations of the Buddha's visits to Ceylon.

28) i) There are three painted versions of the parinirvāna. One of these is in six scenes, following the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, and beginning with the visit of Māra to the Buddha, asking him to die. (Māra's name is etymologically related to Latin Mors, 'death'.)

When the principal Buddha image in a shrine was not seated, it was invariably lying in a pose called the "lion-lying" (simha seyyāva); the Buddha lies on his right side, his head on a pillow on which his right hand also lies, his left arm straight down by his side and his feet one on top of the other. According to my informants this pose can represent the

Buddha meditating in a lying position; usually however it is clear that the parinirvāna is intended. (I have heard that if the toes are all in line he is alive, but if the big toe of the left foot is raised he is dead; however, it is rare for the toes not to be aligned, so I am not sure that this interpretation is to be credited.) The lying Buddha is called a satapena pilima. I counted thirteen such images, two of them in the two separate image-houses of temple 37.

ii) Of events after the Buddha's death, Drona's distribution of the relics is shown once, with a companion piece showing Sonuttara Sāmanera.

The evidence from daham pāsala text-books can be far more rapidly summarized, as it is presented in Appendix ~~II~~^{Two}. For each year there are two text-books, of which the first is principally concerned with the life of Gotama, the incidents being arranged in ten chapters. Naturally each book is rather more detailed than its predecessor, and written rather less simply, but there is a good deal of repetition from year to year; for instance, the Bodhisattva's birth is described in each of the first three years. In comparison to visual representations there is far less emphasis on the spectacular; for instance the accounts of the birth omit the seven steps and subsequent pronouncement, and the accounts of the Enlightenment omit the battle with Māra, and describe the event rather in terms of my paragraph 19 than of my paragraph 18. This probably reflects western influence. On the other hand, the early books maintain the concentration on ^{Two} Gotama's life before Enlightenment: the first year ends with the barest mention of that event; the second year has six chapters on his life as Siddhārtha, the seventh chapter takes us to the first sermon, then there are two chapters on the years of teaching, and the last is on the parinirvāna.

The events in the first book, which I would assume to be the best

known, are covered at not much greater length than I have given them, in the very simple and rather repetitious style suitable for small children. There is a fair amount of descriptive detail, especially about the three palaces (my para. 12), which I have omitted, but not much which I would judge substantive. On the other hand some important details are missing. Each chapter is two small pages long in the original. This said, a fair notion of the primer's coverage and emphasis can be gathered from the following tabulation of its contents.

Chapter of primer contains	Paragraphs	in my account
1	4	Dr. F.J. Paus in his account of the
2	4,5,6	(no details on birth)
3	7	
4	8	
5	10	
6	11	
7	12	
8	13	
9	14	(no Māra), 15 (no gods, no dismissal of Channa and Kanthaka)
10	16	(no Bimbisāra or teachers), 17 (no bowl), 19 (no details)

The primers also include a number of Jātaka stories. These hardly coincide with those represented in temples, nor am I able to discern a pattern, such as illustration of the Ten Perfections, underlying their selection, so I shall merely refer the interested reader to their listing in Appendix ^{Two.} ~~II~~.

The two sources cited, temple art and the daham pāgala primer, account for all paragraphs in my account except para. 27, the Buddha's visits to Ceylon. On what are these contemporary sources based? Almost entirely on ancient commentatorial literature. Almost everything mentioned under my paragraphs 1 to 22 and 24 is based on the Nidānakathā. Paras. 23, 25

and 26 are gleaned from various canonical sources; more relevantly, perhaps, those events and persons are frequently mentioned in the introductions (pac-cuppana-vatthu) to individual Jātaka stories which were presumably composed at the same time as the Nidānakathā, the introduction to the whole book. Para. 27 is based on the first chapter of the Mahāvamsa. Para. 28 is based on the canonical Mahāparinibbāna Sutta.

Someone who reads the Nidānakathā will find in it almost everything now known about the Buddha by a Sinhalese villager. It is not my concern here to trace the origins of the contents of the Nidānakathā in any detail — that has already been well done by Dr. E.J. Thomas in his learned work, The Life of the Buddha as Legend and History¹, which covers the main stories found in all ancient Sanskrit and Pali sources. However, a few more words about the Nidānakathā in its relation to other literature will be appropriate.

The Nidānakathā forms the introduction to the Pali prose commentary on the Jātakas. As explained in chapter I, the Jātaka stories are themselves technically a commentary, i.e. the prose stories are a commentary on the verses which form their nucleus; but the work of which the Nidānakathā is a part is a commentary on the Jātaka stories taken as a whole. It is not the first such commentary, because it mentions an earlier one with which it disagrees; this is probably the Sinhalese version on which it is based. Its introductory verses indicate² that it was composed in the Mahāvihāra in Anurādhapura, but it is anonymous. It cannot be securely dated, but as will appear from the analysis of its contents, it is ~~is~~ likely to be roughly contemporary with Buddhaghosa, and as Buddhaghosa was the first to translate Sinhalese commentaries into Pali this work cannot precede

1. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London 1927 (3rd. edition 1949).

2. Jātaka p. 1 verse 11.

him.¹ Inclusive tell of the story of the Buddha's life.

After brief (but involuted) introductory verses the Nidānakathā is in three parts: I Dūreṇidāna ('Distant Origin') II Avidūreṇidāna ('Not so Distant Origin') and III Santikēṇidāna ('Proximate Origin'). I is half the length of the whole, II and III a quarter each. I contains the story of Sumedha, including his decision to attain each of the Ten Perfections; matter on Dīpaṅkara and the rest of the 24 Buddhas; and a bare mention of various births in which he attained the Ten Perfections. II contains the life of Gotama from his decision to be born to his Enlightenment. III tells of the first year of his preaching, ending with Anāthapiṇḍika's gift of the Jetavanārāma.

Three other texts between them cover almost everything that is in the Nidānakathā. Two are canonical, though generally considered late: the Buddhavamsa and the Cariyāpitaka. The third is the commentary on the Buddhavamsa, the Madhuratthavilāsini by Buddhadatta. The Nidānakathā uses the first two, but seems itself to be used by the third.

The Buddhavamsa, in verse, has twenty-eight chapters, all but one of them short. The first sets the scene: the Buddha tells how he came to attain Buddhahood. The second chapter is far the longest, and tells the story of Dīpaṅkara and Sumedha; all of it but the last verse is quoted, with acknowledgement, by the Nidānakathā (as vv. 12-222). Chapters 3

1. The stratification of the Jātaka book which has come down to us has not been finally settled. In his edition Fausbøll differentiates typographically between (1) the prose of the stories; (2) the general commentary, which consists of the Nidānakathā and the introductions to the individual stories and their conclusions in which the characters are identified by the Buddha as former incarnations of himself, his relations and followers; and (3) the explanations of difficult words in the verses. Though in origin (1) must be far older than (2), it seems to me quite possible that in the form in which we have them they (and (3)?) were composed by the same person.

2. Even of these six, only 199, 200, 213 and 214 occur in the Cariyāpitaka in the same form with the same references. 201 occurs in a different form, and 202 occurs in three different stories in slightly varied

to 25 inclusive tell of the other twenty-three Buddhas before Gotama. Just the first verse of each chapter is quoted (with some variant readings) in the Nidānakathā (as vv. 223 and 225-246). The 26th. chapter gives a biography of Gotama, as brief as the preceding chapters, and is not itself quoted. Chapter 27 is a list of Buddhas, ending with Metteyya, who is not mentioned elsewhere in the work; chapter 28 gives a list of relics and their distribution. Neither of these last two chapters has a commentary, so they are probably late additions. So much for the Buddhavamsa. So far (up to page 44) the Nidānakathā consists entirely of these verses from the Buddhavamsa and of prose passages which enlarge on them or (in the case of Buddhas after Dīpamkara) paraphrase the verses not quoted. The Nidānakathā then lists the Buddhas before Gotama, a list which is also found in the Buddhavamsa commentary, (pp. 131-2). Next then are a few lines summarizing the story so far and listing the qualifications (such as male sex) for becoming a Buddha. The last three pages of the Dūre-nidāna then list births (all of them Jātaka stories) in which the Bodhisattva attained one of the Ten Perfections, and for each perfection a verse is quoted. At the end the author says that the stories mentioned can be found in full in the Cariyāpitaka. Interestingly enough this is not true of the Cariyāpitaka as we know it. The Cariyāpitaka is a canonical book which similarly selects Jātaka stories to illustrate the attainment of the Ten Perfections, and retells them briefly in verse. But the selections made by the Nidānakathā (by title only) and the Cariyāpitaka differ in about half the cases, and of the eleven verses quoted, despite the contrary impression given by the author and the contrary statement by Rhys Davids¹, only six² are in fact taken from our Cariyāpitaka. This strongly suggests

1. Buddhist Birth Stories, Trübner, London 1880, p. 54, note 2.

2. Even of these six, only 259, 260, 268 and 269 occur in the Cariyāpitaka in the same form with the same referents. 267 occurs in a different story, and 200 occurs in three different stories in slightly varied forms from which it is conflated (cf. Cariyāpitaka III, I. 6 (p. 92) III. III. 10 (p. 94) and III. VI. 18 (p. 97)).

that the version of the Cariyāpitaka^{then} known was not the one which has reached us. So much for the Cariyāpitaka.

This disposes of the Dūre-nidāna of the Nidānakathā: it depends entirely on the Buddhavamsa and Cariyāpitaka; all of it not duplicated elsewhere is of a purely commentatorial nature. The rest of the Nidānakathā is largely duplicated by the commentary on the Buddhavamsa. This ^{was} noted by ^{Rhys Davids¹ and} Miss Horner ^{cites} in the introduction to her edition of the commentary, and the parallel passages are cited in her footnotes^{the}. The commentary on the story of Dīpankara and Sumedha is largely the same as the first part of the Nidānakathā. The first part of the commentary on the 26th. chapter of the Buddhavamsa, the one about Gotama Buddha, is an abbreviated version of most of the rest of the Nidānakathā, adding only a few short bridge passages and a few verses. This section of the commentary (p. 272^{line} 6 - p. 291^{line} 31) takes the story as far as the first sermon, covering Nidānakathā p. 47 (beginning of the Avidūrenidāna) to p. 82^{line} 12. The remaining twelve pages of the Nidānakathā are not to my knowledge duplicated or closely paralleled in another Pali text, except that parts of it recur in the introductions to individual Jātaka stories, which are usually presumed to be by the same hand.

The relevance of this analysis to our subject is that the traditions I encountered do not derive from the Nidānakathā alone. For example, the Sunday school primer gives the names of Siddhartha's three palaces as Ramma, Suramma and Subha. In the Nidānakathā they are not named. But these names occur in the Buddhavamsa (27.14)² and hence in its commentary (p. 278). The commentary goes on to give the story about the feat of arms, more or less as given in the Sunday school primer. In the Nidānakathā this incident

1. Only as quoted in the commentary, p. 293. The P.T.S. edition of the text reports only variant readings, as it does in the next line for the name of Siddhartha's wife (also not mentioned in the Nidānakathā). Miss Horner draws attention to the two names of the wife.

1. Buddhism, p. 13.

is mentioned only briefly, but the author refers one for it to the Sarabhangā Jātaka (522), in which a similar but even more elaborate story is told of the Bodhisattva in a former life. The version before us therefore seems to come from the Madhuratthavilāsinī.

Sometimes one has to look even further. When monk 39 was telling me about the birth of the Buddha (see chapter 7, p. 383) he recited a pair of Pali verses. The first is not in the Nidānakathā but is in the Buddhavamsa and in its commentary. Its original appearance in the Buddhavamsa is in a very short reference to the Buddha's birth, but it is quoted again in the commentary in the context of the full story. The second verse, however, is in none of these texts, but in an even shorter version of the whole early biography, perhaps potted from the Madhuratthavilāsinī. This very short version is in the commentary to the Dhammapada (vol. 1 pp. 83 seqq.). This text, like my informant, closely follows the first verse with another;¹ so this is presumably his source.

Of course the traditions under discussion do not necessarily derive directly from the Pali texts. In most cases no doubt the Pali texts have been mediated through folk literature which derives from the great Sinhalese mediaeval classics, prose accounts of the Buddha's life such as the Amāvatura of Gurulugōmī and the Butsarana of Vidyācakravartī. But these Sinhalese works, ^{some of} which are ^{hardly} ~~incidentally~~ no more intelligible to a Sinhalese to-day than Pali, are in their turn based on the Pali texts. ^{the Palace of the Buddha} (literally "Palace of the Buddha"). The temple is controlled by II. THE BUDDHA AS WORSHIPPED: MAN OR GOD?

Now that I have reviewed the Buddha's life and works (caritaya), the primary interest of the Buddhists themselves, it is time to return to his

1. Dh.A.I.84, note 14. Norman, the editor, seems to consider the verse an interpolation.

ontological status, if I may so call it, which has been the primary interest of academic observers, and to discuss the cult of the Buddha and his image. The bridge to this cult of the Buddha is the relic (dhātu, dahatunvahansē). We already hear of relics in the Canon. Shortly after the Buddha's last words (quoted on p. 104) ~~of this chapter~~, in the same text, is recounted how after the Buddha's body had been cremated all the peoples of that area sent asking for his remains. They were divided into eight parts by Dona; a tribe who applied late got the embers of the pyre, and Dona kept the vessel in which the remains had been collected. The original text ends by telling us that there were then ten portions, and for each a stupa was built and a festival celebrated. To this is appended a verse, which Buddhaghosa says was added in Ceylon, which adds to the earlier eight portions of bodily remains four teeth, one of which was allegedly in heaven, and another in Kalinga in south India. This latter became of great importance to the Sinhalese, for it was brought to Ceylon in the fourth century, and from that time on accompanied the king of Ceylon, and had a temple in its honour in his capital. Its history is chronicled in Pali verse in the Dāthāvamsa¹ ("The Chronicle of the Tooth"), composed by Dhammakitti in the twelfth century. The Portuguese claimed to have taken it to Goa and destroyed it in the sixteenth century, but the Sinhalese claim that by miraculous intervention they failed to do so. The Sinhalese kings built a temple for it in Kandy which has the title, unique for a religious edifice, of "palace" - the Daladā Māligāva (literally "Palace of the Tooth Relic"). The temple is controlled by a lay administrator, the Diyavadana Nilanē, and is likewise unique in not belonging to a monastery, though monks of the two great monasteries of Kandy, Malvatta and Asgiriya, alternately officiate there,

1. Ed. R. Morris and F.W. Rhys Davids, *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 1884 pp. 109-150.

preaching on pōya days, etc. It is nowadays - as has perhaps always been the case - exhibited only to people of the greatest importance, such as heads of state and prime ministers. But once a year it is taken in procession (perahāra) inside its casket (karāṇḍuva) on the back of the largest available elephant; though it is said that these days an empty substitute casket is taken, in case of accidents. This is the Āsala Perahāra, Ceylon's most famous tourist attraction¹; it takes place on the ten nights leading us to the full moon of the Sinhalese month of Āsala (in August) and on the day itself. The tooth is preceded by the perahāras of the four gods whose temples are near by; the five processions coalesce into one great spectacle of elephants and men, officials in pompous Kandyan costumes of white, purple and gold, drummers bare-bodied leaping and turning, a din of their drumming and chanting, the whole illuminated by the flames of resin torches. Probably no other occasion attracts so many Sinhalese visitors from all over the island and specially the Kandyan provinces; the procession is certainly a pinkama and attendance is meritorious; but the Tooth Temple is not one of the sixteen great places of pilgrimage, because the Buddha never visited Kandy. We shall return to this question.

To trace the progress of other individual relics is beyond the scope of this work. Relics have always followed close upon the spread of the doctrine; the arrival in Ceylon of the Buddha's begging bowl and right collar-bone and a branch of the sacred Bo tree were mentioned in the Introduction. Most recently the Ceylonese Buddhist Mission to England has been supplied with relics from Ceylon; the first relic was judged perhaps too obscure when Mrs. Bandaranaike, then Prime Minister, arrived in London with a second, taken from Mihintalē (the site of Mahinda's arrival and

1. For the tooth relic festival in ancient Ceylon and the impressions of a fifth century tourist, see Rahula, History, pp. 280-281.

conversion of King Devānampiya Tissa), and astonished the inhabitants of Chiswick with a perahāra including an elephant from a circus.¹

These Relics may be of the Buddha or of any arhat, male or female. By the excavation of a stupa in Kashmir in which was found an inscribed reliquary containing the bones of Majjhantika, striking confirmation was given to the historical accuracy of the Mahāvamsa, which records this arhat's mission to Kashmir in chapter XII. However, in practice only relics of the Buddha are important.² They have been divided by doctrine³ into three classes: sārīrika (pieces of the body), pāribhogika (things he used) and uddesika (reminders, i.e. representations). It is these three classes of relics, or their most typical examples, which are listed in this Pali verse, known by heart by most villagers and recited by the pious laymen who take the eight precepts at the temple on pōya days:

Vandāmi cetiyam sabbam sabbatthānesu patitthitam
Sārīrika dhātu mahā bōdhim buddharūpam sakālam sādā

I worship always every shrine, standing in ~~any~~^{every} place,
the bodily relics, the great Bodhi tree, and every
image of the Buddha.

The worship of relics, as Obeyesekere put it in his lectures, resolves the central point of view this is a miracle-working, but it is not the clash of the cognitive fact of the Buddha's absence with the psychological (I would say affective) fact of his presence. In a recently published article⁴ he suggests the linguistic and doctrinal origins of the belief that an enlightened person is immanent in his relics. Linguistically, dhātu in Sanskrit and Pali, and hence in learned Sinhalese, means

1. Times of Ceylon, 13th October 1964.
2. All relics are included in beliefs about their spectacular disappearance at the end of our sāsane, for which see chapter 7, section on eschatology.
3. J. IV.228, where the adjectives are attached to cetiya. Cf. Milindapañho 341.
4. G. Obeyesekere, "The Buddhist Pantheon in Ceylon and its Extensions", in Nash M. (ed.), Anthropological Studies in Theravada Buddhism, Yale University Southeast Asia Series, 1966, pp.1-26. This argument is on p.8.

an "element"; for instance, it can refer to the essences of man and woman embodied respectively in semen and a posited equivalent female fluid. This does not mean (pace Yalman¹) that an ordinary Sinhalese villager knows that the word can mean "semen" and hence that relics have connotations of pollution or sexuality.² It does however mean that unlike the word "relic", which suggests something merely left behind, the word dhātu suggests a basic constituent, perhaps even a sort of essence. This of course applies in the first instance to the ancient Sanskrit and Pali, and is not a Sinhalese innovation. Far more interesting, to my mind, is Obeyesekere's hypothesis that this conception of relics derives from one of the "undecided questions" mentioned in the Introduction (p. 9). The Buddha would not say, when asked, whether an arhat after death exists or does not exist or both or neither. Though that can hardly have been his intention, his silence leaves room to conjecture some sort of after-life for the enlightened. Moreover, the doctrine that enlightenment, the summum bonum, is a "blowing out" of the personality is counter-intuitive. "Thus the dhātu is the visible representation of the immortal nirvāna state". From the orthodox doctrinal point of view this is a misunderstanding, but it could date from the earliest times. As Obeyesekere shows, it fits in well with the popular ascription to relics of the same abnormal powers of locomotion as arhats are supposed to possess, typically the ability to levitate and fly.

Such holy powers should, by the logic of this argument, inhere only

1. Nur Yalman, Under the Bo Tree, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1967, p. 137 note 8. Bones are not dirt, nor does dhātu-garbhaya mean 'dhātu in the womb'.
2. On p. 9 Obeyesekere refers to the myth that the Buddha will be reassembled from his relics at the end of the sāsane, and says, "This is strikingly similar to the notion that male dhātu and female dhātu unite in orgasm to form a new being." For once I must disagree with him: I do not find the similarity striking or the analogy plausible.

in bodily relics. Indeed, certain functions are reserved for the bodily relics. With a few celebrated exceptions, such as the Buddha's begging bowl (pātra), they are the only ones to be enshrined. Enshrinement can be in stupas, in relic caskets (which usually have the form of miniature stupas), or in images - which will be explained below. Relics are of course usually to be found in temples, though exceptionally one is owned by a layman. In theory it is not a relic which makes a temple holy - it is monks who sanctify it by their presence - but in my researches I came across only one temple which did not claim to possess a relic. Though they are of course handled with the greatest veneration, in a wider sense these relics are casually dealt with: I invariably asked after the origin of a relic, but never got any reply more interesting than that it was inherited from the monk's teacher (paramparāvin). This is not the uncritical attitude of fanatical regard, which would retail some elaborate myth, but an indifference entirely proper to monks. However, I think the indifference is shared by laymen: I was sometimes told quite casually that some relic had been lost ("nāti vunā"). These village relics are indeed not very impressive objects: as a special favour I was shown those in Mīgala, precious casket removed to reveal precious casket, until the last tiny stupa contained a couple of minute white balls of what I presume was bone.

When monks formally visit a layman's house, typically to receive a meal or to recite pirit, they probably take with them the small temple karāṇḍuva containing relics, and there is a perahāra. (A perahāra need not be religious at all, but usually it is. The sort of perahāra I am discussing involves monks or relics, probably both. There are also perahāras for gods, in which their images are carried.) On the way to or from a pirit the sacred books (pirit pot), palm-leaf manuscripts, are carried and treated in the same way as the relic. The relic casket,

covered with a rich cloth, is carried on a cushion on a man's head, and a canopy is held over it. It is preceded by drumming and, on grander occasions, dancing; small boys run ahead throwing fire crackers, other children carry white pennants tied to sticks, and maybe Buddhist flags, and all the laymen frequently shout "Sādhu sādhu sādhu". The monks walk behind the relics, carrying their umbrellas. When the procession reaches its destination it halts for a final climactic salvo of drumming and then dissolves. Before monks enter the building they take off their sandals, if any, and as they reach the threshold their feet are washed by one layman and dried by another. (The reader who recalls Biblical parallels should be reminded that in Ceylon such personal services to monks are always performed by men). In a well-conducted ceremony the monks from this point walk on white cloths, the provision and spreading of which is a special function of the washer caste. At a really big perahāra like the Kandy Asala Perahara these cloths are used throughout the procession, but this is too extravagant for villagers. Inside the house the relic casket (with manuscripts, if brought) is put on a table; the essential is that it should be higher than the seats of those present. When monks are fed, a portion may be set aside in front of the relics. I saw this done several times by middle-class people in cities. It is a substitute for the normal Buddhapūjā (offering to the Buddha) which is made at every temple before every meal. Such offerings are discussed below. In the village however the Buddhapūjā is usually sent straight up to the temple to be offered in the normal way, so no food need be reserved at the scene of the dānē. When the monks have been satisfied the remainder of the food is served to the guests, but the Buddhapūjā may be given only to animals or beggars; in cities it is often just thrown away. The return procession is similar to the arrival but much less ceremonious.

The commonest pāribhogika dhātu, object used by the Buddha, is a Bo tree. Under its shade he attained enlightenment. There is one in almost every temple, and some grow elsewhere besides. Wherever a Bo tree grows it is sacred: it may not be cut down, and it may receive offerings. The nature and rationale of offerings (pūjā) made before relics will be extensively discussed below. Here I shall only remark that one type of offering seems to have entered Buddhism from earlier tree worship via the Bo tree: a piece of cloth, nowadays formalized as a flag (kodiya) may be tied onto a branch.

It is the pāribhogika dhātu which provide occasion for pilgrimage. In the canonical text already quoted which describes the Buddha's death is a passage in which the Buddha, on the last day of his life, recommends pilgrimage to four places: where he was born, attained enlightenment, preached the first sermon, and died. These places should be seen and admired, and if anyone dies with a contented mind while on a pilgrimage (cetiya-cārikā) they will be reborn in heaven¹. These four points, or the places believed to be them, are the supreme goals of pilgrims; every year tours are arranged from Ceylon, and several of my monastic informants had been on them. However, more places of pilgrimage have been found nearer home, on the above model: anywhere visited by the Buddha provides occasion for religious awe, so he visited Ceylon.

According to the first chapter of the Mahāvamsa the Buddha paid three visits to Ceylon, arriving by air. His first visit was to Mahiyangana, at the eastern foot of the central massif; his second to Nāgadīpa (Tamil: Nainativu), an island near Jaffna in the extreme north. On the third visit he went to Kālaniya, on the west coast near Colombo, and on his way

1. DN II. 140-1 (sutta 16.5.8).

back planted his footprint on Siripāda, known in English as Adam's Peak, in the south-west part of the hill country, the second highest mountain in Ceylon and by far the most spectacular; he further tarried and meditated in a cave at the foot of Siripāda, at Dīghavāpī on the east coast, and four or five spots in Anurādhapura. According to another ancient version (Samantapāsādikā I. 89) the third visit included Mutiyangāṇa, in the south-eastern highlands. What these places have in common is that, like the Bo tree, they were used by the Buddha. At Mahiyangana the Buddha also left some hairs of his head and that temple later miraculously acquired a bone of his neck¹; at Nāgadīpa he left the seat from which he had preached and the tree which had served as his parasol, themselves pāribhogika dhātu; but at the other places he originally left nothing, and Siripāda, the place of pilgrimage par excellence, has nothing material to offer the worshipper except the Buddha's footprint, recently covered in concrete.

There are altogether "sixteen great places" (solos mahāsthāna) which are said to have been visited by the Buddha and are therefore sites of pilgrimage. Such a group of sixteen is alluded to in the last chapter of the Cūlavamsa (C.128 and 253) but for reasons given below I suspect that the group is far older. The list is not stable, and I think I have discovered the basic reason for its instability: in the passage in the Mahāvamsa describing the Buddha's third visit to Anurādhapura, and in the passage in the Dīpavamsa on which it is at least partially based, there is an ambiguity², so that they can be interpreted to mean that the Buddha

stopped at the future site of the Bo tree at the future site of the Mahāvihāra, or to make these into two separate stops. The other points

1. Not a collar-bone, which is in the Thūpārāma. See Geiger, Culture of Ceylon, p. 213 note.

2. Divy. 1.180-81, Dīpavamsa 11.61-65.

visited in Anurādhapura, as listed in the Mahāvamsa, are the Ruvanvālisāya, the Thūpārāma and the Lankārāma. There are thus eleven¹ or twelve² sites which according to fifth-century sources (the Mahāvamsa and the Samantapāsādikā) were visited by the Buddha, and the number sixteen has to be completed by the addition of four or five names. Candidates for the other places are Tissamahārāma near the south-east coast (always included); Kataragama, near Tissa; Mihintalē, very near Anurādhapura; and at Anurādhapura the Mirisavātisāya, Abhayagiri and Jetavana. When the Buddha is supposed to have visited these places is obscure to me, but their other sacred associations are all recorded in the first part of the Mahāvamsa.

What can we deduce from the size and shape of the list about its history? Though I know of no ancient evidence for a list of sixteen places of pilgrimage, the number sixteen has ancient connections with stupa worship in Ceylon:

"On the lowest terrace of a stupa there were sixteen marks of footsteps known as pādapīthikā fixed at regular points round the cetiya. They indicated the places where the pilgrims should stop and kneel down and worship in the course of his circumambulation, after offering flowers at the upper terraces ... "3 "Guruḷugomi ... (12th c.) says that there were sixteen pādapīthikas fixed at the Ruvanvālisāya indicating the points at which sixteen golden Buddha-images were enshrined inside the cetiya ... "4

As for the list's composition, it is notable that none of the superb sites of Polonnaruva are included, but that all the places named have sacred associations going back at least to the fifth century A.D.. Moreover it can hardly be a coincidence that half the places listed are so well distributed round the country, while the other half are in the ancient capital.

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1. Thus Geiger in his note to his translation of Mhv.C.109, attributing his list to Wiḍesinha, a previous editor, and Obeyesekere, "Buddhist Pantheon", p. 23.
 2. Thus Professor Jayawickrama, The Inception of Discipline and the Vinaya Nidāna, Luzac, London 1962, p. 116, and depictions in the local temples I visited.
 3. Rahula, History, pp.117-8, with references to Buddhaghosa's commentaries
 4. Rahula, History, p. 118 note 1.

It certainly looks as if the list antedates the Polonnaruva period, and symbolically brings the whole of Ceylon under the religious suzerainty of Anurādhapura. ¶ These then are the sixteen places of pilgrimage, fifteen of which the devout Buddhist hopes to visit at least once in a lifetime. (Fifteen, because the site of Divyaguḥā ('Divine Cave'), in which the Buddha spent a day at the foot of Siripāda, has not been determined.) A pilgrimage is simply called a vandanāva ("worshipping") or a ṣin gamana - a "merit journey". It may well be the longest journey in a villager's life. It is normally undertaken in large groups, without differentiation by age or sex. A monk may go too, in which case he is of course provided for by the others, but I do not think monks travel on more pilgrimages than do devout laymen. Pilgrimages may take place at any time, but there are recognized seasons for the most famous spots, and nowadays the government makes appropriate arrangements. The season starts¹ with Siripāda, which is usually climbed in the four months ending at Wesak (in May), because that is the part of the year when it is least likely to rain there and the sunrise may be seen in its full glory. Siripāda is the only pilgrimage necessarily to involve physical exertion, but the three-thousand foot climb up steep stone steps, up by night and down in the morning, deters neither the aged nor the pregnant woman with another baby on the hip; I went along with such a cross-section of Mīgala, and all of us made the ascent in three hours and the descent in one and a half. Poson, in June, is the time to visit Anurādhapura, because it is the anniversary of Mahinda's arrival in Ceylon. The fortnight before the full moon in August (Āsāla) is the time of Ceylon's two most famous religious festivals, though neither of them

1. Kālaniya used to hold a perahāra in February; this has been suspended during that monastery's difficulties since the then incumbent was jailed for his part in Mr. Bandaranaike's assassination.

is on our list of pilgrimages; the procession for the tooth relic in Kandy and the festival of the god Kataragama at his eponymous centre in the south-eastern jungle. A Buddhist's visit to Kataragama, whether it is considered one of the sixteen places or not, is inevitably combined with a pilgrimage to nearby Tissamahārāma; witnessing the procession of the Tooth is anyway meritorious. Finally, September is the month of the perahāra at Mahiyangana.

In the old days of course people walked on most pilgrimages, but nowadays they hire a bus from one of the companies which cater principally for this demand. Some enterprising people decide to organize a trip, calculate that they can fit fifty or sixty bodies into a bus, and divide the cost equally among the lay travellers. Some buses take pilgrims to all the sixteen places, and several besides, in a tour lasting a week or more. These buses have materially altered the character of pilgrimages. The sentimental outsider may deplore the rapid disappearance of the religious picnic party adventuring through the forest towards some scene of ruined grandeur. The safer bus journey to a repaired and whitewashed antiquity, electrically illuminated by night, may seem less romantic, and may exclude the very poor, but few Kandyan villagers in the old days can ever have reached Nāgadīpa, and the wider travel may even have marginal political advantages in increasing national sentiment. The ritual character of the pilgrimage has been equally altered: all improvements in communications work to the detriment of purely local deities. Less mobile villagers used to worship the local god before leaving his territory; then the god's overlord, the bigger god who controlled a wider area; and so on till at their destination they reached the Buddha, lord of all and god among the gods (devātideva). The remains of these customs, if any, are hard to recognize. On leaving Mīgala for Siripāda no one ever dreamt of

bothering with our local god, Piṭiya Deyyō; but on our way we stopped in Kandy to pay our respects to the Buddha at the Temple of the Tooth, and as we climbed the mountain we chanted

Apē Budun api vaṇḍinna
Saman deyyō pihita venta

We praise our Buddha; god Saman, help us.

That Saman is the god of Siripāda everyone knows, but few know how far his range of the Buddha was set up by Parakramabāhu Vīra, i.e. in the third century B.C. Much less obvious is the vestigial nature of our stop in Kandy: to go from the Buddha's tooth to the Buddha's footprint is a geographical but not a religious ascent; however, we were worshipping the local and familiar relic before venturing into the unknown.

The two classes of relics already discussed have probably been venerated since the Buddha's death, worshipped by pilgrimage and prostration, like an old and respected teacher. The third class, the uddesika dhātu which "indicate" the Buddha to remind one of him, are an innovation, though an ancient one. Though the very shape of a stupa, through its association with physical relics, has itself acquired the status of an uddesika dhātu, the most important example is the image of the Buddha, his representation in painting or sculpture. The Sanskrit word for any image, pratima, has become specialized: in Ceylon it and its derivatives, such as Sinhalese pilima, refer only to sacred sculpture, for the sculptured image is culturally the important one¹.

In the earliest Buddhist art, which is of course Indian, the Buddha was represented only symbolically by an empty seat under a Bo tree, a footprint, an umbrella, or the dharmacakka, the wheel of the law which he dis-

1. An ordinary sculpture in Sinhalese is rūpaya, but the word is not applied to sacred images. Painting is citrakarmaya or pintūraya; the latter word more naturally applies to a framed picture, so that the wall-paintings typical of temples are generally called citrakarma.

covered. Where and when his body was first depicted is still disputed: art historians say that it was either in Gandhāra on India's north-west border, where art was influenced by contact with the Roman Empire, or well within north India in the Mathurā school of art, and that it probably happened some time in the last two centuries before Christ. They thus reject or ignore the evidence of the Mahāvamsa, which says¹ that a stone image of the Buddha was set up by Devānampiya Tissa, i.e. in the third century B.C. This image was the most famous one in ancient Ceylon; it is frequently referred to in the chronicles, and was probably the one which so impressed the Chinese pilgrim Fa Hsien in the early fifth century A.D. (He says the image he saw was made of green jade, but that is most improbable.) It is possible that it is the same as the famous samādhi pilima (seated Buddha image) still visible (though disfigured by restoration) on the Outer Ring Road at Anurādhapura; though this statue is far less tall than the two chang (about 22 feet) vaguely claimed by Fa Hsien. This Mahāvamsa testimony occurs in an account of events in the third century A.D., and was written still later; the author may have been mistaken about the statue's origin². Error is, however, even less likely in the long account (chapter XXX) of Dutugāmuṇu's decoration of the relic chamber in the early first century B.C.; he had a golden Buddha image made, and many other sculptures and paintings which are enumerated. The similarity of the subjects then chosen to what I saw in the village temples I visited is quite remarkable.

Buddha images are sacred objects. They are made by special people:

1. XXXVI, 128.

2. For more detail on this interesting question of the origin of the Buddha image see Rāhula, History, pp. 121-5. It is sad that the facts he adduces are still so unfamiliar to art historians. I would also recommend the curious reader to his subsequent investigation of the origins of the image-house in Ceylon.

their manufacture is - or was before the days of mass production - the prerogative of sittaru (literally: 'painters'). Sittaru do all the artwork, both painting and sculpture, in a temple. They form a sub-caste of the navandannō, the caste which includes all types of craftsmen, from carpenters to goldsmiths. Another person, an artist, may in these modern times make a Buddha image, but if he has any trace of traditional sentiment left he will refrain from giving it the finishing touch, which consists in putting in the eyes, and leave this to a sittarā, who will perform the appropriate ceremony, a nētra pinkama ("eye festival"). Only then is the image sacred. As Knox put it: "Before the Eyes are made, it is not accounted a God, but a lump of ordinary Metal, and thrown about the Shop with no more regard than anything else ... The Eyes being formed, it is thenceforward a God."¹ Though in this passage Knox calls the image a God, he elsewhere shows that in the seventeenth century the cognitive position was just as I have explained it: "As for these Images they say they do not own them to be Gods themselves but only Figures, representing their Gods to their memories; and as such they give to them honour and worship."² The pilima is an uddesika dhātu. But it is also usually the repository of a sārīrīka dhātu. For Buddhaghosa, it seems, an image was not itself a relic (dhātu), and was of importance only if it contained one: he only mentions regard being paid to an image (pratimā) which has a relic (sadhātuka). I have mentioned above that to this day portable relics are always in a container shaped like a stupa, or else in a small Buddha-statue; this must have been how Buddha images acquired their sacred character; and the doctrine of the uddesika dhātu is still very close

1. Knox, op.cit., p. 130 (original folio p. 82).

2. Knox, op.cit., p. 116 (folio p. 73).

to the viewpoint, which seems to have been Buddhaghosa's, that an image is worshipped only for the relics it contains.

A relic is not worshipped merely by contemplation or physical gesture. Offerings are made, and such an offering is called a pūjā: the word does not differentiate between the act and the thing offered. Typical offerings which may be made before a Budupilima, a Bo tree or a stupa are flowers, incense and lights, flowers being much the commonest. Villagers visit the temple on pōya days and other religious occasions to make these offerings but more often they are made at home. Most homes have a picture of the Buddha, before which these offerings are laid on a small altar. The word which here and throughout I translate "altar", mal āsana, literally means "flower seat". In addition the main Budupilima in a temple is offered the same meals as the monks. Let me say a few words about each kind of offering, beginning with those which are the commonest and doctrinally the least problematic.

In towns flowers can be bought outside every temple; in villages they are readily available. A flower should be offered without leaf or stalk, and each bloom is laid down to face the image (or Bo tree, etc.). This is merely the kind of good manners one shows to any superior, to whom one does not present one's feet or one's back. According to a sermon on the subject delivered in Mīgala at Wesak, the custom of offering flowers was started (and is still practised) by the gods. When offering a flower it is usual, but not essential, to recite these two Pali stanzas.

Vanna-gandha-gunopetam
Etam kusuma-santatim
Pūjayāmi munindassa
Siripāda-saroruhe.

This heap of flowers, which has colour and scent,
 I offer at the blessed lotus feet of the lord of sages.

Pūjemi Buddham kusumen' anena
Puppham milāyātiyathā idam me

puññena-m-etena ca hotu mokkham
kāyo tathā yāti vināsa/bhāvam

I make offering to the Buddha with this flower, and by this merit may there be release (moksa). Just as this flower fades, so my body goes towards destruction.

Not every kind of incense is appropriate to the Buddha; those with grosser fragrance are reserved for lower beings. The Buddha receives joss sticks, which are lit and left to smoke before him. They are generally confined to the worship of an image, maybe because the sweet smell would be lost in the open air. These are the verses which accompany respectively an offering of incense (suvāṇḍa) and of 'fragrant smoke' (suvāṇḍa dum), i.e. burning incense.

Sugandhi-kāya-vadanam ananta-guna-gandhinam
Sugandhināham gandheṇa pūjayāmi Tathāgatam

To him of fragrant body of face, fragrant with infinite virtues, to the Tathāgata, i.e. the Buddha, I make offering with fragrant perfume.

Gandha-sambhāra-yuttana dhūpenāham sugandhinā
Pūjaye pūjaneyyam tam pūjā-bhājanam uttamam

With this fragrant smoke full of perfume I make offering to the supreme recipient of offerings, worthy to receive them.

The lights offered nowadays by individuals are sometimes candles, the influence of western technology and the Roman Catholic church, aided maybe by Col. Olcott. In villages the usual light offered is still an oil lamp, a little clay dish containing a strip of cloth lying in coconut oil. On special occasions after dark the entire premises of a temple may be outlined with such small lamps; in Mīgala this was done to commemorate the anniversary of the death of D.S. Senanayake, independent Ceylon's first prime minister. A few temples in the area have provision for a perpetual lamp to burn, a dolos maha pahana (literally "twelve-month-lamp"). This is still a coconut oil lamp as described, but a big one on a separate structure, e.g. a short pillar, standing in the courtyard, with some protection from the wind and rain. Here is the Pali verse for offering

lights (pahan).

Ghana-sāra-ppadittena dīpena tama-dhamsinā
Tiloka-dīpam sambuddham pūjayami tamo-nudam

With this lamp which blazes with firm strength, destroying darkness, I make offering to the truly Enlightened lamp of the three worlds, the dispeller of darkness.

The order in which I have presented these verses corresponds to how ^eall they are known: the flower verses are in the first book of the Sunday school primer, and known to every normal person, whereas I think only the very devout layman would know the last two.

Flowers, incense and lights are the only offerings commonly made within the home. It is the remaining types of pūjā; those more p~~r~~eculiar to public places, which raise the more complicated problems. Before considering these, however, let me deal with the question raised by any offerings before relics and images: can such worship be reconciled with the cognitive position that the Buddha is dead and powerless to help? Yes certainly — it can and it is. Such offerings raise not only the question of the ontological status of the Buddha, with which we are here concerned, but also connected problems concerning "prayer" (which will be discussed in chapter 5) and concerning ethics (see chapter 6) of which I can here do little more than take cognizance. However, it is essential for an understanding of the Theravādin position that I here give a brief explanation of the rationale for all such offerings.

Ask any monk, and the cognitive position is quite clear: no offering, no flowers, no recital of verses has any intrinsic merit; it is the thought that counts. The Buddhist ethic is an ethic of intention; and doctrine is consistent on this point. We may accept this, but question whether the intention in offering flowers or food is not to receive some favour in return. The answer is no. What then is the intention? There are

two ways of answering this. The first is to say that there is no further intention: the thought itself, the emotion on the mind of the worshipper, if it is pure (śuddha), makes for what we might translate as spiritual development (hita diyunuva)¹ which is furthered by the earnest aspiration to achieve nirvāna which should accompany the offering. This answer is doctrinally orthodox and clear. The other answer might be to say that there is an intention to acquire merit (pin). This perhaps begs some further questions, as it seems to be coming close to granting to an act the intrinsic merit which has just been denied; but the answers of an adept informant will take us back to the same position as that disclosed by the first answer. The relation between these two answers, which cognitively can be harmonized, but affectively seem to differ, will be examined in chapter 6. For my present purpose it suffices to note that all answers come down to talk of pure thoughts, and emphatically deny that the Buddha is seen or considered as a god, still alive or powerful.

The nature of the emotion which the worshipper is supposed to feel might be conjectured from some of the verses. The stanza on lights contains a play on words which gives it a philosophical twist: the darkness which the Buddha dispelled was the darkness of ignorance. The second stanza in the flower offering contemplates the transience of the body. Are such philosophic moods the ones that are experienced, or supposed to be experienced? Very many people, though they do not know Pali, have had the meanings of the stanzas explained to them, and monks certainly understand them precisely. However, when I asked the head monk at Mīgala about mal pūjā he said that they are not for the Buddha, who is dead, but for us to derive joy (prīti) from looking at them. Buddhaghosa says² that one gets

1. The literal meaning is "mental development" or "development of thought".

2. Sammohavinodanī (Vibhanga Atthakathā) p. 243; see also Atthasālinī (Dhammasaṅgāni Atthakathā) p. 91. Cited by Rahula, History, p. 126.

Buddhāmbanapīti, joy derived from contemplation of the Buddha, by looking at a Bo tree or caitya. The head monk's reply was therefore in this tradition in describing the emotion of a worshipper as prīti, joy, though he gave it an interesting and perhaps idiosyncratic twist by making the flowers themselves the immediate reason for joy. What occasions a pure emotion is however irrelevant, so the discrepancy is unimportant. It is more interesting that despite the clear contrary implication of some of the verses recited for particular offerings, the general emotion felt to be appropriate to pūjā is joy.

We now come to consider offerings and ceremonies which are commonly said to be borrowed from Hindu practices, and thus incur the suspicion of Hindu ideological backing. Most Ceylon Tamils (the Hindus in question) worship at temples containing images which are believed to incorporate a god and thus to be in some sense alive and divine. It is however possible, prima facie, that the Buddhists should have adopted ceremonial forms and changed their meaning; this becomes all the more plausible if the forms turn out on closer inspection to have been modified.

Here is the first example. Before every meal in the monastery the principal Buddha image has a portion of the food etc. laid before it. The shrine is emptied for a couple of minutes; then the food is taken out again, and thrown away or handed to dogs or beggars. No self-respecting Buddhist would touch it, or anything which has been offered to the Sangha, which is in the same category. In Mīgala I think it was usually eaten by dogs, as a normal Buddha pūjā is too small to be worth the trip for a beggar. But when lots of monks were fed and so plenty of food was left over Tamil beggars assembled behind the temple and had a feast. In their eyes such food is not even degrading, for after a Hindu pūjā the worshippers share the food which has been offered; but to the villagers

this was a vivid illustration of the beggars' degradation, and among themselves they made some quite nasty comments to this effect. The food is offered before the Buddha image by whoever is giving the meal to the monks, or by a monk if it comes from their provisions. (Food is supplied by laymen in some monasteries always, in others almost never, in the rest somewhere in between.) Monks have two meals, breakfast and the mid-day meal, and in the evenings they drink tea, maybe suck sweets, and are offered also the materials for chewing betel and other things they may like to chew. A portion of all these is first offered to the Buddha image; e.g. the mid-day meal, which the monks eat at 11.30, is offered to the statue at 11 or soon after. The Pali stanza which may accompany this runs:

Adhivāsetu no bhante bhojanam parikappitam
Anukāmpam upādāya patiganhātu-m-uttamam

"May the monk accept the food we have prepared; taking compassion (on us) may he receive the best."

In my translation the verse is addressed to a monk; the Pali says bhante, which is a normal way of addressing a monk in the Canon. The Buddha too was a monk, so the word makes sense here. It crops up here because adhivāsetu no bhante is a common phrase which (like anukāmpam upādāya) may be used when asking a monk to administer the precepts (pan sil or ata sil).

According to the Nidānakathā, the two merchants who give the Buddha his first food after Enlightenment say:

Patiganhātu no bhante Bhagavā imam āhāram anukāmpam upādāya

"May the monk, the Blessed One, accept this food from us, taking compassion (on us)."

The above verse is merely a versification of this prose formula. There are minor variants for this verse, most of which are to modify its application: instead of bhojanam: "Food" one may offer vyañjanam: "curry", taralam: "rice gruel", khajjakam: "sweets", paniyam: "water", panakam: "drink", bhesajjam: "medicine", or gilānapaccaya, which also means "medicine"

(literally "requisites for disease"), but in its Sinhalese form gilampasa is the generic term for the evening dānē.

At this point it may be objected that the production of sentiments of joy or philosophic contemplation may be an adequate explanation for the comparatively insubstantial offerings of flowers, incense and lights, but that when food is offered surely something else must be involved. The idée reçue runs something like this: flowers etc. are the true Buddhist offerings; food is offered to their gods by Hindus (who make no careful distinction between the image and the presence of a divinity); food is laid before the Buddha image just as it is laid before statues of Vishnu or Kataragama (which may even be found in the same shrine); therefore the offering of food to the Buddha is a practice borrowed from the Hindus. The fact that the food thus offered is rendered sacred, in that no Buddhist will afterwards eat it, is sometimes adduced in support of this theory. To take the supporting argument first: the sacredness of the offering is of a very different character, for in a Hindu pūjā food which has been offered to the god is then distributed among the worshippers in a kind of communion. The practice implies that one derives benefit from the close contact of one's food with a divinity. The Buddhist attitude we saw to be just the opposite: food offered before an image is treated as if it were Sāṅghika, i.e. like something given to the Order, and for this reason no longer allowed for lay use¹. This distinction is perfectly clear, though maybe not so theoretically expressed, to the Buddhist inhabitants of Mīgala.

1. Ancient inscriptions recording gifts to the Sangha mention the unpleasant rebirth awaiting anyone who should feed on Sangha property, and a dog and crow are sometimes illustrated. The Rev. Rahula has suggested to me a contributory cause for the tradition. In the Dhammadāyāda Sutta (MN Sutta 3) two monks arrive hungry when the Buddha has dined, and he offers them the rest of his meal. One accepts and one refuses. He praises the latter, saying that to be an heir (dāyāda) of material goods is nothing: one should inherit the dhamma.

Some of them occasionally visit a Hindu temple to Kataragama about five miles away which is run by and mainly patronized by Tamils. Like the Hindus they take food, offer it to the god, and then eat their share of what has been offered. They accept the Hindu theory that Kataragama has enjoyed the food, and have no theory about why they then eat it themselves. But all this has no effect on their behaviour in a Buddhist temple. An interesting question is what happens to food which is offered to, say Kataragama, in a Buddhist temple. On this I cannot speak from experience. In Migala temple there were no statues of gods at all, which is rather unusual. In most temples in the area there are statues of gods, but most of them are purely decorative. Even those which are worshipped are never, to my knowledge, given offerings of food. But in some Buddhist temples in other districts I believe that a god is offered e.g. the daival dānē after another portion has been offered to the Buddha. Perhaps some of this is returned to the worshipper according to the Hindu custom. Every god who is worshipped and receives offerings has his own priest (see next chapter), who in fact of course receives the offerings for him; I suspect that this would apply also to offerings of food, which would not be sāṅghika and would therefore be fit for human consumption.

But the offering of food to the Buddha need not be explained by a diffusion of Hindu practices in Ceylon. Buddhaghosa says¹ that wise men before a meal offer food and drink to an image or casket (cetiya) containing a relic which they place before them. This is exactly the practice we saw to be followed today at a dānē when the Budu pilima in the temple is too far away for convenience. The offering before the portable relic is the older custom: to make it before the large, stationary image which contains

1. Samantapāsādikā (Vinaya Atthakathā) III.264-5. Cited by Rahula, History, p. 125.

a relic is but a logical extension. This is not to deny that Hindu influence may have been helpful in formulating modern procedure: the Buddha pūjā at mealtimes is no doubt sociologically over-determined. This conclusion is reinforced by the tenor of other offerings and ceremonies.

The crucial respect in which modern practice seems to have changed from that recommended by Buddhaghosa is the recitation of the verse quoted above, in which the Buddha, being asked to accept the food, is addressed as if he were alive. This looks like a break-through of what I shall show to be the affective attitude to the cognitive level: feelings that the Buddha is a living presence here seem to find expression in words. The case is not clear-cut: the man reciting the Pali formula Adhivāsetu no bhante, to which he is also accustomed in other contexts, may not fully understand its meaning, let alone its implications, nor is he likely to understand the exact meaning of the rest of the verse; after all, it is one thing to compose such a verse oneself, quite another to mouth a half-understood conventional phrase in a dead language. Still, when all is said and done, I think the words do amount to a cognitive inconsistency, which is not removed by saying outside the immediate context of the Buddha pūjā that of course the Buddha is not there to hear the words or accept the food.

One very particular dānē had best be mentioned here, the Kiripidupātraya ('bowl of milk-rice'). This is - or was - an annual harvest festival, an offering to the Buddha of first fruits in the form of a huge bowl of milk-rice. The festival is obsolete in my area, and my information is unfortunately scanty. I was told that it took place in early April, and that the rice was prepared in the presence of only male villagers, who danced as it was cooking. In these respects the festival sounds similar to the adukku, offerings of first fruits to the local village gods, which

I mention in the next chapter. On the other hand I was told that originally the rice was buried after being offered, though in more recent times it had been given to beggars, which is to say that it got the normal treatment of a Buddha pūjā, whereas adukku, like other offerings to gods made off vihāra premises, are eaten by the participants. Moreover, the dish of milk rice was offered in commemoration of the dish of milk rice which Sujātā offered to Gotama the day before his Enlightenment, cooking it with honey (though the villagers just boil the rice in cows' milk). If this is so I wonder whether the festival was not in fact held at Wesak and has been assimilated by my informants to the adukku in April. The rice was cooked on temple premises (in Mīgala on the porch of the vihāra gedara), and if the ceremony was correctly performed the relic in the stupa emitted rays (Budu rās) in the five colours of the Buddha's halo. This happened in the days of my informants' grandfathers. (No doubt the event was always ascribed to the past.) The ability to emit such rays is a property of sārīrika dhātu and does not appear as anomalous or miraculous to those who do not share western ideas concerning the laws of nature. A schoolmaster was however worried by the idea and suggested that the rays were an illusion arising from the "fumes" of the cooking rice.

We have now enumerated all the types of offerings which are accompanied by Pali verses recorded in Bauddha Ādahilla (and I doubt whether there exist similar verses which this manual omits), which may suggest that those still to be described are doctrinally less orthodox. Though most of the standard objects which can be offered have been listed, any offering for the embellishment of a sacred object or improvement of the shrine can count as pūjāva, and such miscellanea as a vase for flowers or a table to serve as a mal āsana need not detain us. However, the offerings of cloth (redi) deserve special mention. Before the main Budupilima there is always

a curtain rail on which hangs a curtain, which is often of fine material, and may have the name of the donor embroidered on it. The custom is an imitation of the curtains which hang before Hindu images, and hence also before many Buddhist statues of gods. However, the contrast with Hindu usage is again instructive.

In a Hindu temple (kovil) the image, which is conceived of as incorporating a living presence, is kept veiled behind its curtain or curtains and can never be seen by a casual observer. The statues of gods in Buddhist buildings devoted to them (dēvalē) are also kept behind curtains, but the curtain will always be drawn by the attendant priest (kapurāla), or indeed by other people, on request. Those statues of gods which are inside a vihāragedara may not even have curtains, and be treated with no respect at all, their importance diminishing with their proximity to a Buddha image. All this is as much as for the Buddhists to say, "We know that as Hindu gods you are entitled to such prerogatives as curtains, but here you are quite secondary to the Buddha." The living Hindu images, then, are entitled to privacy, or even secrecy; but there should be no restrictions on access to a Buddha image, in the first place because it is not alive, and in the second place because, even if it were, Buddhism is exoteric and anyone should have access to the Buddha. I shall have occasion to return to this point.

The influence of Hindu practice is also suggested by the various cloths which sometimes cover the Buddha's hands or feet and legs. A standing Buddha (ot pilimvahansē) has the right hand raised in blessing, and in some temples this hand is covered by a cloth. A seated Buddha may have a cloth covering the entire lap. Apart from a cloth, a particular kind of ornament, which I might call a cloth rosette but is doubtless intended as a lotus, is often placed on the folded hands, and maybe elsewhere. This "cloth

lotus" is a round cloth disc, made in patchwork and multi-coloured, with many tiny "petals" radiating from the centre. The idea of covering the hands and feet (both of which are painted with auspicious marks) may be an analogue with Hindu practice; the form of the cloth lotus I can only surmise to show the influence of flower offerings.

A final specific offering of cloth is the offering of flags (kodi), or rather pennants. These pennants may be strung up in rows in an image house; but the usual practice is to tie them to the Bo tree. Here the influence is not specifically Hindu; ancient evidence shows the custom to be a survival of tree worship which has occasionally gravitated into the shrine. To place kodi in the vihāragē was not customary in my area, and in Mīgala and its immediate surroundings they were not even tied onto trees, so I am no authority on the practice. It seems clear however that originally any strips of coloured cloth were used, as they still are in some parts of Ceylon, and the pennant shape is a mere formalization, perhaps under western influence. Such pennants, made of paper, are carried on sticks in village perahāras by children, and their shape is that of some church flags, of which they could be a miniature version.

Claims made by the worshippers that they are merely commemorating a dead man, who lived as a simple monk, become increasingly difficult to justify in the context of the ceremonies still to be discussed. For clarity of analysis I have now stated the cognitive claims as two: that the Buddha was a man, and that he was a monk on the same level as any other monk who attains nirvāna. The doctrinal position is unequivocal on both points; but in our context the former seems the more crucial: it is less jarring to treat an image of a dead monk as if it were a dead king than as if it were alive. It is over the question of the Buddha's earthly status that the first discrepancies seem to arise; and I shall show that they date

from ancient times.

The only common offering which I have not so far discussed is the "offering of sound" (sabda pūjāva), which consists essentially of drumming. This drumming is the prerogative and duty of a certain caste, the beravayō. In Mīgala these drummers are attached to the temple as feudal villeins; they have a hereditary right to tenure of lands owned by the temple in return for which they must perform hereditary services. If the temple agrees the service may be commuted for a cash rent, but the tenure is always revocable by the temple. This system of social organization will be mentioned at greater length in chapter 8; for present purposes only a passing remark on it need be made. Originally there was a wide variety of such service tenures; indeed it is arguable that the great majority of Sinhalese castes originated in this way. Normally of course the services are due to people; in the case of vihāragam, villages owned by monasteries, these services are due to monks. In the 150 years since the end of the Kandyan kingdom the feudal organization has gradually declined, and though most people still work on land owned by others, service tenures in the strict sense have become a rarity. Drummers however perform a service which is principally required for the Buddha, and is therefore in continued demand. Any temple of some age -- say fifty years -- is almost certain to own land, and some of this land is probably leased to drummers in return for their professional services. Although drumming is not the only caste-bound profession -- laundering is another -- it is the only one, at least in the area where I worked, which is regularly associated with service tenures, and this to such an extent that the term rajakārayō literally "workers for the king", which used to designate all feudal villeins, is now widely taken to refer only to drummers living off temple lands.

There are various types of Sinhalese drums, and their use shows some

regional variation. In the Mīgala area the basic and essential drum on religious occasions is the bera, the long drum, tapering at both ends, which gives the caste its name. The drum is worn slung round the neck, and struck with the hands at both ends. In Mīgala it was invariably accompanied by the horanāva, a shrill wind instrument looking like a large and simplified oboe, with a limited range of notes. The players of the horanāva are hereditary specialists, also of the drummer caste; the playing does not seem to require much skill, as the notes produced follow no discernible pattern. In Mīgala drumming usually consists of one or two bera and a horanāva, sometimes accompanied by a hēvisi, a squat cylindrical drum. The other instruments, a couple of which are mentioned in my article on the nētra pinkama, are not used in Mīgala.

The paradigm case of a śabda pūjāva is that which occurs at the temple itself on pōya days and any other special occasions, such as a big pirit. The drums are beaten for a few minutes at three times on those days, to coincide with the three offerings of food. Ideally the drumming begins when the food is taken in to the shrine, continues for a few minutes while it is left there, and stops when the food is taken out again. Drumming may also occur at other times of the day, but this is said to be "for no particular reason" (nikam) not "as worship" (pūjāvata). However, a formal śabda pūjāva can be offered at other times, as an item by itself. I observed this after a tun māsa dānē, ^{at which} ~~after~~ a householder feeds monks three months after the death of a relation: drummers stood outside a shrine and played for a few minutes without any other ritual. The giver of the dānē acquired merit by this (merit which he was to pass on to the dead man), in that he paid the drummers for their services. In Mīgala and most other old temples, drummers are attached to the temple by feudal ties,

and so do not get paid. Temples which do not command the services of drummers almost invariably hire them on pōyas, though a poor temple may miss out the quarter (atavaka) pōya and even the māsa pōya (when there is no moon). The going rate for such drumming is two rupees a day. In Mīgala there was a drummer living near the temple who usually performed, but for full moon days and other big occasions drummers came from the temple's vihāragama a few miles away, bedding down in a corner of the pansala. Even in such cases, when the drummers perform unpaid, as a duty, the mere making of the offering is meritorious, and all who participate in thought earn merit. To the end that more might hear the drumming and hence have the opportunity to participate in the offering, the head monk had built while I was there a hēvisi mandapa, a small roofed enclosure on a rocky prominence near the temple, from which it was estimated that the sound could carry to the furthest parts of the village.

Drumming also accompanies any perahāra or pinkama worth the name, attending the relics whenever they leave the temple; but this is not strictly a pūjāva, for such processions with drumming — and sometimes with dancing too — are by no means necessarily religious, but may take place for any secular festivity, from occasions of state to the homecoming of some newly-wed rich villager. This identity of religious and secular ceremonial is the point to which I wish to draw attention.

The śabda pūjāva is last on my list of regular offerings, and the only common one for which no Pali verses exist. It is not hard to imagine why this should be so. In the first place, anyone who has experienced such drumming inside a vihāraya will realize that during it one cannot hear oneself think, let alone recite. More important, perhaps, is the non-religious nature of the offering, on which I shall expatiate after describing the sūvisi pinkama. Finally, there is a subtle difference in

in the form of the pūjā, in that other offerings are presented by the worshipper himself, whereas in this case he is merely paying others - professionals - to make the offering.

The three remaining ceremonies to be described, which deviate increasingly from doctrinal expectations, are all rather major affairs reserved for special occasions. The first can be viewed as an elaborate extension of the drumming offerings described above. It is called a sūvisi pinkama. Sūvisi is the old Sinhalese for "twenty-four", and the reference is to the twenty-four previous Buddhas. The ceremony, if that is the correct word for an occasion which does not seem to be highly formalized, consists in Kandyan dancing by a troupe of dancers and drummers, who meanwhile chant verses about the lives of the previous Buddhas. The show goes on for three nights, theoretically with eight dances a night; in my experience the dances invariably start so late that there is not time for eight before dawn at six a.m., when the meeting breaks up. but nevertheless the second and third nights always start with the ninth and seventeenth Buddhas respectively. Sometimes the sūvisi is supplemented by a fourth night on which the sassatiya is danced, one dance for each of the seven weeks Gotama Buddha spent immediately after enlightenment.

I attended (for one night each) two different sūvisi pinkam, and though detailed accounts would here be out of place, it will be convenient to describe them in outline. Neither pinkama was arranged for a date of any religious significance. Both were major features in fund-raising drives for new temple buildings, and from the point of view of their organizers, the temple incumbents, were purely commercial undertakings. This is certainly the standard, perhaps the invariable pattern. The performing troupe was hired for so many rupees a night, but the organizers could be

sure of collecting enough money from lay spectators to make a considerable profit. Although this commercial motive was obvious to all, for the spectators the occasion offered both entertainment and religious merit. In this it resembled all bana (preaching); indeed, a sūvisi pinkama has much in common with bana, and will have to be mentioned again under that head; here I am concerned only with its relevance to worship of the Buddha. The entertainment element is more obvious than usual with bana, as spectators could watch singing and dancing; religious merit could be acquired both by listening to the words about previous Buddhas and by contributing financially -- and of course, as always, by rejoicing in the acquisition of merit by others.

The night's events began with two pure fund-raising activities. First came an auction (salpila) of sundry objects donated by laymen. There followed a malvatta vendēsiya, the sale of a tray of flowers to the last bidder, a universal feature of temple fund-raising occasions. An arrangement of opulent flower blossoms on a tray is shown to the assembled laity, and young men who act as ushers then move among them collecting donations. In my experience this takes the form of a competition between villagers, but this competitive element seems quite artificial. Each donation is announced by an usher standing in a commanding position and using a microphone at maximum volume; he announces the amount, and the village of the donor. Each large amount is greeted by "Sādhu sādhu sā." The event continues for two or three hours, and the ushers make frenetic efforts to maintain enthusiasm. The money is not added up, but the flower-tray is "won" for his village by the last person to make a donation -- in other words, when no more money can be elicited. What is really won is the right to offer the flowers to the Buddha -- not that this confers any religious distinction, as the flowers are first carried round for everyone to touch with folded

hands and thus share in the merit of the offering.

It is only at this point - which is usually after midnight - that monks appear on the scene. They are first offered requisites (pirikara).¹ At one of the sūvisi pinkam I attended, twenty-four sets of monks' robes (sivuru) had been bought beforehand by donors who subscribed at least ten rupees (their names were read out), and the idea was to offer one of these before each dance. Before a robe was offered it was carried round among the audience for people to put coins (paṇḍuru) on it as an additional contribution. Each set of robes was offered before the pictures of the 24 Buddhas; moreover, there were 24 Buddhas but not 24 monks present; so in some sense the robes were being offered to the Buddhas though they were to become the property of the monks. The offering of robes will be discussed below in connection with a ceremony which affords a more clear-cut case. Towels (also reckoned as pirikara) were also there, to be offered by any person or group who put up two rupees, a feat only achieved after considerable exhortation from the incumbent monk. These were offered to the monks direct.

Before each dance a monk gives a "sermon", which consists of a reading from the Nidānakathā. I was not able to check this, but I assume that he reads out the story of each Buddha whose story is about to be danced. After the sermon the dancers appear and begin their performance. They dance before a screen on which have been put up pictures of the 24 previous Buddhas. On one occasion this took place in the bana pedara

1. The eight requisites are three robes; the two-fold robe (depata sivura), the three-fold robe (tunipata sivura) and the lower robe (andana sivura); a belt (sivuru patiya); razor (dālipihiyē); filtering cloth (perahankadaya); needle and thread (idikatuva and nūl bōlē); and alms bowl (pātrē). This list, which I reproduce exactly as it was told me, is canonical; it was (and is) supposed to comprise an exhaustive list of a monk's personal possessions.

(preaching hall), on the other under a pavilion (mandapa) erected ad hoc. On neither occasion therefore were they dancing in the presence of a consecrated Buddha image, nor do I imagine that they ever do so, as there would be no room for the dancers, let alone the spectators, in a shrine room. Nevertheless I feel entitled to suggest that they dance primarily for the Buddhas, only secondarily for the spectators. No Sinhalese would put it like this; they consider the object of the pinkama to be to gain merit and to raise funds, and the question "for whom" the dancing is intended does not arise explicitly. However, the dancers behave as if performing a religious ritual; they begin by taking the Three Refuges and Five Precepts. Moreover, they then dance as if the pictures were the principal audience, facing them most of the time; most of the human audience view the performance from behind, the monks and other privileged people getting a side view.

The dancers on these occasions are professional groups, who spend most of their time giving such performances over a wide area. They are usually of drummer caste, displaying hereditary skills. However, one of the troupes I saw was the family troupe, six girls and four boys, of a man of dhobi caste (hēna or radā) who had learnt the necessary arts from a drummer and then trained his children of both sexes. Traditionally the performers should all be men, but the performance by boys and girls was quite acceptable to the villagers, nor did anyone mention the caste question, though it surprised me that a hēnaya should have undertaken an occupation traditionally associated with a lower caste. I was able to visit this troupe leader late^rly, and he told me that he went on tour quite regularly, the children getting schooling when they could. Besides the sūvisi and the sassatiya he said he had a performance for the forty-five vas retreats of the Buddha. He said he made up the entire performances himself, including the verses.

Indeed, although the form of the sūvisi pinkama must be at least a couple of hundred years old in its general form, no one was aware of any traditional text, and each troupe seems to use its own.

These notes on the sūvisi pinkama may be completed by an impression of the first troupe I saw (not the family troupe). There were six dancers, accompanied by three drummers on bera. The costume showed red, white and gold against the dark bodies. Each dancer had a white head-dress, a kind of turban with two long ends falling waist-length behind him. His only other garment was a white sarong, bunched in a frill at the waist in front. Over this he wore a red belt and a red kerchief tied round the waist, and he had coloured side-pockets on the sarong. Feet, like torso and arms, were bare, but he wore gold armbands, heavy golden anklets, and long golden earrings. He held a tambourine, which he frequently passed between his hands or tossed in the air. The dancing varied between slow and fast tempi, and during the slow passages verses were chanted in an unmelodious monotone. For an outsider the fast passages were much the more exciting; egged on by the drummers, they went faster and faster, till at the climax the pattern of group movement would be broken by individual displays of twirls, somersaults, etc. which reached great acrobatic virtuosity.

To explain the form of this ceremony, of which there is no published account, has involved some digression from my theme, the compatibility of such rituals with explicit doctrine. The seventh precept listed in chapter 2, which is taken by all monks and all laymen undertaking any special religious observance, is "to abstain from seeing dancing, music vocal and instrumental, and shows". A sūvisi pinkama is sponsored, organized and presided over by monks, and watched by laity, however pious, as an act of religious merit. However my principal concern here is not the keeping

of the precepts, but the behaviour towards the Buddha (and his predecessors). In considering the first set of offerings we saw that the Buddha is usually addressed as a monk in the accompanying verses, and behaviour is compatible with this conception. To offer musical performance in the śabda pūjāva, let alone a night-long combination of music and dancing, is plainly not to treat him as a monk should in theory be treated. Rather it is to treat him like a king. This interpretation does not originate with me but with some of my informants. It is a doctrinal inconsistency of which they are aware, and which they tend to excuse by saying that these things were done for the kings of Kandy, who ordered that they should be done for the Buddha likewise.

In fact however both the dancing and singing before relics and the explicit attribution of kingship considerably antedate Kandyan times, for they occur in the first part of the Mahāvamsa. It is recorded (chap. XXXIV) of King Bhātikābhaya (38-67 A.D.) that he not only offered the Great Stupa (the modern Ruvanvālisāya) incredible masses of flowers, perfumed unguents, lamps, water (as an offering to stupas outside my experience, but perhaps a transference from watering the Bo tree), and jewellery (including "lotuses of gold, the size of wheels" (line 47), but also arranged in honour of the Great Stupa "various dances and plays with various instrumental music" (line 60). His brother King Mahādāthikamahānāga, who succeeded him, seems to have been equally munificent; when he had built the Ambatthala stupa on Mihintalē he covered it with a red woollen blanket festooned with pearls and gold balls (line 74), put up flags, triumphal arches etc., and had dancing, singing, and instrumental music (line 78). The entire description of this ceremony is very reminiscent of modern practices, though if the account is credible modern times have not witnessed anything comparably lavish. The fact that the focus of a suvisi pinkama is likely to be a Budupilīma raises most of its significance as possible image-worship

if such festivals have traditionally been associated with all types of Buddha relics, and the claim of the worshippers that the image is quite secondary gains plausibility.

The ascription of temporal sovereignty to relics dates virtually from the introduction of Buddhism to Ceylon, and subsequently was to become almost a commonplace. King Devānampiya Tissa worshipped (Pali: pūjesi) some young Bo trees by offering them a white umbrella, emblem of royalty, and performing the royal consecration (abhiseka) (Mhv.XIX.59). Duṭṭugamunu did exactly the same (same Pali roots) for the relics he was enshrining and gave them sovereignty over Ceylon for seven days (XXXI 111). in the great stupa (XXXI. 99), ⁹⁹ The purely symbolic nature of such gestures is surely indisputable; they do not ascribe life or the capacity to rule to the saplings or the bones. Though, as I must repeat, the ceremonies I have described are no doubt sociologically over-determined, it seems to me more relevant for their interpretation to recall Buddhist practice of two thousand years' standing than to equate them with the usage of Hindus who treat their images as gods and their gods as kings, and provide them with music at mealtimes much as the drums are beaten during the Buddha pūjā.

Before passing to the next ceremony, let me finally note the linguistic evidence for what an outsider might call "confusion of spiritual and temporal power" in the Sinhalese concept of the Buddha. I have already mentioned that the commonest Sinhalese word for monk is hāmuduruvo, meaning 'lord'. Like the English equivalent, the word can refer to spiritual or temporal authority, so when the Buddha is referred to as Budu hāmuduruvo this ambiguity is preserved. The only other common title of the Buddha is Budu rajānanvahansē, which may be translated 'His Majesty King Buddha'.

In writings of the Buddha, or speaking of him with formal correctitude, certain honorifics are used; for instance the ending - sēka after a verb

is reserved for him alone. I believe that all these honorifics were formerly used for kings of Kandy. Finally, the word tēvāva, which used to denote personal services (e.g. fanning) involved in waiting on the king, was used as a synonym of pūjāva in the context of the next ceremony to be described, in which several such operations are performed. Linguistically the Buddha is the last Sinhalese king.

The inconsistency with orthodox doctrine in treating a Buddha relic or image like a king may be said to be interesting but not glaring. After all, it is natural that respectful behaviour should be modelled on situations in human society; moreover, it can even be objected that the Buddha could have become a universal monarch, but rejected temporal power for a career in which even kings bowed down to him. But, most important of all, the confusion perhaps began with the Buddha himself. In the canonical text already quoted for evidence of relics and pilgrimages, the Buddha tells his attendant Ānanda that he should be cremated like a great king, and a stupa (Pali: thūpa); should be erected for him at a crossroads. "And whoever shall put there garland or perfume or paint, or worship there (abhivādessanti) or calm their minds, that will long conduce to their welfare and happiness." He goes on to say that he, the Sammāsambuddha, a Paccekasambuddha, any other arhat (a Tathāgata-sāvaka¹), or a righteous emperor of the world is ~~worthy~~ of a stupa, because on recollecting their excellence people will become tranquil and go to heaven after death.² This reason for relic worship is exactly that which I was given by villagers and have already recorded above. Whether these passages are interpolations I cannot here discuss; even if they are, they are extremely ancient (before Buddhism came to Ceylon); and for the Sinhalese the question does

1. For these three types of Buddha see above, p. 104, where they have been given the Sanskritic names used by my informant.

2. DN II 141-143 (sutta 16.5¹¹12).

not arise.

So far it is only the Buddha's monastic status which has been compromised, and for this he himself sowed the seed. That he was mortal is still not in doubt: when I asked about this at the sūvisi pinkama a monk told me firmly that the whole performance was merely out of respect (gauravayen) for the Buddha's memory.

There are however two further ceremonies involving a Buddha image which cannot be explained in the same way - at least, when I questioned the monks present at the ceremonies no one attempted a rationalization, but explained them as traditions of no religious significance. These two ceremonies also appear to be less ancient. We have seen that chap. XXXIV of the Mahāvamsa mentions every pūjā with which I have so far dealt¹ (with the exception of the food offering mentioned by Buddhaghosa slightly later), and a few more besides. The next ceremony concerns the anointing of an image, and I know of no references to it in early literature. However the Cūlavamsa (Chap. XXXIX) tells how a general under King Kassapa I (478-496) was refused permission to perform an abhiseka festival for a Buddha image (1.7), but held it under his successor. Abhiseka means anointing: though it is the same word as that used for royal inauguration, that meaning can hardly fit here. Rahula² and Geiger³ say they do not know what ceremony is being referred to, and we shall never know for certain. But it does seem possible that it was related to the nānumura mangalya which I shall now describe, as that word means "Festival of Anointing".

1. The sūvisi pinkama is not attested, but I am merely concerned with its character as dancing and singing, covered by the Pali term natanacca.

2. Op. cit., p. 283.

3. Note to his translation of Cūlavamsa XXXIX 7. (Cūlavamsa vol. 2 p. 43). I agree with him in rejecting Wijesinha's interpretation that the abhiseka is a netra pinkama. There is no evidence that a netra pinkama can be referred to as an "anointing"; moreover, this would be the earliest reference to a netra pinkama by over a thousand years.

The nānumura mangalya is performed only once a year,¹ at the Sinhalese New Year. The Sinhalese New Year centres on April 14th, but various observances and celebrations stretch over about a week. Astrologers declare a day, shortly before or after April 14th, on which people are supposed to bathe for the New Year; and the ritual has been extended to the Buddha image.² There is no special auspicious moment (nākāt vėlāva) at which the ceremony has to be performed, but it must be over in time for the monks to go and bathe in the river themselves, in the stretch reserved for them, and return in time for the dānē at 11.

The ceremony I witnessed was at Mīgala at about 8.30 a.m. on April 10th, 1965, and was performed by the two adult monks in residence at the time. At Mīgala there are two viḥāraḡedara, one dating from the eighteenth century. The incumbent explained the ceremony as a relic of the days of the Sinhalese kings, now preserved in only a few old temples; the things done for the Buddha image, he said, used to be done for the kings, who then ordered that they be done for the Buddha likewise. The crucial difference in performance was that the Buddha was only anointed on his mirror image. Normally no laymen witnessed this ceremony, but I was allowed to do so as a favour. To this and the use of the mirror I shall return below.

In the pansala the unguents (nānu) are prepared on a tray: saffron bark (kokum poḡa), margosa leaves (kohōmba kola), turmeric (ānu kaha), sesamum (tala), green gram (mūn āḡa), punac (mīmuru), coconut (pol), red

1. According to the Report of the Temple Land Commissioners 1857-1858, published Colombo 1859, p. 5, fourth note, the ceremony took place every Wednesday in the Temple of the Tooth. If this is so it probably fell into desuetude in the nineteenth century, as Coomaraswamy implies (op. cit., p. 74) that it no longer happened when he wrote (in 1908).

2. On the same page of the Report cited in the previous note it says that the nānumura mangalya takes place eight days after the New Year. The one I saw was on April 10th., but most of the villagers put special unguents on their heads and then bathed on April 17th. Probably the two events originally took place on the same day; but life in Mīgala was never so tidy.

and white sandalwood (rat and sudu haṇḍun), and "all kinds of sour things" (okkoma āmbul jāti): limes (dehi), sour oranges (āmbul dodam) and tangerines (nas naram.) The pieces of red and white sandal, from which a little has been shaved, are said to date from the Sinhalese kings. Each of the ingredients is mixed with oil and made into a paste; then a little of each paste is taken and mixed into one paste in the centre of the tray.

There is a small perahāra up to the temple, with the usual drummers (bera and horanāva). Someone carries on his head under a canopy not only the unguents but also a mirror, a kettle of water, a fly whisk (cāmara), a small bell and a set of the eight requisites in a package. At the temple an oil lamp is lit on either side of the door, and the junior monk sweeps out the temple. Someone blows a conch shell many times, and the drums and fife play. The shrine room is shut, with only the two monks and me inside it, and for light a single candle is placed by the head of the main Buddha image, which is a recumbent one. All is now ready, and the chief monk shouts to the drummer through the door "Strike up" ("Gahāpan"). The two monks then kneel before the Buddha image and worship, bending their heads to the floor three times. They are very serious. The chief monk then wedges the mirror on the pedestal by the Buddha's head, so that it reflects the head at an angle, and uses a flower head left there in offering to smear paste onto the mirror. The junior monk pours water over the mirror from the kettle, and the chief monk removes the paste with the same flower. The same is repeated for a smaller Buddha statue in the same shrine, a seated image. The chief monk then offers the robes to the lying Buddha, and in turn waves the fan and the yak's tail before him and rings the little bell. After each action he bows deeply with folded hands. Finally both monks kneel and mutter a few words beneath their breath. Exactly the same sequence of events, minus the initial worshipping, was repeated at the other

viharagedara. The chief monk, who had a skin complaint, preferred to bathe in hot water and did not proceed to the river, but the junior monk went with two novices and many male hangers on to the river, where before bathing they all anointed their heads with a mixture of sour stuffs from a brass urn.

This simple ceremony combines elements which can be said to correspond to at least three different conceptions of the Buddha. The analogy with a secular king was sufficiently explained by the chief monk and I need only add a reminder that a yak's tail is a traditional Indian accoutrement of royalty, and the waving of a fan and ringing of a small musical bell (in addition to the usual drumming) likewise were the actions of royal attendants performing teṅava.

A different conception^{is} reflected in the action of offering the eight requisites. It may at first seem implausible to argue that food laid before a statue argues a different attitude from clothing similarly offered, and certainly the two can be seen as a continuum; nevertheless there are certain contrasts which I wish to stress. Firstly I must repeat that the former (offering food) was justified by the monks themselves in canonical terms, whereas the latter (offering robes) was not, so that there is a clear distinction for the participants themselves. Secondly the offering of food has been shown to stem from an ancient tradition, whereas I know of no ancient authority for offering robes to a relic of any kind.

Finally, food may be offered to anyone, but the requisites can only be offered to monks and novices (pāvīdi). At first sight this looks orthodox: did we not say that the Buddha was a monk? But there is something odd about a monk's offering the requisites, because while occasions can and do arise (as when a junior monk waits upon the others at meals) when a monk offers food (and the monk who offers food before the Buddha can be said

to act on this analogy), on no occasion does a monk offer requisites - they are always offered by laymen. The requisites, in short, are always offered to someone of distinctly higher religious status. Therefore when the chief monk offered the requisites before the Buddha image he was behaving not merely as if the Buddha were a monk, but as if he were a person on another religious plane. While the respect shown in making the offerings first discussed (from flowers to food) was shown to be modelled on that shown by laymen to monks, here it is monks who are treating the Buddha as a super-monk.

The Buddha has been treated as if he were a king and/or a super-monk. Whether he has been treated as alive in the statue¹ is on the evidence so far still ambiguous; but it is this question to which we must now turn. One detail which seems incongruous with the claim that the Buddha was a mere mortal is the case of the mirror. Kings have yaks' tails waved before them, and monks are offered robes, but no human, dead or alive, has his face anointed in its reflection only. A possible interpretation of this use might be that it arose merely from a veneration so great that the monk considered himself unworthy to touch even a representation of the Buddha's face. This however, becomes implausible when we find that a monk has no general reluctance to touch representations of the Buddha. A far stronger interpretation emerges when we take into account another ceremony in which a mirror is used, my last example.

1. Discussion in this chapter centres on treatment of the Buddha image. It would be possible to draw a distinction between treatment of the image and treatment of the Buddha himself; logically it could be argued that the image might be conceived of as alive while the Buddha was still conceived of as dead. This would imply that the image had a life which was not the Buddha's. That this distinction would be over-complex and unnecessary is shown by such phenomena as the recitation of the qualities of the Buddha as a spell, which will be discussed in a later chapter⁴ in the context of the use of sacred texts. All these actions imply a living presence, and whose if not the Buddha's?

However, before leaving the nānumura mangalya I must mention a less tangible point: the atmosphere of secrecy surrounding the main part of the ceremony. Esotericism and secrecy are wholly untypical of Theravāda Buddhism. Access to the sacred is free for all. A Hindu deity is tucked away in his shrine, usually visible only to the attendant priest, and in many Hindu temples permitted proximity is graded by the caste and ritual purity of the worshipper. The contrast between Buddhist and Hindu practices in Ceylon is neatly exemplified by the use of the curtain before the image, to which I have already referred. The shut doors of the shrine - which we shall also find again in the next ceremony - suggest not merely Hindu forms but also Hindu ideology: the image has become a god - only affectively, of course.

My final example of a ceremony involving a Buddha image is the nētra pūkama, or "eye festival", the final touch, which completes an image, is to paint in its eyes. I have described this ceremony at length elsewhere¹, so I shall restrict myself to the barest recapitulation of my conclusions. Certain elements of the ceremony made me agree with Knox's interpretation (quoted above on p. 147) that, "The Eyes being formed, it is thenceforward a God." That adding the eyes should be the action which consecrates the image is itself significant; the features of a mere image could presumably be finished in any order. The ceremony is undertaken by the specialist craftsmen who made the image as the culmination of long and elaborate ritual. It seems very dangerous, for it can only be undertaken at an extremely auspicious moment. The craftsman and his assistant shut themselves into the shrine, and everyone is warned to keep clear even of the outer door. A mirror is again used; the craftsman does not paint

1. "The Consecration of a Buddhist Image," Journal of Asian Studies, vol. XXVI, no. 1, 1966, pp. 23-36.

the mirror, which would be ineffective, but he looks only at the mirror while painting the statue's eyes sideways or over his shoulder. Afterwards he is led out blindfold, and the covering is removed when his eyes will first fall on something, such as water, which he can then destroy symbolically with a sword-stroke.

What the craftsman fears is obviously the gaze of the image, which is conceived as being so powerful that it cannot be borne direct; everyone else must put closed doors and as much space as possible between themselves and the gaze, while he who has been it come into being, even reflected in a mirror, has dangerous potential in his own gaze till the evil has been transferred and killed. The concept of the dangerous look or gaze (bālma) is common currency among the Sinhalese, and of course in many other cultures: for instance illnesses (notably psychological troubles) for which medical diagnosis is not accepted are usually ascribed to the gaze of some evil spirit (yakā). Indeed, the nētra pinkama contains elements common to most Sinhalese exorcism.

That the circumstances of a nētra pinkama imply the attribution of life to the image cannot be and was not denied; the monks pooh-poohed the whole thing as a meaningless (but harmless) tradition. In the terms of my analysis, the ceremony treats the Buddha as a god. But what is especially striking is that he is treated as a dangerous god, potentially maleficent. It is not an excess of holiness which the craftsman fears from the newborn gaze. None of the other ceremonies contained this element of fear and danger. With knowledge of the nētra pinkama it is possible to attribute the use of the mirror in the nānumaru mangalya to a similar fear, though the emotion may no longer be felt. (I mentioned that in fact the whole ceremony is almost obsolete.) Certainly the monk did not conspicuously avoid the gaze of the image's eyes, and he was only grave where the craftsman

seemed positively scared. But the totally un-doctrinal danger of the nētra pinkama is clear and unambiguous. Moreover, the introduction of the pālma makes it impossible to claim that the image is only being venerated for the relic it contains.

After stating the doctrinal position that the Buddha was a monk who is now dead, I have shown that certain ceremonies performed before his images imply otherwise. Though nearly all the ceremonies can be explained, as they are, as gestures of respect for his memory, certain others can not, and in turn imply minimally that he was a king, that he was (or is) a monk above other monks, that he is alive in the image, and that his living presence is potentially maleficent. The hierarchic order of these assumptions could be slightly varied, for instance by claiming that it is further from doctrine than the implication that he is a live super-monk. This is not important if all the implications listed are granted; the most interesting result, which seems to me incontestably proven by the last two examples quoted, is that certain ceremonies only make sense on the assumption that the statue is alive, which I take to amount to calling the statue a god.

It is of course open to the outside interpreter of these rituals to work in the opposite direction, and to claim from the evidence of the nētra pinkama etc. that the Buddha always appears to his worshippers as a god.

This is in effect what has usually been done, though interpreters usually stop short at extrapolating from the nētra pinkama the danger of the Buddha's gaze (of which they may not be aware) when they declare the Buddha's image to be considered a living idol but admittedly benevolent. I have suggested that this is too simple a view. I prefer to see in each ceremony the minimal supernaturalism, and hence the minimal deviation from the canonical doctrine, that the facts will bear, because this approach pays due attention to the views of the participants themselves. Moreover, it allows me to preserve

the distinction between what people say they believe and what they behave as if they believe - what I called cognitive and affective beliefs. In this context I must stress that it does not follow at all that because an image is treated as alive in one ritual it is generally so viewed; many villagers are not even aware of the proceedings at a nānumura mangalya or nētra pinkama, and those who are may, like the monks, explicitly repudiate their implications and declare their ceremonies meaningless. Finally, the order in which I have arranged the ceremonies does seem to correspond very approximately to the order of their genesis in time - and maybe to the reverse order of their future disappearance, if "reformed" Buddhism is anything to go by. The earliest reference I could find for some form of the nētra pinkama is in a Kandyan edict of the early sixteenth century¹; the nānumura mangalya probably also dates from Kandyan times and so does the sūvisi pinkama; the other offerings, accompanied on occasion by ceremonies more elaborate than any known today, we have seen to be ancient.

In all the complex evidence adduced from Buddha pūjā there is only one statement in words to imply that the Buddha is still a living presence. There is however a widely known Pali couplet which runs as follows:

Kāyena vācā cittena pamādena mayā katam
Accayam khama me bhante bhuripanna Tathāgata.
 Forgive me my transgression committed through carelessness
 by body, word or thought, O Tathāgata of great wisdom.

This verse is quite unlike that used in the Buddha pūjā in that it is not a formula; in particular, the Buddha is here addressed not as bhante, which can apply to any monk, but as Tathāgata, which applies only to him. He is being asked to forgive sins, just like the Christian God. This con-

1. See my article, p. 26, note 10.

contradicts two cardinal points of doctrine: that the Buddha is dead, and that sins can never be cancelled by forgiveness. Unfortunately I was not aware of this verse in time to include a question on it in my interviews. Moreover I would dearly like to know when and where it originated. It is a uniquely unambiguous expression of feelings which the general run of the evidence would only allow us to deduce. Our conclusion must be that even the cognitive position is not fully consistent: a Sinhalese Buddhist will always say, if asked, that the Buddha is dead, but in certain contexts he will even say otherwise, and in a wider range of contexts he will not behave as if this is what he believes. Some further evidence will be adduced in the next two chapters to support this conclusion.

I hope in the above discussion to have illustrated some of the principles stated in the first part of my introduction. I have been concerned with several logically distinct but contextually related problems raised by worship of the Buddha. The only ones which I have attempted to answer in full, are what the Sinhalese say about the Buddha, how they behave towards him (on which I shall have more to say), and how their behaviour compares with their professions. The answers to the first two are descriptive (although all description of course involves interpretation), to the last interpretative. I have also touched on the historical problem of the evolution of the ceremonies among Buddhists and the question, also primarily historical but doomed to remain largely matter for conjecture, of what has been borrowed from Hindu neighbours. The subject holds other problems, of course, including ones which I have not even noticed. But if the Buddha is generally said to be dead, this raises in the western mind many questions about the Sinhalese universe and its laws, especially about places filled and functions performed by the Christian God. To answer some of these general questions, and to provide a background for others

more strictly doctrinal (to a Buddhist mind), will be the purpose of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

A SKETCH OF THE UNIVERSE AS SEEN FROM BUDDHISM

I. Caustion

The Christian God is the First Cause and the final end. The Buddha showed little interest in eschatological questions, which he pronounced irrelevant to man's problems, and the Sinhalese have inherited his attitude. The universe, according to general Indian belief, goes through cycles of expansion and devolution; though our physical environment is periodically destroyed it comes into being once more. The Buddhists see no beginning or end to this process, so have no need of a first cause, nor of any cause to bring the world to a halt. Nor can there be any question of an omnipotent judge; for while the universe lasts so long results pleasant and painful follow from the inexorable law of karma.

The law of karma would fill a central position in any account of Buddhism (or any other religion) which attempted to treat their problems as counterparts of those of the great monotheistic religions, for it replaces the omnipotence and benevolence attributed to the Christian God, and resolves the conflict between them technically known as the problem of theodicy. Problems and difficulties in the operation of karma, which fall more properly in the sphere of Buddhist doctrine and by no means matter, will be discussed in the next chapter; but here it

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concerns us more generally, as the foundation of the Sinhalese view of causation and the way in which the universe functions.

The traditional Sinhalese view of the universe, what we might call their cognitive map of the world, does not have a concept corresponding to our "laws of nature".¹ Things operate according to the way they are, their "own essence" (svabhāvaya); of course this usually leads to nothing unexpected; if a man walks into a wall he will stop with a bump. But if he practises meditation successfully he may be able to go through the wall. The regularities of the physical world are not "laws", and may on occasion be evaded.

There is however one universal law of which everyone is aware, and that is the law of karma. This law applies to all living beings, always. Karma means 'deed' or 'act'. Strictly speaking your karma is what you do, not what is done to you - that is the maturation (vipāka) of your karma, the result of one of your previous acts, in this or one of your former lives. Karma is a doctrine of free will. Indeed, will is paramount: the doctrine is that what counts is the intention, not the effect.

1. It must be remembered that I am talking here of the world of the Sinhalese villager, not the schemata of learned literature. The Pali commentaries have the concept of niyama, which might be translated 'law'; it covers regularities as diverse as utuniyama (the regular succession of the seasons), bījaniyama (i.e. from acorns grow oaks), and karmaniyama, the law of karma.

2. For this theory, cited on page 167 in the Abhidhamma, see Nyanatiloka, Guide Through the Abhidhamma-Pitaka, London: Sāhitya Sabhā, Calcutta 1957, p. 21.

"It is intention (cetanā) that I call karma," said the Buddha.¹

For all the inconsistencies which will be probed in chapters 5 and 6, everyone knows and broadly subscribes to this doctrine, even if perhaps they cannot formulate it. The doctrine is logically very far from fatalism; indeed it might be said to go to the other extreme. On one level the imprecision of linguistic usage is misleading. When a villager meets with misfortune he is liable to say, "It's karma" ("Karumē"), by which he means - and will I think say so if questioned - that the misfortune is the result of his former bad actions. To this extent "it can't be helped", but that does not mean that it is not his fault, or that he is not responsible. Determinism is a heresy (mithyā dr̥ṣṭiya).² Moreover, karma is not necessarily responsible even for everything that happens to you: it operates, if I may so put it, in a gross way. Monk 12 said that karma determines the station in which you are born, and your luck (vāsanāva); after that, it is up to you - the present you. "Luck is one's former habits" ("Vāsanāva kiyanne pera purudda"); said monk 19 to me. The idiom is as in English: "luck" usually means "good luck". If he has good fortune, a villager will probably say, "Vāsanāva"; if bad, "Karumē", but he knows that his vāsanāva is due to his karma.

In Buddhism the karma theory disposes of this problem on the

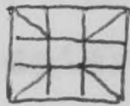
1. AN sutta VI.63.11. The full quotation reads: "Cetanāham bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi; cetayitvā kammaṃ karoti kāyena vācāya manasā."

2. For this heresy, cited as point 167 in the Kathāvatthu, see Nyanatiloka, Guide through the Abidhamma-piṭaka, Baudha Sahitya Sabha, Colombo 1957, p.81.

But the response to misfortune "Karumē" does in fact have a fatalistic ring, which suggests that on the affective level the villager may not accept the total responsibility which he admits cognitively. In practice the distinction between these two logically so different positions may be a fine one: a thief is not allowed by doctrine to claim that he is stealing because of his karma, but he may - and probably does - claim that it is his karma which has caused his rebirth as a man who has to steal to keep alive. In fact villagers do often say "We are sinners" (api pavkārayō), not in any mood of contrition or of defiance but simply meaning, "Look, we are so poor that we have to sin to keep alive", and probably further, "and we are born poor because we sinned before". Moreover animals too - to say nothing of lowly spirits - are as they are because of former misdeeds; now they have little chance to do good, but must live by killing others, etc.; this bad karma can set up a vicious circle, only to be broken by the greatest willpower. In this light the world of the poor villager seems a pathetic spectacle.

Theodicy (popularly known as "the problem of evil") is in the first place a logical problem: if God is Love, and can do anything, how is it logically possible that he allows suffering? In Buddhism the karma theory disposes of this problem on the cognitive level: suffering is a punishment for sin committed either in this or in a former life. There exists however no general consolation for undeserved suffering, so that psychologically karma does not solve the problem; in fact, by

making a man responsible for even his "luck" it may be said to aggravate it. In other words, karma resolves the problem of theodicy on the cognitive, but not on the affective level.

One of the affective legacies of the karma theory is an uncertainty very similar to that felt by Calvinists anxious to know whether they were predestined to salvation or damnation. The Calvinists interpreted worldly success as a sign of divine favour and so worked hard to achieve it; the Buddhists - rather more logically, if I may say so - tend to consult astrologers. You cannot avoid the results of bad karma, but you can at least be prepared for it. A man's luck, which is really his current stock of karma, is largely reified in his horoscope (kēndraya): if his karma is good he will be born at a moment when the stars are favourable. According to a Mīgala astrologer, everyone has three kēndra, based on his sign of the zodiac (lagna), the sun (ravi) and the moon (candra), but the first of these is the most important. The planets (grahayō) are pan-Indian: ravi (sun), candra (moon), kuja¹ (Mars), budha (Mercury), guru (Jupiter), śukra (Venus), śani (Saturn), rāhu and kētu. (The last two are the head and tail of a mythical demon and correspond astronomically to comets.) They may be in any of the twelve lunar mansions (nākāt - the work is also used to denote the stars in astrology generally), and the horoscope is drawn up like this .

1. I have listed the planets' astrological names. In other contexts, e.g. the names of the days of the week, kuja, budha, guru, śukra and śani are respectively Aṅgaharu, Bada, Bṛhaspati, Sikura and Senasura.

Lunar mansion number one is top centre and they are numbered consecutively anti-clockwise. I believe that mansions 1, 4, 7 and 10 are the most important, and if they are all empty the outlook is very bad. The horoscope indicates the outlook for material prosperity, and if it is very poor a solution for males is to make them monks, in which condition they are supposed to have no stake in good fortune. So at least I was told by laymen, though monks usually denied it. Of course I was not so impolite as to ask a monk outright whether he had a bad horoscope; their denial came by implication because they would say that a monk needed a 'suitable horoscope' (sudusu kēndrayak); many said they did not know in what this consisted, but one (2) specified that it should have Saturn in the ascendant (senasuruyōge), while another (33) added to this that in a monk's horoscope (pāvidi yōga) five planets should converge in mansions 1, 4, 7 and 10. Altogether 19 monks out of 21 asked stated that a suitable horoscope was needed to become a monk, although a couple added that exceptions could be made; and the general implication was that the suitable horoscope was a favourable one. However, a contrary case gives some confirmation to lay gossip: monk 3 told me, with disarming frankness, that when he was 22 years old his horoscope was inspected as he was about to marry, and it was found to be such that instead of marrying he hastily entered the Order.

Horoscopes are always matched in arranging weddings to make sure that the couple are suitable; but otherwise villagers

rarely consult them, as the above story illustrates, and often they even lose them. Another branch of astrological practice, besides casting horoscopes, is determining auspicious (subha) days and moments; almanacs listing these are widely diffused, but auspiciousness may be general (for everybody) or particular (for oneself) and the latter can only be determined by consulting an astrologer. Although Mrs. Bandaranaike was plausibly rumoured in December 1964 to be awaiting an auspicious moment for the dissolution of Parliament, villagers have little interest in these moments and observe them, if at all, with very little precision. Altogether villagers tend to pay less attention to astrology than do members of the middle and upper classes. Partly no doubt this is because astrology - like magic - caters for the emotional insecurity of those who have left behind the ascribed status of traditional village life for the competitive strains of a more "open" society. Dr. Obeyesekere however suggests a more specific explanation: that here again we encounter the anxiety caused by the doctrine of karma. The more conscious a man is of the doctrine, the more anxious he becomes to know what the future holds in store for him; the more Buddhism, the more astrology. I think this an interesting and plausible hypothesis.¹ Traditionally astrology would predict only the

1. My friend David Pingree, whose knowledge of Indian astrology is unrivalled in the West, remarks with his usual good sense that astrology is less used by poor people because they cannot afford the fees. I do not find this economic argument strong enough to stand alone, especially as village astrologers, including monks, are sometimes part-time amateurs who give advice cheaply or possibly even gratis; but financial considerations must at least reinforce those adduced in the text.

events of this life; yet I came across the case of an elderly professional man who, while he was turning to religion, had astrologers predict for him his next rebirth. His doctrinally induced anxiety must have been unusually great. Dr. Obeyesekere further substantiates his hypothesis by a comparison of villages he knows; one in remote parts, with little knowledge of Buddhist doctrine, has correspondingly little interest in astrology, and many of the villagers never even had horoscopes. I made the same observation: middle class people in and around Mīgala were punctilious in observing auspicious practices at the New Year to which villagers paid little or no attention.¹ But on the personal level among the villagers I may have detected a contrary tendency: those who put most trust in Buddhism were least inclined to astrology. This I would explain by canonical tradition: the Buddha himself condemned astrology, palmistry and all similar practices, though his condemnation was specifically directed against their practice by monks: he did not deny their possible validity, but declared them a distraction from the road to salvation. This attitude was exemplified by the monk (19), well versed in the scriptures, who told me that astrology is not lies (nākāt śāstrē boru nā), but to become a monk no horoscope is necessary, only faith (kēndara onā nā, sraddhāva). But another monk (27) who struck me as being unusually devout took the opposite view: one needs a suitable horoscope to become a monk, and a

1. It must of course be admitted that all these cases could be covered by the "open society" hypothesis; it is so hard to isolate the variables.

novice who is found to have an unsuitable one must leave, because his religious conduct would turn out poorly; moreover one should be ordained at an auspicious time. This I would judge a flagrantly uncanonical position in its implied assimilation of spiritual to temporal success. The behaviour of monk 33, who took a correspondence course in astrology and has a government certificate to prove that he passed the final examination, also strikes me as uncanonical, even though he told me that the study of astrology is traditional in his line of pupillary succession. A few other monks said they knew some astrology but only one (41) said he practised; several said it was wrong for a monk to do so. However, astrology was till recently taught at the primarily monastic university (pirivena) of Vidyodaya.

A sceptical western reader will not be surprised to learn that even the predictions of astrology are usually imprecise; a villager who wants a specific piece of information will probably consult another specialist who employs other means (see below). What astrology generally predicts is an apalē,¹ an unlucky period, which may be either general or individual, just as a day may be lucky either for everyone or for an individual in accordance with his horoscope. There was an apalē all over the Indian cultural area in February 1962 when there was a conjunction of planets so dire that Indian predictions of the end of the world reached western newspapers. In Ceylon there was widespread

individual impairment. He may ascribe it to human agency

1. The word is connected with Skt. aphala, "fruitless".

ritual chanting of Buddhist texts (pirit, discussed below), and in Mīgala temple thirty monks chanted (in rotation) for a week, ending with a colourful ritual (the dorakaḍḍāsānē). One of the monks described it to me with great enthusiasm and said the final ritual was very fine (hari lassanayi); there was a photo of the participants hanging in the pansala, and everyone seems to have had a lot of fun. Equally cheerful was a young villager who told me his horoscope showed he had an apalē of fifteen years, of which he had about eight years to go. In the end, he said, things would turn out OK. If he did pin he would be reborn in a better state. On the other hand a middle-class villager for whom an apalē was diagnosed immediately had a specialist come and perform white magic, and stayed home from his job when the astrologer so advised.

Bad karma means that one is due for misfortune. An apalē is not a specific misfortune, but a period of being prone to misfortune. Specific misfortunes are caused by other beings - gods, men or devils - who operate as free-will agents, or they may result from natural causes such as eating the wrong food. These causes interlock and cannot be rigidly schematized. A man who falls ill will probably first try western medicine at the local hospital, and if that fails try Ayurvedic ("Sinhalese") medicine administered by a village specialist. If that fails his next resort will be determined by his sub-culture and individual temperament. He may ascribe it to human agency (black magic), and employ suitable counter-measures (white magic).

He may ascribe it to demons of disease or to malign planetary influences (i.e. simply the influence of the apalē) personified as planetary divinities, and banish or appease them by more or less elaborate exorcistic ceremonies. He may ascribe it to the actions of a god, or rather the failure of that god's protection, and make the god a vow, promising him some present or service if he recovers. If the remedy does not work this may be due to a wrong diagnosis, or, much more likely, it may be because the man's karma is too bad, and he is due to suffer longer.

The theories and remedies listed are not mutually exclusive: for instance, a man may make a vow to a god at the time when he enters hospital, or think that the failure of a god to offer protection has let a malign demon do his work. What they have in common is that none of them have anything to do with religion as the Sinhalese understands the term. The western observer who makes cross-cultural classifications could find in the above list first science, then magic¹ and finally religion; but to the Sinhalese this has no relevance: all are means of combating worldly misfortune and therefore are worldly and ipso facto not religion. Nor are the beliefs on which these practices are founded considered religious beliefs: they form no part of the Buddha's message, but are just facts of life. From this point of view there is no difference between gods and demons, between worldly gain is improper, and so it is improper to

1. As stated in the introduction, I use magic to mean a process by which the practitioner is believed to compel the result, and not to depend on the free-will acquiescence of another being.

the higher and the lower supernaturals, although Dr. Obeyesekere has made the interesting point that it is easier for a Buddhist to deny the existence of gods than of demons, as the activities of demons - principally inflicting disease - are the more obvious. In fact the only person I found positively to deny the existence of gods was a lay villager, though some monks were sceptical about their powers. However the Sinhalese are aware that other religions set store by gods, so that when I asked monks about gods a couple of them made a point of stressing that their gods have nothing to do with Buddhism. Belief in gods is not contrary to Buddhism but has no connection with it (9); belief in gods is not a matter of religion (āgama vāsāyēn adahaññe nā) (10); Buddhists as such have no devotion (bhaktiya) to gods and make no demands (illīma) on them (25); to worship just gods (deviyanma ādahīma) is heretical (mithyā drṣṭiya) (33). It is crucial to the Buddhist theory of monasticism (mahanakama) that a monk should not be concerned with worldly goods and ills; but it is only worldly goods and ills that gods and devils (whom for convenience I shall call supernaturals, though the concept is un-Sinhalese) have it in their power to bestow or remedy. Accordingly, while theory has nothing to say against the existence of these supernaturals, it does not become a monk worthy of the name to make any use of them or their institutions; to seek worldly gain is improper, and so it is improper to require the favour of a divine or a human potentate. Both are sometimes solicited, from an ignorance which does not know of this

impropriety or a greed which chooses to ignore it; but supernaturals are far less often solicited than men, whether because such intercession with a god or demon, requiring as it does a lower-class human intermediary, is a more conspicuous lapse, or because efforts at propitiating human favour are regarded as the more fruitfully expended, we can only conjecture. I do not know how many of the monks I interviewed had at some time or other been involved in civillitigation over temple property, but the number was at least double the two who said that monks do occasionally make vows (bāra venavā) to gods, of whom only one (23) admitted doing so himself; and a monk in a law-court is a far commoner sight than a monk in a god's shrine (dēvālē). To this ideological reason why a monk may not placate gods or demons the sociologist may ^{conjecture} ~~conjecture~~ add another: that it is the very function of the Buddhist clergy to preserve Buddhism, not merely in the sense that they preserve the texts and are themselves coterminous in time with Buddhism, as they themselves admit, but also in their keeping the doctrine distinct from the theocentric religious tendencies of the laity. To preserve the Theravāda tradition the Order need not deny the existence of gods, but it must keep sufficiently aloof from theocentric practices to allow laymen a vision of a life lived independent of supernatural favour.

The distinction between propitiation of super-humans and religious actions is clear-cut, for, however ambiguous the ontological status of the Buddha, he cannot be dealt with like

the gods on a quid pro quo basis, nor of course can he be compelled by spells like a demon. In Buddhist theory however the distinction is only incidentally one of means, namely that gods and demons (being alive) can be reached and affected while the Buddha (being dead) can not; essentially it is one of ends: gods and demons can be asked for any worldly benefit, from the destruction of an enemy to recovery from disease; the Buddha is in fact asked to forgive sins. But it is also possible to use religious instruments to further certain limited worldly ends. (This raises no more problems of definition than getting a priest to post a letter.) Buddhist texts are used (and have perhaps always been used) for what at least to an outsider looks like white magic, and it might even be argued, although I would hesitate to agree, that in certain contexts the Buddha himself is invoked for similar worldly ends, namely protection from sickness and danger.

The use of Buddhist texts to gain protection and relief from misfortune is generally formalized in a ceremony called pirit; the text used in informal contexts which could be taken as an invocation to the Buddha is the "Iti pi so" gāthā. Both will be discussed in detail at the end of this chapter, where they have been placed at the end of the section on white magic. I have included them in this chapter rather than in the next one, which is on some problems of doctrine, and deals with some other Buddhist practices which might be described as magical, both because they seem behaviourally more on a par with other practices

for counteracting misfortune and because they are doctrinally unproblematic, which the prārthanā discussed in Chapter 5, being concerned with future lives and religious goals, are not. On the other hand I juxtapose pirit and prārthanā to draw attention to their similarity, exemplified in the words of the Jayamangala Gāthā (p.301). To elaborate would be premature; I mention this rather complex argument here merely to point out, in accordance with my principle of paying attention to the sentiments of the Sinhalese themselves, that their explanation of pirit etc. does not exactly parallel their explanation of the cases listed above, in which gods and devils were propitiated directly and remedy was clearly matched with cause. Prima facie it might seem that the obvious explanation for the recitation of sacred texts at a sick-bed would be to say that as the situation is due to bad karma the direct remedy is to acquire better karma by the performance of meritorious actions. But this explanation is rarely if ever used, because it does not really work: the doctrine of karma requires that bad acts bear fruit, so that the pin of the sacred text will be rewarded in the future, but can have no effect on the current punishment of pay. On the other hand pirit etc. can by more than one argument be made to harmonize with the rationalist position of canonical orthodoxy. I shall return to these interpretative problems at the end of the chapter.

II. THE CONTENTS OF THE UNIVERSE.

The bulk of the remainder of this chapter must be devoted to a descriptive account of the non-human inhabitants of the

Sinhalese Buddhist universe and the institutions directly connected with them. Although this subject matter mainly¹ falls outside the local definition of Buddhism, much of it is necessary for a wider understanding of the way in which the Buddhist sees the world, and in particular for an appreciation of the ambiguous position of the use of Buddhist texts just alluded to, to which I shall return at the end of the chapter. For the most part I confine myself to the minimum information necessary for this purpose, but at times I shall supply some further data. I hope that these descriptive digressions may not be felt to impede the flow of the argument, but I think it right to attempt to complement the ethnographic data collected by my predecessors in the field. There is plenty of detailed literature on the Sinhalese pantheon, ritual and magic,² but most of it

1. As will become plain, some of the beliefs described, though few of practical importance, are derived from Buddhist scriptures. Whether a villager considered them part of Buddhagamaya (or dharmaya) would probably depend on whether he was aware of their provenance. The line between religious and secular beliefs is not more stable than, say, in our own culture.
2. Notably M.M.Ames "Magical-animism and Buddhism: A structural Analysis of the Sinhalese Religious System", pp.21-52 in E.B. Harper (ed), Religion in South Asia, University of Washington Press, Seattle 1964; *ibid.*, "Ritual Prestations and the Structure of the Sinhalese Pantheon". pp.27-50 in M.Nash (ed), Anthropological Studies in Theravada Buddhism, Yale University, South-east Asia Studies, Cultural Report Series No.13, 1966; D.de S. Gooneratne, "On Demonology and Witchcraft in Ceylon", JRAS (Ceylon Branch) vol.4, No.13, 1865-6 pp.1-117; E.R.Sarathchandra, The Sinhalese Folk Play, Ceylon University Press Board, Colombo 1953; W.A.de Silva, "note on the Bali Ceremonies of the Sinhalese", JRAS (Ceylon Branch) vol.22, no.64, 1911, pp.140-160; E.Upham, History and Doctrine of Buddhism, Ackermann, London, 1829; P.Wirz, Exorcism and the Art of Healing in Ceylon, Brill, Leyden 1954; N.Yalman, "On some Binary Categories in Sinhalese Religious Thought", *ibid.*, "The Structure of Sinhalese Healing Rituals," pp.115-150 in E.B.Harper (ed), *op cit.*, I am unable to profit by the publications of Professor Pertold. Obeyesekere's articles are mentioned separately.

depends¹ on material collected in the Low Country, and in these matters there is much variety between the Low Country and Kandyan sub-cultures, and even between smaller areas. The only article on the local Kandyan gods whom I refer to as the Twelve Gods was published by the Seligmann's in 1909, and whatever its excellence the mere lapse of time justifies another look at the subject.

In treating this kind of material much use - and misuse - has been made of Redfield's distinction between great and little traditions. The great tradition in a community consists of the common inheritance of the whole civilization to which it belongs, and is transmitted principally by the learned (usually in books); the little tradition consists of the other, local elements of a culture, varying between communities, for the most part transmitted orally and ignored in the works of litterati. Dr Obeyesekere in his article "The Great and Little Traditions in the Perspective of Sinhalese Buddhism" has brilliantly demonstrated the utility and the limitations of these concepts in the interpretation of field-work material, using as his example the subject matter of this chapter. He himself has drawn² a useful distinction between the ideal and the actual pantheon, between supernaturals whom people merely believe to exist and those with whom they interact. I think it is possible usefully to relate this

1. Yalman's work is the main exception.

2. In lectures at the University of Ceylon in 1965.

latter distinction to that of Redfield and thus clearly to schematize the whole situation. The graph paper on which this schema will be drawn is the Sinhalese map of the physical universe.

According to canonical Buddhist doctrine the world consists of three spheres or areas (dhātu), each with many named sub-divisions. The lowest sphere is that of desire (kāmadhātu), the next up is the sphere of form (rūpadhātu), and the highest the sphere of non-form (arūpadhātu); they are inhabited respectively by creatures with sensual desires, with no desires but formed bodies ("made of mind"), and with no bodies. This categorization is scholastic, so we need not further pursue such questions as whether the spheres are literally on top of each other. The sphere of non-form is so far out that no one knows anything about its formless inhabitants except that they are very near attaining nirvāṇa. At the top of the sphere of form are five heavens called "pure abodes" (suddhāvāsa); as their inhabitants are immaterial they cannot be illustrated or usefully described beyond saying that they are minds sunk in meditation. The lower heavens sometimes are depicted on temple ceilings; there are at the lower end of the sphere of form seven Brahmā heavens (brahmaloka or baṃbalova), and below them are six divine heavens (divyaloka or devlova) which constitute the top segment of the sphere of desire. The inhabitants of these divyaloka enjoy divine bliss (dev sāpa viñḍinavā). These heavens have a drawback: they are so pleasant that no one bothers to meditate

and make spiritual progress. Most of my informants agreed that an inhabitant of one of these heavens, i.e. a god, cannot attain nirvāna; that can only be done by a human being or an inhabitant of one of the higher spheres. Nevertheless, these divyaloka are the heaven (svargaya) in which most people aspire to be reborn.

The heavens are a place up in the sky; nirvāna of course is not a place but a state. A schoolgirl twelve years old said that nivan is in the sky above the heavens, and the stars are lamps which they light in heaven, but adult villagers are more sophisticated, if less poetic. But her statement that in nirvāna one has no body, only thoughts, is interesting in that it answers the canonical account of the higher spheres and illustrates how these have resulted from attempts to imagine rarefied worlds to correspond to the most sublime mystical experiences. In fact one canonical formulation has it that there are four stages or stories (bhūmikā): sphere of desire, sphere of form, sphere of non-form and supra-mundane (kāmadhātu, rūpadhātu, arūpadhātu and lokottara). "Supramundane" is of course nirvāna. It is this highly specialized word, lokottara, that M.M. Ames takes as a translation for "sacred" as opposed to "profane", which illustrates the pitfalls in matching Buddhist with Weberian concepts. The bottom stratum of the sphere of desire, and thus of the universe, consists of various hells under the ground, hells hot and cold in which demons torment those who must pay for

past sins. Black monsters are shown in temples inflicting on their naked victims the most sadistic tortures. Often the punishment fits the crime: in a special hell depicted in temple 12 those who have killed hair-lice are crushed between huge boulders which appear to them as human finger-tips must appear to a hapless louse.

In between the heavens and the hells, roughly in the middle of the sphere of desire, is the human world (manuṣyaloka) we know, which includes the sun and moon and other planets in the sky, as already mentioned, and a great variety of other non-human beings, including gods (sic), animals, demons and goblins.¹

This map of the universe taken from the Pali canon has not, and probably never had, any clear effect on religious behaviour, but it illustrates a pattern which I see repeating itself. In the scheme of the three spheres man's world is rather near the of the human world (manuṣyaloka) in its centre.

1. Canonical geography need not detain us. Ancient Indian geography divided the earth into four or more continents, the southern one being the Indian continent (Skt: Jambudvīpa, Sinh: Daṁbadiya), which includes Ceylon. England is the northern continent (Uturuguru) (39). This traditional geography is far less widely known than the modern geography we all share in the great tradition of science. I came across a monk (10) who held to both geographies, apparently without feeling an inconsistency. Though I did not normally discuss geography in my interviews, knowledge of the subject among the clergy seemed to be very poor, probably poorer than among laymen; doubtless this was because geography has only recently been taught in monastic schools. One monk (16) thought England was very hot, and asked how it got water; another (4), who ran a small piriveṇa which did teach geography, told me proudly that London was a country divided into four parts: England, Scotland, Ireland and New Zealand; moreover he confused it with the United States (Eksat Janapada), which he did not know to be in America.

bottom of the pile. However, when we focus on the world in which we as men have any immediate or practical interest we ignore the top two spheres and concern ourselves only with the sphere of desire, a world of which man is the centre, with gods in heavens above him, demons in hells below him, and other men animals, goblins and ghosts around him; a world moreover in which man is unique in his ability to attain nirvāṇa. Even for the Buddhist in ancient times there was a difference between what Obeyesekere calls the ideal and the actual universe: some parts he just knew about from teaching, while some were psychologically real because he felt he might easily visit them himself. I suggest that this narrowing of focus has repeated itself: the heavens and hells of the canonical sphere of form are now psychologically more distant, and the supernaturals with whom man has any contact, who constitute the ideal pattern, are only those of the human world (manuṣyāloka) in its centre.

As with areas of the world, so with their inhabitants: no one has ever met one of the disembodied denizens of the Pure Abodes, but some gods and many ghosts are regular village visitors. This was as true in ancient times as it is to-day. The non-human inhabitants of the canonical universe have been catalogued by Father Joseph Masson; a glance at his survey of what he calls (counter to the tenor of this thesis) "popular religion" in the Pali canon¹ reveals even within the canon a difference between

1. J. Masson, La Religion Populaire dans le Canon Bouddhique Pâli, Bibliothèque du Muséon, Vol. 5, Louvain, Bureaux du Muséon, 1942.

an ideal and an actual pantheon, between supernaturals who appear in formal catalogues and those who figure in stories. For anyone who wishes to "get the feel" of a religion this distinction is surely most important. It is a distinction which cuts right across the question of origins with which Redfield's dichotomy between great and little traditions is properly concerned. When the relevant part of the canon was compiled¹ the great tradition was that of Vedic Brahmanism, and fragments of the Vedic pantheon survive in the Buddhist texts, though the only parts of it to occur in the actual Buddhist pantheon have been transformed and "Buddhicized". The Vedas were however composed at least five hundred years before the Buddhist scriptures, much further west, by high-caste Aryans (i.e. speakers of Vedic Sanskrit). Buddhism therefore incorporated material from the little tradition of a different time, a different place, and people with a different ethnic, social and linguistic background. Some of this too was obsolete or obsolescent. To all this were added the innovations of the Buddhist litterati, a new great tradition which made a rather successful attempt to systematize the jumbled heritage.

This situation finds its parallel to-day; if anything, the historical constitution of the modern Sinhalese pantheon is the less complicated. It is less complicated because there

1. For simplicity and economy I am concerned here only with the first four Nikāyas of the Suttapiṭaka (see p. 56), the sermons which were collected in NE India roughly between 500 and 300 B.C.

has been no structural innovation; the custodians of the Buddhist Great tradition are still the monks, and the systematized schema they offer is the very one invented by their predecessors more than two thousand years ago. It is the schema which I have just introduced. It is ideal, not actual, but so it always has been. The most important gods of the actual canonical pantheon, Sakka and Mahā Brahmā, were borrowed from the Hindu Great tradition but changed in character and station so as to appear suitably Buddhist; the most important gods in the modern Sinhalese pantheon, notably Vishnu and Katarajama, have likewise come in through contact with Hindus, and Vishnu at least has been Buddhicized by being made a Bodhisattva. (Katarajama is rather a special case, as we shall see below.) Sakka and Mahā Brahmā were assigned their heavens in which to live; the universe now being partitioned there are no new worlds for the new gods to inhabit, so they live in the human world with us. (For gods living in the human world there are canonical precedents.) As for the demons and goblins, both then and now they are mostly local individuals fitted into traditional categories.

Although the modern Sinhalese have preserved the memory of several other categories of canonical supernaturals (most of which were probably ideal, not actual, even when the canon was composed), there are only three categories of supernaturals in the actual pantheon: god (deyyō or deviyō¹ - this plural

1. Derived from Sanskrit and Pali deva. I am here disregarding the term dēvatā, "deity". E.R. Leach ("Pulleyar and

form is used also to denote the singular), devil (singular yakṣayā or yakā, plural yakṣayō or yakku) and ghost (singular prētayā or perētayā, plural pretayō or perētayō). Of these three classes the first two are much the more important. "Devil" and "ghost" are extremely inaccurate translations, as I shall soon explain, so I shall refer to these two categories by the Sanskrit terms yakṣa and preta. Added to men and animals this makes five classes of beings, and so corresponds to the standard canonical list of five gati (states in which one can be reborn); in ascending order these are hell, animals, preta, men and gods.¹

(Cont.) the Lord Buddha,") has completely muddled this issue and probably misled subsequent researchers. Deviyō he says is the Sinhalese word for a "Hindu deity" (p.84, note); he assigns opposed meanings to deva and devatā. His distinction has no correlate in Sanskrit, Pali or Sinhalese. If we translate deviyō as "god" and devatā as "deity" we will have given a fair idea of their interrelation: the two terms are virtually synonymous. The term devatā in Pali, as can be seen from the entry sub voce in the PTS Dictionary, had a very wide meaning, covering objects as disparate as Brahmā, stone, ascetics and domestic animals. It was however particularly often applied to nature deities, the morally neutral yakṣa group which I discuss below. Modern Sinhalese usage is similar: devatā generally connotes a rather low deity, one in the actual pantheon and not too powerful at that, though usage is imprecise. (Gooneratne gets tied up in his attempts to explain the word precisely; he attempts it five times, on pp. 11, 14, 17, 26 and 62. The version on p.17 is the one which seems to me best.) Ames ("Ritual Prestations", p.43) has listed devatā as a separate "type of spirit" "interstitial between deviyas and yakās". In fact, as I show below, in certain cases even the terms deviyō and yakṣa are interchangeable; in similar cases devatā is merely a less common (more literary) synonym of either.

1. Eg. MN I.73, DN III.234. In other passages, e.g. DN III.264, six gati are listed, with asura inserted between preta and men. The asura were a Vedic class of fallen gods, already ossified in the canon; the discrepancy is trivial.

The category of god, as conceived both now and in the canon, is well-defined and fairly straightforward: a meritorious person is liable to be reborn in heaven, and the inhabitants of heaven are all gods. The only problem arises in connection with the gods of this world. In the canonical account of the Buddha's first sermon it says that the gods of the earth (bhummadevatā) were delighted with it and their applause attracted the attention of the gods in the various heavens;¹ in the account of the Buddha's death the Buddha tells Ānanda that there are gods of the earth with perceptions of the earth (santi devatā pathaviyā pathavi-saññiniyo), who weep and mourn at his passing.² These gods of the earth may be the minor spirits who proliferate in the canon rather than gods of the power and importance of Vishnu in Ceylon, but they do provide a precedent for locating gods in our world rather than in heaven: one monk (9) told me that Vishnu, Kataragama etc. live mainly in this world; whether or not they go up to the heavens (diviyaloka) we do not know. The general opinion concerning Kataragama, the most important god in modern Ceylon, was that he was powerful but a sinner, and definitely an inhabitant of our world. The opinions of one monk (43) deserve to be reproduced in detail. Concerning Vishnu he held the unusual theory (which he told me was his special private theory) that

1. SN V.423.

2. DN II.140 (Sutta 16.5.6) repeated DN II.158 (Sutta 16.6.11).

was probably implying that the "big gods" of the canon really he is a personification of nature ("Viṣṇu kiyanne svabhāva"); this does not mean that it is futile to pray to him - on the contrary, he is very powerful. The other gods he divided into "big gods" (loku deyyō) and "little gods" (podī deyyō). (Compare the canonical distinction quoted by monk (17) between gods of little and of great power (alpēsakya mahēsakya.) The "big gods" he mentioned were the canonical gods who survive in the Sinhalese ideal pantheon, namely Śakra and the Four Guardian Deities, who live in their heavens; the little gods, he explained, are merely humans who had developed minds (hita diyuṇuva) in life and have been deified. He applied this to all the non-canonical gods except Vishnu. We can see the process with Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, who will soon be Riḍavē Dayas Baṇḍāra.¹ Similar cults await other men who have little passion, hatred and delusion (rāga dvēsa mōha aḍu minissu). It would be invidious to reproduce the rest of our discussion.

The above exposition suggests a rather mixed intellectual background. According to Buddhist doctrine all gods were men in a former life, so it should not be necessary to specify this for any particular gods. On the other hand the same Buddhist tradition makes euhemerism a favourite explanation of gods among sceptical Buddhists. The difference between the Buddhist and the euhemeristic position is that the former allows the gods to exist in their own right, the latter claims that they exist only in the popular imagination. My informant

1. Ridgeway Dias were two of the prime minister's names. Baṇḍāra is a Kandyan type of minor god discussed below.

was probably implying that the "big gods" of the canon really exist but the "little gods" do not, a position not illogical but incongruous.

The categories of yakṣa and preta are far less clear, and the muddle goes back to the canon itself. Both then and now the category yakṣa overlaps with that of god on the one hand and that of preta on the other. The former overlapping is a mere semantic unclarity, the preservation (or repetition?) of which is a historical curiosity; the latter reflects the more fundamental difficulty, met with also among Christians, of reconciling doctrine on the fate of men - especially bad men - after death with a half articulated belief in their return as ghosts.

The range of meanings of yakkha, the Pali equivalent of yakṣa in the canon, can best be studied in the Pali Text Society dictionary entry for that word. The term covers a great variety of supernatural beings, usually of a religious and moral status somewhere near that of man. Two kinds of beings seem principally to be covered by the term: morally neutral or ambivalent nature deities who live in trees or on mountains; and extremely malevolent and hideous demons who frequent cemeteries and lure lonely travellers to sudden death. The female of the former class is frequently portrayed, according to the general interpretation, in the lush female figures at Bharhut and Sanchi; the female of the latter class is apt to beguile the wayfarer or shipwrecked sailor by appearing as a lovely woman, only to turn into a cannibal ogress. This latter,

modern times. He lives in the lowest of the worlds, but demoniacal class widely supplants in Buddhism the similar to judge from what I see in the lowest (2) rakasa is called rākṣasa (Sinh.: rakusa) of Sanskrit literature. However the word yakṣa has a wider meaning of "supernatural being", for it is even applied to the Buddha. I think the importance of this passage can be over-stressed,¹ for it is in a long verse eulogy during which the Buddha is also called Sakka purindada ("Sakra sacker of citadels"); but the great god Sakra is himself called a yakkha.² At the other extreme one kind of preta, those with great power (mahiddhika), are all yakṣas. For the middle ground let me adduce the passage³ in which yakṣas are cited as a distinct group parallel with three other kinds of demigods: gandhabba, kumbhaṇḍa and nāga.⁴ Their king is the guardian of the north, Vaiśravaṇa (Pali: Vessavaṇa alias Vessamuni alias Kubera, Sinh.: Vesamuni), who is elsewhere said to be the god of wealth and live in the Himalayas. He has survived till known sort of yakṣa, however, is distinctly malevolent, and in the low Country is exercised by devil-dancing. These yakṣas

1. MN I.386. The other place where the Buddha is allegedly called a yakkha, SN I.234, is even more dubious
2. E.g. at J.IV.4.
3. DN II.257 (Sutta 20.9). On the basis of this passage J. Przyluski and M. Lalou in "Notes de Mythologie Bouddhique. I Yakṣa et Gandharva dans le Mahāsamaya Suttanta", Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies, 1938, vol.3. no.1, pp.40-46, claim that yakṣa was at first a general term which then narrowed in meaning; but I find their argument unconvincing, especially in view of the imprecision of usage current to this day.
4. Gandharvas, celestial musicians associated with fertility, and nāgās five-headed cobras, are Vedic. Kumbhaṇḍas make here their sole appearance - and that by name alone - on the stage of history.

modern times. He lives in the lowest of the divyaloka, but to judge from what I was told (monk 12) can properly be called a yakṣa himself.

The semantic spread of the term yakṣa in modern Ceylon is almost the same, except that it is never used of the Buddha or a "big" god; it implies at least potential sinfulness and generally residence in the human world. There are native divinities who live in big trees, especially Bō (sacred fig) or nā (ironwood) trees;¹ these are vaguely conceptualized and poorly integrated with the rest of the pantheon, but the day before cutting down a big tree the woodmen will inform the resident divinity by mentioning the fact as they pass by, and maybe decorate another tree with lights and strips of cloth to indicate it is a suitable alternative residence. (Bō and nā trees are not cut down at all.) The more important and better-known sort of yakṣa, however, is distinctly malevolent, and in the low Country is exorcised by devil-dancing. These yakṣas generally bring disease, and certain diseases are even associated with particular yakṣas; but in my area these individually named yakṣas have little currency, and misfortune may be ascribed to any yakṣa fairly indiscriminately. There is a clear tendency for the named yakṣas, those with individual personalities, to be

1. As mentioned in chapter 3, the day before his enlightenment Gotama was meditating under a sacred fig tree. Sujātā had made a vow to the deity of that tree, in fulfilment of which her maid brought the milk-rice. On seeing Gotama she thought him to be the tree-deity (J.I.68). Similarly Maitrī, the next Buddha, will obtain enlightenment under a nā tree

assimilated to the important class of minor deities called "the Twelve Gods" and known to scholarly literature as the Baṇḍāra cult. The Twelve Gods will be discussed in detail below; here suffice it to say that they are known collectively as gods (deyyō) and most of them include "god" or "deity" (dēvatā) as part of their name, and yet most of them are freely described as yakku. The expression may be pejorative, but this depends on the speaker's expression and tone of voice; the term is not itself loaded, but retains its canonical ambiguity. At the other extreme are the devils who torment sinners in hell: for these too there is no word but yakā. But whereas all the other yakku are part of the actual pantheon the devils in hell are only part of the ideal universe. We shall return to them in a moment.

Already in the canon the pretas (Pali: peta) are an adaptation of an older idea to the Buddhist conceptions of rebirth and punishment, and seem to be poised on the borderline between the actual and the ideal; they are still in exactly the same position. In the Vedas there is no cycle of rebirth; the dead go down to some kind of Homeric underworld, where they exist as ancestor spirits or "fathers" (pitaras). These pitaras were to receive offerings (bali) from their male descendants, and this obligation persisted, illogically, despite the new doctrine of rebirth first met in Upaniṣads. Buddhism resolved the illogicality but retained some incongruity. A class of pretas was invented, hungry ghosts who roamed the dark corners of the earth

just slightly better off than if they were in hell, and liable to reform just like all other classes of beings. Preta and peta mean "departed", the term being used to mean "dead" as in English; but the term is linguistically confused with the pitaras,¹ thus revealing the ambiguity of the concept. Another compromise with the older ideas was achieved when in non-canonical Pali literature the pretas were divided into four² (or three)³ categories of which one was designated as "living on what others give" (paradattûpajîvino); but in this case what they receive is not a physical offering but merit given them by human beings, notably by relatives at the funeral feast - as described at the end of chapter 5.

I mentioned above that the pretas "of great power" are said in the canon to be yakṣas. In modern Ceylon the categories yakṣa and preta are never formally stated to overlap; but they seem somewhat confused in matters concerning their manifestations and treatment - in a word, when they are ghosts. Sinhalese has a word appropriately translatable as "ghost" - holman. It is important to note that a holman is not a separate class of being; it is a mere apparition, a manifestation

1. DN II.234 and II.264 have petti visayo, MN.I.73 has pitti visayo. Both show connection with Sanskrit paitrya, an adjective formed from pitr.

2. Milindapañha 294.

3. Vibhanga Atthakathā 455.

2. E.g. by P. A. S. S. "Buddha and the Dancing Sattvas: A Study of Magic and Religion", As. Anth., vol. 66, No. 1, 1964, pp. 75-82

(avatāraya) of a being.¹ (The word avatāraya, which has a distinguished history in Hinduism, has in Mīgala so far come down in the world as to be used as a synonym for holman.) These holman are much associated with scenes of death, which leads the westerner to expect that they might be manifestations of perētayō, but in fact they are generally said to be yakku. Perētayō are said to have huge bellies and very small mouths (their uncouth appearance and insatiable appetite perhaps justify their being called "goblins");² holman on the other hand never have this form, but appear typically as a naked white figure or as a dog. They are however not necessarily seen; they may be heard (as pursuing footsteps), or even felt (as a hand on the back). They appear at night, and the hours of 6 p.m., 6 a.m. (twilight) and midnight are said to be especially dangerous. The most dangerous place is a cemetery - and here we are reminded not only of ghosts but, perhaps more pertinently, of the necrophagous yakṣa of the canon. The worst such ghoul is

- are part of the ideal rather than the actual pantheon.
1. Gooneratne defines holman rather more widely (p.48) as "ominous signs" which betoken the presence of yakku. Of avatāra he says (pp.46-47): "Although demons are said to shew themselves in these ways to men, yet the opinion of those, who may be called the more orthodox of the demon-worshippers, is that these apparitions are not the demons themselves but certain puppet-like spectres, which they create and present to the eyes of men, in order to frighten them;...This opinion however is one, which is confined to the more learned of the demon worshippers; the more ignorant believe that the demons themselves are bodily present at these scenes, although they assume some sort of disguise, whenever they choose to make themselves visible to men."
 2. E.g. by M.M.Ames, "Buddha and the Dancing Goblins: A theory of Magic and Religion", Am. Anth., vol.66, No.1, 1964, pp.75-82

Mahasōna,¹ who may lay his great hand on the back of a lonely wanderer near a cemetery at midnight. People dead of shock have been found to bear his livid imprint on their backs,² a phenomenon comparable to the bleeding stigmata of Padre Pio and other Christians. Though I heard of no such extreme case in Mīgala, the villagers do not allow their womenfolk near the cemetery at night, and I heard of one lady who had come across Mahasōna and been frightened into a fever. However, holman do not necessarily do you any harm; they can be kept at bay by reciting a Buddhist text (the "Iti pi so" gāthā - see end of chapter) or a consciousness of rectitude, and some seem to view them with more curiosity than alarm, though such people, as one might expect, have usually not met one - and some do not even believe that they are anything but figments of the imagination.

I am not an authority on perētayō, because so far as I could discover the inhabitants of Mīgala do not interact with them; outside the context of the funeral feast I think they are part of the ideal rather than the actual pantheon. It is in the Low Country that they are actual: Obeyesekere writes,³

1. Mahāsona (his Pali name) originally appears as one of the ten warriors of Duṭṭhagāmuṇu (see especially Mahāvamsa XXIII 45-48), but his character has undergone considerable deterioration. I suggest this may be because the distinctive part of his name (sōna) has been confused with Sinhalese sōhona (cemetery), which is often pronounced sōna.

2. I owe this information to Gananath Obeyesekere.

3. "Great Tradition", p.144.

"Pretas ... are given inferior foods like puluta or marijuana and sometimes fecal matter"; but I came across no such offering, and an informant wise in local lore even refused to draw the Low Country distinction between offerings to yakṣas (pidēni) and offerings to pretas (dola), but said that as both were amanuṣya (a Sanskrit word literally meaning "non-human") both received dola.

Another term for creatures in this murky area is bhūta (Sinh.: bhūtayā, pl. bhūtayō), which literally means "has-been". In the canon the word is common only in the compound bhūtavijjā, literally "science of bhūtas", which is the normal word for exorcism. The word is not commonly used in Mīgala - though again I believe it to be common in the Low Country - but I have had to explain it in order to render intelligible the opinions on this subject of the euhemeristic monk (43) quoted above; his opinion on the lower spirits will illustrate how the line between yakṣa and preta is blurred. At first he said that yakku are wicked men, such as the black cannibals in Africa; the yakku who were in Ceylon when the Buddha¹ visited it were of this sort. This statement is ambiguous: it could mean that wicked men are reborn as yakku, which would be traditionally orthodox, or that they tend to be mistaken for yakku, a rationalization on the euhemeristic lines of his remarks about gods. Then however he added that some yakku are also bhūta; bhūta, perēta and holman are the same, though perēta is really the general name for a dead man. He then spoke of yakku possessing people: when the

1. Mahāvamsa I. See chapter 3, p. 140.

possessed person is exorcised the yaka shouts "Hū" and leaves by the mouth. Yakku are very fond of drumming; he told a story of a woman who while possessed could drum marvellously, but lost the art when exorcised. There are many yakku in Colombo, but some everywhere - even in Buckingham Palace there are ghosts.

The above is the only note I have of someone specifically connecting holman with perēta (rather than with yakṣa); but equally significant is the remark of a schoolgirl that there are holman only when bad men, not when good men die. Moreover, to add to the confusion there is a category of yakṣa called maḷa yakā ("dead yakṣa"). I only came across the term once in my field work (monk 10 on Kaḍavara - see below, p.248), but Gooneratne gives this account of them (p.19): "If a man, who lives at enmity with another, remember, on his deathbed, just before he dies, and at the very moment of his expiring, any thing relating to that enmity, and if, instead of a feeling of forgiveness, resentment and hatred take possession of his mind, he is supposed to become, after death, a demon of this kind. These demons are not so powerful, as [big demons like Mahasōna], nevertheless they too cause sickness." The indeterminate position of the wicked dead seems established. It is aggravated by the ideas about hell. In the doctrinal picture hells have two classes of inhabitants, the wicked and the devils who torment them, but this is incongruous with the picture of heavens in which the good are reborn as the gods. Moreover, people are supposed to identify with the tormented,

not with the tormentors; but it is dubious which should be considered the worse fate, for the tormented are expiating their sins and so will be reborn elsewhere, whereas the tormentors by their cruelty are sinning more. My objections are a purely academic quibble, for the hells are part of the ideal rather than the actual universe; they are certainly believed in, but as men cannot interact with their inhabitants the only effect they can have on behaviour is to deter from sin, an effect not measurable by the social scientist. However these slight inconsistencies even on the cognitive level do suggest that affectively the doctrine of unpleasant rebirth for bad karma, matching pleasant rebirth for good karma, all rebirths being transient states, does not carry full conviction. The ambiguous nature of the preta and their imperfect demarcation from yakṣa I have shown to be canonical; the dilemma about hell is canonical also. In the canonical list of five rebirths (gati) the others are all as types of creature; but the worst is just "hell", whether as tormentor or tormented being unspecified. There is in fact no rebirth as devil mentioned in this list: it was no doubt to remedy this deficiency that the otherwise obsolete Vedic asura were introduced to extend the list of gati to six. The Sinhalese holman are a local product of the very widespread human hopes and fears that the dead may revisit their former dwellings and acquaintances; but in so far as such an event would be inconsistent with the doctrinal Buddhist scheme of things, the inconsistency is nothing new.

Working up from the bottom of the universe in the same way as the list of gati, we have now dealt with hell, preta, and indeed asura. Animals require only a few words. They too are vaguely considered to form some kind of hierarchy, with the elephant, hero of Sinhalese folk-lore, at the top. As in western culture, animals traditionally symbolize certain vices: the pigeon stands for lust, the pig, dog and crow for rapacious greed. A man subject to a particular vice is likely to be reborn as the appropriate animal. The cobra (nayā - Skt. nāga) has a peculiar position: though it is always a sin to kill, to kill a cobra is especially sinful and extremely unlucky - two different ways of saying that it is so bad that bad results are sure to ensue before long. If a cobra is known to be living somewhere he is not disturbed, but often offered saucers of milk. Cobras sometimes are said to guard sacred places (e.g. see monk 2). In the canon nāgas are a separate class of beings, semi-divine five-headed cobras, and the cobra's special status is a survival of this belief.

The next on the list of gati is man. The human world is itself hierarchically structured in the caste system (see chapter 8). To be reborn in a good human station is more desired by some than to be reborn in heaven (see chapter 6), nor is this wish necessarily irreligious, as it must seem to a westerner, for men are held to have a better chance than the lower gods of attaining nirvāṇa. Any human being, irrespective of status, may attain nirvāṇa, but it is widely believed to be much harder for

women. The relations of all human beings to the physical world are the same, except that enlightened people (arhats) have supernormal powers (r̥ddhi) which enable them to pass through solids, fly through the air, etc.. (In the Canon the acquisition of these powers comes several stages before Enlightenment, but in the popular imagination this gap has disappeared.) Arhats are finished when they die, and are not normally worshipped, though in ancient times (when there were arhats), their relics were venerated. However, an arhat called Sīvalī occupies a somewhat anomalous position. He is little mentioned in the Pali texts, and then mainly in connection with his birth; but the Buddha called him "pre-eminent among recipients of gifts",¹ and his modern reputation seems to rest on this and on a story² that the Buddha once took him along on a difficult journey because he could always find a meal. He is portrayed as an ordinary monk, seated, holding an alms bowl, and his picture is in many homes, and even on buses over the driver's seat (when the driver is a Buddhist). He does not receive prayers or offerings; his picture merely seems to serve as a general "lucky charm".

We are now back with the gods and the problems they raise. I have already shown that all the main Sinhalese beliefs about the workings of the universe and the pantheon are part of the great tradition. Even Vishnu and Kataragama (described in

1. AN.I.24, the human world - "little" gods, etc., etc.

2. Apadāna II.495 and are actual, and prove up to the hilt that

because of their unclear status and their association with the gods.

more detail below), who are most typically cited as innovations in Theravāda Buddhism, are certainly not ascribable to a "little tradition"; they are pan-Sinhalese, not local gods; worshipped by members of the educated classes (probably more than by poor villagers); historically derived principally from the great tradition of Hinduism; long absorbed into Sinhalese literate culture as their presence in the Mahāvamsa will testify; and fitting comfortably into the Buddhist doctrinal scheme of things. Certain individual local godlings and demons have no such respectable histories to offer, and can certainly be ascribed to little traditions, but this is trivial - the point is that they all fit into the structure which the great tradition has provided. To my mind the principal interest of little traditions (sub-cultures) in Ceylon lies in their selectivity from the great tradition. In Mīgala there is a proliferation of minor gods, but little stress on yakku, and perētayō are so little considered that they have by and large retreated from the actual to the ideal; a glance at the work of Ames or Wirz will show by contrast the enormous exuberance in the Low Country of belief and practice concerning all the lower and nastier spirits; and I believe that this is a general contrast between the Low Country and the Kandyan provinces. On the other hand I think that Obeyesekere's distinction between the ideal and the actual pantheon can be explained in terms of the system itself: it is the inhabitants of our world, the human world - "little" gods, men, animals, yakṣa and ghosts - who are actual, and preta are on the borderline because of their unclear status and their confusion with holman.

The two gods who were the most important in the canon - so much so that they alone deserve to be called "actual" canonical gods - are the two who have survived to head the ideal Sinhalese pantheon, and of these two Śakra (Sinh.: Śakrayā) is - as he was - more important than Mahā Brahmā. Śakra has remarkable staying power because under the name of Indra he was the most important god in the Ṛg Veda. However, after a vigorous youth as a rumbustious warrior god and a respectable middle age as a highly moral supporter of the Buddha, he has declined into a feeble and somewhat disgraceful senility; for he is now little considered, and his only appearance in ritual of which I am aware is as a lecherous old man!¹ In the canon Śakra rules a heaven (called in Pali the Tāvatiṃsa heaven) which is one away from the lowest; the lowest is ruled by the Four Great Kings or "world guardians" (lokapāla), one for each point of the compass: Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Virūḍha, Virūpākṣa and Vaiśravaṇa rule E. S. W, and N respectively. Except for Vaiśravaṇa, king of the yakṣas, these four are totally colourless. These six gods, Śakra, Mahā Brahmā and the four world guardians, are frequently portrayed together at the entrance to image-houses, usually forming a standardized framework for the makara toraṇa on the outside entrance wall of the central shrine. Śakra and Mahā Brahmā may also appear in representations of scenes from the Buddha's life, even attending on him like divine correlates of the two chief disciples; but the four world

1. In the Pattinī gam maḍuva scene of the birth of the goddess from a mango, described by Obeyesekere in his lectures.

guardians have no more than a decorative function. Vaiśravaṇa may be said to lead a double life: as king of the yakṣas he is imagined as a kind of super-yakṣa himself, but in temple iconography he is a good-looking young king not distinguishable from his colleagues.

Below the four world guardians we enter the human world and the actual pantheon, gods with whom the Sinhalese interact. At the top of the hierarchy are the four guardian deities of Ceylon, two of whom are always Vishnu and Kataragama. Traditionally these gods were associated with a particular area of Ceylon in which also stood their principal shrine: for instance, Kataragama is at home in Ruhunu, the south-eastern part of the country, which contains his eponymous shrine. However, the country was in ancient times divided into three parts (Pihiti, Māyā and Ruhunu) not four, and the list of guardian deities fluctuates. I suspect that their number was fixed at four only because of the influence of the four world guardians of the canon.

Now that we are getting down to the human world it is time to remark on the structure of the pantheon. On the whole I can do little better than recapitulate the conclusion of Dr. Obeyesekere's brilliant article. He has shown that the structure of the pantheon follows the structure of authority in the feudal system which was once so exactly represented in the Kandyan kingdom: all power derives ultimately from the Buddha, who has given the gods varam ("warrants"), and similarly the greater gods give warrants to the lesser gods, who form their retinue (pirisa

or parivara). I entirely concur with this interpretation: indeed I was given it spontaneously by an elderly monk (12) who can never have heard of Dr. Obeyesekere's work, a startling tribute to Obeyesekere's acumen. There are various symbolic ways in which the gods are made to defer to the Buddha's superior authority, and a few of them will be pointed out in the remainder of this chapter; but none of them require that the Buddha be conceived as still living. Obeyesekere presents his feudal model with the Buddha as the king at its head, alive and active at least to the extent that he is still able to issue new warrants. He is fully justified in so doing, as he cites a Low Country drama as evidence for the active Buddha. However it is not logically necessary that the Buddha be alive for the warrant mechanism to function if he has already delegated his power to some high god or gods; new warrants can be issued by further delegation.¹ In fact I never heard anyone suggest even in this context that the Buddha is still alive or active. On the contrary, my informant (monk 12) clearly stated that Śakra was king of the gods - a position which I may say has been attributed to him in very different times and circumstances. At the top of the pyramid of current divine authority I would accordingly substitute for Obeyesekere's Buddha monk 12's Śakra. Śakra is the king; if the Buddha is anything in this model we will have to transfer to

1. I am reassured to see that in his next article, which reached me after the above was written, Dr. Obeyesekere makes precisely this point ("Buddhist Pantheon", p.13), thus correcting a slightly misleading impression given by the former article.

the feudalism of mediaeval Europe and call him God who has legitimated the occupant of the throne.

Theoretically the four guardian deities of Ceylon derive their power from Śakra, or his council of ministers or parliament or whatever device he governs by, and the local gods, each with his rigidly defined territory (sīmāva - "boundary" - the same term as is used for parishes) are retainers of the guardian deity in charge of their area; but in fact there are several gods of indeterminate, or rather varying, status, and the whole thing does not work out so neatly. Probably it never did, but I suspect that some of the confusion has arisen through the gradual dissolution and merging of local cultures which has followed political centralization, improved communications, and the population explosion. Especially in the last twenty years, since the eradication of malaria and general advance in public health, villages have spilled over till the old boundaries have only legal or historical existence, and the people are no longer quite sure where the jurisdiction of the local god ends. Improved communications mean the spread of ideas: outsiders give the villages new ideas about the gods, as about everything else; and a god who hits the headlines, as it were, is likely to displace his old colleague or rival. Political centralization has made the old model of regional autonomy obsolescent, and the replacement of feudalism by modern parliamentary and bureaucratic government has blurred the clarity of the traditional hierarchy. Some now compare the god's arrangements to Parliament. The main beneficiary of

all these changes has been Kataragama, who seems to be on his way to ousting all the other guardian deities. Obeyesekere even suggests¹ that within a few years this stern and punitive father-figure, originally a wargod, will have made Ceylon monotheistic (my term) for the first time in history. I saw his power rising locally: while I was there the first Sinhalese shrine (dēvālē) to Kataragama in the area was opened. Moreover he was said to be the god from whom the local village gods derived their warrants; but as the god of Ruhunu I would think that he can originally have had no business in the hill country, and I would guess that he has filched the retinue of Saman or one of his other declining colleagues. This last is however rather light-hearted conjecture; against it may be adduced Kataragama's long established position as one of the Four Gods in nearby Kandy, where Saman has no shrine of any importance.

Kataragama has long been the most important deity of the Tamil Hindus of Ceylon, who are all Saivites and whose religiosity contrasts markedly with that of the Sinhalese - Ruth Benedict would have called the former Dionysian, the latter Apollonian.² Coloured red, he has six heads and twelve arms, which hold weapons; his mount (vāhana) is a peacock. He is Śiva's second son, known to Sanskrit mythology as Skanda,³ Kumāra, or Kārttikeya, and to

1. "Buddhist Pantheon", p.25.

2. See Patterns of Culture, Mentor Books, New York, 1959, p.79.

3. Obeyesekere writes (p.146): "Skanda is considered a manifestation of the god Śiva." This must be a slip.

his Tamil worshippers by these and several other names;¹ the name Kataragama, far the most commonly used by the Sinhalese, is no doubt originally the name of his shrine in the extreme south-east corner of Ceylon.² Here he has two wives, Tēvānī and Valli Ammā. Tēvānī is the Tamil wife he brought with him from India, with whom he lives most of the time; Valli Ammā is the Sinhalese or Vādda wife he met in Kataragama, whom he visits during the annual festival there in July/August. Such annual festivals are celebrated in all his Hindu temples, and involve processions (perahāra) and firewalking; the festival at Kataragama itself is well on the way to becoming, if it has not already become, the most important event in the religious calendar, attracting even more pilgrims than the Asaḷa Perahāra for the Buddha's Tooth in Kandy. Though the Kataragama festival is primarily for Hindus, drawing Tamils from all parts of Ceylon and even from India,³ it has since ancient times been a place of Buddhist pilgrimage also, and Sinhalese in increasing numbers are going there and making vows to the god. (There is now also a Muslim shrine there so that Muslims may have a religious excuse for joining the pilgrimage. Christians have

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1. E.g. Shanmugan ("six-faced" - because he has six heads). Murugan (the ancient Tamil god of war), Subrahmanian, Kandan. Some of these names are extremely common components of the personal names of Ceylon Tamils.
 2. In Mīgala the place was often referred to as maha ("great") Kataragama, to distinguish it from poḍi ("small") Kataragama, his local Hindu temple (kovil).
 3. Leonard Woolf, Growing, Hogarth Press, London 1961, p.226.

no such excuse - but go.) The character of some of these vows inclines towards the gruesome: in their fulfilment men - and women - not only shave their heads (or half their heads) and walk on fire, but put skewers through their cheeks, or even hang in mid-air from strings passed through the tendons of their backs. The more arduous of these devotions are practiced mainly by Tamils, but fire-walking is not entirely alien to the Sinhalese tradition, and more and more non-Hindus are undertaking such vows, and doubtless coming under the influence of Kataragama's dark and violent spirit.

Most of the monks I asked (twenty out of twenty-seven), had visited Kataragama, several more than once, though they usually hastened to add that they went just to look, not for worship (bhaktiya) or to make a vow (bāra venṭa). Several however mentioned that (like other gods) he should be given merit, and some said he gave protection (āraksāva) to Buddhism (sāsane) or Buddhists. Opinions and knowledgeability about him varied greatly, and seemed to constitute one of the best indices of traditionalism, the more traditional monks knowing and caring little about him and holding him in low esteem. (In Appendix ^{One} ~~4~~ beliefs about Kataragama will be found under the heading "Supernatural Beings" in each interview.) A very old monk (29), who had never been to Kataragama, seemed to put him on a level with yakku, saying that he rules over cemeteries (balapānnē sohonāṭa). Several mentioned that he inspired fear (e.g. 30), but monk 24 said there is no reason to be afraid; he came to Ceylon in flight from India after losing a war, and people just believe that he has supernormal power (tējasa). His harshness

to Tamils was stressed (17, 20, 21), and is explained by a myth (2): he came to Ceylon from India, and assumed the form of a boy. When he landed it grew dark and he needed shelter for the night. He knocked at the hut of a Tamil, who refused him. He then went to the hut of a Sinhalese, who not merely asked him in but went out himself, to give the whole hut to the visitor. For this Kataragama is now making the Tamils pay (vipāka denavā) and the main priest (kapurāla) of his shrine has to be a Sinhalese. The hut in which he stayed is reconstructed in front of his dēvālē. The monk who told me this was just back from a trip to Kataragama, and far more positive about him than most: Kataragama, he said, was very good and truthful (satyavādī). It is widely known that Kataragama is supposed to have killed asuras in a great battle (see monk 9); the above monk who favoured Kataragama justified this conduct, explaining that the asuras were very wicked, committing the ten sins (dasa akusal), and therefore deserved to be punished. Another monk (8), less pleasantly, explained that the asuras were in fact Tamils. The sufferings which Tamils undertake in his worship are felt to require explanation, and this explanation coincides with Sinhalese nationalist prejudice. Like monk 26, the monk (8) who made it connected Kataragama with Duṭṭagāmuṇu's victory over the Tamils - not unreasonably as Duṭṭagāmuṇu grew up in and began his march from the immediate vicinity of the shrine, which indeed monk 26 said he built in fulfilment of a vow to the god. I asked some monks whether killing did not make Kataragama a sinner (pavkārayek), and they usually agreed (e.g. 4,

38), Moreover, said 21, he has servants who are yakṣas, and he also sins through them. Only one monk (33) held him to be a Bodhisattva, and he was a man of deviant opinions who nevertheless cannot have held him in high regard, as he had never been to Kataragama. As for his history, he was generally connected with the human world and with India. Monk 1 said that most of the gods were just men (minissu mayi) who were born in India, and because of their merit were reborn as powerful gods. The statement of monk 12 that Kataragama is not a man but a god by birth (utpattiyen deyyō) does not contradict this; it is rather aimed against the euhemeristic type of explanation which I have already cited (43), and of which I came across several more examples in this context. To say clearly that he was a man in a previous life fits the traditional Buddhist scheme of things; but it is hard to know how to interpret the remarks of monk 11, an intelligent and modern-minded person, who said that all these gods were originally men, and there is a popular feeling that they have been reborn as gods; this implied no scepticism, for he also said that Kataragama had the power to help people, and he knew of cases in the village where he had cured barrenness.

Kataragama's arrival in Buddhism as a Hindu alien was remarked on by several, not only in metaphorical terms. Monk 26 by implication put the Hindu influence back to the time of Duṭṭhagāmuṇi (c.100 B.C.) or earlier. Monk 18 told me that vihāras and dēvālēs have been built together since the Polonnaruva period. Monk 41 associated a more recent dating with an

unusually outspoken condemnation: popular beliefs about Kataragama are heretical (vaituli adahas). The last kings of Kandy, he said, were of Śaivite origin and brought Śaivite queens from South India. These queens believed in Vishnu and Kataragama (who was once a man in India), and so they became popular. When the kings went to worship the Buddha, the queens wanted to go and worship Kataragama, so they put the shrines together for convenience; this is how shrines to gods came into temple compounds. Then according to Śaivism (Śivāgamē hāṭiyāṭa) you must make a vow, and give a hand for a hand, etc. [a reference to ex voto offerings]; this is contrary to Buddhism (Buddhāgamāṭa viruddhayi). But Kataragama has no real power; his influence (balapāma) depends on belief (visvāsa), and, like a magician, he works on credulity.

According to Professor Hans-Dieter Evers there are many myths according to which a vihāra was built by the king, an accompanying dēvālē by the queen. Though this was the only case I came across, I can well believe that the assertion is frequent, for it is a natural way of expressing that the two systems represented by these buildings are conceptually distinct but complementary.

The above monk was the only one to say that making vows was "contrary to Buddhism", though maverick monk 33 came rather near it when he said that to worship gods is heretical (mithyā drṣṭiya), and it is wrong (varada) to believe in gods alone (deviyanma ādahīma), and it is wrong to ask for individual gain, as people

do at Kataragama, rather than for liberation (mokṣa). I am however sure that these two monks did not mean to express any disagreement with the clearly expressed opinion of several others, which is one of my theses, that the worship of Kataragama is simply irrelevant to Buddhism. Belief in gods is not contrary to Buddhism, but has no connection with it, said Monk 9. Buddhists as such have no devotional worship (bhaktiya) and make no requests (illīma) of gods, said monk 25. Belief in gods is not a matter of religion (āgama vasāyēn adahanne nā) said monk 10, who certainly believed in some of them. The same attitude was expressed by numerous monks who said that one should give the gods merit but nothing else. What monk 41 had in mind was that worship of Kataragama is specifically Śaivite and not found in the texts; he also was probably thinking of what monk 33 went on to say: that vows to Kataragama are often of a dubiously moral nature - victory in law suits, or worse - and people who ask the god for favours against others are reborn as yakṣayō.

So much space has been given to Kataragama because it was concerning him, as by far the most important god in modern Ceylon, that I mainly questioned the monks, and their attitudes to him exemplify their attitudes to "popular beliefs" in general. The other guardian deities of Ceylon can be disposed of more briefly, especially as they are already the subject of much scholarly literature. There are in Kandy four dēvālēs which have for many centuries combined to hold the Āsaḷa Perahāra¹ (see

1. Since the Buddhist revival of the mid-eighteenth century

chapter 3), and they belong (in order of ceremonial precedence) to Nātha, Vishnu, Kataragama and Pattinī. This tetrad is not the same as that which appears as the protectors of Ceylon in inscriptions and literature of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: Upulvan (i.e. Vishnu - see below), Saman, Vibhīṣaṇa and Skanda-kumāra (= Kataragama).¹ Only Kataragama and Vishnu are in both lists, so it is not surprising that when I asked people to name the Four Gods (hatara deyyō) they were the only two always named. Were the analogy of divine with human government consistently applied we would expect the Four Gods to have Ceylon, or perhaps Sinhalese Ceylon, divided between them into four non-overlapping territories (sīmā), but the reality is not so tidy. Of Vishnu I was often told, in accordance with the Mahāvamsa story, that his territory is the whole of Ceylon.² His chief shrine in Ceylon is at Devundara, on the south coast. Ancient and mediaeval references which are commonly assumed to be to Vishnu, including the Mahāvamsa passage and references to the Devundara shrine,

(Cont.) the Temple of the Tooth has joined with them to form the spectacle still visible to-day. At that time Buddhism reasserted its sovereignty, and the Buddha's tooth (or its replica) leads the emblems of the gods in the procession. For a description and sociological analysis of the Āsala Perahāra see H.L. Seneviratne, "The Āsala Perahāra in Kandy", Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies Vol.6, no.2, 1963, pp.169-180.

1. S. Paranavitana (ed.), *History of Ceylon*, vol.1, Ceylon University Press, Colombo 1960, part II, p.765.
2. Cf. Paranavitana, *History*, II 763: "In the fifteenth century, Upulvan was looked upon as the national god of the Sinhalese."

in fact say Upulvan/Uppalavanna. The name means "having the colour of a blue lotus", and Vishnu has. Professor Paranavitana questions whether Upulvan really was Vishnu,¹ but as the two have been popularly identified the question is purely academic. Vishnu's traditional character is benevolent and colourless; his character as fidei defensor is his only salient characteristic. As in India he is shown as blue, with four arms, and his mount is a kind of eagle (garuḍa).

Nātha (the name means "lord" in Sanskrit and Pali) has almost been forgotten. His main shrine is at Toṭagamuwa on the south-west coast, but to my knowledge he is never considered the guardian deity of that or any other particular region. His Kandy shrine is probably the oldest of the four dēvālēs there, being built in the second half of the fourteenth century, and was used for ceremonies at the inauguration of kings of Kandy.² The disappearance of the court dealt him a severe blow. Nātha was once a mere epithet of Avalokiteśvara, an important Bodhisattva of the Mahāyāna Buddhism which came to Ceylon in late classical times, but this has been forgotten - Avalokiteśvara is a name

1. Paranavitana, "Mahāyānism in Ceylon", pp.66-67. Here he suggests that "...Uppalavanna was a local form of one of the Mahāyāna Bodhisattvas." In a later monograph he wishes to identify Upulvan with Varuṇa, a Vedic god. See The Shrine of Upulvan at Devundara, Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, vol.VI, Colombo 1953.

2. Paranavitana, "Mahāyānism", pp.52-60

not known to villagers. However he was twice named to me when I asked which gods were Bodhisattvas, so a memory lingers. A middle-class lady in Kandy told me that people do not make vows to him as to the other gods, and explained this by saying that he is to be the next Buddha Maitrī, so presumably has lost interest in vows. Monk 18 too said that Nātha is Maitrī. It is also notable that he does not share his shrine with other gods, but lives apart. Maitrī today shares an iconographic feature, the ^{small seated Buddha figure} ~~dhyanī Buddha~~ in the headdress, with the classical Avalokiteśvara. Maitrī and Avalokiteśvara /Nātha are several times mentioned together in inscriptions and literature from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century.¹ There has clearly been some conflation. However I doubt the Kandyan lady's explanation of why people make no vows to Nātha, although it would support my thesis; I suspect that once they did, but that he has simply drifted out of the actual pantheon for reasons unconnected with his Bodhisattva nature, and so lost power and prestige.

Pattinī too is losing ground. She still has shrines all over the country,² including two in my area of research, but few people name her as one of the guardian deities. She is a goddess from South India, with a highly distinctive cult which has been exhaustively studied by Obeyesekere. She is notable as the only lady in the pantheon, actual or ideal. Her rich

1. Ibid.

2. Her headquarters are at Navagamuva near Colombo.

background of ritual and mythology has been largely forgotten in my area: I was merely told that she was powerful (satta) and could cure pox; monk 21 identified her with Nāgammā, a mother goddess who has a temple in Nāgadīpa near Jaffna.

More commonly listed as one of the Four Gods (Hatara Dēyyō) than either Nātha or Pattinī is Saman. His historical origins are the subject of another learned monograph by Dr. Paranavitana,¹ but again its contents are not in any sense known to the villagers. Saman is par excellence the god of Adam's Peak, which in Pali is perhaps named after him (Samantakūṭa) - or he after it - and so he is the god of the Kandyan hill country. In fact he has another major centre, even closer to Kandy, at Mahiyangana. It is interesting that in both places he is intimately associated with the Buddha, for these are the sites of the Buddha's footprint and his first visit to Ceylon respectively. There is thus something very Buddhist about Saman; his figure appears frequently in vihāra in my area and one monk (2) went so far as to say that he is the very highest god, next to the Buddha in rank, with Vishnu, Kataragama and Alutnuvara below him. He is represented as white, and his mount is a white elephant. I was told in Mīgala that the season for pilgrimages to Adam's Peak ends at Wesak; on the two nights of the Wesak full moon festival no pilgrims, not even monks, make the climb, but the way is left clear for Saman's white elephant, who lives secluded in the jungles on the mountain

1. S. Paranavitana, The God of Adam's Peak, Artibus Asiae, Ascona 1958.

slopes, to ascend and pay solitary homage to the Buddha.

Vibhīṣaṇa, the last god with a historical claim to be one of the Four, rarely cropped up in my informants' lists. In Sanskrit texts this is a name of Śiva, but about Vibhīṣaṇa nothing seems to be known these days; he is totally colourless and iconographically bears no resemblance to Śiva, but is not individuated. His main shrine is at Kālaniya near Colombo. Mr. Malalgoḍa tells me that it was razed by the Portuguese; this must be a cardinal reason for his decline.

The gods mentioned so far are all, I believe of nationally recognized status. Of more strictly local reputation is Dāḍimunda alias Alutnuvara Deyyō alias Dēvatā Baṇḍāra Deyyō. (Three such different names may suggest the conflation of three gods; if this is so the conflation is complete, as several informants told me that these names denoted the same person, nor were there any statements to the contrary.) Dāḍimunda's status and function are very differently assessed. Some say he is in the retinue of Kataragama, some (more circumstantially and so more plausibly) of Vishnu; but some even counted him (under the name of Alutnuvara) as one of the Four Deities, and so he must be mentioned here. His main shrine (under the names of Dāḍimunda and Alutnuvara) is some twenty miles west of Kandy, near Māvanālla in the province of Sabaragamuwa.¹ I was told at the shrine, which is large and

1. According to Gooneratne (p.39) this temple belongs to "the chief of all Ceylon demons...Wahala Bandara Dewiyo, or as he is more commonly termed, Wahala dewiyo." The myth he

extremely prosperous, that it is about eight hundred years old, and was originally to Vishnu, but since Vishnu's shrine was moved to Kandy in 1748 the chief god is Vishnu's minister (amātyayā), Dāḍimunda Dēvatā Baṇḍāra. According to a Mīgala villager, Dāḍimunda got this shrine built by yakṣa labour recruited from Bengal and South India. The image at the shrine is a gold figure of a prince, only about a foot high; I saw no mount there, nor did he have one in Mīgala - a most distinctive feature. I was given more news of him by various informants in Mīgala. He is the son of the yakṣa Pūrṇaka and a nāgakanyā ('cobra maiden'): Pūrṇaka figures in the Vidhurapandita Jātaka,¹ so this gives Dāḍimunda canonical antecedents. The main story about him is this. When Goṭtama was seated under the Bo tree striving for enlightenment, Dāḍimunda was one of the godlings in attendance on him. At the approach of Māra all the godlings fled, but Dāḍimunda, being rather slow, could not make his getaway, and hid in the Buddha's robe. When Māra and his host had been routed the Buddha looked round, and at that moment Dāḍimunda appeared beside him. "You alone of all the gods did not desert me," said

(Cont.) retails of how this "Dewatawa" had the temple cut from a huge rock by his yakṣa slaves leaves no doubt that these are just more names of the same god. (Mr. H.L. Seneviratne has sent me a folk poem, Galakāppu Sāhālla (published by N.J. Kūrērat the Anula Press, 1961), in which the same story is told of Alutnuvara Dāḍimunda Devatā Baṇḍāra Dēviyō.) Gooneratne goes on to give a most interesting account of pilgrims to the temple, which he describes as the national headquarters for exorcising women possessed by yakku.

1 J VI, pp. 255-329.

the Buddha, and in gratitude put him in charge of Ceylon. So I was told that Dāḍimunda is a guardian of Buddhism (sāsanarakṣaka) for all Ceylon, and this fits him to Vishnu, who received a similar trust. I shall ^{have} more to say of Dāḍimunda below when he crops up in less exalted company.

Before going on to describe those deities who are definitely lower in status, I should explain how the Bodhisattva (Sinh: Bosat) fits in. Bodhisattva is a religious, not (like god) an ontological status;¹ a Bodhisattva is simply a being who has taken a vow to become a Buddha, or, in the phrase used by monk 1 of Vishnu, a person fulfilling the requirements for enlightenment (bōdhi sambhāra purāṇa aya). Whether someone is a Bodhisattva may be known only to himself. (This does not imply that one would keep it a secret.) In the Jātaka stories Gotama Buddha's lives as a Bodhisattva are recounted, and he is always born as a god (usually quite a minor deity), a man, or one of the higher animals. A Bodhisattva would be virtuous, so that a lower rebirth would be most unlikely. We have seen that in tenth century Ceylon all kings were believed to be Bodhisattvas. Nowadays however only a few of the ancient kings (Duṭṭugāmuṇu, Devānāmpiya, Tissa, Mahāsena) and some of the higher gods are named as Bodhisattvas, and on asking for names of Bodhisattvas I found much disagreement. Most claim that Vishnu is one, but one (33) denied it. The claim was variously

1. Ames ("Ritual Prestations", p.43), in calling Bodhisattvas "higher deviyās" (sic), has missed the point that Bodhisattvas and deviyō are not terms on the same continuum.

made for Saman, Alutnuvara, Nātha, Vaiśravaṇa, Kataragama and perhaps Tārā;¹ most monks denied either directly or by implication, that Kataragama was a Bosat. Saman seemed to have the best religious reputation; he was given me as an instance of a good Buddhist (31), and another monk (21) told me that he is the only god free from sin (keles) and has entered on the path to enlightenment (sovan). One monk (33) held deviant views which must reflect some reading: Tārā is supposed to be above the gods; Mahāyānists believe in her and think she is a Bosat; she is powerful in India. This was the monk who rejected Vishnu but accepted Kataragama as a Bosat.

The rest of the pantheon in my area consists of gods who are permanent or floating members of a group called the Twelve Gods (dolos deyyō), and the group is usually considered to form the retinue of Kataragama. Most of these twelve gods are village gods (gambāra deyyō) - that is, they are individually believed to be in charge of a village, or rather a group of villages. There is said to be an analogy between the human and the divine power structure; using the title of the administrative officers who superseded the feudal nobility, I was told that the Four Gods were like Government Agents (who were in charge of a province) and the Twelve Gods like District Revenue Officers (who are in charge of a district). The Twelve Gods thus hold power on warrants from one of the Four Gods - nowadays from Kataragama. An implied

1. "Nātha's consort, Tārā, was worshipped at a shrine at Doravaka in the fourteenth century". Parānavitana, History, II, 762-3

modification of this analogy was however supplied by the old Mīgala kapurāḷa; he said that though our local god, Piṭiya Deyyō, is a retainer of Kataragama, he is in absolute charge of his own territory, so that if Kataragama wishes to visit it he has to get Piṭiya Deyyō's warrant. This seems to take us back to the days before the bureaucratization of the feudal structure, when nobles had full local autonomy.

Local gods (like the Twelve) are of rather different character from regional gods (i.e. the Four). Local gods in some sense validate the social structure: their rituals emphasize the traditional status differences of caste and sex, and they are supposed, through the kapurāḷa, to ensure good harvests and freedom from disease. Traditionally they are the only gods of whom the members of the village community make requests. But once a year the villagers are supposed to go to the shrine of the regional god, just as the sharecropper pays his annual visit of homage to the landlord, who may live in the city. Villagers used to be somewhat frightened of leaving the territory of their local god - as they walked through the forest on their way to the regional centre they would repeatedly say "Karunāvayi" ("Mercy") and hang strips of cloth on trees to placate the spirits through whose territory they were passing. The ritual at the regional centre paid no attention to status distinctions - in the dēvālē of a major god all are equal; nor was this the place to ask for anything specific - one just worshipped and received edification. This pattern is rapidly disappearing. As it becomes easier for

people to get to the bigger gods, by bus, they visit them more often and informally, and ask them favours; the visits for purely religious edification are those paid to the Buddha's relics. The regional centre for Mīgala should be Mahiyangana; a large group of villagers went there, but it was at Poson, a day associated with the Buddha, and it was to see the vihāra and worship the relics that they went. It is not only because villagers now go to the big gods that the little gods are in decline; the big gods are also coming to the village. What this amounts to is the supersession of specifically Kandyan tradition by the religiosity of the Low Country and the middle classes - which is the same thing. Low Countrymen outnumber Kandyans by about five to one; they have also enjoyed the dubious advantage of about three hundred years more of European rule. Their traditional society was modified long ago under European laws along European-built roads. With greater mobility, and more education, they became economically dominant; the trade in a Kandyan town is almost entirely in the hands of Tamils, Muslims, and Low Country Sinhalese. Geographical (horizontal) mobility long ago disposed of local gods in the Low Country and introduced Low Countrymen with their emphasis on big gods and little devils into Kandyan towns and villages. Social (vertical) mobility produced among Low Countrymen a middle class, something which hardly yet exists among Kandyans, whose feudal aristocracy still own most of the land; the emancipation of the middle classes disinclines them towards village gods, whose rituals remind them of their caste status and narrower social horizons,

while the notorious strains of social mobility incline them to belief in astrology and even in black magic. Meanwhile they enter the professions and the bureaucracy, and become the models for ambitious villagers to emulate. A lady in the village took to visiting regularly the Hindu temple to Kataragama a few miles down the road, though she said she was afraid of him, and spoke ill of our local village kapuvā as a fake (though she still had her daughters stand well clear when he became possessed); the explanation lies I think not in her very pleasant personality, but in the fact that as a low-caste woman she would be at a double status disadvantage in the local cult, and visits to Kataragama made her feel a more progressive and socially superior person.

Since then the village gods are in rapid decline, and since ethnography on them is extremely scanty,¹ I shall put down what I was able to find out about them. The worship of the Twelve Gods is sometimes known as the "Baṇḍāra cult". Baṇḍāra was a Kandyan title, and the word figures in the names of many of these gods. The term "Baṇḍāra cult" would be a good one were it taken merely to imply that these gods function in ways analogous to noblemen under the old order. However Rahula (op. cit., p.37) calls it "the adoration of deceased chiefs and

1. C.G. Seligmann, "Note on the "Bandar" cult of the Kandyan Sinhalese", Man, vol. 9, 1909, no.77, pp.130-4, says that the baṇḍāra gods can only get in touch with the living world by sending sickness or animals, usually the latter. I never came across any belief that they send animals.

prominent ancestors", an explanation to which the term lends itself but which I believe to be only partially correct; so I shall refer to them simply as the Twelve Gods.

There were in or near Mīgala three shrines to Piṭiya ^{ww}Dēyyō, the local patron, each with its own priest called kapuvā, kapurāḷa, or kapumahattayā. The title is used for a marriage broker, so it might be translated "go-between"; it indicates that the priest in this cult acts as a medium, or shaman. The priests of these shrines were related, an uncle (whom I shall call K 1) and two nephews (K 2 and K 3). K 1 and K 2 (who were not on speaking terms) were my main informants on the Twelve Gods, and I asked them to list the gods. K 1 said that there are altogether sixty-seven gods, of whom he made offerings to twenty-four; of these, twelve are the main ones and twelve are their attendants. Asked to name the twelve he then listed fifteen, and when I pointed this out eliminated three, whom I have put at the end of his list. The second list is that of K 2, who initially listed twelve, but later in conversation referred to Amusila ^{ww}Dēyyō, who must be the same (my misunderstanding?) as Amusiri in the other lists. The third list was given to me by the headman (āracci)¹ of a village about eight miles from Mīgala.

1. Strictly speaking, the ex-headman. The office of headman was abolished about 1960, and most of his official functions transferred to a newly created class of government servant, the grāma sevaka. I observed however that in many villages the ex-headman unofficially retained his title, his prestige, and even his rôle as a leader.

It is worth reproducing because he seemed a competent and spontaneous informant on this subject and his list seems the least repetitious. It does not include Piṭiya Dēyyō, whom he confirmed to be in charge of the Mīgala area, but said his own area was under Kandē Dēyyō, who protected the village and cured diseases. I reproduce the titles exactly as given.

K 1

K 2Aracci

Piṭiya Deyyō	Piṭiya D.	
Gaṅgē Baṇḍāra Deyyō	Gāṅgē B.D.	Gāṅgē B.D.
Dēvatā Baṇḍāra Deyyō = Dādīmunda	Alutnuvara D.	Dēvatā B.D.
Kīrti Baṇḍāra Deyyō	Kīrti B.D.	Kīrti B.D.
Kaḷu " "		Kaḷu B.D.
Vanniya " "	Vanniya B.D.	Vanniya B.D.
Kaḷukumārayā	Kaḷukumāra D.	Kaḷukumārayā
Kohōmba Deyyō	Kohōmba D.	Kohōmba D.
Kaḍavara	Kaḍavara Deyyō	Kaḍavara Deyyō
Kāṇḍakumāra	Kāṇḍē Deyyō	Kāṇḍē D.
Amusiri Yakā	Amusila Deyyō	Amusiri Deyyō
Mangara Deyyō		
Hūniyam	Hūniyam Dēvatā Baṇḍāra	
* Valkom Baṇḍāra Deyyō		
* Abakom " "		
	Siddamulē Hūniyam Dēvatā Baṇḍāra	
	Pallebādda Deyyō	Pallebādda Deyyō
		Kiriāmmā Deyyō

* Thus my notes, taken phonetically, but I would emend to Abayakōn and Valkōn, Kandyan personal names.

Translations:

Piṭiya:	a tract of flat ground
Gaṅgē:	in/on/at/of the river
Kīrti:	fame, glory
Kaḷu:	black
Vanniya:	of the Vanni, a desolate area in northern Ceylon
Kaḷukumāra:	black prince
Koḥoṃba:	Margosa (a kind of tree)
Kandakumāra:	mountain prince
Kandē:	on/of the mountain
Hūniyam:	void
Kiriamā:	milk-mother (term for wet-nurse, also for grandmother)

Allowing for some regional variation we seem to have a well standardized list. I agree with K 1's second thoughts, for his last three names do not really belong: Hūniyam is a pan-Ceylonese deity who will be discussed below; the other two were not named by anyone else. Similarly I would eliminate Siddamulā Hūniyam from the second list - he looks like a makeshift variant on Hūniyam to complete the number. Kiriamā Deyyō is the only female; she was not local in Mīgala and I have no more information on her.

Before setting down what I know of individuals in the list, here are some remarks made to me about their classification. K 2 told me that some gods are jīvamāna. This is a Sanskrit word meaning "alive". I deduce however that he used it to mean

"perceptible" or "perceived"; its opposite he expressed by the sentence "when they are born they live without being visible" (Ātmayak labāgena innavā pēnen nātuva). He said Alutnuvara Baṇḍāra Deyyō and Hūniyam Dēvatā Baṇḍāra were jīvamāna: Alutnuvara can go on flowers, over rocks, or in the water; Hūniyam can take any form, e.g. a black dog or a tall white figure. K 1 said that none of the Twelve Gods was married; ten were born of woman (mānikē) like us, but Gaṅgē Baṇḍāra Deyyō was born of a blue gem in a blue sea, and Kaṇḍakumāra was born from the mountain at Kataragama, so these two were born without pollution (killa) and no one polluted (by the blood of menstruation or parturition or by death)¹ may approach them. Another kind of status difference was indicated by K 2: the only gods who can be served by a kapuvā who is not goyigama ("high-caste" - see chapter 8) are Kaḍavara Deyyō and Amusiri Deyyō. This seems to match the fact that neither of these gods is ever called Baṇḍāra or Kumāra. The word which K 2 used for "service" was rājakāriya, which historically means the service obligations attached to feudal land tenure - yet another analogy (if that is not too weak a word) between the religious and the secular.

Of the individual gods I have most information on Piṭiya Deyyō, our local patron. For 50 cents K 3 showed me his picture, or photograph (chāyārūpaya) as he called it, which he claimed to

1. I have not discussed pollution (killa), as it affects only the cult of the gods. For anything to do with the Buddha or monks there is no killa. See monk 4 on supernatural beings.

be ancient and could well be fifty years old. It is a picture of a man in the costume of a Kandyan nobleman (radala) with a horse (Piṭiya Deyyō's invariable mount) and four attendants, painted on a piece of wood shaped rather like a wine glass, with ornamentation round the borders. It is kept under a cloth and hence is well preserved. The picture of Piṭiya Deyyō produced by K 1 was a less venerable object, a cardboard cut-out of a bearded man with a white horse. K 2 at his shrine also showed me a Kandyan noble with a white horse; he also had pictures of Pallebādda Deyyō, over whose "photograph" cockroaches were crawling, Vanniya Baṇḍāra Deyyō and Alutnuvara Baṇḍāra Deyyō. All look like Kandyan noblemen. Vanniya B.D.'s mount is an elephant; Alutnuvara has no mount.

Piṭiya Deyyō, says K 2, escaped from India after committing some misdemeanour there and came here in the days of Kīrti Śrī Rājasinḥa [i.e. about 200 years ago]. He visited sixty-seven places and from each acquired a follower; all of them are now gods and form his retinue (pirisa); Pallebādda Deyyō was his first and chief follower. According to K 1, he came from India five or six hundred years ago; his story went on to connect him with various local places: where he first stopped, ate, bathed, etc. He is in charge of everything locally, and (like all gods) knows the future, on which he can be consulted at his shrine via the kapuvā. Not all, however, agreed that Piṭiya Deyyō came from India; monk 26 identified him as the son of the righteous Tamil king of Ceylon, Eḷāra. While driving in his chariot that

unfortunate prince accidentally ran over a calf, for which, on complaint from the calf's mother, he was executed by his father. (The story comes from the Mahāvamsa, XXI. 15-18) Another informant told me the same story but located it in India. All agree that Piṭiya Deyyō is (the reincarnation of) a prince, that he is connected with a (perhaps unintentional) misdemeanour, and that he was not Sinhalese. The last fact is an interesting reminder of the large Tamil element in Kandyan culture; it is tempting to speculate - and it is unlikely that we shall ever be able to do more than speculate - that K 2 was preserving an authentic tradition when he connected the god's arrival with the reign of Kīrti Śrī Rājasinḥa, a Tamil from Malabar.

Kīrti Baṇḍāra Deyyō was also identified as a king's son.

Vanniya Baṇḍāra Deyyō was said to be chief of the Vanni area of fifteen pattu (administrative districts in Kandyan times).

Kaḷu Baṇḍāra Deyyō has a dēvālē on a large mountain nearby, but no one knows where it is. Once an old farmer lost his two buffaloes and went searching for them with his son. They found them in a pond. They were so tired that they too bathed in the pond, and when they came out the father was young again, and so were the buffaloes. When they returned home the farmer's wife at first refused to have anything to do with him, and was only with difficulty convinced that it was he. The villagers then went out looking for the pond, but it had disappeared.

The other three gods on whom I was able to get any information are usually called yakku (though see my lists). Kaḍavara

Deyyō is a yakṣa who lives in trees in the jungle (monk 13). He used to be a minister in India of a certain King of Malaya [i.e. South India?], but having died as a man he became a yakṣa (manuṣyek mārīlā yakṣek vunā); he is a malayakā [literally "dead yakṣa", i.e. the reincarnation of a man] (monk 10). He cut a rock to make a water-course at the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy (monk 8). It is tempting to associate this with the fact that according to the dictionary kaḍavara means a ditch or channel, but the meaning is given as lexical only, so the connection may be fortuitous.

Kaḷukumāra, the black prince, is unambiguously maleficent. As his name indicates, he too is or was a prince, and he is said by K 2 to have six thousand followers. According to K 1 he was the son of a Kandyan king. He and his father each reared a koṇḍeya bird. One day he let out the two birds and they fought, and his bird killed his father's. At this the king sentenced his son to death, but on the insistence of his ministers the sentence was commuted to banishment, and he came to a river called the Maha Oya and settled down there in the Maha Oya Dēvālē. [The Maha Oya is in South-western Ceylon.] But the main point about Kaḷukumāra is that he afflicts women, appearing to them in dreams or otherwise casting his gaze (bālma) upon them to disturbing effect - I gather he is a kind of incubus and may then have to be exorcised. Though he usually confines his attention to women, an elderly man in Mīgala told me that Kaḷukumāra was always in him and would possess him during ceremonies so that he was carried

away (vāhenavā); it might be significant that the man was a bachelor.

Hūniyam or Sūniyam has a most peculiar history, and it is doubtful whether he should properly appear here, up among the deities, or down among the yakku and holman. He is especially liable to appear at night as a black dog or naked white figure; according to K 2 he can bring good or evil, but another villager said he was definitely benevolent. This opinion contrasts violently with his character in the Low Country, where he is predominantly associated with black magic, which may even generically be called hūniyam. He certainly is fond of assuming different shapes: I was told that he has eighteen different forms or disguises (vēsa), and wears clothes of five colours with a garland of flowers, usually white. He is often associated with Dāḍimunda. At Dāḍimunda's big temple near Māvanālla ~~he is~~ he is the only other god represented, and is said to be Dāḍimunda's minister. One monk (2) even identified Hūniyam with Alutnuvara. I found him sharing one dēvālē (in the grounds of vihāra 4) with Vishnu, Mahasēna Kataragama,¹ and Dāḍimunda. On this occasion I was told that Vishnu is in charge of the whole world, Sūniyam of Ceylon, and Dāḍimunda of the Kandyan provinces (uḍa raṭa). Of Sūniyam there was a small statue dressed in white as an ascetic (tāpasa) taking the precepts (sil), and a picture of him as a

1. This god was explained by his kapurāḷa as not the Kataragama from India, but a local god. Mahasena was an ancient king of Ceylon whom it would not be surprising to find deified, but his acquisition of the name Kataragama seems most anomalous.

village deity (gambāra deyyō), which I was told to be his own usual form (niyama svarūpaya), with four arms. His appearance as a virtuous Buddhist is, all in all, a shade less surprising than his nocturnal behaviour as a black dog, for his name tells us that he has evolved, by untraced stages, from śūnya "the void", the dominant principle according to those Mahāyāna philosophers who declared the world to be "empty" in that things have no essence. (In this they were developing the concepts, which they shared with Theravāda, of impermanence (anityatā) and non-self (anātmata); though Sūniyam be a degenerate, I would not wish to call him a heretic!)

The above information on the Twelve Gods, however sketchy, sufficiently demonstrates that to describe their worship as an ancestor cult is a gross oversimplification. Even the title of Baṇḍāra is no guarantee of a god's human origin (in the euhemeristic sense), for it is accorded to Hūniyam himself; it is rather a Kandyan naturalization certificate. The most conspicuous characteristic of the shrines of the Twelve Gods was that though themselves unimpressive they were always associated with a striking natural feature: a huge rock, a cave, above all a spot with a wonderful view. All the three local shrines to Piṭiya Deyyō were on or by huge rocks, one of them in a cave in the jungle just above a great sloping rock slab, another on a rock overlooking the river and covered with temple trees, a third on a great rock which, though not very high, commanded a magnificent view of the village territory. The shrine to Kaṇḍē Deyyō

near the village of the headman quoted above was on a mountain, and so inaccessible that it was now visited only once a year. Gaṅgē Deyyō's shrine was on an island in the middle of a big river. Moreover the names of at least four of the gods (Piṭiya, Gaṅgē, Kaṇḍē and Kohōmba) associate them with natural phenomena. In this they recall the canonical divinities of trees and parks (vanadevatā, āramadevatā), and the yakṣas associated with trees and mountains: a group of morally neutral nature divinities.

A second current associates them with the more distinctly malevolent type of canonical yakṣa. The confusion of this group with the nature divinities is, we recall, a canonical feature. Here probably fit those gods who are most often called yakku: Kaḍavara, Amusiri, Kaḷukumāra and Hūniyam. Even this group is far from uniform: Kaḷukumāra seems to be the type of disease demon so vividly represented in the devil dancing masks of Ambalangoda; Hūniyam has drifted in from the "great tradition", while some of the others are perhaps local boys.

Thirdly there is indeed the ancestor element, represented in the titles baṇḍāra and kumāra, suggested also by such names as Kīrti ("Glory") and by Alutnuvara and Pallebādda, which are probably place names. Local people themselves incline to this type of explanation of the cult; we have already discussed the ambiguity involved in this interpretation among Buddhists, who are anyway committed to a belief in the rebirth of all beings and therefore to a type of euhemerism as an explanation of any god or demon. What is noteworthy is that the stories

so often involve the banishment of a prince or minister for some misdemeanour. This has the ring of historical authenticity, as the mountains have long served as strongholds for disgraced potentates and rebel chieftains. The fact that they are usually said to be Indians, or at least Tamils, likewise sounds authentic. Vanniya Baṇḍāra Deyyō also sounds as if he were in exile. This true baṇḍāra element therefore provides a third strand in the constitution of the Twelve Gods. What must however be noted is that two or three of the elements - nature, maleficence, and ancestry - combine to form the individual divinity. Piṭiya Deyyō has a name associating him with nature, is supposed to have been a prince, and left India under a cloud; Kaḷukumāra was also a prince who left under a cloud, brings a particular kind of disease, and has a shrine in a river.

Our catalogue of the inhabitants of the universe seen from Mīgala is now concluded.

III Attempts to Influence Non-Human Beings.

"Buddhism being considered to be the sacred religion, while Demonism is only a religion relating to one's temporal interests, it is natural that the influence of the former should to a certain extent be felt on the latter."

Gooneratne, p.15.

The institutions and ceremonies appropriate to each class of being have been described at length by such authors as Wirz and expertly classified by Ames. In the following paragraph I wish to do little more than give a picture of the types of worship

distinctive to Mīgala, and this will again involve a concentration on the Twelve Gods.

The higher and more powerful the divinity, the more imposing the edifices and personnel devoted to him; the lower and weaker the devil, the more the attitude of human beings, both laymen and specialists, changes from worship to control.

The Institutions

(1) Conceptually the Buddha stands outside this scheme, for in his case control is out of the question; but from the sociological (i.e. behavioural) point of view, as Ames has demonstrated, monks, vihāras and Buddha pūjā fit in well. The vihāra is described in Chapter 2, Buddha pūjā in Chapter 3.

(2) After vihāra the largest (and richest) religious institutions in the area are the Tamil temples (kovil) to Kataragama. In each there is a brahmin in permanent residence; the one I visited was specially brought down from Jaffna. The ritual is entirely Śaivite Hindu, and the great majority of the clientèle are Tamils from the plantations.

(3) The Buddhist god has a dēvālē served by a kapuvā, though the major gods are also usually represented in vihāra, in which case they generally have no kapuvā (and no organised worship). In accordance with the reformist principles of the Rāmañña Nikāya (see Chapter 3) their vihāras have no gods or dēvālēs on the premises; there were only three Rāmañña vihāras in my area. Dēvālēs to the Twelve Gods exploit natural sites and often lack buildings; there may be no more construction than

a shelf to serve as altar. The kapuvō are always of goyigama caste, except, I was told, for the gods Kaḍavara and Amusiri, whom we have seen to be more properly called yakku; the kapuvā of one Kaḍavara dēvālē was said to be padu, ^{a low caste.} ~~see chapter 83~~. By tradition the office of kapuvā runs in families, but where new shrines are opened to regional gods new men are sometimes recruited.

(4) Minor spirits have no buildings, and the specialists devoted to them could appropriately be called exorcists. Material on this subject is more prolific and classification more precise in the Low Country. An exorcist of yakku is called a yakādurā, of evil planetary influences a baliādurā, but usually these are the same person, according to context. A supplier of amulets (yantra) and charms (mantra) (who may in a specific context function as yakādurā or baliādurā) is a kaṭṭaḍiyā. These exorcists are usually (but not necessarily) of low caste. The drummer caste (beravayō) are supposed to be skilled in these matters, and are especially associated with appeasing the planetary deities. A general term for a magician is mantrakārayā, "charm-maker".

There is a general tendency, exemplified by the last paragraph, for those who are specialists in one type of causation to pick up knowledge and practice connected with other types. We have already seen how monks, who may be said to have specialist knowledge of karma, and are involved in rituals to avert and cure misfortune through pirit, tend also to become experts in astrology

and Ayurvedic medicine. The same goes for the other specialists: astrology and Ayurvedic medicine are very often found together also in laymen. As both are associated with learning they tend not to be practised by the low-caste drummers, who are often socially depressed; but these drummers, who participate in rituals for the Buddha, are knowledgeable in ritual at all levels and are generally reputed to be good at magic. Kapurālas also tend to be suppliers of yantra mantra; and the one man in Mīgala who knew astrology (which he had learnt from a monk) practised Sinhalese medicine (part-time and for little or no money), and was the son and brother of kapurālas.

Before I describe the local rituals, it will give a fair idea of their relative importance if I list the religious institutions in my area. There were about forty vihāra, which do not concern us in this chapter, and two Hindu kovil to Kataragama, which will not be mentioned again. There are two old shrines to Pattinī (whose priests are called pattinīrālas). Otherwise the only dēvālē of any age to a god of national standing was a dēvālē to Kataragama, which was in a village entirely surrounded by tea estates, and had a Tamil as kapuvā; though it was within the grounds of a vihāra it therefore hardly qualifies as a Sinhalese institution. With this dubious exception twenty years ago there was not a single dēvālē to Vishnu or Kataragama in the entire area. However, this is changing fast. A Vishnu dēvālē recently opened next to one of the kovils, and during my stay a Kataragama dēvālē started in a cave in the woods, very

much in the style of the homes of local gods. The habit of having a dēvālē in the vihāra grounds, extremely common in the Low Country, was gaining ground even faster: the first had been built in 1949 - and was run by a kapurāḷa imported from Mātara in the south - and four more were being built or projected. I am excepting an old dēvālē to Piṭṭiya Dēyyō which stood in one small vihāra (commanding, as ever, a superb view), and a tiny shrine to Vishnu in an uninhabited monastery. But I must not give the impression that Vishnu and Kataragama are strangers to the area. Most image-houses contain their statues, or at least that of Vishnu, standing behind a curtain in the Hindu fashion, and the worshipper can always worship them, drop a coin in the box provided, or even make a vow if he should be so inclined.

Accurate information on dēvālēs of the Twelve Gods is hard to get, as many of them are falling into disuse. I asked about them when interviewing monks and my list may contain duplications. I listed fifteen dēvālēs, all said to be to Piṭṭiya Deyyō, Kaṇḍē Deyyō, Kaḍavara Deyyō or Kīrti Baṇḍāra Deyyō. All of these except the one already mentioned had no physical connection with a vihāra. Though I could not investigate them, I think the two shrines to Pattinī properly belong in this category, not merely because of their age but also because they must have performed the functions of shrines to village gods.

The meaner spirits are only noticed when something goes wrong, and as far as most people except the kapurāḷa are concerned this is true also of the Twelve Gods, excepting perhaps the annual

harvest festival. Statues of gods in vihāra are of course accessible to visitors at any time, as the vihāra is always open:¹ but any dēvālē which can be locked up is only opened by the kapurāḷa, who attends on certain days called kembara.² The kembara in my area are Sundays, Tuesdays and Fridays. In other parts of the country they are Wednesdays and Saturdays.³ But this does not seem to be purely a question of locality. A village lady told me that it varies from god to god; that Alutnuvara's days are Wednesday and Saturday. The days at the big Alutnuvara dēvālē at Māvanālla are in fact Wednesday, Saturday, and half-day Monday (varu kembara - afternoon only), but whether this is determined by the identity of the god or by the shrine's location (in Sabaragamuva Province) I have not enough data to judge. The same lady considered that of the three kembara the most auspicious day on which to visit Kataragama's kovil

1. It is usually kept locked to prevent theft, but the key is in the pansala and will be produced on request. A dēvālē in temple grounds will probably be similarly accessible.

2. The word kembara has another use, completely distinct, as a synonym for gam maḍuva (see below).

3. Gooneratne, whose material comes principally from the Low Country, wrote (p.14): "Every Saturday and Wednesday, all the respectable demons attend a sort of pandemonium called Yakṣa Sabawa, where each chieftain gives an account of those under him to the principal chiefs,..." Knox, who lived west of Kandy, wrote (p.121), "Wednesdays and Saturdays are the days, when people who have any business with the Gods, come and address themselves;..."

(possibly because it is generally an auspicious day) is Friday. On the other hand a little used dēvālē to Piṭiya Deyyō opened only, if at all, on Sundays. When a dēvālē to one of the Twelve Gods is in operation the kapurāḷa becomes possessed (māyam venavā), but interestingly enough he will not do this on a pōya day. On the one hand the god gives precedence to the Buddha; on the other there is something not quite proper about becoming possessed, even if it is your rôle. I have never heard this something made explicit, but I judge that it violates the Buddhist ideal of self-control. To become possessed on a pōya day would therefore be like getting drunk on a Sunday morning.

Traditionally, as I have mentioned, people do not make vows (bāra venavā) to the higher gods, but only worship (vaḥḍinavā) them for their blessing, which is conceptualized as "peace" (śāntiya or set śāntiya; set is merely the old Sinhalese form of śānti). There is some disagreement whether the gods do in fact do good, or merely give protection (āraksāva) from harm, especially the harm brought about by yakku; in any event it is sufficient to transfer merit to them and perhaps occasionally to give a coin towards their expenses.

To the village gods, however, people hardly ever go unless they have some specific request; they go to make contact with the god, the kapurāḷa acting as intermediary. Even if no one turns up he is supposed to perform some rudimentary ritual (ḷūjāva) for the god; what in fact happens no one can know, but I am sure the ritual is most perfunctorily performed, for I never met

anyone who seemed to hold the local gods in awe. I saw pūjā to the Twelve Gods at all three local dēvālēs to Piṭiya Deyyō. The kapurāḷa is naked to the waist and wears a white sarong with a red cloth tucked in at the waist; he always wears his hair in the traditional style, long and done up in a bun (koṇḍē) at the back of the head. The basic pūjā consists merely of his blowing a conch shell and then reciting an invocation (yātikā) while shaking a timbrel, ringing a bell, and burning a little incense (dummala) before the god's image. He then smears ash or saffron paste on his throat and chest. Anyone who wishes to be associated with the offerings must give a coin (paṇḍuru - the plural form is used proleptically) purified with lime juice and wrapped in a betel leaf. Usual additional offerings are candles, coconut oil (for lamps) or even flowers - much the same things as are commonly offered before the Buddha. An offering entitles the worshipper to be mentioned in the invocation - the kapurāḷa makes an entreaty (kannalavva) to the god for his welfare. All invocations to these gods begin with the words "Ai bō" several times repeated; this is a clipped version of "Ayu bo van", the normal greeting between human beings, meaning "May you live long". During the invocation the worshippers are supposed to squat with hands respectfully folded. At the end the kapurāḷa makes a mark (tilaka) with saffron paste on the forehead of each. Further services cost extra. At some dēvālēs I have seen tariffs posted, but the only tariff I saw in my area was at a kovil, and I doubt whether the institution of the Twelve Gods will not disappear

altogether before they become so formalized, What most people want is to be told either their future or the cause of a malady, and this usually costs a rupee for a villager, though maybe much more for a well-to-do visitor. To tell the future (or the unknown past) is generally called śāstra kīyanavā; I was told that there are four main methods: pēna kīyanavā (which is what the kapuvā does), palmistry, looking at a man's horoscope, and asking at what moment he left his house to come and ask his fortune (we might subsume the last two under astrology). To tell the future a kapuvā becomes possessed (māyam venavā), which he achieves by dancing on the spot, shaking the timbrels, and breathing very rapidly; he tosses his head till his long hair falls about his face. He then gasps out the answers. I saw another method employed. When a village lady wanted to know the cause of a disease the kapuvā had a small palm-leaf manuscript book with a long thread tied to one end like a bookmark; the lady plunged this thread into the book at random while he held it loosely shut, and he then opened it at that place and gave a diagnosis; the recommended remedy is always to tie on a thread as amulet (nūl baṅḍinavā), a lime-cutting exorcism (dehi-kāpīma), to make a vow (bāra venṭa) to one of the Twelve Gods, or simply to do a pūjāva as above - or a combination of these. (All involve a little expenditure from which the kapuvā will profit.) To make a vow (bāra venṭa) it is not necessary to visit a dēvālē beforehand; the vow can be made in thought, and a coin for the god is put aside. The offerings vowed are often little metal replicas

of objects in the vow, like Christian ex voto offerings; a tin-foil leg for a leg made well, even a silver-foil elephant (the party symbol) for UNP victory at the elections. For the Twelve Gods, however, the most usual offerings are weapons (āvuda (from Skt. āyudha)) for the god: the vower gives a smith the materials and the pattern, which is taken from a picture or another weapon. These weapons are about a foot long and not much like real weapons, but this is explained by saying that such weapons were current in the days of the god (i.e. when he was a man). They have wooden handles which are brightly painted and sometimes bear the name of the donor; but they tend to be left out on the stone altar, so that they soon fade and rust. To fulfil (oppukaranavā) the vow (bāra), the weapon is given to the kapuvā for the god, and tied onto it, wrapped in a piece of cloth, is the coin put aside when the vow was made.

A vow for a good harvest results in the ceremony of giving aḍukku (first fruits), which is still an annual¹ event in most villages some time in April, when the spring harvest (maha) has been gathered in. Most informants held that this vow and offering were made to Vanniya Baṇḍāra Deyyō, though he was not the village deity; but the headman whose list I cited above said it was to all Twelve Gods. Some middle-class friends gave theirs

1. Obeyesekere ("Buddhist Pantheon", p.15) reports from a very remote village that aḍukku are offered twice a year, after each harvest. He gives interesting data on status distinctions during the ritual.

to Kataragama. The aḍukku themselves are a portion of rice which is set aside; if offered in the morning, I was told, the rice is then sent up to the temple for Buddha pūjā at mid-day, but if offered in the afternoon people just eat it themselves. People can give aḍukku individually for the success of their own crop, but the tradition is to hold a collective ceremony at which the kapurāḷa becomes possessed and dances to each of the gods in turn to the accompaniment of drumming and chanting.¹ This type of ceremony, which locally is to my knowledge held only for the Twelve Gods, is called "to dance kembara" (kembara naṭanavā), and kembara in this sense is used as a synonym of gam maḍuva² (verbally: gam maḍuva naṭanavā). (This differs from Low Country usage, where a gam maḍuva is usually in honour of the goddess Pattinī and is a much more elaborate affair lasting several nights with a variety of dramas and other rituals.) It takes place on a Tuesday or Friday night. Unfortunately I never witnessed one of these kembara, but was told that only men are present and that some of the spectators become possessed and dance too (my informant had done so himself). This is ascribed to the gaze of the god falling on them, presumably via the kapuvā. After dancing the kapuvā tells the future (pēna kiyanavā).

Low Country ceremonies. They feature as follows in the dictionary

1. I once observed some such drumming and chanting at a Mīgala dēvalē, and noted that it was done by high-caste (goyigama) men, not by the drummers (beravayō) who perform in Buddha pūjā. In exorcisms however only beravayō may drum.

2. Literally "village shed". Maḍuva means any kind of temporary structure, especially if it is used to house ritual.

The object of an exorcism is to free the patient from the evil influence (dos or vas) which has fallen on him from the gaze (bälma or drṣṭiya, generally pronounced bäluma and diṣṭiya) of some evil spirit or person. (The person need not be malevolent: one can have the evil eye without knowing it.) All large-scale exorcisms are somewhat akin to the kembara just described: a specialist dances all night to the drumming and chanting, becoming possessed by (or impersonating - the distinction is often unclear) the spirits to whom this is principally addressed. Explanations vary: the yakṣa is forced or persuaded by the exorcist to leave the patient, or banished by a more powerful yakṣa or god who is his master. Sometimes the patient becomes possessed too and joins in the dancing. The famous devil-dancing of the Southern and Western Provinces, in which men of the drummer caste exorcise demons of disease, are of this type. Another spectacular type of ceremony in the Low Country is bali, which is directed to appeasing the planetary deities. However, devil dancing is unknown in my part of the country, and bali (usually called tovil or bali tovil) are rare. I never got to see one (I do not think there had been one in Migala for three years) but I understand that they too are far simpler than the Low Country ceremonies. They feature an image of the planetary deity, which may be huge, and is itself called a bali. The monk (24) told me that these are of three types: malbali (made of flowers), añdanabali (drawn or painted), and aṃbanabali (moulded, i.e. three-dimensional figures). A schoolmaster (not locally

born) said that the dances for yakku and for bali (yaknāṭuma and balināṭuma) were the same, being differently named according to context. Often I found my informants on this topic unwilling to make the distinctions which Ames has documented for the Low Country; they obviously had little experience of these matters.

In view of this it is perhaps not untypical that the only lime-cutting ceremony I attended was in the house of an immigrant from the Low Country, and performed by a yakādurā from another village. The man, who I shall call Perera, had been in poor health and felt that he was resented as an outsider; he suspected that malicious neighbours had practised black magic and brought a yakā into his house. He got a yakādurā to come from some way away so that people - I suppose he meant his enemies - should not know about it. The lime-cutting (dehi kāpīma) was to nullify the spell. Detailed descriptions of similar ceremonies have been published, so I shall only summarize. The exorcist prepares indoors the offering (pideniya) for the yakā; the items in it, which are minutely specified, are called puluṭu (literally "burnt": the word properly refers to the five kinds of parched grains which are included) and include meat. He then takes up in a leaf a little of each ingredient and leaves it, in great secrecy, at a place where three ways meet. The yakā is presumed to have gone out for the food, and then not to find his way back. Indoors a bowl containing five oils is then put over a fire; Perera covers his shoulders with a white cloth and sits on a mat; he is now "the patient" (āturayā). The chair

on which lies the rest of the pideniya is put next to him with limes and an egg. The exorcist burns joss sticks before pictures of the Buddha and gods, which are hanging on the walls, and begins. Each lime in turn he holds against the patient's body at some crucial anatomical point, or moves it backwards and forwards between such points, and mutters very fast and low; at the end of each spell he cuts the lime with cutters and tosses the two halves into the sizzling oil. He uses 21 limes and covers the whole body, then puts the cutters too into the oil. Finally he takes the egg, passes it from Perera's forehead down to his feet, cracks it on the ground and throws it into the pot. The dosa has all been drained out and burnt.

The piece of meat included in the pideniya was the only element in the rite which jarred with Buddhist principles, and after all, men as well as yakku eat meat. In the Low Country exorcisms sometimes involve the sacrifice¹ of a living victim (billa) - in fact a chicken - to the yakṣa, and I did hear of one such case in Mīgala. My informant, a very poor and uneducated local man, unfortunately would not tell me whether the patient too was a local, as the matter was supposed to be somewhat secret. The exorcist was again procured from outside the village, and the rite took place in the cemetery. The patient had to give as bili a cock, a bottle of toddy and a bottle of arack. My

1. Usually blood sacrifice is only in token, i.e. a few drops of blood from the chicken's comb; but on occasion it is beheaded.

informant was present and said it was all fake (boruva), for who but a man takes toddy and arack?

The only kind of magic which my informant believed in, he told me, was the tying on of thread, because this was accompanied by reciting the qualities of the Buddha. This thread is a simple amulet, and the measure is a prophylaxis rather than a cure.¹ It was often performed by a kapuvā, but I found out that my informant, who was also high-caste, had tied on a thread himself for someone who had been frightened by a holman. Besides the thread some people supply amulets (yantra),² pieces of copper foil on which are engraved linear diagrams with letters of the alphabet and which are then rolled up and kept in a small cylinder round the neck. Children usually wear one. The yantra, as well as parts of the spells, are in Mālayālām, and are the same as those used by the Tamils in the area. The spells (mantra) are used when making and applying these amulets; normally a mantra should be recited over a yantra 108 times, but further repetition will make it stronger. I was told that besides Sinhalese and Mālayālām they use Tamil and Telegu. The word Mantra is generally used only to denote spells of white magic; they begin with at least a brief invocation of the Buddha (e.g. "Om Buddhāya"), tantamount to an acknowledgement of his supremacy over all forces.

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1. On the general use of thread in magic cf. Gooneratne, pp. 57-60. He refers to prophylactic thread (āraksa nūl) on p.60.
 2. Historically yantra should refer strictly to the diagram on the amulet, but it is used to denote the whole object.

White magic however usually implies the existence of black magic to be counteracted; but to believe that black magic is being used against you argues a certain degree of paranoia. The villagers of Mīgala were not much given to paranoia, and generally conceptualized the evil influences to be counteracted as yakku. I did not come across cases, common enough in the Low Country, where people were believed to have an evil eye or evil tongue, nor did anyone ever tell me that he was the victim of black magic. I would not deny the possibility of these things going on in Mīgala, but they are certainly not obtrusive. The only story of black magic which came to my ear sounds a cheerful note. A group of women disliked a lady teacher in the village. They approached a kapurāḷa to put a spell on her, so that she would have some misfortune and wish to leave. He asked a hundred and fifty rupees (nearly a month's salary for a junior teacher), fifty of it as an advance. He then went to the husband of the unpopular lady, who had on occasion helped him out financially, and told all, saying that as they were good people no harm would come to them, but he would like the lady to feign illness and stay away from school. Accordingly while teaching at the school next day she complained of a violent headache, and immediately took three days' sick leave. The women were much delighted with their quick results, and handed over the outstanding hundred rupees. In their glee they went - as would be customary - to call on the sick lady, pretending to condole. But to their chagrin, after three days she reappeared

at the school, hale and hearty. They went to complain to the kapurāḷa; at first he claimed to be non-plussed, and questioned them, only to be told they had visited the victim. No wonder she had got well! They had spoilt it all by going to see her. Now some of it might even have rubbed off onto them. Would they not like some protective amulets?...

Early in this chapter (pp. 190-1) I listed the ways in which the Sinhalese feels he can cope with misfortune, and control his environment; I have now placed these ways in their setting of belief and ritual. Most of them have nothing to do with Buddhism (Buddhāgamaya). But Buddhism does have some contact with secular welfare, not through any attempt to propitiate the Buddha himself but through the use of sacred texts, the Buddha's word (Buddhavacanē). Behaviourally viewed, certain canonical texts are used as spells. However, for the Buddhists there is no incongruity in most of these uses; they are still quite explicable in their own terms; moreover they are of great antiquity. The principal such use of texts is institutionalized in a ceremony called pirit.

Pirit is derived from the Pali word paritta (~~skt. paritra~~) meaning "amulet". The word now denotes a prescribed text or set of texts (which may however be abridged) recited in a particular ritual. This ritual has certain features shared with other Sinhalese rituals, to which no reference is made in the texts recited and for which no rationale is given. A reel of thread or string (pirit nūl) is held by all the monks reciting

and passed round to enclose the spectators, any of whom may also clasp it. At least one bottle of water (piritpān) is kept on or under the table on which the manuscripts of the texts (pirit pot) lie during the recitation, and at the end of the ceremony a monk sprinkles this water over everyone present. These features, not rationally explicable in doctrinal terms, allow us to mention pirit here in the context of magic as well as in chapter 5 in the context of soteriology.

There is to my knowledge only one text which has a specialized application: the Angulimāla Paritta, for use in childbirth (on which see chapter 5, p.299). All the other applications of pirit, which are listed below, make use of a collection of Pali texts, mostly suttas from the Canon, made in Ceylon by the tenth century¹ called the Catubhānavāra ("Four sections of sermons"). The texts which make up this collection are listed, not in strict order, by Rahula;² the list dictated to me from memory by a local monk coincides with Rahula's in all but one particular which is plainly a slip. The Catubhānavāra begins with three texts, the Mangala (alias Mahāmangala) Sutta, the Ratana Sutta, and the Metta (alias Karaṇiya-metta) Sutta, all of which are from the

1. Geiger, Culture of Ceylon, p.173, para. 161, refers to a tenth century inscription containing the name of the book.

2. History of Buddhism, p.278, see especially note 6. Rahula says that the book contains these texts "among others", but so far as I know his list is complete, plus the Angulimāla Paritta, which I believe is not in the Catubhānavāra. (I have not seen a copy of the work.)

canonical book called the Sutta Nipāta and also from part of the canonical chrestomathy, the Khuddaka Pāṭha. These texts, followed by some verses called the Jayamāṅgala Gāthā, constitute the Maha Pirita ("Great Pirit") which begins and ends long pirit ceremonies, and is always recited by all monks present. The other text which must be singled out for mention is the Āṭānāṭiya Sutta (from the Dīgha Nikāya); this is always recited twice and comes last, immediately before the final recitation of the Maha Pirita, which means that its recitation falls at about 4 in the morning.

Pirit may be "said" by anyone (even a layman, if no monk is available), and there is no limit to the number of participants. During long ceremonies however the full complement usually is present only for the maha pirit; most of the time the recitation is carried on by two monks (yuga pirit) or four monks, who work in two-hour shifts. Continuity must be preserved, not necessarily by an uninterrupted flow of sound, but by the continuous presence of at least one monk in a preaching seat holding the thread.

A pirit ceremony using the full range of texts (i.e. the Catubhānavāra) may last all night (sarvarātrika pirit), which in practice means roughly from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m.; for thirty-six hours (tun tis pāya pirit), roughly from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. a day later; or for a week (sati pirit),¹ as happened when the whole world

1. Dickson, op.cit., pp.227-231 has some interesting details for which I cannot vouch: he says that for a week's pirit at least twenty-four monks are needed, and that on the eve of the ceremony they all chant the paṭicca-samuppāda.

seemed in danger from the fearsome conjunction of the planets. (At the end of a week's pirit there is a ceremony called the dorakaḍāsanē.)¹ A standard form of shorter pirit is valu pirit, which is said for an hour in the evening before the monks' gilampasa pūjā, an hour before breakfast (hīl dānē) the next morning, and an hour the next evening, i.e. roughly at 5 p.m., 5 a.m. and 5 p.m. However, pirit can come in much shorter chunks: Radio Ceylon began every day with about fifteen minutes of it, immediately after the Three Refuges and Five Precepts, broadcast at 6.30 a.m. However pirit by radio obviously becomes a totally different affair, as the thread and water are missing. It is, probably consciously, a reversion to canonical practice, in that the texts are used, theoretically at least, for the meaning they convey; for pirit originated as a kind of preaching - to a supernatural audience.

The use of water in this connection is however very old.

In the reign of Upatissa I (end of the fourth century A.D.)

Ceylon

...was afflicted by famine and disease. The king inquired from the Sangha if anything was done by the Buddha in such a situation to alleviate the suffering of the people, and the monks described to him how the Ratana-sutta was recited by the Buddha when Vesali was visited by such a calamity. Thereupon the king had a golden image of the Buddha made, and placing in its hands the Buddha's stone alms-bowl filled with water, mounted it on a chariot. Then he organized a great alms-giving and ordered the citizens to observe the moral precepts (sīla), himself observing them.

1. For a description see E.R. Sarathchandra, op.cit., pp.19-21.

The city was beautifully decorated, and a large crowd of monks following the chariot with the golden Buddha image walked the whole night round the streets reciting the Ratana-sutta and sprinkling water. The king himself took part in the ceremony, walking with the monks. Rains came and famine and pestilence disappeared. Upatissa decreed that this ceremony should be performed, whenever there was a similar calamity in the Island.

The Ratana Sutta is still one of the texts comprising the maha pirit. In a footnote to this passage Rahula gives the story of the Buddha's alleged use of pirit.

When Vesāli was afflicted by famine and pestilence, the Buddha visited the city on the invitation of Licchavis, and recited the Ratana-sutta. (It is included in the Khuddakapāṭha as well as in the Sutta-nipāta). The Buddha first taught this sutta to Ananda and requested him to go round the city accompanied by Licchavi princes, reciting the sutta and sprinkling water from the Buddha's alms-bowl. The city was saved from the calamity. A great festival was held in honour of the Buddha's visit. Two boats on the river were joined together and a pavilion was built thereon. After this successful mission to Vesāli, The Buddha returned to Rājagaha along the Ganges. This journey is called Gangārohana, and the name was given to the festival itself. (SnA. pp. 204-205; CBhA. p.97 ff.).²

This story comes from Buddhaghosa's commentaries; the use of water has no canonical authority. Rahula also quotes (p.279) a description from the commentary on the Dīgha Nikāya of how pirit should be recited for a sick man: here neither water nor thread are mentioned. Rahula (p.280, note 1) says that "... the pirit ceremony as we know it to-day can be seen only after the Polonnaruva period". With this I take it he refers to the use of the thread, which is thus a comparatively modern develop-

1. Rahula, History, pp. 276-277.

2. Rahula, History, p.277, note 2.

ment. However, the description in the Dīgha Commentary has other non-canonical features, which are now obsolete, such as that the monk reciting the Āṭānāṭiya Sutta should not have eaten meat or flour.

There is frequent reference in the canon to monks' being disturbed in their meditations in forest solitude by troublesome yakṣas. The beginning of the Āṭānāṭiya Sutta (D.N.xxxii) refers to this circumstance; Vessavaṇa, king of the yakṣas, comes to the Buddha saying that yakṣas trouble monks in the forest and recites to him a long poem consisting largely of the names of various spirits, to keep them at bay; the Buddha then repeats it to his monks. There are several other verse texts which, though they lack a similar introduction, can be deduced to have been intended from the first to serve a similar purpose. The commentary says as much of the Karaṇīya-metta Sutta¹ which preaches universal love and good-will; and it is probably significant that the Ratana Sutta, which has a similar purport, begins by addressing "Whatever beings of the earth or sky are here assembled". In Buddhist terms, the yakṣas are being preached to, converted to Buddhist benevolence so that they will no longer want to harm anyone. (The Rev. Rahula contrasts the Christian expulsion of devils with the Buddhist way of winning them over by the exercise of loving-kindness.)

1. The commentatorial accounts of the origin of the Karaṇīya-metta Sutta and of the Mangala Sutta were told me (of course as fact) by a young layman.

I was present at several pirit ceremonies, but as descriptions of pirit have been published¹ I shall refrain from reproducing my own. It will suffice to remark on the extremely unspecific nature of the ceremony, which we can see from Rahula's work to have been the case in ancient times also. Pirit is used at a sick bed, to commemorate a death, to consecrate a new building, to avert a public misfortune, to celebrate the opening of Parliament, or simply to acquire merit.

The canonical explanation of pirit is that it converts, or at least mollifies, the yakku. Another explanation, also with some canonical authority, is the general one that it is meritorious to recite canonical texts or have them recited. The recitation of texts is always considered equivalent to preaching (baṇa), and is listed (as desanā) among the ten good

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1. (1) Nur Yalman, "The Structures of Sinhalese Healing Rituals", pp.120-121. Yalman's statement that the pirit book "tells of the struggle between Buddha and his rival Maraya" is incorrect, and his spelling of Sinhalese words, as in all his publications, extremely erratic, not to say slapdash.
 - (2) André Bareau, La Vie et L'Organisation des Communautés Bouddhiques Modernes de Ceylon, Institut Français d'Indologie, Pondicherry 1957, pp. 55-57. Bareau says that the Patthana Sutta is part of the maha pirit; there is no text of this name, so this must be a mistake for Ratana Sutta. What he calls an "orchestra, playing in the interval" is the usual drumming etc. which accompanies every public pinkama.
 - (3) J.F. Dickson, "Notes Illustrative of Buddhism". Though brief and generalized, I find this account the best in English.
 - (4) E. Waldschmidt, "Das Paritta", Baessler-Archiv 17, 1934, pp.139-150, is the most exhaustive.

deeds (dasa kusala karma)(see chapter 2, p. 96). Moreover, listening to preaching (suti) is similarly listed, being considered the equivalent of "causing to preach". This rather formalistic attitude to the sacred texts clashes with the Buddhist doctrine of intention (cetanāva)(see chapter 6). What is here more to the point is that this explanation does not fit the case of pirit recited (as so often) to allay an already present misfortune. To earn merit in any way, including this, will improve one's karma, but karma is a long-range affair, and there is no reason why the merit just gained should take immediate effect, so as to make a sick man well. To say that pin can cancel out pav is in fact a heresy, discussed at the beginning of chapter 5. Indeed, if one is thinking in terms of karma the presumption must be rather the other way: if a man is ill because of a past sin he will go on being ill till the sin is expiated, despite any ad hoc remedial action. In the case of misfortune, to explain pirit as "merit in a hurry" will therefore not wash.

This line of explanation is however applicable when pirit is used at a celebration - indeed it sometimes fits the case far better than the explanation involving yakku. On the occasion of his fiftieth birthday the chief monk of Mīgala temple had pirit chanted for thirty-six hours and gave alms to fifty monks, including the Mahānāyaka of Malvatta. He was of course not trying to dispel any yakku, but simply making himself a birthday present of a vast quantity of

merit¹. To be sure, there is no reason why the texts used should have been pirit - any baṇa would have served the same purpose - but he used the institution which was at hand. (The celebration of his own birthday - with great advance publicity - strikes me as flagrantly untraditional conduct in a monk, but was well thought of by the villagers, who gained both the sight of a festivity and the chance to acquire merit by sympathy.)

What pirit is in public, the "Iti pi so" gāthā are in private. The "Iti pi so" gāthā is a short prose² formula, beginning with the words "Iti pi so", which eulogizes the Buddha. There are similar formulae eulogizing the dhamma and the Sangha, which are often recited in succession; the three together form a statement of faith somewhat analogous to the Christian Creed. These Pali sentences occur frequently in the canon.³ The "Iti pi so" gāthā is also known colloquially as Buduguna (or Buddha-gunē), "the qualities of the Buddha". The Buduguna are the most frequently employed spell in white magic. Someone frightened by a ghost will recite the Buduguna and thus keep the ghost at

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1. At the cost of nearly 5000 rupees. He told me afterwards that the total expenses were about R.6000, of which R.1300 were contributed by laymen. However, he explicitly denied that the quantity of merit depended on the size of his expenditure (see chap. 58, p. 302).
 2. The term gāthā usually denotes verse; that these prose passages are so called indicates their formulaic character.
 3. E.g. Samāññaphala Sutta, DN I. 49 § (Sutta 2. 8)

bay, even if he has to repeat them all the way home. The Buduguna are highly recommended in Mīgala. The ex-headman said that in an apalē (astrologically dangerous period) one should just recite the Buduguna, and not bother about bali-tovil and such ceremonies. The old kapurāḷa (K 1), who did quite a bit of business with amulets, etc., himself said that the Buduguna were the best guard against yakku, while the most effective cure for any ill is to recite the Mahāṃangala,¹ Ratana, and Karaṇīya-metta Suttas morning and evening. When I asked him for some yantra mantra (apotropaic spells), the first one he recited to me was the Pali

Sabbapāpassa akaraṇaṃ kusalassa upasampadā
Sattitta-pariyodapanāṃ etaṃ Buddhānusāsanāṃ

to be repeated three times, with Dhamma and Sangha substituted for Buddha at the second and third repetitions. The verse means, "To abstain from all evil, to do good, to purify one's ^{mind} awareness, this is the teaching of the Buddha/Dhamma/Sangha". Examples of similar verses in spells could doubtless be multiplied by research.

The question again arises whether the Buduguna and similar Buddhist formulae are mere spells, or whether their use can be rationalized: affectively they are surely a spell, but does their use involve a cognitive inconsistency? Perhaps not, because to recite the Buddha's qualities is to remind the evil spirits of his power and goodness, so that they will lose the will to

1. = Mangala.

attack. According to monk 21, the Buddha himself recommended the practice; saying that even Śakra (who is addressed in the Dhajagga Sutta, one of the best known pirit texts) has passion, hatred and elusion (rāga dosa moha), "so if you want anything just think of me (mama sihi karagaṇṭa)."¹ "If the qualities of the Buddha fail, recite the qualities of the Dhamma; if that still fails, those of the Sangha. Recital of the Three Jewels will get rid of all fear and danger. This explanation touches on the belief in the power of truth, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

However, Obeyesekere has told me of a twist in the use of Buduguna which defies even this type of explanation. Among villagers out on a hunt he heard the Buduguna muttered by a man to prevent his rival from catching anything. The qualities of the Buddha prevent violence - even when used with ulterior motives!

Having found Buddhist texts used as spells, it will be less surprising to find a relic used as a talisman. I did not come across a case in practice; but I was told that someone who has a Buddha relic on his person is invincible at cards! But lest this be taken for a modern degeneration, let me refer to Nahāvamsa XXV.7, which tells us that Duṭṭugāmuṇu had a relic put in his spear.¹ Nothing reported by any ethnographer in modern

1. Geiger, note to his translation of the passage, says, "the spear serves as a royal standard, which is always carried before the prince." "Duṭṭugāmuṇu's use of the relic is thus reminiscent of Constantine's labarum. He was waging a "holy war", leading the Sinhalese Buddhists to regain Anuradhapura and its holy places from Tamil Hindus, much in the manner of the Christian crusaders.

times approaches this flagrant violation of both the letter and the spirit of the doctrine.

The use of spells and talismen characterizes what we are calling "magic". There is a gap here between our categorization and that of the Sinhalese, because where the spells are Buddhist texts or the talismen Buddhist objects the practices with which they are associated are generally considered to be part of Buddhist religion (Buddhāgamaya); in fact it is largely these practices which Buddhist modernists call Buddhist religion (Buddāgamaya), as opposed to Buddhist philosophy (Bauddha darsanaya) which they consider the true, original Buddhism. While in this chapter I am mainly concerned with statements by Buddhists which interpret pirit, for example, as something other than magic, its resemblance to magic will strike the western reader; I will return to it in chapter 5. At this point it is sufficient to point out that magic per se is not contrary to Buddhist doctrine, provided it serves only worldly ends. In this respect it is on a par with gods and other spirits; a picture of the world which includes these forces, and considers a spell of similar efficacy to a medicine or a poison, is not logically incompatible with a belief in karma.

Black magic is contrary to Buddhist ethics, not to Buddhist metaphysics: a sin, but not a heresy. White magic to secure worldly ends is contrary to neither. A monk who practises black magic is doctrinally on a par with one who drinks; a bad Buddhist, if you like, but bad in the sense of wicked, not of inconsistent.

A monk who says pirit to cure sickness, whatever~~y~~ may be his theory to explain its efficacy, is a good Buddhist in every sense.

Although we have come across certain beliefs and actions which cannot be reconciled with the doctrine of the canon, I would suggest that these are somewhat trivial and peripheral. They are also ancient; changes since ancient times even seem, oddly enough, to have been more towards than away from orthodoxy. In the ninth century King Sena II "had the Ratana Sutta written on a gold plate and made offerings to it";¹ there is nothing like that to-day. Finally, are the "deviant" practices so thoroughly unjustifiable? Only on one level. All can be explained by the Buddhist doctrinal belief in the power of human thought, to which we shall have frequent cause to refer in the next chapters. As monk 1, a simple traditional person, remarked to me, diseases are usually curable by medicine or by bali, in which they use the Budugāṇa; the reason one gets better is because of one's own ideas (tamangē adahasa). Monk 38 said the same of all worship of gods, and specifically of pirit: it will only do you good if you have faith (visvāsa); you are protected by your own belief.

IV Summary

There are few or none zealous in their worship, or have any great matter of esteem for their Gods. And they seldom busie themselves in the matters of their Religion, until they come to be sick or very aged. They debar none that will come to see the Ceremonies

1. Rahula, History, p.110, referring to Mhv. LI.79.

of their worship; and if a stranger should dislike their way, reprove or mock at them for their Ignorance and Folly, they would acknowledge the same, and laugh at the superstitions of their own Devotion, but withall tell you that they are constrained to do what they do, to keep themselves safe from the malice and mischiefs that the evil spirits would otherwise do them, with which they say, their Country swarm...

It is a usual saying, and very frequent among them (if their Geraha [graha], which is their fortune, be bad) What can God do against it: Nay, I have often heard them say, Give him no Sacrifice, but shit in his Mouth, what a God is He? So slight an estimation have they of their Idol-Gods;...

Knox, p.132

I have attempted to present the subject matter of this chapter analytically. To give a clear picture of local beliefs in a brief synthesis let me reproduce the opinions of the three men in Mīgala whom I knew best. Our neighbour, a very simple and uneducated man, had seen the bali with cockerel and arack, and said it was all false. Similarly, he said, all the stuff done by the kapurāḷa (K 1) was false (boru). These kapuvō ask for money, but why should a god need money? I asked if he believed in Piṭiya Deyyō. He did not answer me directly - plainly he took Piṭiya Deyyō's existence for granted - but replied with a vehement assertion that the gods need nothing but merit. I asked about tying on thread. No, that is not false, because that is Buddhagunē. Yakku only frequent the cemetery; if you go past there at midnight or twilight you may get a bāluma and get scared, and tying on the thread cures you of this fright. I found out that he himself had tied thread for someone so frightened. "It is all in the mind (okkoma hitē);" he meant not that yakku do not exist but that they only trouble

those in a receptive state of mind. He too has seen holman near the cemetery, and heard their noise, but nowadays he is never troubled. I ask if holman are people who sinned in previous births. No, holman are rightly called yakku.

Another villager whom we got to know very well, a share-cropper of very little education and no better than he should be, struck me as the perfect "man in the street" of Mīgala. He did not go to the temple often, and had very few opinions on religious topics, but he did tell me that he doesn't go in for this yakṣa stuff. When he was seriously ill he did not get a yakādurā (exorcist) but had monks say valu p̄rit. On the other hand when his son was ill he made a vow to Piṭiya Deyyō, and gave the god a small weapon when his son recovered. Some people are frightened of the dark and hear footsteps behind them, especially near the cemetery, but he has never seen anything [and he lived fairly near it]. Some people in Mīgala have met Mahasona there and fallen ill of fright; a female cousin of his even died of fright one night; a year after her marriage she and her husband were asleep in the house when at midnight a bull lowed out at the back; when they went out they heard footsteps and her husband ran to look, but found no one. One may meet hūnivam, but he is benevolent. A figure of a white naked man is a holman; his wife is frightened of these. Once she went out to the latrine at night and screamed to him that she heard footsteps, so he went out; there was nothing there, but he pretended to be shooing away a dog and so her fear was

appeased.

Our landlord, a small cultivator in his fifties who had been a bus-driver, was in most respects a typical villager, but held some unusual opinions. It is possible that he had been influenced by spending some time at a mission school when a boy, but I would be inclined to discount this. He considered himself a devout Buddhist, but said he believed in no gods at all - it was all lies (deyyō okkoma boru). One of the village shrines was robbed of all its cash, and this caused him endless amusement, for, he said, if the god was so powerful why did he not stop the thief? He also refused to observe any of the tabus connected with the Sinhalese New Year celebrations and his wife served us a cooked meal at the time when the fire is supposed to be extinguished. He had been to Kataragama "for fun" (vinōdēṭa), but Kataragama too was "lies"; it was all for the kapu to make money: they rake in the coins (paṅḍuru) in the morning and drink toddy in the afternoon. Why should gods need money? One doesn't give rupees to the Buddha.

Such extreme scepticism is however unusual. To conclude this chapter I reproduce my notes, taken almost on dictation, from an elderly monk (12) who gave me in resumé a classic exposition of the Sinhalese view of the world - an anthropologist's dream.

He has never been to Kataragama - people go there mainly for vows (bāravalaṭa), not to worship (vaṅḍinṭa). Kataragama was not a man but a god by birth (utpattiyen deyyō) and Ceylon

is his sphere of responsibility (bāramaṇḍalē).

The gods have a system of government like the human world. Sakra is the chief of the gods, and he has a retinue of ministers (amātyapirisa), the four gods (Dhṛtarāṣṭra, etc.) who live in the Cāturmahārājika heaven. Below them are gods in charge of various countries. Ceylon is in charge of four gods: Viṣṇu, Kataragama, Saman and Vibhīṣaṇa. Each rules a quarter of the country; this part is under Saman. Pattinī is all over Ceylon in charge of one department (eka aṃsēṣa pradhānē). Dāḍimunda is fierce (candē) - a yakṣa. Below these come the gods in charge of villages (gambāra deyyō) [here the monk wrinkled his nose], under the former as DROs are under GAs. "Those fellows are the bosses of tiny little parts (Ē aya poḍi poḍi kotasvalokō)". The local DRO equivalent is Piṭiya Deyyō.

There are three classes of beings: deyyō, yakṣayō, prētayō. The latter two groups are ruled by Vessavaṇa, who is the boss of the yakṣas (yakunnē lokkā). He is very tough (sārayi), and if someone breaks his laws he looks at them in a certain way and his gaze burns them to cinders (āsdrṣṭiya piti piti piccenavā). Gods are pleased by the five precepts (pan sil) and pinkam, and like good people; yakṣas, on the other hand, break all the five precepts and like wicked people. But they cannot harm the good people, because they are scared of Vaiśravaṇa. Yakṣayō and prētayō live on smelly foods like meat; to get people to make offerings to them they show them holman, which are just their own forms (svarūpa), apparitions (avatāra); these holman frighten

people into making offerings. However, they may be exorcised by the recital of the Three Refuges (tun sarana), at which yakku and prētayō will flee for miles.

Astrology (nākāt śāstrē) can tell only trends and dispositions, and give suspicious and inauspicious times. To say that it can predict the future in detail is contrary both to truth and to Buddhism.

The planetary deities (grahayō) are not a class of yakṣa (yakku vargayak); they are ways of effecting the good and bad karma which a man is born with. In other religions gods make creatures - but who makes the gods? Karma alone determines a man's birth, but karma is long-term (diga); it does not determine the details of one's life, but only those things which can't be helped - principally the condition of one's birth. To escape particular misfortunes may be possible by e.g. bali ceremonies, in which the planetary deities are propitiated (śānti karanavā). Karma is purely the result of one's own efforts and thoughts.

"All that we are is the result of what we have thought", says the first verse of the Dhammapada.¹ To test whether this doctrine is still consistently upheld will be the purpose of the next chapter.

1. In Max Müller's famous translation, which is admittedly contentious.

Chapter 5

TOTAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE.

At the beginning of the previous chapter was stated the theory of karma, according to which a man's destiny depends on his own efforts. However, in the course of the chapter were mentioned certain beliefs which seem prima facie to contradict this. In this chapter we shall examine these beliefs and scrutinize their congruity with stated doctrine. Our principal topics are the doctrine of superseded karma (ahosikamma), the religious wish (prārthanā) and the transference of merit (patti and pattānumodanā).

Ahosi kamma is a Pali technical term, literally meaning "has-been karma". It refers to karma which is superseded by the course of events. If someone attains nirvāṇa he will not be reborn, so much of his karma will never bear fruit and becomes obsolete (ahosi venavā). Even an arhat, however, can never escape the consequences of (i.e. ahosi karanṭa) one of the five great sins: killing mother, father, or an arhat, causing schism in the Sangha, or shedding the blood of a Buddha. The venerable Mugalan, one of the Buddha's two chief disciples, suffered terribly at the hands of robbers long after he had attained Enlightenment. They surrounded his house, threatening to murder him, but he got out by his supernormal powers (iddhi). The same happened a second time. When he was in the same situation for a third time¹ he examined his past lives

1. Seventh, according to monk 34, who alluded to the same story. See next note.

with the eye of wisdom (nāṇacakkhu) which all arhats acquire, and realized that this was the result of his having killed his aged parents in a former life; so he submitted to his fate and was beaten up by the robbers who left him at the point of death. This story from the commentary to the Dhammapada¹ was told me by monk 36. The circumstances under which he had killed his parents were these. They were very old and blind, and he was living with them and his wife. The wife said his parents were such a nuisance that he must choose between them and her. To deceive him she would throw the scum of the boiling rice onto the floor and then tell him his parents were spitting everywhere; similarly she simulated fallen white hair. Finally the son pretended to his parents that he had to take them on a journey through a dangerous forest. On the way he suddenly exclaimed that robbers were attacking. His parents told him to flee and save himself; he ran off and returned pretending to be a robber, and killed them. For this he came to be brutally murdered, arhat or no.

I questioned monk 39 about ahosikamma. By doing some great act of merit, he said, one may anticipate the maturation of one's karma (karmavipāka) and reach nivan first. There are

1. Dh.A.III.65. The robbers were hired by jealous Jains. The story also occurs in the Jātaka book (J.V.126), with a few differences. Most of these are trivial, but the discrepancy that at the last moment he is moved by his parents and does not kill them seems to deprive the story of its raison d'être. Malalasekere (Dictionary of Pali Proper Names, Luzac, London 1937, vol.II, p.546, note 48) erroneously attributes this version to the Dhammapada commentary.

four kinds of karma:

- (1) dr̥ṣṭadharmavedaniya: will bring results within this life (mē ātmēma vipākē denavā)
- (2) upapadya: will bring results in the next life (īlānga ātmē dī vipākē denavā)
- (3) aparāparivedya: there is no limit - will bring results when opportunity arises (sīmāvak nā - avasthāvak lābunōt vipākē denavā)
- (4) ahosi: disappears (nātivenavā)

For example, Duṭṭugāmuṇu killed many Tamils in war, which is pay, but he did it to save Buddhism, and then did so much for Buddhism (founding monasteries at Anurādhapura, etc.) that his pin so far outweighed his pay that he will stay in heaven (divyalōkē) till the time of Maitrī, the next Buddha, when he will be reborn as his right-hand disciple (dakunatsav, i.e. the equivalent of Sāriyut for Gotama Buddha) and attain nirvāṇa. His pay will therefore never mature, there being no results (vipākē) of bad karma in heaven.

That my informant gave Duṭṭugāmuṇu as his example is no accident, for apart from arhats¹ his is the only specific case of ahosi karma ever heard of. The prediction concerning him is contained in Mahāvamsa XXXII, so my informant was fully justified in saying that Duṭṭugāmuṇu would never pay for the sin

disciple, but we do not know what lives he will pass through

1. Among arhats the classic case of ahosikamma is Angulimāla, who will be mentioned in another context later in the chapter. For his full story see the entry under his name in Malalasekere's Dictionary of Pali Proper Names.

of killing. Even so the monks I interviewed were divided on this question: some (8,14,18,20,21) concurred in saying that Duṭṭhāgāmuṇu would get off while others (24, 30) asserted that at some point he must surely pay for his sins.

Although all the stories deal with the extreme case, it is not merely the attainment of nirvāṇa which can prevent the maturation of sin. Common sense suggests that it may not be possible to reap the recompense for every action. As an old upāsaka put it to me, though a man commit fifty murders he can only be hanged once. This was just an analogy fitted to my western understanding; if he is constantly reborn he can of course be hanged fifty times; yet if he persists in so murderous a course it becomes impossible for him to pay for all his crimes. This is the point of the above classification given by monk 39, as interpreted by monk 38. There are some sins [these would be the lesser ones] which are superseded (ahosi venavā) if you do not pay for them in this life or the next - "there is a time limit" ("Kālasīmāvak tiyenavā"). Some on the other hand may crop up any time there is a chance. Another analogy: if he (the speaker) wants to do me harm while I am in Ceylon but gets no chance before I leave for England, the matter lapses (ahosi venavā). [But killing is very bad, so] we cannot say about Duṭṭhāgāmuṇu; finally he will be reborn as Maitrī's right-hand disciple, but we do not know what lives he will pass through before then.

I have presented ahosikamma in a rather scholastic light

for this was the only light under which it ever appeared to me. I never came across it as part of behavioural or "actual" religion, and most laymen have no idea what it is. Obeyesekere however has come across a popular variant which by a small change runs clean counter to canonical doctrine. If sufficient merit can ensure that one will never pay for sins, it is not a big step to saying that merit can cancel out sin. Obeyesekere has met this argument in a remote area where villagers subsist partly by hunting, thus flagrantly violating the first precept not to kill; they hope that by becoming good upāsakas in old age they can nullify the effects of their past sins. This is a clear case of religious change on the cognitive level; its intellectual origin and psychological motivation are clear, but it is not, I think, widespread, and so is of limited interest.

Far more important and problematic, because a common feature of the life of every Buddhist, is the prārthanāva or religious wish. The same word is used by Sinhalese Christians to translate "prayer"; I have avoided this translation in the Buddhist context, as it would prejudice a balanced exposition. The term "prayer" implies a person who could answer it, and suggests that he could intervene in the course of events, thus interfering with the suppliant's karma. Neither implication is justified on the cognitive level, though affectively the prārthanāva does have some affinity to prayer of a very particular type. If a translation is required it would be best to use some

such phrase as "earnest wish", which is indeed the primary meaning of the Sanskrit word and of its Pali equivalent patthanā.

Prārthanā are made at the end of every pinkama. Most commonly they occur at the end of a sermon (however short): the monk expresses the hope that all beings may attain nirvāṇa (e.g. siyaḷudenāṭama ⁱⁿ or siyaḷu sattvayaṅṭa nivan sāpa lābēvā) at which remark everyone present raises their folded hands to or above the head, if they are not there already (for this is the posture in which the pious listen to sermons), and exclaims, "Sādhu sādhu sā", exactly like a Christian congregation saying "Amen" at the end of a prayer. Notice that in this context the prārthanāva is always exactly the same, namely to attain nirvāṇa. The same prārthanāva is used at funerals, where nivan sāpa lābēvā concludes the eulogies of the dead person which are printed and handed round, or at poor funerals merely recited, and the same words are printed on a banner at the entrance of the cemetery and perhaps elsewhere on the funeral route. In this context the prārthanāva is closely parallel to the Christian Requiescat in pace, with the difference that peace is requested for the Christian immediately in the grave, long before the Day of Judgment, whereas nirvāṇa is the Buddhist's long-term goal, certainly to be attained after further rebirths. Under Buddhist influence Ceylon Catholics have turned to consider their own long-term goal, and instead of R.I.P. their funeral banners read "svargē sāpa lābēva" - "May he attain the bliss of Heaven".

Another common occasion for prārthanā is in letter-writing

and here I wonder whether there has not been western influence. It is customary to conclude a personal letter with a formulaic religious wish, usually to the effect that the recipient should find refuge in the Buddha or in the Three Jewels (e.g. "teruvan saraṇa lābēvā kiyā patami"). There is nothing particularly uncanonical about hoping that someone will find refuge with the Three Jewels, in which he probably takes refuge daily, but these formulae are not used outside letter-writing, and the practice looks as if it is modelled on the Christian writing "May God be your aid" or some such benediction.

The prārthanā already discussed are made for others, which makes it easy to explain them (as is done) as mere expressions of benevolence. But the remaining ones are made for oneself, which puts them in a different category, constituting a more serious doctrinal problem. If one posits, as I think one must, that prārthanā arose from an emotional need, one would expect the prārthanā for oneself to occur earlier than the prārthanā for others, and we shall see that such is indeed the case, only the former occurring in the ancient literature.

The prārthanā for oneself may have originated with the dying wish. There is a belief that if a person on his deathbed aspires to be reborn in a particular state, his wish may well take effect. At first sight this may seem to run clean counter to the doctrine of karma; but on the cognitive level this is not so. A man's dying thoughts, so the argument runs, are necessarily conditioned by the life he has led, so that to say

that they determine his fate after death is only to say that this fate is determined by his conduct in this life. Unless his life has been pure he will not be capable of making a prārthanā for nivan, but will aspire to some lowly form of existence.

From this situation (if I am right - I doubt whether the matter can be proved or disproved) there developed long ago the more general practice of making prārthanā for oneself, ideally to attain nirvāṇa but in fact probably for all kinds of satisfaction. To what extent prārthanā are made, and to what end, I cannot say, as they are for the most part a private affair, nor need they be made out loud. The usual occasion for prārthanā is some act of merit, typically at a dānē. On receiving a dānē a monk recites a Pali verse in thanks:¹

Icchitam patthitaṃ tuyhaṃ khippam eva samijjhatu
Sabbe pūrentu attasaṅkappā cando pannarasī yathā

May what you wish and desire² very soon be successful;
may all your wishes for yourself be fulfilled like the
full moon.

The content of this verse indicates that anything may be desired, not just nirvāṇa. The donor makes a wish and the monk hopes it will be fulfilled. This is not strictly in contradiction to karma theory, because it can be said that the wish will only be fulfilled if the karma is good enough, and the merit gained

1. Such an expression of thanks is called an anumodanā; these are discussed at length below (p.308).

2. patthitaṃ, from the same verb as prārthanā.

just before a prārthanā is made should ensure this. However, there is little doubt that affectively the donor feels he is achieving a certain result by a certain action in an automatic, magical way. Moreover, the explanation just given only avoids contradicting canonical doctrine in cases where the prārthanā is for something other than nirvāṇa. This not because nirvāṇa cannot be achieved by mere wishing (for it can be argued that the prārthanā is only for an advance towards nirvāṇa through mental purification, not a direct means to nirvāṇa itself), but because the Buddha specifically condemned desire for nirvāṇa, as he condemned all desire; one should practice meditation for its own sake, in the spirit in which a hen sits on her eggs, and the results will follow. The later canonical literature shows us that this advice was soon disregarded, as might be expected, at least by the common run of Buddhists.

But before examining these ancient antecedents of the modern practice I must give the explanations of prārthanā offered by monks 25 and 38. Prārthanā for nirvāṇa, they said, are merely expressions of one's desire for nirvāṇa, a reminder of one's ultimate goal. Nirvāṇa can only be attained by effort (utsaha) over many lives, so one has to keep oneself up to scratch. Success in the human world and in heaven (mānuṣya sampat, diviya sampat) come automatically when one has done merit, said monk 38; but to attain nirvāṇa (nivan sampat) one must make a prārthanāva. This, he said, is to because to attain nivan requires constant mindfulness and constant striving. If I may put this in a different,

unSinhalese way: prārthanā for nirvāṇa are mere epiphenomena of the pure thoughts of a man who, by reason of those thoughts, is advancing spiritually. This explanation seems to me canonically orthodox in avoiding all suggestion that prārthanā are prayers and thus avoid karma; it fails only to satisfy the Buddha's injunction that one should not desire nirvāṇa - a text which is not, I think, widely known. However, it also comes close to saying that nivan is achieved by something other than pin (merit). Nivan is in fact, as explained in chapter 2, the result of morality, meditation and wisdom, all of which are pin; to say that anything else is necessary would be heretical.

This very heresy was put forward by monk 6. I have so far not taken account of his opinions, because his is a very odd case: he is not a fully ordained monk, nor recognized by the other monks, and probably slightly crazy. He is a poor villager, most unlikely ever to have been exposed to external cultural influences; yet he has turned Buddhism into a devotional religion in the Mahāyānist style of such sects as Jodo-Shin - a genuine heretic by local standards. Monk 25 said that no external help is possible in your quest for nirvāṇa, and every right-minded Theravādin would agree; but monk 6 expressed the directly opposite opinion: all pin is fruitless (ahosi venavā), and no one can attain nivan without the help of Maitrī. "Only that man can be called a Buddhist (Buddhāgama kārayek) who prays to reach nirvāṇa in the time of Maitrī." Monk 6's opinions are more fully reproduced at the end of chapter 7. Here we must return to the

history of prārthanā.

Patthanā for oneself are found in the ancient Pali literature which I have taken as my basis for comparison with modern times; they are however restricted to commentatorial literature. In the Four Nikāyas, the main body of sermons, the patthanā practices described above do not occur, but the word is found in the same general senses. In one text¹ it seems to be a synonym of āyācanā, which means "request" or "prayer". The meaning "prayer" is unambiguous in the Nidāna-Kathā² (which strictly speaking is part of a commentary), when Sujātā makes a patthanā to a yakṣa that if she gives birth to a son she will make offerings to the banyan tree in which the yakṣa lives.

In other canonical passages³ patthanā is a synonym for paṇidhi, a word which can be translated as "earnest wish" or "aspiration". It seems to me that sometimes in the Canon paṇidhi, with its verb paṇidheti, is used to give the same sense as prārthanā today. Paṇidhi is the technical term for the vow to become a Buddha, i.e. someone who has made a paṇidhi is ipso facto a Bodhisattva. Monk 17 said that a prārthanā is necessary to become a Bosat or just to see nirvāṇa; here he was using the word "prārthanā" as the translation of paṇidhi (which has no other Sinhalese equivalent); the use has however been slightly extended, so that it is made not only by those exceptional

1. A.N. III 47.

2. J. I 68.

3. S.N. II 99 and 154.

creatures who will become Buddhas, but by all seeking enlightenment - hoping to become buddha with a small b. (As mentioned in chapter 3, anyone enlightened is buddha, nor is it peculiar to Mahāyāna (as is sometimes thought) to grade buddhas, the Bodhisattva, being superior to the mere arhat.)

The paṇidhi is also the canonical equivalent of the modern prārthanā in another context, that of the death-bed wish. In one story¹ a dying householder is advised by tree-deities to aspire to become a universal monarch ("Paṇidhehi ... rājā assaṃ cakkavattīti"). They think that this aspiration will succeed as he is virtuous. But the householder says that kingship is impermanent, and instead recites the qualities of the Three Jewels, giving his relations faith (pasādeti) in them. It is perhaps notable that the householder does not make a paṇidhi (or patthanā) for nirvāṇa, thus preserving the pristine purity of the teaching; plainly however this is only a short step away. Before leaving the paṇidhi we may conclude that though the distinction between the spirit behind a paṇidhi to become a Buddha and a patthanā to attain nirvāṇa may be clear in theory, it is a nice one which is liable to become obliterated in practice.

The word patthanā occurs precisely in its modern sense in the commentary to the Dhammapada. Here are two examples, corresponding to the two main situations in which prārthanā for oneself now occur. First the dying wish: a woman makes a

1. S.N. IV 302-5

patthanā to be reborn as a female yakṣa (yakkhinī), and her rival similarly achieves rebirth as a leopard.¹ Notice that these are wishes by sinful people for very low rebirths. Patthanā for nirvāṇa (and for lower grades of spiritual attainment) occur² in a story which could be describing procedure to-day. After feeding a pratyekabuddha with sugar-cane a man makes a patthanā for "success among gods and men, followed by enlightenment", whereat the pratyekabuddha says, "So be it" (evam hotu), and recites "Ḍcītaṃ patthitaṃ etc.". What is more, he then "forms the resolution that he [the donor] should one day comprehend the law" (yathā so passati evaṃ adhiṭṭhahitvā). This is wildly undoctrinal! Later, on hearing of the incident, the man's elder brother makes a patthanā for nirvāṇa.

We see therefore that though patthanā are foreign to the earliest Buddhism, they appear in their "modern" form in ancient times. They do undoubtedly contravene the principle that one should not desire nirvāṇa, but they can be, and are, explained in such a way that they do not contravene the doctrines of karma and intentionality (cētanāva). At the same time it is clear that this cognitive congruence is achieved by a rather subtle argument which can bear little relation to the feelings of most participants. The man who gave the sugar-cane doubtless considered that the pratyekabuddha was granting his wish, and so did the story-teller. The notion that anyone, even a pratyekabuddha,

1. Dh.A. I 47-8

2. Dh.A. IV 200

can resolve on someone else's spiritual progress is a more flagrant deviation from doctrine than anything I came across in the field, and suggests the Mahāyāna. The elder brother probably felt that his own patthanā would produce its result automatically. The elder brother's affective beliefs suggest magic, the younger brother's theism. I shall return to this point in a moment.

Before leaving the prārthanā I must mention a canonical doctrine which logically and affectively comes very close to it: the act of truth (Pali: saccakiriya). It is believed that a solemn asseveration of one's righteousness in some particular respect can, by its truth, produce some desired result. Most of the canonical examples occur in the Jātaka stories,¹ but the locus classicus is in the Angulimāla Sutta in the Majjhima Nikāya. The former brigand Angulimāla, now a monk, sees a woman in a painful and difficult labour; on advice from the Buddha he says to her, "Since being born in the noble birth [i.e. entering the Order] I have never intentionally taken life; as this is true may you and your foetus be well." And it comes to pass. Angulimāla's words, known as the Angulimāla pīṭi, are still used in Ceylon to ease the pains of a woman in labour.

The "act of truth" is today, not surprisingly, a matter of theory rather than of practice; perhaps no one alive is holy enough to bring it off. The last recorded "act of truth" of

1. For references see the PTS dictionary sub voce saccakiriya.

which I am aware was by Duṭṭhāgāmaṇi; when his soldiers in the confusion of battle mistook each other for the enemy he asseverated, "Not for the pleasure of sovereignty is my striving, but always to establish the doctrine of the Full Enlightened one. As this is true, let the armour on my soldiers' bodies acquire a blazing hue." ¹ And so it happened.

To harmonize the "act of truth" with the doctrine of karma would not be logically impossible, as it could be claimed that truth is a natural force, which is here being harnessed to a righteous end; but this would be far-fetched. Affectively the "act of truth", like the prārthanā, seems to be a short cut.

To the outsider it would seem that the saccakiriya and the prārthanā might be grouped with pirit and other practices akin to white magic mentioned at the end of chapter 4, in that all seem to be based on an implicit belief in the power of religious utterances. I was in fact told by a schoolmaster that the sound of the Āṭānāṭiya Sutta, which on a night of pirit is chanted in the small hours of the morning, produces vibrations which keep the yakṣas at bay. This explanation is reminiscent of Hindu theory and is unlikely to be traditional among Buddhists; but though untypical it is worth quoting, as it explicitly describes pirit as a spell of automatic efficacy. Moreover this is almost done by a pirit text itself. The Jayamangala Gāthā, verses which conclude the mahā pirit, begin

1. Mhv. 25.18.

Mahākāruṇiko nātho hitāya sabbapāṇinam

Pūretvā pāramī sabbā patto sambodhim uttamam

Etena saccavajjena hotu me jayamangalam.

The lord of great compassion for the welfare of all alive fulfilled all the perfections and reached the supreme Enlightenment. By this statement of truth may the blessing of victory be mine.

The last line recurs several times in the poem. The saccavajja (which literally means "truthfulness") is plainly in the context a saccakiriya, "act of truth"; the text, the latest used in the pirit, ^{us} ~~the~~ gives this explanation of itself. Though this step has never, to my knowledge, been made by Buddhists, the most economical explanation of the prārthanā as behaviour would be to put it in the same category of white magic which works through the efficacy of religious utterance. It would of course be easy to describe the automatic use of prayer by a Christian in difficulties in similar terms; but we must remember that despite the prayer-like appearance and history of the prārthanā it is, at least nowadays, more akin to magic than to theistic religion, for, even though the benediction of a monk or pratyekabuddha may somehow help it along, it is not considered to depend for its effect on the whim of any external agent.

The third contemporary belief which seems at first sight to run counter to karma theory is the transference of merit, usually called in Sinhalese "giving merit" (pin dīma), a term which can be misleading. Giving normally implies that the

giver parts with the thing given, but in giving merit one merely offers to others the chance to earn merit by rejoicing at one's own. It was several times explained to me that giving merit is like giving light when one lamp is lit from another. This disposes of the problem as far as the giver is concerned; what about the recipient? Can one acquire merit from an act one has not done oneself? Here I must refer the reader back to the list of good deeds on page 96. The fifth is pattānumodanā, rejoicing in another's merit (and the fourth is patti - giving someone a chance to rejoice in your merit, i.e. "giving" it). If someone does a good deed you may earn as much merit as he does - or even more - by being really pleased about it. If this seems to the action-oriented westerner to be an easy way out, let me remind him that this doctrine is fully consonant with Buddhism's ethic of intention: it is the thought that counts, and merit bears fruit for the doer because of the pure thought that accompanies it; therefore if the thought of a spectator is purified too, so much the better for him. The high priest of Mīgala, having spent five thousand rupees on a pinkama, told me that a villager who took sympathetic joy in the merit he was earning might thereby earn more merit from it than he did himself, without spending any money. This seems to me a humane and rational equivalent of the New Testament story of the widow's mite. Theoretically indeed this could be an endless process, pleasure at the merit (and consequent spiritual progress) of others enhancing your own good karma, and their pleasure at your progress in turn enhancing theirs. All

this is patti and pattānumodanā.

This ingenious and pleasant doctrine has a curious history, which well illustrates the interrelation between the cognitive and the affective which is a theme of this work. It is not a part of the original doctrine: the terms patti and pattānumodanā in this sense are not found in the Four Nikāyas. The verb anumodati is used in these early texts with two closely related meanings, "to agree with", or "to receive with gratitude", i.e. "to thank". In the first meaning, Sāriputta says of a doctrinal debate:¹ na me koci bhikkhu anumodati: "no monk agrees with me". Parallel to the second meaning is the noun anumodana² "gratitude" or "thanks". This word from the beginning³ is mainly used as a technical term for the thanks uttered by a monk on being given alms. This usage has been preserved unchanged till today in the Sinhalese anumōdan. The passage in the Vinaya Piṭaka⁴ in which the Buddha prescribes the utterance of the anumodana and says that it should be said by the eldest monk present does not specify the content of what is said: though the Buddha doubtless composed his thanks variously to suit the occasion, one may assume the early use of some such benedictory formula as "Iccitaṃ patthitaṃ..." quoted above (p.293).

1. A.N. III 194.

2. Rarer forms parallel to anumodana (neuter) are anumodanā (feminine) and anumodaniya (neuter),

3. e.g. DN.II 88, where the Buddha recites some verses.

4. Vin. II. 212.

The modern uses of patti and pattānumodanā appear in the commentatorial stratum of Pali literature. I shall present passages in what seem to me to be the doctrinal and linguistic order of evolution. In a simple Jātaka story the Bodhisattva gives leftover food to fish in a river, and gives the merit for it to the river goddess. Here the word patti means "the giving of the merit gained by a gift to someone else". It involves a particular kind of dakkhinā ("religious gift"), on making which the donor wishes that someone else should get the credit for it. Prima facie this runs clean counter to karma theory, but we are not here dealing with a type of literature which worries about such doctrinal niceties. The river goddess receives the merit with thanks. The relevant passage reads:¹ Bodhisatto atirekabhattaṃ gaṅgāya macchānaṃ datvā, nadīdevatāya pattiṃ adāsi, devatā pattiṃ anumoditvā...

"The Bodhisattva, having given the leftovers to fish in the river, gave the merit for the gift to the river-divinity, and the divinity, having received the merit with thanks..." This is a paraphrase of the following verse² : macchānaṃ bhojanaṃ datvā mama dakkhinaṃ ādisi "Having given food to the fish I gave the gift..." The verses of this book are believed to be much older than the prose. Note that the word dakkhinā is used in the verse where patti appears in the prose; the verse uses a word which normally means the gift itself to mean the

1. J. II. 423.

2. J. II. 425.

merit gained by the gift. That the two should be separable, an idea veiled by this proleptic usage, is the decisive break with the original doctrine.

The passage just quoted can of course be rationalized by modern doctrine, as explained above, by talking only of the good intentions of both parties concerned. This fits the situation well enough: the Bodhisattva wants to benefit both the fish and the river deity. This explanation becomes more strained in our next example, in which the merit of a gift is given retrospectively. In this Jātaka¹ the Bodhisattva, born as a brahmin merchant, has gained merit by feeding a pratyeka-buddha; he is shipwrecked, and while swimming in the sea with an attendant is picked up by a deity whose duty it is to protect virtuous men in misfortune; she did not notice the attendant, so "the brahmin gave him the merit of his good deed, and he received it gratefully" (brāhmaṇo attanā katakalyāṇato tassa pattiṃ adāsi, so anumodi) and was picked up.² Here we are very close to the idea of a fund of merit, like a bank account, to be drawn on at will. I stress that even this passage can be rationalized by reference to the doctrine of intention; but the more obvious interpretation of the passage would be to regard merit as a kind of spiritual money. And a characteristic of money is that when you have used it you no longer have it.

The equation of merit with money becomes virtually explicit in the above-quoted story from the commentary to the Dhammapada about the two brothers and the sugar-cane. When the younger

1. J. IV. 15-22.

2. J. IV. 21.

brother feeds the pratyekabuddha sugar-cane from his brother's field, he thinks, "If my elder brother demands the price [of the cane] I shall give him the price, if the merit I shall give the merit" (sace me jetṭhabhātiko mūlam āharāpessati mūlam dassāmi sace pattim āharāpessati pattim dassāmi)¹. Of course this again is not a doctrinal treatise; but it is clear that the merit and the money are on an equal footing, and that the giving of the merit will have nothing to do with benevolence or purity of thoughts. Here the incongruity of the transaction with doctrine is not confined to the affective, and reaches the cognitive level.

Having traced thus far the evolution of patti, let us turn to the evolution of anumodana. So far the verb anumodati has only been used of receiving something offered, so that it has involved thanking for something, not just rejoicing at it. There is nothing especially meritorious about thanking someone for a gift; rejoicing at their merit, however, is a good psychological state, and thus meritorious. In our next example it is not yet clear whether the merit was offered or not, though I think the latter. Here² a monk talking to a preta says, "You never gave anyone a gift with your own hands, but rejoicing at the gifts of others (parassa dānaṃ anumodamāno) stretched out your hand and spoke." However, by this means the preta had acquired enough merit to be reborn in comfort.

1. Dh.A. IV. 200.

2. Petavatthu 2.9.20.

In the next stage a man rejoices (anumodati) at merit, not merely without being offered it, but without being present. He merely hears that there is going to be a dānē and expresses his joy. This^{is} the modern doctrinal position.

Finally let me quote from a late commentary a passage in which both patti and anumodana occur. The words, though purporting to describe Visākhā and her friends after Visākhā has built a vihāra for the Sangha, could, translated into Sinhalese, be an exact transcription of modern procedure. Visākhā says to her companions,¹ "The merit I have earned, rejoice at it, I give you the gift of this merit."² With gladly trusting minds they all rejoiced. 'Oh, it is good, oh, it is good.' One good lady who was there concentrated especially on that gift of merit. Soon after she died and was reborn in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three." (Yaṃ mayā puññaṃ pasutaṃ, taṃ anumodatha, pattidānaṃ vo dammī ti. Aho sādhu aho sādhu ti pasannacittā sabbā pi anumodimsu. Tattha aññatarā upāsikā pi visesato taṃ pattidānaṃ manasā akāsi.) This anumodanā of hers she describes³ as a "pure rejoicing" (suddh' anumodanā) and hence truly meritorious. (This is in the canonical text, not merely the commentary.) Though in this case the merit was offered, that "rejoicing" and not "thanking" is the appropriate translation is clear both from this

1. Vv. A. 188.

2. The translation cannot convey the full ambiguity of patti, discussed in my text.

3. Vv. A. 189 = Vv. 44.9 (p.40).

passage and from the two previous passages cited.

Having reached the modern interpretation of anumodana, let us, before summing up the evolution we have traced and attempting to account for it, look at what happens today.

Merit is typically transferred after a dānē. The donor (dāyaka) presents food (i.e. a dānē) to the monk, who then recites the Pali verse Iccitaṃ patthitaṃ etc. quoted above, followed by a long formula in highly Sanskritized Sinhalese prose, telling the donor to transfer the merit to the gods. This the donor does, either by reciting the following Pali verse or by giving his assent ("Sādhu sādhu") when it is recited by a monk.

Ākāsaṭṭhā ca bhumaṭṭhā devā nāgā mahiddhikā
Puññaṃ taṃ anumoditvā ciraṃ rakkhantu sāsanaṃ.

May air-dwelling gods and ground-dwelling gods, nāgas of great power, having rejoiced at the merit, long protect the Teaching.

The verse may be repeated, with "me" substituted for "the Teaching".

What the monk recites is the anumodana. However, according to modern doctrine it is not he who anumodati, rejoices, but the gods - the third parties. We thus get the following table, which I owe to a conversation with the Rev. Rahula. In the table the three participants (or groups of participants) are on the left: in the centre are the actions they are performing in Pali, Sinhalese, and a literal English translation; on the right is the type of good deed (according to the Pali list of the good deeds) which the action represents. The lines from top to bottom are in chronological sequence.

Donor	deti	denavā	gives	dāna
Monk	anumodāpeti	anumōdan karavanavā	causes to cause to rejoice	desanā
Donor	anumodeti	anumōdan karanavā	causes to rejoice	patti
Gods	anumodanti	anumōdan venavā	rejoice	pattanumo- danā

The Pali alone suffices to show that something has got twisted up here. In fact the double causative form anumodāpeti is not in the dictionaries, and the plain causative anumodeti is cited only once,¹ in the quite different meaning "get the approval of".

The popular understanding of what goes on - which I might also call the common sense view - is rather different. It also corresponds to the historical view. The monk is understood to be saying "Thank you", as indeed he was by original doctrine. The point of this is to make the donor feel joy (prītiya) - an important matter to which we shall return in the next chapter, but not here relevant. The donor is then understood to be giving the gods his merit as a quid pro quo, as if he were buying their protection for cash. But this latter assumption, that the gods are being paid in spiritual currency for concrete benefits, was never expressed to me. It is true not on the cognitive but on the affective level.

What we have here is a correspondence between affective

1. Paramatthadīpanī VI (Therīgāthā Aṭṭhakathā), 201 1 9. Even this is uncertain - there is a variant reading anumānetvā

religion and an early behavioural deviation, appearing in Buddhist stories but never explicitly accepted by doctrine; doctrine has then made a come-back and harmonized practice with canonical theory, though not without becoming exceedingly tortuous (and philologically barbarous). The stages through which behaviour evolved have been traced above; the behaviour represented in passages dealing with patti represent gradual deviation from doctrinal orthodoxy, while the changed meanings of anumodana and its verbs represent the rationalizations of doctrine to accommodate the behavioural deviations. On the behavioural level all the three passages first quoted for patti (pp. 304-6) represent someone's giving their merit to another person, and that person's saying thank-you. As the idea that one can give away merit contradicts a fundamental doctrine, this clear implication has to be explained away, which is done, most ingeniously, by changing the meaning of anumodati. Although I know of no passage which is quite explicit on the point, the identity of the last passage quoted with modern practice strongly suggests that the modern doctrine too had been evolved by the time it was written. For this it is significant that the good lady attributes her rebirth in heaven to the purity of her rejoicing (anumodana). This comes not in the commentary but in a canonical text, albeit a late one, the Vimānavatthu. The entire evolution of doctrine and behaviour with which we are concerned therefore took place, in all probability, within what for the purposes of this work I am calling the ancient

period; and what I have called the "modern" doctrine, though clearly different from the original doctrine, may be as much as two thousand years old.

How the doctrine of patti evolved in logical terms I have suggested by the order in which I ranged my examples. I make no claim that the passages are presented in the historical order in which they were composed; the dating of these texts is utterly uncertain, nor is it necessarily relevant, as when they were composed in their final form they probably utilized older material. Logic does however suggest that the break with karma theory which patti originally represented was first conceived of while a gift was being made in the presence of a third party whom one wished to benefit; retrospection, and the absence of the third party, were probably secondary (later) developments.

Besides the question of how patti developed there is the question of why? It would be possible to answer that man's responsibility for his own fate is an emotional strain too great to bear, and leave it at that; but I think we can be much more specific. I think that patti first arose in connection with the dead, through the wish to help dead relatives by giving them some merit.

Before I describe the ritual at which merit is still transferred to the dead, there is one point to be borne in mind which corroborates my thesis. Were practice completely as modern doctrine would explain it, anyone should be free to rejoice at a meritorious act, and thus gain merit for himself. In

some cases this is so: the villagers could rejoice at the monk's fiftieth birthday celebrations without specific invitation. But in all standardized situations a verse or formula is recited offering the merit to specific benefactors. Why should the Pali verse be recited at the dānē offering the merit to the gods? The doctrinal answer (monk 38) is that one is simply drawing their attention to the merit. The same reason can be given for the less institutionalized practice of carrying round among the laymen present an offering which one is about to make to the Buddha or the Sangha. The laymen fold their hands, touch or make to touch the offering with their fingertips, and then raise their hands to their foreheads in the gesture of worship. The person who is physically making the offering is drawing the attention of the others to his act of merit, and their gestures symbolize their participation. In this case the doctrinal rationale fits. It does not however adequately explain what goes on at the ritual for the dead, and the old commentary makes clear why this should be so.

The rituals for the dead to which I refer would on a cross-cultural basis be called funeral feasts. This illustrates the aptitude of Buddhism for giving new meaning to old practices. It is customary to feed monks, if possible in one's home, at certain fixed intervals of time after the death of a relative. The number and size of such dānēs depends mainly on the wealth and social status of the family; however, a dānē on the seventh day after the death is obligatory, and one three months after

the death is almost equally common, while annual dānēs on the anniversary of the death are very common, especially for dead parents. (This practice is not confined to laymen: the chief monk in Mīgala gives two annual dānēs to commemorate the deaths of his parents, and a third to commemorate the death of the previous incumbent, his father in religion.) All these dānēs given for the dead are called mataka dānē/dāna ('dead' dānē) to distinguish them from jīva dāna, dānēs given by and for the living;¹ but the dānē after seven days is the mataka dānē par excellence. A mataka dānē should properly be sānghika, which means given to Sangha as a body, not to individual monks. The donor of a sānghika dānē must approach a monk (in fact the chief monk at his local temple) and issue an invitation by saying that he wishes to give a sānghika dānē for so and so many monks (at least five), without naming any particular monk he wishes to come. The monk who receives this invitation simply sends along the requisite number. Five is the minimum required for any official act of the Sangha (vinayakama). However, poor people who can afford only the seventh day dānē may even then feed fewer than five monks.

The dānēs for the dead vary in character. The seventh day dānē is a private affair for the family and maybe close friends. It is preceded by a sermon (baṇa) late on the previous evening.²

1. Technically a jīva dāna is a special dānē given when someone expects to die soon; it is described by Dickson, op.cit., pp. 231-2.

2. The Rev. Rahula has told me of a custom in some remote parts of Ceylon which suggests a linkage of exorcism to funeral
(cont. next page)

The three-month dānē (tun māsa dānē) on the other hand is an occasion for conspicuous consumption, and is usually preceded by pirit, to which all acquaintances are invited - though in the village explicit invitation is generally unnecessary. The annual dānē lies somewhere between these two. However, at mataka dānēs the ritual for transferring merit to the dead is the same, and takes place after the mid-day meal (daval dānē) which closes the whole pinkama, even if monks are also fed on the previous evening and at breakfast-time.

The meal is offered to the Sangha with the usual Pali sentence, repeated three times:

Inaṃ bhikkhaṃ bhikkhusaṃghassa demi

I give this alms-food to the community of monks.

When the monks have eaten (and, usually, been offered "requisites" (pirikara), objects they are allowed to own such as pillow-slips) a small bowl or dish and a pitcher of water are set before them and the immediate relatives of the dead man come to the front. Everyone assumes a reverent posture and the head of the household slowly pours the water into the dish till it overflows, while the monks intone in unison:

Yathā vārivahā pūrā paripūrenti sāgaraṃ

(Cont.) feast. A monk will come to deliver the sermon in the evening, and then, on the pretext that it is too much trouble to return to the monastery after dark when he has to come back for the dānē the next morning, will spend the night in the bed of the dead man.

Evam eva ito dinnam petānam upakappati.¹

As the full water-bearing [rivers] fill the ocean, so indeed does what is given here benefit the dead (preta).

Unname udakam vaṭṭam yathā ninnaṃ pavattati

Evam eva ito dinnam petānam upakappati.²

As water rained on a height reaches the low land, so indeed does what is given here benefit the dead (preta).

When the water has overflowed the monks stop chanting and everyone says "Sā". The proceedings conclude with a short sermon on transitoriness (anityatā) to console the mourners, at the end of which, instead of the general formula transferring merit to the gods given above, the householder says (perhaps on prompting from a monk),

Idam me³ ñātīnam hotu. Sukhitā hontu ñātayo.

May this be for my relatives. May my relatives be happy.

The doctrinal explanation of all this is rather complicated. It was explained thus by monk 38. The death is primarily an occasion for doing merit (pina) oneself; secondarily for offering it in case the dead man is expecting it. He can however only rejoice and benefit from the merit if reborn as a perēta, because

1. My edition of Bauddha Adahilla has upakappatu "may it benefit". I emend on the authority of the Rev. Rahula and the PTS text of the Petavatthu.

2. Ibid.

3. Thus Bauddha Adahilla. The PTS text has yo for me; the meaning is unaffected, as yo agrees with ñātīnam.

if he is higher than that he does not need the merit, if he is lower, in hell (apāya), he cannot get it. [There is in fact a further refinement: only the top class of prēta, "those who live on merit given by others" (paradattopajīvin) are able to sympathize with the merit of others.] But this does not mean, he said, that the relatives giving the dānē assume that the dead man is now a prēta, for if we pay a call we take food along as a gift, but if the person is out we eat it ourselves; similarly, the pinkama earns merit for the living whatever the fate of the dead. The origin of the custom of offering it to the dead is this, he said. Once Bimbisāra gave the Buddha a dānē, and his ancestors, who were prētayō, came to see it. He offered them no pin; so they were sorely disappointed. In the night there was a great noise round his palace, so next morning he went to the Buddha and asked if this boded ill for himself or his kingdom. The Buddha said not so, but explained what had happened. So to remedy his oversight Bimbisāra gave him a dānē that day too, and offered the pin to the prētayō. My informant added that to offer pin one has really to think of offering it while doing it - a mere form of words, or afterthought, will not do.

When introducing the prētas in chapter 4 I dwelt on their ambiguous status throughout the recorded history of Buddhism, and the above statement illustrates this very well. It contains small but telling points of doctrinal inconsistency: it is not clear why prētas who have already come to the dānē (as in the story of Bimbisāra) should be unable to rejoice at the merit

unless it is specifically offered; nor why gods, who in other contexts are always offered merit, are in this context said not to need it. However the latter discrepancy can be removed by saying that while the gods are in no hurry for the merit the pretas need it urgently, because they are suffering in a state of woe, from which only pattānumodana can relieve them, because they have little or no opportunity for performing meritorious actions independently. Remember moreover that length of life is one of the things that decreases as one goes down the cosmic scale; the Rev. Rahula has told me of a belief that pretas live only seven days, which makes it essential to catch them at that point before they sink further. He very plausibly connects this with a belief found in other schools of Buddhism (Mahāyāna and Sarvāstivāda) in an "in-between state" (antarābhava) lasting seven days; during this period the person is suspended between death and rebirth, and any improvement in karma will of course make the next birth a better one. I must stress that this antarābhava is not a Theravāda belief; it goes towards explaining the seven days dānē on the historical, not on the doctrinal level. From this historical angle it is also interesting to notice that in the Pali words just quoted the donor transfers merit to all his relatives, not just the recently dead man, thus reminding us of Hindu offerings to ancestors (pitaras).

The mataka dānē, though not quite explicitly described, is canonical in Theravāda Buddhism. A canonical book, the Petavatthu, consists of poems concerning pretas. The three

verses cited above come from a poem¹ entitled the Nātidhamma Sutta ("The Sutta of behaviour due to relatives")² which also occurs under the title, taken from the first words, of Tirokuḍḍa Sutta as the seventh item in the nine-item canonical chrestomathy, the Khuddakapāṭha. Here is Bhikkhu Nānamoli's translation of the whole poem.

1. Without the walls they stand and wait,
And at the junctions and road-forks;
Returning to their erstwhile homes,
They wait beside the jambs of gates.
2. But when a rich feast is set out
With food and drink of every kind,
The fact that no man does recall
These creatures stems from their past acts.
3. So they who are compassionate
At heart do give for relatives
Such drink and food as may be pure
And good and fitting at these times:
4. 'Then let this be for relatives;
'May relatives have happiness.'
These ghosts of the departed kin
Foregathered and assembled there
5. Will eagerly their blessing give
For (plentiful) rich food and drink:
'So may our relatives live long,
'Owing to whom we have this gain;
6. 'For honour to us has been done,
'No giver ever lacked the fruit.'
Now there is never ploughing there,
Nor any cattle-herding found,
7. Nor merchandizing just the same,
Nor bartering for coin of gold:
The ghosts of the departed kin
Live there on giving given here;
8. As water showered on the hill
Flows down to reach the hollow vale,
So giving given here can serve
The ghosts of the departed kin.

1. Dickson reports (p.234) that the monk reads out the whole poem in Sinhalese translation. I witnessed several mataka dānēs but never came across this.

2. Petav. I.5)

9. As river-beds when full can bear
The water down to fill the sea,
So giving given here can serve
The ghosts of the departed kin.
10. 'He gave to me, he worked for me,
'He was my kin, friend, intimate'.
Give gifts, then, for departed ones,
Recalling what they used to do.
11. No weeping, nor yet sorrowing,
Nor any kind of mourning, aids
Departed Ones, whose kin remain
(Unhelpful to them acting) thus.
12. But when this offering is given
Well placed in the Community
For them, then it can serve them long
In future and at once as well.
13. The True Idea for relatives has thus been shown,
And how high honour to departed ones is done,
And how the bhikkhus can be given strength as well,
And how great merit can be stored away by you.¹

The verses cited above were, in order, the ninth, eighth and first half of the fourth. As Stede has remarked,² verses 11 and 12 (his 10 and 11) look like an addition. Moreover, till verse 12 there is no trace of Buddhism; dead relatives are to get food and drink, and benefit their donors in return. This is still a funeral feast. Not till the end is there mention of the Sangha or of merit, and they are not well integrated. In the context of the poem the "this" which is given to the relative in verse 4 line 1 is food and drink; only in the ritual as now performed and explained is it merit, or rather the chance to rejoice at merit³. It is this rather complicated explanation which has

1. Minor Readings and Illustrations, Luzac, London 1960, pp. 7-8

2. Wilhelm Stede, Die Gespenstergeschichten des Petavatthu, Harrassowitz, Leipzig 1914, p.63.

3. The question whether the pretas could actually eat the food was controversial in ancient times. In Nyanaponika's

circumvented a doctrinal incongruity which originally must have been glaring.

The story of the origin of the mataka dānē told me by monk 38 is taken from the commentary on this poem, Buddhaghosa's Paramatthajotikā. In the commentary the thing offered is still explained as the food etc., not the merit; but this is perhaps not an important point, as the general interpretation is clearly the modern one: the king gives a dānē to the Buddha and dedicates it (uddisati) to the pretas. More important is the story of this event given in the commentary to the Dhammapada.¹ The Buddha explained to Bimbisāra that after he had given the first feast the pretas had made a row because "when you gave the food they did not get the merit" (dāne dinne pattiṃ alabhamānā). When Bimbisāra therefore fed the Buddha the next day, "he gave the merit, saying 'Sir, may the divine food and drink from here accrue to those pretas.'" (Bhante, ito tesam petānaṃ dibbannapānaṃ sampajjatū ti pattiṃ adāsi). They get the food, then show themselves to the king naked. The king therefore gives robes (cīvarāni) the next day to the Buddha and his disciples, and the pretas

1. Dh.A.I. 103-4.

(cont. from previous page)

summary of the Kathāvatthu (Nyanaponika, p.71) question 69 is, "Can alms which are given here be enjoyed by beings elsewhere (e.g., by the...Petas)?" and we are told that two sects, the Rājagirikas and Siddhatthikas, think they can, but that Theravādins hold that "the mind of the Petas might be favourably influenced, but the material food cannot be enjoyed by them." This would seem to contradict the Theravādin commentaries quoted in my text, though they are presumably many centuries younger than the Kathāvatthu. The complete victory of orthodoxy is more recent.

accordingly are clothed in heavenly garments. At this they leave the condition of preta (petattabhāva) and become gods (dibbattabhāva). "The teacher, giving thanks, used the words of thanks. 'Outside the walls they stand' etc." (Satthā anumodanaṃ karonto: tirokuḍḍesu tiṭṭhantīti tirokuḍḍānumodanaṃ akāsi.)

In this poem which the Buddha is then said to have recited, the verb anumodati is used of the pretas (poorly translated by Nāṇamoli, "their blessing give"). If this is compared to the last line just quoted it will be seen that the confusion about the use of anumodana is already present: both the receiver of the food and the third parties are said to do it. Moreover, in this account the spirits are getting not mere merit, but more tangible benefits - food and clothes.

The first story quoted in this section, that of the Bodhisattva^{ttv} feeding the fish, already suggested that originally merit was only given to someone present to receive it. In most contexts reinterpretation has rendered this idea obsolete. But in the context of the funeral feast this element, the obligation to offer the merit before it can be taken, has survived. Moreover, I think that it is here that the doctrine of patti originates. Indians, used to offering funeral feasts to their ancestors (pitaras), went on doing so;¹ this had to be explained

1. Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf describes how Chetris, a high Hindu caste in Nepal, can gain merit by having brahmins recite sacred texts for a week (saptāha). "If performed as a memorial rite the saptāha involves the gift of an entire set of household goods to the senior Brahman priest, and it

away by saying that the living could only supply the dead with food which they had not deserved by their own conduct through the mechanism of merit transference. It is no accident that the concepts of patti and pattanumodanā occur with particular frequency in the Petavatthu and Vimānavatthu and their commentaries. This is not because those works are comparatively late (which is uncertain), but because theirs is the context in which these concepts must have originated.

In the mataka dānē we encounter an especially striking case of incongruence between the cognitive and the affective - a very wide gap between the explanation of the ritual and what the chief participants feel about it. It is true no doubt that they are not calculating whether the dead person has been reborn as a paradattopajīvin preta so that he can benefit from their actions, but the reason is not one of subtle doctrine. They feel emotionally that they owe this ceremony to the dead man and that he will benefit from it; they would act in a very similar way without the doctrines to which they subscribe. Even the overflowing water may have been reinterpreted. The pouring of water in Sinhalese ritual frequently signalizes a solemn act (e.g. marriage);

(Cont.) is popular belief that as a result of this donation corresponding objects of personal use will be available to the departed for his life in the next world. The fact that such an idea is inconsistent with the belief in the immediate reincarnation of every human being in a shape conditioned by his earlier deeds does not seem to disturb the Chetris, who like other Hindus see nothing incongruous in the holding of apparently inconsistent views. "Morals and Merit, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London 1967, p.168.

but here it seems most relevant to recall the libations poured to the Manes in other, older cultures.

The water-pouring ritual just described takes place at the funeral (avamangalya) itself. When the coffin has been placed in the pyre or over the grave, according to whether the body is to be cremated or buried, a white cloth is laid on it. One of the monks present - there may be any number, down to one - gives the three refuges and the five precepts as usual; then everyone present repeats three times after the monk,

Imaṃ matakavatthaṃ bhikkhusanghassa demi

I give this corpse-clothing to the Sangha
of monks.

At this the monks spread the cloth out across the coffin, and chant a Pali stanza:

Aniccā vata saṅkhārā uppāda-vaya-dhammino,

Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti, tesaṃ vūpasamo sukho.

Impermanent indeed are compounded things, whose nature is to arise and pass away; having arisen they are destroyed; their being stilled is pleasant.

This couplet is supposed to have been recited by Śakra at the death of the Buddha¹: The monks then pick up the cloth, symbolically appropriating it, and someone takes it away. The water is then poured by a near relation as at a dānē, the monks reciting the same verses; as it is an outdoor ceremony the water is sometimes that of a young coconut, which is split at the appropriate moment. A monk then preaches. At a village funeral

which I witnessed the monks then left, before the coffin was lowered into the grave, perhaps to avoid being present during the lamentations which naturally accompany the body's final disappearance.

The cloth given to the monks is known as pāṃsukūla (literally "dust-cloth"), a name which has also been extended to the ceremony of giving it. Pāṃsukūla is the name of the first of the classical list of thirteen ascetic practices (dhutanga), optional for monks who wished to display more than the usual ascetic rigour.¹ A pāṃsukūla monk dresses only in rags picked up at cemeteries. The modern pāṃsukūla ceremony is a curious fusion of this with a dānē. By picking up the cloth from the coffin the monk is symbolically taking the winding sheet, or some other item of the corpse's clothing, and thus conforming to the letter of the pāṃsukūla practice. On the other hand the dead man's next of kin are giving the cloth, which therefore is the best new white cloth, to enhance the value of the gift; they have made the funeral an occasion for transferring the merit earned by a gift to the Sangha, thus destroying the spirit of the pāṃsukūla idea so that the original meaning of the term has been completely lost.

The doctrines discussed in this chapter avoid serious inconsistency with orthodoxy. Though some of them have been described as "modern" they are so only in relation to the Four

1. For the classical account of the pāṃsukūla dhutanga (followed by the other dhutangas) see Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga, book II

Nikāyas; in simple chronological terms they are ancient. The latter and more important doctrines discussed are rationalizations, or if you will Buddhizations, of practices (the dying wish, the mataka dānē) which afford some psychological relief from the oppressive doctrine of man's total responsibility for his own fate. Beliefs which these practices imply have never entered the mainstream of Theravāda Buddhism: the cognitive position has been maintained with remarkable tenacity. The canonical theory of karma survives intact - cognitively; affectively its rigour is sometimes avoided.

One which a westerner usually comes across is the noble eight-fold path, for it is one of the four noble truths and occurs in the Buddha's first sermon. But when a villager is asked about kareva he will rarely volunteer information on the eight-fold path, and it is comparatively little known. The reader will recall that the eight factors have been grouped from the beginning into morality (sīla), concentration (samādhi) and wisdom (paññā). Although the impediments to lay meditation are practical, not doctrinal, they are, or are considered to be, so great that very few laymen in traditional Ceylon meditate before old age. Meditation and the peculiar prize, airiyā, will concern us in the next chapter: they are the sphere of what Weber called virtuous religion. The religious concerns of the normal Buddhist layman are centred on morality and merit-making (piyaka), which aim at a good rebirth, but rebirth goes on ceaselessly. To see merit-making and meditation as a clear dichotomy, as has been done in sociological works, I do not find satisfactory in terms of doctrine or of analysis.

but as a principle of arrangement of the material, this chapter will be concerned with the merit-making.

Chapter 6

The ways in which merit can be made are listed as the ten good deeds.

THE ETHIC OF INTENTION

In the second chapter were listed the five precepts (pan sil), the ten good deeds (dasa kusala karma) and the noble eight-fold path (ārya aṣṭāṅgika mārgaya), three different ways of formulating the conduct expected of a Buddhist. How do these three formulations relate to one another? The first one which a westerner usually comes across is the noble eight-fold path, for it is one of the four noble truths and occurs in the Buddha's first sermon; but when a villager is asked about karmaya he will rarely volunteer information on the eight-fold path, and it is comparatively little known. The reader will recall that its eight factors have been grouped from the beginning into morality (sīla), concentration (samādhi) and wisdom (paññā). Although the impediments to lay meditation are practical, not doctrinal, they are, or are considered to be, so great that very few laymen in traditional Ceylon meditate before old age. Meditation and its peculiar prize, nirvāna, will concern us in the next chapter; they are the sphere of what Weber called virtuoso religion. The religious concerns of the normal Buddhist layman are centred on morality and merit-making (pinkam), which aim at a good rebirth, but rebirth nonetheless. To see merit-making and meditation as a clear dichotomy, as has been done in sociological works, I do not find satisfactory in terms of doctrine or of analysis,

but as a principle of arrangement it is convenient: this chapter will be concerned principally with merit-making.

The ways in which merit can be made are listed as the ten good deeds. We notice immediately that the third of them is bhavaṇā, meditation, which shows the difficulty of dichotomizing between merit-making and meditation if we are to use the Buddhists' own terms. The second of them is morality; so what is the relation of morality to merit-making? By śīla is meant the five precepts, which should be called the five abstentions, and these are negative. They are undertakings to abstain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and drinking intoxicants. From the point of view of the individual, to keep to these undertakings is a sufficient basis, as expressed in the eight-fold path, for meditation and for the wisdom which attains nirvāṇa. Cognitively they are quite sufficient - but effectively perhaps they suffice only for the virtuoso, if even for him. A negative formulation sounds too cold-blooded and requires some supplement. The supplement can come from other canonical formulations, such as the four holy states (brahmavihāra) of loving-kindness (mettā), compassion (karuṇā), sympathetic joy (muditā) and equanimity (upekkhā); or simply from such an inclusive list as the ten good deeds, which present a Buddhist's ideal behaviour - I hesitate to use the word "duty" in the context of Buddhism, which says "take it or leave it" - in a positive form. Moreover, the five precepts seem to concern a man in isolation; this is all very well for the virtuoso or the recluse, but an

ordinary layman misses in them any allusion to such things as his interaction with the Sangha which is his contact with organized religion. A final shortcoming of the five precepts from a practical point of view is that it is virtually impossible to keep to them, so if there is no easier goal the outlook becomes depressing. The ten good deeds make the five precepts but one item in a list; if you fail to abstain from all sin you can at least compensate yourself by doing good in other directions. Weber called the five precepts an "insufficiency ethic for the weak".¹ It is quite true that Buddhism recognizes different stages of development, at which a man can legitimately make different demands of himself. These different levels of demand were summarized in chapter 2. A monk has to do more than keep the five precepts; put in general terms, meditation and wisdom are necessary to attain the highest goal, but are expected of only a few people. Yet to call the five precepts an "insufficiency" ethic seems to indicate a value judgment that they are rather paltry stuff. On the contrary, being absolutes they are extraordinarily demanding. I am not alluding merely to the fact that nearly everyone lies. Even the first precept, not to take life, is necessarily broken by any agriculturalist, and the Sinhalese villagers are vividly aware of the fact that they are sinners (pavkārāyō).

The five precepts, preceded by the three refuges, are taken so frequently that they may be called the functional

1. Max Weber, The Religion of India, trans. Gerth and Martindale, Free Press, New York 1958, p. 215.

To sum up, the five precepts are negative - to do no equivalent of the Lord's Prayer. They are repeated after a evil - while the ten good deeds are positive - to do good. monk at the beginning of all pinkam and again at odd moments For the Christian the latter is necessary for salvation: the throughout. This raises the question in the minds of a the Buddhist only the former is absolutely required, but some spectator whether their recitation has not lost its meaning. the emotional needs of the individual and the practical needs Plainly any religious community anywhere in the world has not of society seem better answered by the latter, broader formula- always got its mind on the texts it repeats; but how far has tion. I speak here only of ethical actions in the world of this gone? One monk (36) told me that one always had the actions affecting others, and disregard other responsibilities duty to keep the five precepts, whether one recited them or behaviour, notably faith (for the Christian) and meditation not; but would this be clear to ordinary villagers? I (for the Buddhist), to both of which I shall refer. accompanied a group of some sixty villagers from Mīgala on a I do not propose to deal here with all the ten good deeds, pilgrimage to climb Adam's Peak. At frequent intervals in for some are of far less importance than others, nor do I have our progress we repeated the five precepts after a dasa sil systematic material on all of them. In my interviews I was upāsikā, the person of highest religious status present. On mainly concerned to find out whether Buddhism was truly an the way back, being tired and impatient, I remarked to someone ethic of intention, or an ethic of works - what I shall call at a halt for such a recitation that I was not going to join the problem of intention. The other problem which interested in this time, because my last recitation of the five precepts me, rather less easy to solve, was the problem of ethics, had been so recent that I could not yet have broken them even mentioned in my introduction: what are felt to be Buddhist had I wanted to. My remarks were passed on and discussed, and values, and to what extent are they adhered to in action? to my surprise it was soon decided - without any counter- argument - that I was right and another recitation would be of which I know was conducted by Obeyesekere and his research pointless. The five precepts were not taken again for the assistants in a remote Kandyan village. They asked twenty- rest of the trip. two adults to recite the five precepts (in Pali, of course); If anything deserves the name of an insufficiency ethic - all but one were able to do so. The informants who could a term I had rather avoid - it is the list of the ten good deeds. recite the precepts were then asked for the meaning of each To perfect them all is tantamount to attaining nirvāṇa, but at precept. The number who were able to assign meanings to the least one can make measurable progress by positive acts; unlike undertakings they had given in Pali can be tabulated thus: the black and white of the five precepts, they allow of shades of grey.

To sum up, the five precepts are negative - to do no evil - while the ten good deeds are positive - to do good. For the Christian the latter is necessary for salvation; for the Buddhist only the former is absolutely required, but both the emotional needs of the individual and the practical needs of society seem better answered by the latter, broader formulation. I speak here only of ethical actions in the sense of actions affecting others, and disregard other recommended behaviour, notably faith (for the Christian) and meditation (for the Buddhist), to both of which I shall return.

I do not propose to deal here with all the ten good deeds, for some are of far less importance than others, nor do I have systematic material on all of them. In my interviews I was mainly concerned to find out whether Buddhism was truly an ethic of intention, or an ethic of works - what I shall call the problem of intention. The other problem which interested me, rather less easy to solve, was the problem of ethos, mentioned in my introduction: what are felt to be Buddhist values, and to what extent are they adhered to in action?

The only systematic investigation of the latter problem of which I know was conducted by Obeyesekere and his research assistants in a remote Kandyan village. They asked twenty-two adults to recite the five precepts (in Pali, of course); all but one were able to do so. The informants who could recite the precepts were then asked for the meaning of each precept. The number who were able to assign meanings to the undertakings they had given in Pali can be tabulated thus:

can answer that strictly they are speaking to their audience, not translating precepts; but I am not sure that is the impression that they leave the larger with, and I strongly

Number of precepts understood	By how many people
5	5
4	3
3	5
2	0
1	2
0	6
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In Obeyesekere's investigation the three precepts most often spontaneously elicited were those against killing, lying and drinking. The precepts recited were thus understood about half the time. However, this question turned out to be of limited significance, a test rather of linguistic than of ethical knowledge; for when questioned in a different context everyone suggested that they may have been surprised at the results. Obeyesekere's informants seem to have suggested that they were more guilty than the others. My own unsystematic observations would entirely support these findings; the five precepts are almost universally known by rote, and their meanings also are generally known and understood, though the specific meanings of the Pali words are often not known - but this knowledge is on the increase because of daham pāsāl (Sunday schools) and religious instruction in state schools.

Before considering specific precepts a remark concerning their form may be in place. Obeyesekere has been at pains to stress, in accordance with Buddhist tradition, that the five precepts are not commands like the Hebrew "Thou shalt not", but undertakings in the first person. Cognitively this is indeed a crucial point. Yet even here I doubt whether doctrine matches emotional reality. When monks in sermons allude to the precepts, as they very often do, they express them in the form of negative commands, e.g. "Do not kill" (maranta epā). They

can answer that strictly they are speaking to their audience, not translating the precepts; but I do not think that is the impression that they leave the layman with, and I strongly suspect, though he does not say so, that Obeyesekere elicited from his informants the meanings of the precepts expressed not as undertakings but as prohibitions.

In Obeyesekere's investigation the three precepts most often spontaneously elicited were those against sexual misconduct, lying and drinking. Why the first two, against killing and stealing, should be less cited is mysterious; Obeyesekere suggests that they may have been suppressed as associated with greater guilt than the others. However I doubt whether the frequency of mention of the precepts differed sufficiently in such a small sample to be statistically significant.

Obeyesekere's informants seem to have equated sin (pav) with transgression against the letter of a precept. At first sight this looks like subscription to an ethic of works, not of intention; but it turns out that some things were said to be sins but nevertheless "all right". To explain this we must take a closer look at his data on the interpretation of the precepts.

The precepts against killing and stealing are unambiguous and their interpretation was not probed. Even a professional hunter said killing was always a sin. The precept against sexual misconduct (kāmesu micchācāra) has been variously interpreted in different Buddhist societies, which is quite in keeping with both its letter and its spirit. Everyone asked

agreed that adultery was a sin (pav), though some said that it was much less sinful if committed with the knowledge of the spouse. Some said that premarital intercourse was a sin, though most of these added that it was not a sin if the parties subsequently married. A few said that adultery in secret was a sin but all right, and the same was said of premarital intercourse. One man, who admitted he was an adulterer, said adultery was a sin but all right. He went on to say of another man that he claimed to be a good Buddhist because he observed the five precepts, but he practised anal intercourse with his wife and therefore was observing the letter but not the spirit - "a 'good Buddhist' but a sodomist" (Obeyesekere's report of wrong the statement). Lying is sin, as it is against the fourth precept. Asked whether they would lie in court to protect a kinsman accused of murder some said that under those circumstances it would not be sin, others that it would be a sin but they would do it. Of the fifth precept against alcohol there was a more flexible interpretation: seven said that to take alcohol was always a sin; seven that it might be taken without sin for medicinal purposes; six that it was not a sin taken in moderation.

As the Pali words of the fifth precept can be taken to mean abstention from strong drinks which are the occasion of intoxication and carelessness or when they are the occasion for intoxication and carelessness I would not like to say which interpretation of it answers even to the letter of the law, let alone the spirit, so this evidence had best be disregarded. The

case of the man who judged anal intercourse permissible according to the letter of the precept but nevertheless wrong is to some extent a red herring, because I think he misjudged the case: anal intercourse would come under "sexual misconduct" no less surely than adultery if (as in the Sinhalese case) society disapproved of the practice. The quotation was worth including because of the insight it gives into how a villager thinks that other people interpret the precepts. These two cases apart, the problem raised by the (regrettably sparse) data are what is meant by "wrong but all right" (said of secret adultery), and what attitude informs "a sin, but I'll do it" (said of lying to save a kinsman). (In the context I take "wrong" and "sin" to be synonyms, as they would be in Sinhalese (vāradi and pay)). The two statements seem to me to have quite different implications. Secret adultery may be all right because one will get away with it, or because "what the eye doesn't see the heart doesn't grieve over", so nobody is hurt by it. The former reason embodies the prudential attitude to morality, the latter a utilitarian ethic which judges actions solely in terms of their effects on others. It is rather the latter interpretation which seems to fit the case when premarital intercourse is said to be a sin but all right. The latter interpretation is moreover clearly the only one which fits the case of the lie to save a kinsman; here there is clearly added the notion that the morality of an action varies with its context so that literal adherence to moral precepts may not be the most moral course. (I prefer this to talking of "The ends justifying the means", a phrase which may

cover much confusion.) This idea of a higher morality behind the letter of the law is implicit in the whole doctrine of intention, and does not jibe well with the utilitarian ethic which measures an action by its effect on others. To both these ideas we shall revert. First, however, I would like to dispose of the prudential attitude: that the reason for not doing evil is that you might be punished; of which the converse is that the reason for doing good is that you will be rewarded. This prudential attitude is of course compatible with measuring good and evil either by intention or by effect.

The prudential attitude has a long history in Buddhism. It is perhaps implicit in the doctrine of karma, which states that every bad act will automatically be punished and every good act rewarded. A mediaeval Sinhalese poet, Vidāgeṣa Thera, wrote a century of religious stanzas, the Lōvāda saṅgarāva,¹ which is read in the daham pāsala; nearly every one of these stanzas inculcates virtue under the threat of tortures in hell. What is perhaps more surprising is that the prudential attitude is often applied to this life with the mundane air of "Honesty is the best policy". I had a conversation with two monks (38 and 40) which brought this out clearly. They asked me why I thought one should keep the five precepts. When I said that otherwise one would get a bad rebirth they said yes, but what about the results in this life? I suggested remorse, but this was impatiently brushed aside. If one breaks the precepts one will go to prison; if one kills a man one is hanged. I

1. Ed. Guṇadāsa Sōmasiri, Bastian Brothers, Colombo 1955.

protested that for lying one does not go to prison, but one of them pointed out that one does go to prison for perjury, so I failed to make my point. Though this may seem rather simple-minded, let us recall the sermon the Buddha gave to a lay audience on the five advantages of morality.¹ They are: wealth, good repute, self-confidence in public, an untroubled death and rebirth in heaven. The disadvantages of immorality are the converse. The matter well illustrates the Buddhist belief in meeting the audience on their own level. Not only did the Buddha of course elsewhere produce far more elevated ideas on ethical motivation; I also found later that the monk who spoke on hanging held the pure canonical views on the supremacy of intention and the supreme importance of purifying one's thoughts.

In the absence of statistical evidence for Ceylon and indeed of comparative data it would be invidious to attempt an assessment of the extent to which the five precepts are observed. I did not have the impression that killing, stealing, sex crimes, lying or drunkenness were more prevalent than in any other community with which I am acquainted. Statistics do of course exist for serious crimes such as homicide, but these can only constitute a tiny part of the percentage of infringements of the precepts. The homicide rate in Ceylon is notoriously high, but it varies so much between different parts of the island (being quite low in the Central Province) that even this is not a sound basis for generalized judgments. Theft is very much feared by the villagers, as may be the case in all peasant communities;

1. Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, I. 23-24 (DN.II.85-6).

we were constantly being advised to lock up all our possessions, and thieves were spoken of with much vehemence and express disgust. The proximity of Buddhist institutions has no deterrent influence on thieves. One must enter a Buddhist temple barefoot, leaving one's shoes at the entrance; it is notoriously risky to leave shoes unguarded at the entrance to the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy. My own sandals - far too large, one would think, for Sinhalese feet - were abstracted from the entrance to a village temple during a pinkama; after a fruitless search the horror-stricken incumbent confessed to me that he himself had had a pair of new sandals stolen the previous week from his very bedroom in the pansala. I had the impression that sex crimes were infrequent; on the other hand Obeyesekere reported from his remote (and ipso facto untypical) village that nearly all the adult males there had committed adultery. (We already saw that adultery was not very seriously considered by some members of the community.) Lying and drunkenness also occur.

But it will be thought that in one respect the conduct of Sinhalese Buddhists must differ very sharply from that of westerners: in the killing of animals. There is a prevalent misconception in the West that Buddhists are vegetarians. Yet there is no Buddhist country of which this is true on the societal level: vegetarianism is a minority practice freely chosen by individuals, both cleric and lay, much like abstention from alcohol in the West. The Buddha did not forbid meat-eating. In the Vinaya rules monks are forbidden ten kinds of meat, ranging from human flesh to lizards, but none of the creatures normally

consumed are mentioned. The only rule is that one should not have an animal killed for one's meal; but if it is already dead, one may as well eat it. The Buddha himself is often reported as eating meat, and it seems that his last meal was pork.

The result of this tradition is that villagers, especially in isolated communities, occasionally boycott butchers' shops, so that no cattle or goats can be killed in the area; in this way they are directly saving lives. I believe that such boycotts tend to be organized by monks. Mere abstention from meat is however considered useless. Nor must one exaggerate even the reluctance to kill animals. To be a butcher is considered wrong for a Buddhist, and most of the butchers in Ceylon seem to be Muslims. Villagers in my area raised goats which in due course they sold to Muslims. That the Muslims happened to be butchers who then killed the animals they could regard as not their fault; on the other hand I encountered reluctance to admit to the situation and was told that the goats were raised as pets. Once again pay seems to be the literal transgression of the precept but this interpretation does not satisfy the conscience. In remoter areas villagers go hunting, and I am sure they make no secret of it. As they themselves would say, they are forced to it by poverty; the extra twist which they give is that their poverty is due to sin in previous lives, so previous sin produces conditions for further sin, and they are caught in a vicious circle from which only the exceptional person is likely to escape.

Buddh Vegetarianism I found universally admired but rarely

practised. There are moreover degrees of vegetarianism. It is worse to eat beef than other meat (which in practice means chicken or goat-meat), worse to eat meat or fowl (godā mas) than fish (diya mas); eggs seem to be worse than fish but not as bad as meat. A true Buddhist vegetarian eats no eggs; even educated people think that all eggs are fertilized, and when I tried to tell people that a hen could lay without prior assistance from a cockerel, I was never believed, but probably considered crazy. To break an egg is to take life, which means that in one way eggs are worse than any meat, because the "killing" is committed on the spot by the cook. Bareau reports that eggs are not used in monastery kitchens; for similar reasons middle-class urban Buddhists tend to buy "Buddhist eggs", which are already cracked. The hierarchy of value of meats appears to me to relate to the size, value, and apparent closeness to humanity of the animal slain, eggs counting roughly as chickens. This may also be part of the original reason for the special disfavour of beef-eating. In terms of immediate history this attitude is due to cultural contact with the Hindus; in 1815 the British found that among the Kandyans beef-eating was tabu, as it still is among orthodox Hindus. (This does not mean that either in Ceylon or in India beef was never eaten by poor and remote villagers.) Taking a longer historical view, the Hindu tabu on beef-eating may owe something to Buddhist influence, for the Buddha drew attention to the plight of the cow when beef-eating seems to have been general. Explanations given by Buddhists for the dislike of beef-eating, where forthcoming, tend

to be a mixture of the economic (buffaloes are useful) and the moral (cows give us milk, so we should not be so ungrateful as to kill them). (Goat milk is never drunk.) I have even heard the psychological argument that cows, in that they give us milk, are like our mothers. Villagers are well aware however that Buddhists may eat beef but Hindus may not; a lady told me that before visiting a Hindu temple to Kataragama one had to abstain from beef for a week, and ingeniously explained this by saying that Kataragama would be angry because a bull (Nandin) is his father's (Śiva's) mount. In killing smaller animals Buddhist villagers seem to behave much the same as other villagers the world over, and do not display the compunction or squeamishness sometimes found in the urban middle class. I came upon a monk who with the help of the young temple servant (ābittayā) was clearing out a storeroom. A cockroach ran out. "Kill it" (maranṭa) he shouted. The boy however, who was piously minded, swept it over a small precipice and thus saved its life. Monks will also slap at insects in a way scandalous to pious Hindus. Not that they would ever deny this to be a sin - they just don't care that much. The one animal which villagers have great compunction about killing is a cobra; as mentioned in chapter four, there is a belief that the cobra is an animal of special worth and dignity, and to injure one is considered unlucky. Though killing is always a sin, is it equally bad to kill a man and a louse? After all, both are transmigrating beings

who in a few years might change places; on the other hand, a man's life seems intuitively more valuable than that of a louse. As I mentioned in chapter four, there is depicted in a local temple a special hell reserved for people who kill lice; but I think you would have to go a long way to find someone who took this seriously. Monk 24 explained the situation to me: the amount of sin (pava) varies with the intention (cētanāva). It is equally bad to kill an elephant or an ant, a good man or a bad, if the intention is the same; there is a different feeling about it in society, because of the different values of the things killed, but from the religious point of view both are the same (āgama vasen dekama ekayi).

One of the questions I frequently raised in my interviews was the morality of Duṭṭugāmuṇu in making war on the Tamils for the sake of Buddhism. In considering the answers one must bear in mind that in the Mahāvamsa, where the events are recounted, Duṭṭugāmuṇu is presented as the national hero and his actions are justified, so that to condemn him runs counter to tradition and requires an independent mind. Though the answers varied slightly, their general tenor is well illustrated by the reply of the monk (24) just quoted, who said that Duṭṭugāmuṇu's killing of Tamils was sin, but not great, because his main purpose (paramārtha) was not to kill men but to save Buddhism; he did not have full intention to kill. But to say that he will not pay for his sin (ahosi veyi) is wrong. This last point I have discussed in the previous chapter. The rest of the answer, which here concerns us, seems clearly to bring out two points

already evident in Obeyesekere's village material. On the one hand killing is always, intrinsically, pav (thus also e.g. monk 19). On the other hand, what really counts is the intention; Duṭṭugāmuṇu's intention was good (e.g. monk 14), so his sin was "less" (pav aduyi). This latter opinion can also be expressed by saying that his main purpose (paramārtha) was good. One monk (31) actually quoted the Mahāvamsa to the effect that Duṭṭugāmuṇu was told by arhats that it was right for him to fight the war; he thought (monk 31 said) that because of his ultimate purpose he was in the right, though the speaker disagreed with him. However, it is the intention that counts: what Duṭṭugāmuṇu had in mind was not killing men but the raising of religion (āgama nāga hita vīma). The speaker thinks Duṭṭugāmuṇu was right.

This monk was the only one to say that in his opinion Duṭṭugāmuṇu was wrong. Only two monks on the other hand went so far as to say that he did not sin. Most extreme in expression was monk 23, who said that Duṭṭugāmuṇu did not sin in killing the Tamils, as they had wrong views (mithyā drṣṭi) [i.e. were not Buddhists]. It is always wrong to kill good people (silavanta aya), but not wrong to kill in order to save religion; killing in self-defence is also problematic. Though this sounds rather ferocious I should add that this monk seemed a kindly old person who went on to say that one must do one's best to spread loving-kindness (maitrī paturuvaṇṭa): he was however exceptionally unsophisticated. The other monk (2) to say that Duṭṭugāmuṇu did not sin brought the subject up spontaneously; though killing is a sin, he said, if Buddhism is

in danger it is no sin to kill in its defence - as did Duṭṭugāmuṇu.

This last answer exemplifies the ambiguity of the situation. Killing is pay - but sometimes it is not. Plainly the word is being used in two different ways; and these two ways correspond to the formalistic ethic of effect and the ethic of intention. According to doctrine it is only the ultimate purpose which counts, so that the intention must be the yardstick by which to measure right and wrong; but the word pay has come also - perhaps primarily - to mean "sin" in the sense of transgression against the letter of the five precepts. The answers of my informants who merely said that Duṭṭugāmuṇu did "sin" do not therefore reveal whether the speaker thinks Duṭṭugāmuṇu was right or wrong to act as he did. At the time I did not fully realize the ambiguity of the term "pay", so I did not probe more deeply, but to do so would have been very difficult because the double meaning of pay is not explicitly realized by the monks. In fact I think that they would have split about evenly for and against Duṭṭugāmuṇu; but the results would have been tendentious in that without my asking them they would never have considered the matter so deeply. (On the danger of "pistol point" answers see Introduction, pp. 50-51).

Should any distinction between "sin" and doing wrong seem too abstruse an extrapolation from the evidence, perhaps it will appear justified when we turn from the negative to the positive side of ethics. Here the accepted English translations of Buddhist terminology already seem to acknowledge a distinction

between formalistic and intentional ethics, for pin, which is undeniably the exact opposite of pay, is translated not "right" or "good", but "merit", and pinkama, or its equivalents in Sanskrit and Pali, is translated "merit-making". I contend that "merit-making" has formalistic connotations which are in many circumstances quite correct; sometimes, however, the translation is unnecessarily pejorative, and "doing good" or "doing right" would be more apt. Again, according to theory it is only "doing good" - the pure intention - which counts; but in practice the performance of certain prescribed acts seems often to be held - in Buddhism as in other religions - sufficient to ensure rewards. सुखकथेत्य लोकेषु, which is to say that

The other one of the "ten good deeds" which I propose to examine in this chapter besides morality (sīla) is giving (dāna).

Giving comes first in the list, and it is easy to guess why.

The existence of the Sangha, and hence of Buddhism, depends, in theory at least, on the generosity of the laity. Since the

Polonnaruva period many temples in Ceylon have owned lands which supply them with food and maybe additional income, but monastic landlordism was not part of the original scheme of things.

There are moreover still many poor temples where the monks depend wholly or in part on the laity for their food, which is brought to the temple, and every now and again reformist monasteries or individual monks revert to the original practice of begging food from door to door. Beside these circumstances peculiar to

Buddhism we may remark that all institutions seem to need cash, and that fund-raising is a prominent feature of all organized

1. AN Sutta iii. 41.

2. AN Sutta iii. 97 (vol. I, pp. 160 ff.)

religion under the sun. gift to a beggar. For with the

Here however Buddhism faces a difficulty. If generous intention is all that counts (and remember the monk who told me that a poor villager even without giving a cent might earn more merit than he from the pinkama on which he had spent five thousand rupees), why should people give to the Sangha rather than to anyone else? This problem seems to have been acute from the earliest time, for already in the canon we find the highly ambivalent doctrine of the suitable recipient. In the very formula describing the qualities of the Sangha (mentioned above, p. 276) it is described as "the best field of merit in the world" (anuttaram puññakkhettaṃ lokassa), which is to say that a good deed done towards the Sangha (especially a gift given to it) will bear more fruit for the doer than if bestowed elsewhere. In one sermon¹ the Buddha says that of the five timely gifts the most important is the gift given to a virtuous person at the time of the first fruits. In another² he says that even the scourings thrown into a cesspool gain merit by feeding the creatures there, but gifts to the good are more fruitful (i.e. gain more merit) than gifts to the wicked. This was another question which I investigated in some of my interviews.

The fullest answer was given by monk 9. There are two kinds of giving (dan dāma): that with thought of worship (pūjābuddhiya), which is motivated by respect (gaurava), and that with thought of favour (anugrahabuddhiya), which is motivated by pity (anukampāva). The former is exemplified by a gift to the

1. AN. Sutta iii. 41.

2. AN. Sutta iii. 57 (vol. I, pp. 160 ff.)

Sangha, the latter by a gift to a beggar. For both the accompanying thought is all-important (cētanāva pradhānaya), but the former is superior, i.e. brings more merit. [When I spoke up for the latter he showed no comprehension.] Merit varies with the virtue of the recipient, but only in so far as that virtue is known to the giver: if the monk practises secret vice this does not diminish the merit of his dāyakas. Someone practising the supreme quality of giving (dāna pāramitāva) [like Vessantara - see below] gives to everyone, regardless of their virtue; but for the best results one should find out about the recipient beforehand. "The Buddha commended giving with discrimination" (Viceyyadānaṃ sugatappasattham - a Pali quotation).

Other answers on this topic (monks 1, 11, 25, 41) were all in substantial agreement with the above. Monk 41 elucidated the point about the virtue of the individual monk. The Sangha is full of good qualities (guṇasampanna); when one gives to the Sangha the virtues of the individual monk who receives the dānē do not affect the amount of merit, because he has virtues as it were inherited (paramparāvin) from the Sangha throughout history, and the gift is made not to him but to the Sangha as a whole. (Strictly speaking, as explained on page 313, a gift (such as a meal) can only be given to the Sangha if received by more than five monks, but in this context this would be considered too subtle a consideration.)

It already looks as if this doctrine of the suitable recipient is compromising the supremacy of intention, and the

answer of monk 11 makes this fairly explicit. The merit accruing from liberality depends on the intention, but it does vary according to the recipient: if the recipient has noble qualities (uśas guṇa) it increases. There is an analogy with sowing seed on fertile or barren ground. An elephant needs more than an ant, so it must be more meritorious to feed him. [Here I detected another element creeping in: to keep the argument on one track I pointed a choice between feeding an unhungry monk and a hungry beggar.] If one has to choose between an unhungry monk and a hungry beggar one feeds the beggar because of the exigency of the moment, but one gets less merit. Moreover, if with equally good intention one feeds a monk and a beggar, although the thought is the same (hita ēka vunaṭa) it must be more meritorious to feed the monk. The anti-utilitarian streak is interesting: one would feed the hungry beggar, but it would be less meritorious. (Again, the question of which is "really right" cannot be put; the nearest one might get, to revert to monk 24 (page 341), is to distinguish between an action from the societal (samāja vasen) and the religious (āgama vasen) point of view. By dwelling on this we must however not forget that no Buddhist denies that one should also feed hungry beggars. Monk 25 said that the main purpose (paramārtha) of the Sangha is religious progress, so it is best to give to them, but this does not mean that one should not give to the laity: one must help anyone in need; one has a duty to feed the hungry, and gains merit by doing so. In a truly Buddhist society the rich would give to the poor, and all would be

well. Other monks (31, 38) also spoke against social and economic inequality. However, this they seem to consider a question of politics rather than of religion. In the same way, monk 38 denied that capital punishment was contrary to the precept against taking life. "That's politics" (ēka desapālanē), he said. The failure to apply the ethical standards of religion to politics seems to be universal.

But let us return to intentionality. It has been compromised by the variant of the recipient. The other variant is the size of the gift. Here too the evidence is highly ambiguous. In theory Buddhists believe in the widow's mite, but on closer inspection the picture is not so clear. For instance, monk 41 told me that the amount given is irrelevant, it is the effort that counts. But he went right on to say that a wealthy person like Mrs. Bandaranaike is lucky because she can give a lot, which is clearly inconsistent. Monk 36 also said that only intention (cētanāva) counted. To illustrate this he told me a story from the commentary to the Dhammapada about an ascetic who was very poor and so could give the Buddha nothing of value, but did his best, as a reward for which he was reborn in a very wealthy family and could thus give a great deal! Note that this ambivalent tale dates from classical times, so that this too is a dilemma of respectable antiquity.

I suggest that the ethic of intention has taken some blows because it is to some extent counter-intuitive: it seems obviously better to do good, with whatever motive, than merely to mean well. I would connect this with my remarks above (p. 326)

on the relation of the Five Precepts and Noble Eightfold Path to the Ten Good Deeds. I said that if anything deserves the name of an insufficiency ethic it is the Ten Good Deeds, which offer a positive formulation psychologically more reassuring than the negative absolutes of the Five Precepts. I suggest that the list of Ten Good Deeds, which is post-canonical, is the doctrinal come-back after experience had shown that the doctrine of pure intentionality was not fully accepted in practice. Just as the doctrine of merit transference discussed in the last chapter was an ingenious legitimation of the practices of those people (i.e. everybody, or nearly everybody) who could not accept a particular consequence of the intentionality doctrine, namely that they could do nothing for their dead relatives, so the Ten Good Deeds, with their blanket coverage of every potentially meritorious action, offer a general, though merely implicit, legitimation for the feeling that an act must surely be better if you have something to show for it. Historically and emotionally, though not logically, this preference for positive pin rather than mere abstention is linked to a general preference for a happy personal future existence rather than a "blowing out" of the ~~their~~ personality. Most Hindus have believed since before the time of the Buddha that good works, which they judge largely by effect, result in rebirth in heaven. (This course, the life of the householder, came to be contrasted to the ascetic's renunciation, which leads to his freedom from rebirth.) Pinkam, which include abstention from wrong-doing, meditation, and "right views", but also easier and more specific goals, are thus the

practical result of the affective ethics of people who hope that through some combination of good intentions and formally approved actions good works can ensure for them a pleasant rebirth.

But it would be a grave mistake to deduce from the above negative evidence that the ethic of intention receives only lip-service, if that, and has little importance for the Buddhist ethos. English has the proverb, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions", but I cannot see how to put this into Buddhist Sinhalese. Good intentions pave the road to nirvāna. Whether you use the Sanskrit word cetanāva, as my informants usually did in the religious context, or talk merely of thought (adahas or hita), it is the mind that counts. A canonical text says¹ that among the seven² motives for giving alms those alms bring the best results which are given "for the decoration and equipment of the mind" (cittālaṃkāraṃ cittaparikkhāratthaṃ). Sinhalese speak of purifying the thoughts (hita suddha kara gaṇṭa) or mental progress (hita diyuṇuva) - terms which are applied equally to meditation and to other forms of merit-making. I have already mentioned (chapter three, p. 150) how monk 38 told me that the point of offering flowers to the Buddha was to feel joy (prītiya). Professor Arnold Green has been given exactly the same explanation of the dānē (which in chapter seven I show to be ancient): the point of the anumōdan, the short speech which the monk makes on

1. AN. IV 60-3.

2. The lowest motive is with thought of reward in the next life. Other motives which should be superseded include the mere thought, "Giving is good", and the thought that giving will make one happy (i.e. any hedonistic calculation is not good).

receiving the food, is to fill the donors with joy (prītiya), so that they do not think of how much it has cost them, but purify their thoughts and thus make mental/spiritual progress. In the Dhammapada commentary story of the two brothers and the sugar-cane, several times cited in chapter 5, the elder brother, just before making his successful wish (prārthanā) for nirvāna, is said to have "his body suffused with joy" (pītiyā phuṭasarīro).¹ This religion which is founded on the premiss that the world is sorrow thus attaches great spiritual value, under the right circumstances, to the feeling of joy.

A corollary of these beliefs is the further belief in the power of the mind, a power we have already seen in operation with the religious wish (prārthanā) and religious resolution (pranidhi). Another theory, which does not logically follow from this but seems to be connected, is the belief in the strength of mental impulse. On this again Professor Arnold Green has interesting information. He was told that someone who left valuables lying all around was as culpable as the thief if they were stolen, for no normal person can reasonably be expected to withstand such temptation. This was never expressed to me in so many words, but may help to explain the extraordinary insistence of the villagers that we keep our house locked. Corroborative evidence is the insistence of the chief monk that it is natural for the poor to envy the rich. Green was also told that one should not hesitate over difficult moral choices, but act on impulse. I would connect this value attached to impulsivity with the Buddhist theory of the mind as a rapid series of discrete

1. Dh.A. IV. 201.

impulses, not an uninterrupted stream of consciousness as we have thought of it in the West. For this, however, I do not yet have any evidence. I have yet to face the question of ethos. Some relevant evidence can be gleaned from the preceding pages. I had hoped that the Sinhalese vocabulary would give me a clue to their values, and to this purpose I listened to people's judgments on their fellow-men, and in particular to funeral orations. The material is not rich. The two main values expressed seem to be kindness, especially as expressed in liberality, and above all moderation. There is no doubt that the most frequent phrase used to convey approbation of someone is śānta dānta, nor is there any doubt that this is a pure Buddhist value. Śānta dānta are two Sanskrit past participles for the roots śam "to appease" and dam "to tame"; together they express quiet self-control. Appeasement of the passions, taming of the senses - these were the Buddha's constant themes. The oldest and most famous books of Buddhist religious poetry, the Dhammapada and the Suttanipāta, repeat these phrases and their synonyms so often that at times they seem to consist of little else. Śānta dānta continually occurs at every level of conversation. It is also a value in politics. Our village neighbours, who were supporters of the UNP, whose party colour is green, taught their children to sing apē pāṭa kola, api nā kalabola letter for the spirit. Our colour is green, we are not rowdies. The standard criticism of the other side which we heard from UNP supporters was that they scolded too much (baninavā vāḍi).

The śānta dānta man (as they all conceived themselves) keeps a civil tongue in his head.

The other word most frequently used in praise of someone is karuṇāvanta, "kind", "compassionate". This too is a truly traditional Buddhist value. I mentioned above the four holy states (brahmavihāra) in the canon, of which this is one. Though scholastically karuṇā is differentiated from maitrī (loving-kindness), in that karuṇā applies only to people in misfortune, in Sinhalese karuṇāvanta governs both meanings, like English "kind"; nor is it an accident that the most popular meditation among monks seems to be the meditation on kindness (maitrī bhāvanā), in which one is supposed to suffuse the world with one's kind thoughts.

The clearest mark of kindness is generosity, and no one with any experience of Sinhalese villages will demur at my saying that to westerners their generosity borders on the incredible. There are of course two sides to this, as I have already indicated: giving has become institutionalized to a high degree, not only as a means of making merit but in more obvious forms of exchange and purely social relationships. A westerner is also struck by the preference, explained above, for giving to a wealthy temple rather than to a poor layman. Nevertheless sheer generosity of both goods and effort (known in a formal context as śramadāna) is abundant, and disregards the letter for the spirit. Westerners are not favourably impressed by the famous Jātaka story of King Vessantara. This was the last birth of the Bodhisattva before he became Gotama Buddha, and he was to achieve

in it the supreme quality of liberality (dāna pāramitāva). To this end he gave away everything, even his wife and children. This strikes us as excessive. It strikes the Sinhalese in the same way. The two monks (36 and 20) with whom I brought up the subject both said that Vessantara was wrong. Generosity is very well, but even there one must exercise moderation.

Christianity speaks of three cardinal virtues: faith, hope and charity. Buddhists have no similar list of virtues in common use, but - in keeping with the tendency to negative expression - they have a very commonly used list of three vices. These are lobha (or rāga), dosa and moha, commonly translated as greed (or passion), hatred and delusion. Monk 24 translated them into Sinhalese as āsāva, taraha and mōḍakama, which are naturally translated as desire, anger and stupidity. Of these three there is no doubt that the most cited and the most abhorred is desire. Stupidity is more or less universal and nothing much can be done about it. For anger one old monk (21) even had a few good words to say: one should generally be sānta dānta, but there are times when threatening (tarjana karanaya) is necessary and one has to be tough (sārayi) - though one should never carry this beyond words. But desire everyone abhors. When a neighbour wanted to convey to me his disgust for another person he said he was lōbayi (greedy). When our chief monk heard that some men had gone out ploughing on Wesak - a day of all days on which one should avoid killing even worms - he was filled with anger. I suggested that it was just stupidity. No, it was desire (āsāva).

Chapter 7.

Is there then any difference between the ethos of

Sinhalese Buddhists and that of other civilized communities?

The moderation and self-restraint of sānta dānta are perhaps

not very far from the Greek *καλὸς κἀγαθός*, with his *μηδὲν*

ἕλκεν

, or from the English gentleman ideal. But when we

consider the three cardinal virtues of Christianity we come to

a startling contrast. Faith we discussed at the beginning of

chapter two; the Christian ideal of faith beyond reason is

certainly not a Buddhist virtue, and might even be considered

a vice. What about hope? There is no Sinhalese word for

hope! There are words for expectation, but none for the

mixture of expectation with longing which we mean by "hope".¹

The Sanskrit word usually translated "hope" is āśā, the very

word that in Sinhalese is most commonly used for desire! In

so far as hope is desire, it is the supreme Buddhist vice!

Only charity - karuṇāva/maitrī - is a Buddhist value, and that

indeed is all-important.

As the eight precepts are usually taken communally by a group of people up at the temple there is probably

not much opportunity for meditation then; but as meditation

is virtually the sole purpose of taking the ten precepts I

have little doubt that gāḥī all upāsakas meditate, probably

more than most monks.

It is sometimes assumed that meditation is the ideal for

monks, more so for laymen; but this is a

misconception; that everyone should meditate if possible,

both monks and laymen.

1. Neither faith nor hope is listed in the index of

Tachibana's book on Buddhist ethics, which is based on

Pali materials (S. Tachibana, The Ethics of Buddhism, OUP, London, 1926).

Chapter 7.

THE MONASTIC IDEAL AND THE DECLINE
OF BUDDHISM.

Any of the Ten Good Deeds may be performed by anyone, monk or layman. However two of them, teaching (dēsaṇā) (which includes preaching (baṇa)) and meditation (bhāvaṇā) are more typical of monks; laymen may do either, but traditionally laymen only teach or preach when monks are unavailable, and they generally preach merely by reading or reciting the scriptures. I came across cases where monks through infirmity or laziness delegated their preaching duties to lay upāsakas, but this is not standard practice. Similarly, meditation is recommended for all, but it is recognized that in practice laymen will lack the necessary time and tranquility. On pōya days laymen who take the eight precepts are expected to meditate, and the principal goal of retirement late in life as a dasa sil upāsaka or upāsikā is also meditation. As the eight precepts are usually taken communally by a group of people up at the temple there is probably not much opportunity for meditation then; but as meditation is virtually the sole purpose of taking the ten precepts I have little doubt that dasa sil upāsakas meditate, probably more than most monks.

It is sometimes assumed that meditation is the ideal for monks, more active religiosity for laymen; but this is a misconception. Given that everyone should meditate if possible, both laity and clergy are in this respect divided into two groups of unequal size. Just as laymen are in practice

divided into the small minority of meditating upāsakas and the large majority of people who do not meditate, so monks are divided into two categories with the primary duties of teaching and of meditation, and the former group is many times the size of the latter. Those who are primarily supposed to teach are called granthadhura (Pali: ganthadhura) (literally "having books as their burden"), and the others are called vidarsana dhura (Pali: vipassanādhura) (literally "having meditation as their burden"). These categories are first found in the commentaries, and the distinction probably does not ante-date the Christian era.¹ In theory all are supposed to do some meditation, just as all are supposed to preach if requested, but what is theoretically a mere emphasis in practice tends to become an absolute distinction. There is another traditional distinction which might be supposed to correspond to that between granthadhura and vidarsanadhura, namely the distinction between village-dwelling (grāmahāsin) and forest-dwelling (ārāṇhāvāsin or vanavāsin) monks; however the categories do not in fact correspond at all. The former division is still taken to mean what it says, while the latter dichotomy has for the most part lapsed into meaningless scholasticism. There are still a few monks who live in forests, while most monks live in villages (or towns), but village dwellers are often called ārāṇhāvāsin. The theory is that in the Siyam

1. Rahula, History, pp. 159-160.

Nikāya Malvatta monks are grāmvāsin and Asgiri monks are arāṇṇavāsin. This ascription dates from the re-establishment in 1753 of these two monasteries and the branches (pāśva) they head; it continues the tradition of a dichotomy formalized by Parākramabāhu I when he unified the Sangha.¹ In fact however all Asgiri monks (so far as I know) live in villages just like Malvatta monks. At least within the Siyam Nikāya the status of arāṇṇavāsin has thus become meaningless and is not really a matter of choice. On the other hand whether a monk is granthadhura or vidarśanadhura is largely a matter of individual choice, and I met a monk (37) who was vidarśanadhura (= bhāvanāmārgaya) though living in a village as an ordinary parish monk. In theory monks are supposed to go through both stages, passing from book-learning to meditation, but this happens only in exceptional cases (monk 27 may become an example). The meditating village-dwelling monk (37) had entered the Sangha as an adult and had not received a monastic education; these circumstances, though unusual, are catered for in both theory and practice, and such a monk is not expected to undertake the granthadhura.

There is a conventional tripartite division of Buddhism into learning (paryāpti), practice (pratipatti) and realization (prativedana). Each part is higher than the preceding but also depends upon them. Paryāpti means the preservation of the scriptures; though this is a lowly thing, it is the basis

1. Groups of monks are referred to as "village-dwelling" and "forest-dwelling" much earlier, without the implication of a formal organizational rift. See Rahula, History, p. 196.

for everything higher, and thus indispensable. Granthadhura monks are the vehicle for paryāpti; their function is to hand on the doctrines by teaching other monks and preaching to the laity. (That they are also supposed to practice what they preach (pratipatti) and strive towards enlightenment (prative-danā) goes without saying.) Some western authors have given the impression that Theravāda presents the "selfish" ideal of attaining one's own enlightenment and that a monk has no duty but to strive for his enlightenment; according to them it would therefore be anomalous to speak of a monk's "function". Whatever happens in practice, they are right to the extent that a monk is not traditionally conceived as having pastoral duties towards the laity as individuals under his care; but monks - or at least most of them - do nevertheless have the function, formalized as granthadhura, of preserving religious tradition. It is with this same context in mind, incidentally, that suti, listening to religious teaching, is listed as one of the Ten Good Deeds.

I was interested in finding out the extent to which monks actually do teach and preach, at least in a formal context. The role of the village monk as a teacher of the next generation of monks has largely been superseded by monastic schools, the pirivenas. Out of thirty-five monks I questioned on this point, only eight had received their education entirely from their teachers, i.e. the monks who gave them the lower ordination; the rest had attended a piriveṇa, all but one of them for more than a year, typically for the several years between

entry into the Order and the higher ordination (upāsampadā) at the age of twenty or twenty-one. (I disregard any lay education received before entering the Order - this never amounted to more than a few years at the village school.) Most of the nine monks who had been educated entirely or nearly so by their own teachers were elderly monks of the Siyam Nikāya, but one (27) was in the Amarapura Nikāya, nor does the practice seem to be entirely dead: one young monk, not interviewed and so not included in the above figures, whose higher ordination ceremony I attended, had been educated in his own monastery by monk 36, who had sent his previous three pupils to pirivepas. The pirivepas are new but not untraditional institutions, being modelled on monastic schools and universities of ancient times. The two most important (and two of the oldest) of the present pirivepas are Vidyodaya and Vidyālaṅkara, founded in 1873 and 1875 respectively in suburbs of Colombo. These now differ somewhat from the run of pirivepas in that they are devoted to higher education and have become largely secularized; though popularly known as "Buddhist universities" they have no official religious affiliation and have for some years admitted laymen, and in 1966 Vidyodaya started admitting girls as well. A few of my informants had gone on to these universities (none had been to the purely secular University of Ceylon); the pirivepas most of them had attended could however more aptly be described as monastic schools or colleges than as universities. Such pirivepas have proliferated only in the last fifty years; before that education with the teacher had been the norm

for several centuries, but it is now too late to catch more than the remnant of the last generation to be generally so educated. Monastic education has now become more standardized, and there can be little doubt that the general level has risen. One of the monks educated by his teacher made the unique admission (unique in frankness, not necessarily in ignorance) that he knew no Pali, and a couple of the others said they knew very little indeed; none of them had more than perhaps a smattering of Sanskrit. On the other hand all pupils at piriveṇas are taught Sanskrit and Pali and consequently say that they know them; of course I could not test the content of their knowledge, but at least a certain expectation of learning has become normal. Monks usually take a paternal interest (as the Buddha recommended¹) in their pupils, and finance their education at piriveṇas, or get the parents to pay half (monk 2). When their education is complete most monks return to their villeges; the rest for the most part become teachers, either at a piriveṇa or at a lay school, where they teach Buddhism and other subjects. The rôle of a monk as a teacher has thus not disappeared, but has changed with the times and become more specialized; monks who teach usually do so professionally, on the same terms (including salary) as lay school and university teachers.

Religious education is however not confined to piriveṇas and ordinary lay schools: mention has already been made (see especially chapter 3, page 105) of the deham paṣal or

¹ Vin. I. 45 (cited in Tachibana, p. 140.)

"Buddhist Sunday schools". These are usually headed and organized by local monks, though the monks do not necessarily teach in them. Of the thirty-six villages for which I have data eleven had such daḥam pāsala (one had two); in another nine the monks said that there had been a daḥam pāsala which was now defunct, usually for lack of a teacher. These figures show however that many monks, even among the granthadhura, neither personally educate their own pupils nor teach in an institution, and so probably do not teach at all.

36. It is widely believed by westernized people in Ceylon that monks preach every pōya day, just as the Christian clergy preach every Sunday. There is to my knowledge no good historical or doctrinal basis for this belief, and my investigations showed it to be ill-founded. During the ten months in which I was at Mīgala the resident monks never preached on pōya days,*¹ though on the most important full moon pōya days they arranged for other monks to come and preach. The amount of preaching in other villages I could not establish with accuracy, because once I asked about it there was a feeling that there ought to be preaching and so its actual occurrence was probably exaggerated. An indirect, though equally uncertain, way of estimating such preaching is to ask about aṭṭa sil upāsakas on pōya days, as a monk would be very unlikely to preach unless there were several such upāsakas present, who would be his principal audience. Data given me on both preaching and attendance of aṭṭa sil upāsakas varied a great deal from village to village, a variation which my own

*¹ They did preach on the more private occasions listed below, p. 363-4.

observation confirmed. However, a survey of my data suggests that the average monk preaches at his temple on full-moon pōyas and a few other big occasions, such as some opening ceremony, in all maybe fifteen to twenty times a year; the more conscientious monks preach also on the no-moon (māsa) pōyas; and a few preach twice on the fortnightly pōyas (11), or even preach every pōya (18, 19), may be twice (24). Those who preach frequently tend also to be in demand at other temples; our temple was visited at Wesak by monks 18, 24 and 36, all of whom had several engagements to preach that day. On these festivals a large part of the village would attend to hear preaching, especially the sermons after nightfall; but normally the audience was more or less confined to the upāsakas taking the eight precepts at the temple. These varied in number from about a hundred at Wesak in temples with a large catchment area (such as mine), to a couple or even none on half-moon pōyas; on a full moon pōya the average temple in the area probably has forty or fifty people taking the eight precepts, and about half that number on the māsa pōya. Most of these are old people, especially women, who outnumber men taking aṣṭa sil by at least four to one; there are also a few school children, which I believe to be a modern development. Very few people indeed take the eight precepts between the ages of twenty and fifty, except perhaps at Wesak.

The above figures on preaching do not include pirit, which though technically a form of bāṣa is in a class by itself, and is so irregular in its occurrence that many small-scale

like bāṣa on a public occasion, this sort of sermons

statistics would be worthless. Nor does it include the essentially private preaching which accompanies dānēs, especially the ceremonies connected with death. The sermons of a Christian priest follow not only the calendar but also the life cycle of the individual. Buddhism as such however lacks sacraments; there is no equivalent of baptism, no pubertal rite to parallel confirmation or the first communion, and marriage is solemnized by a secular ceremony. The only life crisis with which monks are traditionally associated is death. The grief and separation which death involves are a suitable occasion for the exposition of the dharma of sorrow and impermanence; so monks, who were originally refugees from lay life, have become involved in it at this point. The ceremonies at the funeral and on subsequent commemorative occasions described in chapter 5 in connection with the transference of merit are thus over-determined, providing occasion also for sermons on the fundamentals of Buddhist doctrine. Funeral sermons are usually rather short (e.g. ten minutes), and contain a eulogy of the dead person; the sermon which closes a dānē (after the monks have eaten and the merit has been transferred at the water-pouring ceremony) are similarly short; both categories inevitably consist mainly of reflections on the transitoriness of all worldly things. Only the bapa which take place in the evening a week after the death, or as a replacement for pirit at one of the subsequent commemorations, is a full-scale sermon, lasting perhaps an hour, and may range over wider topics.

Like bapa on a public occasion, this sort of sermon

commences, very much in the Christian style, with a quotation from the Pali canon, which is then expounded and enlarged upon, largely with the help of further quotations; there is more quotation and less invention than is usual in Christian preaching, but in my experience a monk preaching never confined himself to a mere recitation and paraphrase of a canonical text. While preaching a monk sits on a special chair (dharmaśana) or at least on a chair covered with a clean white cloth, and holds a preaching fan. He may hold the fan in front of his face, which serves, I was told, to depersonalize the sermon, but this is often neglected. A member of the congregation, usually an elderly man, takes it upon himself to act as respondent (pratyuttaradennā); he squats in the front row, hands folded, and every so often says "Ehē hā muduru vō",^{*1} which is as much as to say "Amen" in church; in theory he may also interrupt and ask for clarification, but I never saw this done.

The types of baṇa were enumerated for me by monk 24, a well-known preacher. All the commoner ones we have already covered: mataka baṇa is preaching in the house of a dead man; pāṃsukulē baṇa is preaching at a funeral; sāmānya baṇa (literally "ordinary baṇa") is preaching on pōya days. Dharmasaṃvāda, "doctrinal discussion", is usually carried on in an informal context. Āsana deke baṇa ("preaching from two seats") seems once to have been common;² there was none in

*1 Thus in my part of the country; elsewhere other synonymous expressions are used.

2. Gerger, Culture of Ceylon, p.200, para. 194.

"The Teaching of the Devil Alavaka". He told me that he
 my area while I was there, but one was scheduled for just
 after I left. In an āsana dekē bapa one monk reads out
 or recites a text from the Pali canon, and the other with the
 reads out the sannē, a close paraphrase in Sinhalese;
 monk 24 said that the usual text preached like this is the
Damsak pāvatum suta - the first sermon. In ancient times
 there were apparently three monks preaching in a full-scale
bapa, one reciting a text, one paraphrasing in Sinhalese,
 and one giving a sermon proper;¹ but I did not come across
 such an event.² My informant did however list an
āsane hate bapa, "preaching from seven seats", which he said
 was used for the Brahmajāla Sutta, the first sermon of the
Dīgha Nikāya. I assume from the nature of that text that
 this was a kind of part-reading performance, one monk
 taking the rôle of the Buddha and the others reciting the
 arguments of his opponents. This kind of bapa he said was
 obsolete. However, monk 24 was himself responsible for
 an even more vivid form of bapa, a full dramatization of
 a canonical story in which the Buddha converts a man-eating
yakṣa called Ālavaka. The original version of this story is a
 short poem with prose preface in the Sutta-nipāta, but the
 version monk 24 had devised took about three hours to perform
 and was a veritable folk drama. It was called Ālavaka-yakṣa-dāmanē

1. Rahula, ^{History,} pp. 267-8.

2. Perhaps what happened, in our terminology, was an
āsana dekē bapa followed by a samānya bapa.

"The Taming of the Devil Ālavaka". He told me that he had himself devised it with the help of five drummers (beravāyo) from his village who performed the other parts while he sat on a preaching-seat facing the audience, with the actors before him, and to convert the yakṣa gave a sermon exactly as he would have done had there been no play. Whether similar dramatizations of bapa have taken place in the past I cannot say; this one has so far remained unreported, though it might be said to represent a distinctive genre of folk-art, and it may have unreported predecessors. The nearest thing to it in my experience is the sūvisi pinkama, which others called bapa though monk 24 did not mention it in his list; but the sūvisi is already stylized by tradition, as my account in chapter 3 shows. This particular drama is however the spontaneous creation of a local monk and his parishioners.

The last kind of teaching (desana) which must be mentioned is, like pirit, not idiomatically referred to as bapa, because though logically a form of preaching it is highly stylized and specialized. This is the pin anumodana¹ already referred to in chapter 5; we saw then that the original meaning of anumodana is "thanks" or "grateful acceptance." In the commentary to the Dhammapada² the term is already paraphrased anumodana-dhamma-desana (teaching the doctrine by way of thanks). In the old sub-commentary (purāṇa-tīkā) on the Jātakas³ the word anumodana is glossed "teaching the doctrine to arouse joy in creatures" (sattānaṃ pīti-janaka-dhamma-desanaṃ).

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1. For the full English translation of an anumodana see Dickson, op.cit., p. 209.
 2. Dh. A. I. 209.
 3. J.I. 119.

times, however, very many monks, perhaps all those outside the capital, customarily went on the daily alms-round (pāṇḍita). The pāṇḍita became especially important only with the lay people. Professor Arnold Green has pointed out to me that there is a popular explanation of what the monk is doing which similarly goes beyond the idea of mere thanks: he is said to be causing the donors to feel joy (prītiya); he is actually doing them a favour, by causing them to forget the trouble and expense involved in offering a dānē and rather to feel unalloyed pleasure at having given, thus purifying their thoughts and advancing towards nirvāṇa. In this way his anumodana is not mere thanks, but a quid pro quo. This explanation is of course compatible on all levels with the previously mentioned functions of the anumodana as thanks and as an exhortation to share the merit gained; it provides yet another example of the over-determination of a ritual act.

Though the recitation of the anumodana may look to a western newcomer like the saying of grace before a meal, it lacks even external resemblance in that it only happens when the meal is given; when the monks eat their own food, cooked in the monastery kitchen, nothing is said. The original practice was for monks to eat only what they had begged; but when monasteries acquired possessions this became unnecessary, and when they were extremely large it also became impractical. In Anurādhapura, we learn from Fa Hsien and Hiuen Tsiang,¹ vast numbers of monks and nuns were fed at a central kitchen supplied by the King, i.e. at public expense. In the tenth century the King granted villages to the monasteries of Jetavana and Abhayagiri to maintain their refectories.² Throughout ancient

1. Quoted by Rahula, History, p. 175.

2. Cūlavamsa LII, §59.

times, however, very many monks, perhaps all those outside the capital, customarily went on the daily alms-round (pindapāta). The pindapāta became exceptional presumably only with the landless monastery, i. e. in the Kandyan period.

There are today no monasteries except the pirivenas so large that it would be impractical for all the monks to beg locally; but few are so poor as to be quite dependent on dāyakas. Most monasteries own a little land, and a few old ones own a great deal; my survey of local monastic land holdings, which depends entirely on the statements of incumbents but need not be inaccurate for that, can be consulted in the appendix. I had the impression however that the extent to which meals are supplied daily to the monastery depends far less on the monks' need than on more intangible factors such as the character of the monk and the degree of organization of the laity. A few really organized monasteries had a roster so that each household could see when it would be their turn to supply the dānē. Our temple had such a roster for four months of the year only, the three months of vas (see below, p. 372) and the following month, during which it is also customary for monks to remain at home; in this period every Buddhist household in the village had a turn, supplying either the midday meal (daval dānē) or the evening requirements (gilampasa) and breakfast (hīl dānē) the next morning. Even this was economically unnecessary to the temple, which was rich, but it was explained to me that every family was thus given the chance to earn merit. This argument was however not applied the rest of the year, when the monks ate

food provided from their own resources and cooked in the monastery kitchen, except when they were invited out to a mataka dānē or when there was some big pinkama. On these special occasions, e.g. Wesak and the head monk's fiftieth birthday pinkama, the food was supplied by the whole village, nearly every family supplying something; it was carried up to the temple in a procession (perahara), the rice arriving in a huge pot suspended on a pole borne by a man before and a man behind it in the traditional Sinhalese manner.

The alms round (piṇḍapāta) is practised nowadays only by modern fundamentalists, notably the famous Vajirārāma in Colombo; it is a difficult practice to maintain, because a monk who goes begging for his food is usually regarded as remarkably holy and everyone is so eager to give him food that a roster has to be set up. There is a forest retreat called Salgala where since 1931 some monks of fundamentalist persuasion, several of them Europeans, have retired to meditate in the style of the original forest-dwelling hermits (arāṇṇavāsīn); to give a meal to these monks you have to put down your name more than a year in advance. On the other hand a monk may still beg for alms in case of need. Monk 6 lived entirely by begging because he had no alternative. He was not fully ordained but a mere samaṇera, who had entered the Order as an adult, and he was somewhat odd; actually I never heard anyone say either that he was crazy or that he was heretical, but it was complained that he was not learned, and some held it against him that he had a family, although originally it was

of course quite normal to become a monk when an adult with a family - as the Buddha did himself. Be that as it may, he lived in the direst poverty with no perceptible possessions, and every morning at about 6.30 would set off with begging bowl and sun-glasses, hoping to collect enough for the whole day so that he would not have to go out again later. In our village, to which he occasionally came as it lay less than two miles from his temple, he was received by only a few households, so far as I could observe by low-caste people, who probably felt sympathy with him against the goyigama (high-caste) monks of the Siyam Nikāya, who held all the temples in the immediate vicinity and would have nothing to do with him, though he was Siyam Nikāya (and therefore high-caste) himself. Although his was a most unusual case, I must mention here that the lot of a poor monk may be most undesirable. In one monastery (7) which I came to I found an aged monk, quite blind and nearly deaf, living all alone in filth and neglect; he was kept alive by food brought by a local family who took pity on him, but seemed to have no other company or support. Both the children who brought the food and the monk at the next temple, which was very nearby, said that the old man was too bad-tempered (sāra vāḍi) for it to be possible to deal with him; his pupil lived elsewhere and visited him about once a year; whether in fact other people ever visited him I cannot say, but I did not get that impression.

Monks are generally most active as preachers during vas.

Vas, which originally means "rain", was the three-month monsoon period in north-east India when the Buddha told monks to desist from their wanderings and stay in one sheltered place. Though in Ceylon this period is not climatically so distinctive, monks still have to observe vas and stay in one place for the three months of vas and the next month. *1 "Stay" means minimally that they should not be away for more than six consecutive nights. Usually they stay in their own monastery, but sometimes in another, or a layman provides a special lodging. In the last case the monk is led in procession to his retreat. A shopkeeper in the village next to Migala who had built a new house invited monk 36, who was from another village but locally respected, to spend vas there, thus earning much merit and giving his house an auspicious start. Under such circumstances a monk is especially likely to preach often; at the least he constantly has to preach anumōden, as described above. Vas is also the only period during which monks of the Siyam Nikāya in my area meet on full-moon and massa poya days for the uposatha ceremony. It is a basic vinaya rule that monks who live in the same sīmā (see Introduction, p. 35) should meet every fortnight and confess their transgressions when the oldest monk present recites the patimokkha, the canonical list of 227 vinaya

*1 Dickson (op.cit.) has good material on vas, which relieves me of the necessity of supplying many details. I witnessed the beginning of vas much as he describes it, though I did not hear the Nidhikanda Sutta preached, as he says it is on that occasion; I also saw in Migala temple the kathina pinkama which takes place at the end of the fourth month.

regulations. In practice the monks who so unite are the inhabitants of an informal group of up to about ten monasteries which acknowledge the same head monastery (e.g. Asgiriya); and in my experience only monks of the Amarapura and Rāmaṇṇa Nikāyas (see chapter 8) meet outside vas, this being the one tangible respect in which I found the Amarapura more orthodox than the Siyam Nikāya. The Rāmaṇṇa and Amarapura Nikāyas, so far as I could observe, only hold the pātimokkha ceremony once a month, on full-moon pōyas.

The extent to which meditation (bhāvanā) is actually practised by monks is extremely difficult to ascertain, not because meditation practices are esoteric, as some western authors seem to believe, but because the question is so involved with a monk's prestige, possibly even with his self-respect, that honesty is hardly possible. There are in Ceylon today forest-dwelling monks who devote their lives to meditation; one group of these, that at Saigala just referred to, is so large as to form a veritable community; a few others dwell alone, in greater or lesser isolation, ranging from those who live near big cities and thus receive frequent visits to those in truly remote parts of the island such as the south-east coast. Many of these monks are Europeans, and their entire behaviour is intended as a revival (though to some extent it may be a pseudo-revival) of ancient practices which have long lapsed. They are part of the phenomenon which Heinz Bechert calls Buddhist modernism, to which I have

alluded in the latter part of chapter one.

The monks who answered my questions on meditation fall into three groups of roughly equal size: those who said, or as good as said, that they did not meditate; those who claimed that they did some but certainly do very little; and those who seem to meditate regularly. The statement of monk 4, that there was only one monk in the whole area (my monk 27) who meditated, was certainly a gross exaggeration. His implication that granthadhura monks could not be expected to meditate was however accepted by many; though no one denied that meditation is necessary for nirvāṇa, several said that the life of a village monk was too busy (for an elaborate reply on these lines see monk 18), or hinted (monk 12) that they hoped for better opportunities in the next life. Against this monk 19 went so far as to say that it is no good becoming a monk unless you meditate - and doctrine is of course on his side; but monk 9, who was also in the Ramanna Nikāya, explained to me as a matter of course, that as a granthadhura monk his knowledge of meditation was purely theoretical.

The subjects - and no doubt the techniques - of meditation closely follow the instructions laid down by Buddhaghosa in his Visuddhimagga. This is not necessarily a modern feature; it may go back to the eighteenth century revival, when Siamese monks came to teach meditation (vipassana).¹

1. Mahāvamsa, C, 174.

recalling the list of the thirty-two objects of meditation and then applying these thoughts to oneself and others. This is traditionally the main method for cultivating the mind. However, the tradition must at least have been reinforced by monastic education.¹ When I asked monks on what subjects they meditated their answers never went outside the list of forty objects of meditation (kammaṭṭhāna) listed by Buddhaghosa. Popular subjects seemed to be the meditation on kindness (maitrī bhāvanā) and the meditation on the impurities of the body (piḷikul/asubha bhāvanā).² Monk 19 said he meditated every day on maitrī, and quoted to me the Karaṇīya-metta Sutta. The meditation consists, I believe, in recalling this text and then applying it by cultivating a feeling of benevolence towards the whole world. The piḷikul bhāvanā consists similarly in

1. Bechert (op.cit., p.50) holds that traditions of meditation were completely lost in Ceylon at the end of the nineteenth century. He bases this on statements by Copleston, Sangharakshita and Woodward. Woodward, as Bechert himself states, was referring to a divergent tradition of meditation represented by the Sinhalese text, probably dating from the eighteenth century, published as The Yogavacara's Manual. (Its discrepancies from the main tradition are specified by Rhys Davids in the introduction to his edition (P.T.S, London 1896), esp. pp. XXIX-XXX) Whether Copleston is to be considered an authority of weight on such a point must remain a matter of judgement. Sangharakshita is reporting the view of Dharmapala, which is an even unsteadier foundation. The monks I interviewed seemed unaffected by Buddhist modernist ideas on meditation methods, which have been influenced, as Bechert says, by the Yogavacara's Manual and the so-called Burmese methods, which seem to be more emotional and ecstatic in character than the traditional methods. I am therefore not nearly as positive as Bechert that the central tradition of meditation practice was lost. Unfortunately this is unlikely to be a soluble question, as published sources tend not to dwell on what, though not esoteric, is essentially a matter of intimate behaviour.
2. Dickson (op.cit., p. 205) had similar information in 1884.

recalling the list of the thirty-two constituents of the body¹ and then applying these thoughts to oneself and others. This is traditionally the main subject for meditation by the elderly upāsakas who take the eight precepts on pōya days; a very old monk (29) told me he meditated on it "to get used to samsara" (sasaraja purudu venja.) Similarly meditation on the Buddha (Buddhānūsmṛti) centres on the "Iti pi so" gāthā mentioned in chapter 4. The only other text which was mentioned to me (by monks 13 and 37) as a subject of meditation was the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta,² which contains a wide-ranging analysis of the individual; the popularity of this text is also traditional.³

According to Buddhaghosa and to some of my informants there are two kinds of meditation, samatha and vipassanā, tranquillity and intuition. (In the texts samatha is often called or equated with samādhi and vipassanā with pañña.) The objects of samatha are the forty kammaṭṭhāna; the principal objects of vipassanā are the three cardinal Buddhist principals of anicca, dukkha, anatta (impermanence, sorrow and non-self).⁴

1. Included as item 3 in the Khuddaka Pāṭha. The piḷikul bhāvanava is a conflation of two originally different meditations. The meditation on the thirty-two constituents of the body is called by Buddhaghosa kāyagata sati, "mindfulness referring to the body", and is discussed at length in Visuddhimagga chapter VIII, 42-144. It is distinct from the asubha bhavana, which consisted of the contemplation of corpses, classified into ten types (Visuddhimagga chapter VI.) I have never heard of anyone contemplating actual corpses nowadays; as bodies are now buried or cremated, not left exposed, it would indeed be practically difficult.
2. DN II Sutta 22.3
3. Rahula, History, p.253.
4. The most comprehensive modern work on meditation according to the texts is P. Vajirāṇa Mahathera, Buddhist Meditation in Theory and Practice, Gunasena, Colombo 1962.

It was interesting to find that these topics were those named as the objects of their concentration by monk 27, who had a reputation for meditation (see the statement of monk 4) and monk 6, who was a religious enthusiast, albeit heterodox and eccentric. As neither of these monks had ever attended a pirivepa we can certainly speak here of a living tradition, though whether it has been resuscitated only recently it is impossible to judge.

The comparative rarity of meditation is closely connected with the widespread belief in the decline of Buddhism, a topic which I usually included in my interviews. Gotama Buddha is said to have predicted¹ that his sāsane would last for 5,000 years (5,500 according to monks 19 and 37); this belief goes back to the commentaries on the Canon.²

1. Monk 23, oddly, called it a prārthanāva.
2. The canonical prediction (AN.IV 278 = Vin.II 256) is that the dharma will last five hundred years. The Buddha makes this gloomy forecast when Ananda has prevailed on him to allow the formation of an order of nuns (bhikkhuni-sangha). Even the nuns outlived expectation.

This was of course apparent to Buddhaghosa when he wrote his commentaries (or to one of the unknown commentators whose work he used.) In his comment on the Vinaya passage on the founding of the order of nuns (Samantapasadika VI 1291) Buddhaghosa explains away the figures in the text in such a way as to make the dhamma last for 5000 years. He here equates dhamma with paṭivedha (realization), which will disappear in five stages of 1000 years each, and pariyatti (learning) will disappear with it, but linga ("external signs" - here the Sangha?) will last even longer. This is not the version that I was told, and I further deduce that it is not the one which has entered the mainstream of tradition, because it also explains why now, in the third millennium of the teaching, there should be no arhats, which is contrary to what I was told by some informants, and would be a better rationale for the pessimism of others than the obscure story of Maliyadeva (see below). On the other hand I think that this must be where the figure of 5000 started, as there is good reason for it in this context. The story was then elaborated into the form given below, according to which the five stages of decline are differently interpreted and the lack of arhats in the third millennium of the teaching, though implicit if one knows the former passage, is not clearly stated.

(The figure 5,000 lends a certain poignancy to the celebration held in 1956 to mark the 2,500th anniversary of Buddhism; we are half way through, and monk 2 remarked that the assassination of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in 1959 signalized the beginning of the decline.) Only during a śāsana are normal men able to gain enlightenment; between śāsana the only enlightened beings are the pratyekabuddhas (chapter 3, page 104), who have a store of merit so immense that they can realize nirvāṇa under such adverse circumstances, and are accordingly unlikely to be sojourning among us now. The theory that a man attains enlightenment purely by his own efforts is preserved, but this is impossible without a knowledge of the religious truths which a normal man is incapable of ideating for himself, so that in practice one who has not heard a Buddha's teaching has no chance. Monk 25 said that the Four Noble Truths always exist, i.e. are true, but between śāsana they exist undiscovered, like electricity before man discovered its uses. It is further believed by the majority, at least of those whose general attitudes can be characterized as traditional, that this śāsane has already declined so far that it is no longer possible for men to attain nirvāṇa. (Monk 30 even specified that till Maitrī came it was not even possible to become sovan (Pali: sotāpanna), a religious state in which one will attain nirvāṇa after seven more lives.) The last arhat is commonly said to have been Maliyadeva, though most people are very vague about when he lived. (In fact he is mentioned in Mahāvamsa XXXII, 30 and 49, as an arhat in the time of Duṭṭhāmūnu; there are several stories about him in commentaries.*1)

*1 See Adikaram, pp. 66-67, where it is shown that the belief that Maliyadeva was the last arhat is not ancient, and may stem from a misinterpretation of a (probably interpolated) remark in the Jataka commentary (J.VI 30) that Maliyadeva was the last of the characters in a certain Jataka story to leave the lay life.

Others say that there may still be human arhats, but it is unlikely and/or undiscoverable. (Monk 11 pointed out that an enlightened person is not supposed to boast about it.) Monk 34 compared the śāsana to a worn-out organism: very few can attain nirvāṇa now, just as a tree grows barren when its fruit is picked too often, and the seventh child is weaker than the first. Some said there might be enlightened beings still alive in one of the five "pure abodes" (suddhāvāsa) at the top of the brahmaloka, the other part of the universe besides mankind in which enlightenment is possible. The average view, perhaps, was that of monk 1: it is not impossible to attain nirvāṇa now, but "religious practice is weak; it is hard to believe that there is anyone alive who has become an arhat" ("pratipatti durvalayi, arhat vecca aya innava kiyala hitaṇṇa amāruyi").

On the other hand monk 19, who knew the Canon unusually well, told me that it was a grave mistake to state that no arhats now exist, for the Buddha's relics still exist, and so do pariyāpti, pratipatti and prativedanā [see p. 358 ;] there must be some arhats left on earth, maybe in Burma.¹ The Buddha once told a brahmin that his teaching (śāsanē) would last so long as monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen practised

1. Burma enjoys in Ceylon a wide reputation for holiness, fostered no doubt by the Buddhist council held in Rangoon 1954-6 (see Bechert, op.cit., pp.105-6). Monk 19 is moreover a member of the Ramaṇṇa Nikāya, which like the Amarapura Nikāya derived its ordination from Burma.

mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna), and of these four groups only the nuns have disappeared. Monk 9, also well-informed, put the matter precisely: books tell us that it is not impossible for anyone to realize nirvāṇa now, but we know of no cases. The śāsana declines because it is subject to the universal law that there is nothing eternal ("sadākālika deyak nā"). Monk 17 utterly rejected the suggestion that there is a decline (pirihīma) in the śāsane, but he seemed altogether to be on the defensive against the foreign intruder.

Over what will constitute the disappearance of the śāsane there was some disagreement. Monk 25 said that the Sangha will die out, and that will be the end of Buddhism. Monk 19 however included the relics and laity as physical indices of Buddhism's existence. The formulation of monk 27 was the widest: after 5,000 years will come the disappearance (antaradhāne) of five things: relics (dhatū), realization (prativēdana) (which he glossed as "the fruit of enlightenment" (rahat phala)), monks and novices (linga) (which he glossed as "monachism" (mahanakama)), practice (pratipattiya) (which he glossed as "morality" (sīl)), and religious learning (pariyāptiya) (which he glossed as "dharma"). This keeps very close to the commentatorial text¹, which is also the passage on which is based

1. Anguttara-Aṭṭhakathā (Manoratha-pūraṇī) I. 87-93. There is a different version with only trifling discrepancies in the Vibhanga-Aṭṭhakathā (Sammoha-Vinodani) pp. 431-2. The ascription of both commentaries to Buddhaghosa may be correct, but in any case the Vibhanga commentary seems to be written after the other, and some manuscripts interpolate passages from it in the text of the Anguttara commentary (see Vol. I p. 91 notes 4 and 9).

the doctrine of the paramount importance of learning. (See below, chapter 9 p. 431.) The text says that practice and realization depend on the continued existence of learning.¹ The canonical texts will finally disappear in reverse order: first the Abhidhamma Piṭaka, beginning with the last book; then the four Nikāyas of the Sutta Piṭaka, beginning with the Anguttara and ending with the Dīgha Nikāya; then the Jātakas; finally the Vinaya Piṭaka. Last to go is the Uposatha-kanda. When a king offers a purse of gold to anyone who can recite a four-line verse of the Buddha's teaching, and there are no takers, learning will have disappeared.

For another version of what happens next, let monk 39 take up the story.

The sāsane of a Buddha lasts for five thousand years, which period is called a Buddhotpādakālaya (time producing a Buddha), and is followed by an abuddhotpādakālaya (the opposite). During all this time men get wicked and wicked, and their life span gets shorter, till it is only ten years. In these ten years people become adults but remain like children. Then comes the lokavināsa alias sattuvinaṣa ("destruction of the world" or "of living beings"). At that time a king comes down from the Cātummahārājika divyaloka ("Heaven of the Four Great Kings"), which is one of the kāma vacara ("sensual sphere", i.e. lower) heavens. He beats a bera (drum) and

1. Cf. Vibhanga-Aṭṭhakathā p. 432 1.3: Sāsanaṭṭhitiyā pana periyatti pamāṇam. "Learning is the criterion of the continued existence of the teaching."

[just about] to know a Buddha's intention. He announces that after seven days will start a heavy rain, the Murugasamvarsāva ("wild beast deluge"). "Don't get wet," he warns, but most men are so wicked that they don't believe him; only those with pin believe, and they prepare provisions and shelter in caves etc. Then a light rain (sirivāssa) begins to fall. All who get wet begin to look like game animals, so people start shooting each other for meat. In this way all the wicked kill each other till nothing is left but a great pool of blood. When the rain finally stops those who had some merit left in them emerge from their shelters, and on seeing the slaughter they feel compassion (anukampāva.) This good thought (hoṇḍa adahaṣa) produces a revulsion from killing, and they thus relinquish the first of the pas pay ["five sins", the subjects of the five precepts]. At this the maximum life-span (paramāyusa) goes up from ten to twenty. Men then relinquish each of the pas pay in turn, and the paramāyusa rises to thirty, forty, fifty, sixty. They then get rid of the dasa akusal ["ten bad actions", another list of sins: these lists are not mutually exclusive - the story is not strictly logical] and other bad things till in due course the maximum life-span rises to infinity (sic). But this is not a suitable time for a Buddha to be born, as men witness no death or decay and so see no reason to do pin. It is when the paramāyusa goes down again to eighty thousand years that the time is ripe. Then the Bodhisattva who is

[just about] to become a Buddha buduvēna bodhisattvayō
is always born in the Tusīpura divyaloka [another of the
lower heavens, called in Sanskrit the Tuṣita heaven].

Then the gods invite him to be born on earth saying

Kālo 'yaṃ te Mahāvira uppajja mātu kucchiyaṃ
Sadevakaṃ tārāyanto bujjhessu amataṃ padaṃ.¹

This is the time for you, great hero, to be reborn
in your mother's womb, and saving the whole world²
to realize the deathless state.

Thereupon the Bodhisattva looks out for a suitable occasion.

Kālaṃ deṣaṃ ca dīpaṃ ca kulaṃ matārem eva ca
Ete pañca viloketvā uppajjanti Tathāgatha³

Time, place, continent, caste⁴ and mother - after
examining these five are Tathāgatas (i.e. Buddhas) born.

Gotama Buddha was born when the maximum life-span was
one hundred and twenty, and lived to the age of eighty. The
maximum life-span has now declined to a hundred years.

The last part of this myth, which I recount exactly as I
heard it, is the episode which in chapter 3 I called "The
Gods' Invitation". There seems to be a slight discrepancy
in the myth as monk 39 recounted it, in that he says that
the appropriate time for a Buddha to be born

1. Buddhavamsa chap. I v.67 = Madhuratthavilasini p. 53 = id. p.
142 = id. p.273 = Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā I. 84. The P.T.S.
edition of the Buddhavamsa reads "Kālo deva", which is
corrected in the commentary (p.53).

2. For this meaning of sadevakaṃ in a similar context see
J. VI. 546, 1.7, 1.19, and note 3.

3. Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā I. 84 note 14, where the last word
is read as "mahāsyaṃ". For comment on the origin of
these two verses see chapter 3. p. 133.

4. The translation of kula as "caste" is on the informant's
instructions.

is when a life span is eighty thousand years, but Gotama was born when the life-span was a hundred and twenty. This can be straightened out by comparison with another account (monk 10): it is Maitrī, the next Buddha, who will appear when the maximum life-span is eighty-four thousand years. (This latter account gives the maximum life-span at present as one hundred and twenty.) Incidentally, that the Buddha did not live his full natural term agrees with the canonical account in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta¹ of his voluntary renunciation of life.

This story of the decline in world morals leading to general destruction is found in the Cakkavattisihanāda Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya,² the text which also contains the prophecy of the future Buddha Metteyya (Skt. and Sinh: Maitrī). It is generally believed that Maitrī will be the Buddha in the next world cycle, and people express the hope to be reborn (as human beings) during the period of his teaching. Monk 39 said that his two chief disciples (corresponding to Sāriyut and Mugalan for Gotama Buddha) will be Duṭṭhāmuṇu and his brother Saddhātissa, and his parents will be Duṭṭhāmuṇu's parents, Kāvantissa and Vihāra Mahā Devī. This prediction is found in the Mahāvamsa (XXXII, 81-2). The belief that Duṭṭhāmuṇu will be Maitrī's right-hand disciple is general, but some

1. DN. Sutta 16. 3.

2. DN. Sutta 26. Monk 40, who was infected by western ideas, told me that Maitri Buddha was an import from Mahayana, but he was wrong. He also ascribed to Mahayana influence the belief that the Buddha prophesied the decline of his sasana.

say that his left-hand disciple will be Devānampiya Tissa, the king under whom Buddhism came to Ceylon.

The general opinion is that Maitrī will be born after an extremely long time (a hundred thousand years? (34) ten million years? (25)), but we had better start now our preparations for that event, so that we shall then be in a fit state to receive and profit by his teaching. Mainly we must be sure to be born as humans or higher at that time. (Answers at this point reflect the great disagreement over whether gods can attain nirvāṇa.) Some (20) say vaguely that "people who have done merit" (pin karapu aya) will hear him; others lay more stress on the difficulties. One who in this cycle has committed one of the five great sins¹ will not see Maitrī. To accumulate enough merit not to be born in a hell (apaya) under Maitrī one must keep the moral precepts, do meditation etc., and one must work out one's bad karma (pav ahoṣi karanṭa) by rebirth in unpleasant existences. However, if one misses Maitrī there will still be an infinite number of Buddhas after him under whom one can obtain release. And the meanwhile can be spent in pleasant forms of rebirth. Monk 6 was the only person whom I ever heard speak of Maitrī with any fervour; generally I got the impression that monks regarded him with no more than academic interest, politely assumed for the occasion. Nor was he ever spontaneously mentioned to me by a layman.

To close this chapter I shall reproduce the eschatological opinions of monk 6, to whose eccentric doctrines and unusual poverty I have already alluded. The heterodox tenor of these

1. Killing father, mother or arhat, causing a schism in the Sangha, and shedding the blood of a Buddha.

opinions, with their strongly theistic flavour, makes it difficult to subsume them in the general scheme of this work, but even if the deviance that they represent should be no more than a quirk of personal psychology, the fact that I encountered them locally virtually obliges me to record them, and their vivid fervour makes me not sorry to do so.

The present state of religion is very low, he said. No one can now attain nivan until Maitrī comes. No laymen now observe the five precepts, while monks multiply pictures and clocks in their monasteries till they are smarter than hotels. The Buddha in Jetavanārāma lived in utter simplicity.

Only that man can be called a Buddhist who prays to reach nirvāṇa [in the time of Maitrī] (nivan labanta prārthana kalot Buddhāgankārayek, nātnam nā). Religion is ^{the use of} truth (āgama ātta paviccakirīmayi). Nirvāṇa is purity of thought (hita pīrisudu kirīma). A man who has attained nirvāṇa is no longer liable to birth, decay, sickness and death; moreover his body has no weight, so that he can fly through the air, and nothing will harm him: even if he treads on a snake, the snake will not bite him. If he takes the three refuges and observes the five precepts it is enough, for only sin weighs him down and makes him subject to mortal changes. But he cannot attain nivan without the help of Maitrī; and pina by itself is useless, for despite pin kam one may be reborn in some low state like a louse, and then what use is one's merit? So pina is ehosi, nikam (useless). We attain nirvāṇa by our prārthana and earnest wish to reach it; as this wish grows more intense

we go through the four stages on the path, till in the final stage we reach nivan, the supramundane good, which no termite or mouse, no accident can destroy (lokottara kusalata kisi veyyek, miyek kanne nā, anaturak nā).

Gotama Buddha has not yet completely seen nivan, in that he has three nivan. The first two are his original enlightenment and his parinirvāṇa. The third will come at the end of the 5,000 years for which the sāsana (doctrine) will last. For these 5,000 years the Buddha is alive in the three worlds (kāmaloka, rūpaloka, arūpaloka). At the end of this period, all relics and images of the Buddha will reassemble and join into one. (Arhats' relics etc. will not be affected.) In Ceylon every relic, every image, every picture of the Buddha will go to the Ruvanvālisāya at Anurādhapura. From Anurādhapura all these will go to Rangoon, and at the Rangoon caitya the corporeal Buddha will come to life again. Simultaneously the branch of the Bo tree at Anurādhapura will rejoin the Mahājaya bōdhinvahansē, the original Bo tree. Then the Buddha will return to the foot of the Bo tree, and seated there will preach his last sermon, for seven hours, and all the gods will come to listen. At its conclusion the Buddha will finally enter nirvāṇa, and all trace of his doctrine will have disappeared from the earth.

The final paragraph of this account is based on the same Pali commentaries as the account of the disappearance of the scriptures quoted above. According to what is probably the later of these two texts^{*1} there are three stages in the

*1 Vibhanga Aṭṭhakathā pp. 432-3.

disappearances of the doctrine: its existence (ṭhiti) (during which it continually declines), its withdrawal (osakkana), and finally its disappearance. When the Sangha has died out the stage of "withdrawal" has been reached. At this point the text, like monk 6, says that there are three nirvāṇas of the Buddha (parinibbāna): his enlightenment (kilesaparinibbāna - "extinction¹ of the defilements"), his death (khandhaparinibbāna - "extinction of the aggregates [constituents of the person]") and dhātu-parinibbāna - "extinction of the relics." All the Buddha's relics in Ceylon (here conceived only as the physical (sārīrika) relics) will indeed assemble at the Ruvanvālisāya (Mahācetiya), and then stop at Nāgadīpa, on their way over not to Burma, but of course to India. At the foot of the original Bo tree (maha-bodhi-pallanke) they will join up with the relics from the world of the Nāgas² and the various heavens, devaloka and brahmaloka. There, according to the other text³ they will reconstitute the Buddha, complete with his thirty-two major and eighty minor distinctive features, and he will perform the miracle of the pairs. (There is no mention of preaching). No human being will go there, but deities will assemble from the ten thousand world systems and lament the approaching darkness. The body will emit a flash, and disappear. The later text does not say that the relics will reconstitute the body, only that they will form a pile like a heap of gold, which will emit rays of the six colours, which will pervade ten thousand world systems. From all these world systems the deities (dēvata) will assemble for a last look; then the flash from the relics goes up as far as the Brahmaloka, they vanish, and "the doctrine has truly disappeared (sasanaṃ antarahitaṃ nama hoti)".

1. In this context parinibbāna is clearly so to be rendered.
2. According to the verses at the very end of the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta DN. II. 167 the Nagas have a tooth.
3. Anguttara-Aṭṭhakatha I. 91.

Chapter 8

CASTE IN THE MONASTERY

"The structure of Sinhalese society was based mainly on the institution of caste. Is caste in accordance with Buddhism?"¹

Dr. G.C. Mendis the employment of monks in salaried positions. Of these six features Although in the Introduction I stated ~~that~~ that my main interest was in religious change, the main tenor of this work has been to demonstrate that Sinhalese Buddhism has been surprisingly conservative. Before summarizing my conclusions in a final chapter, I wish therefore to quote an example of what indeed has been a striking change, certainly since the time of the Buddha and probably even since the time of Buddha^{One}ghosa, which has so far been our basis for comparison on most points. Obiter dicta - e.g. allusions to sectarianism and to monastic ^{One}possessions - will already have suggested to the reader that I have found more evidence for change in the practices of the Sangha than in doctrinal belief - that change has been organizational rather than ideological. Anyone who approaches modern Buddhism in any Theravāda country after a study of "primitive Buddhism" through canonical texts or such excellent secondary sources on the early Sangha as Sukumar Dutt's Early Buddhist Monachism² is immediately struck by these changes in monastic

1. Ceylon To-day and Yesterday, Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, Colombo 1957, p. 110.

2. 2nd. ed., Asia Publishing House, London 1960.

life. The most striking ones in Ceylon are: the holding of often considerable property by monasteries; the custom of passing pupillary succession to a relative, who thus effectively inherits the monastic property; the invasion of the Order by caste, and its division into parallel groups (Nikāyas) split mainly on caste lines; the virtual disappearance of the alms-round (pindapāta); the entry of monks into politics; the employment of monks in salaried positions. Of these six features the former three can properly be called organizational, while the latter three more strictly concern the conduct of monks as individuals. The disappearance of the alms-round has already been discussed in chapter 7; I shall here discuss caste, which will involve some reference to the first two features, but for further data on these questions I must refer the reader to my Appendix ^{One} 7 and Bibliography. To the participation of my informants in politics I hope to devote a separate article, for which the raw material is likewise presented in Appendix ^{One} 7; I cannot here go into the question whether such participation is justifiable, beyond remarking that whenever Ceylon has had Buddhist rulers monks have held political power. On monks' salaries I have hardly any data: no monks normally resident in my area were employed, though I interviewed one (32) who was. Moreover, in all Ceylon only a small minority of monks hold salaried positions, while monastic participation in politics, ten years ago the pastime of a small minority, is still not universal. Similarly, not all monasteries hold property, and

only a very few have any considerable wealth, while the passing on of such property to relatives is very far from universal. The pervasion of monastic organization by caste is however complete.¹ But this is not my only reason for choosing to talk about caste rather than any other feature of monastic change. Nor is my decision primarily determined by the fact that others of the features listed have recently been written on.² My main reason for choosing the caste question is that it has the greatest ideological significance. Unlike the customs concerning property and succession it is admitted by traditionalists to be doctrinally indefensible, and it is of course heartily attacked by modernists. Some modernists go so far as to say that the Buddha was against caste altogether: this is not the case, but is one of the mistakes picked up from western authors. As their belief is so prevalent I shall give more space than has been my custom to examining the ideas on caste found in the Pali Canon, before describing the entry of caste into the Sangha and the opinions of my informants on the subject.

The standard work on the Sinhalese caste system is Caste in Modern Ceylon by Bryce Ryan;³ chapter 9 (pp. 196-238)

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1. I except a couple of "modernizing" monasteries, which have no significance at all for a study of traditional Buddhism.
 2. Hans-Dieter Evers, "Kinship and Property Rights in a Buddhist Monastery in central Ceylon", unpublished article, 1966; Heinz Bechert, op. cit., especially chapters 25 (on the organization and legal position of the Sangha and its temporalities) and 29 (on monks in Ceylonese politics).
 3. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick N.J. 1953.

of his book, "Caste in the Kandyan Highlands", is especially relevant to my experience; indeed the section of this chapter called "Caste in the Simple High Caste Village" (pp. 204-211) might almost have been written about Migala. The chapter on caste (pp. 58-95) in Nur Yalman's book, Under the Bo Tree,¹ and his paper "The Flexibility of Caste Principles in a Kandyan Community" in E.R. Leach (ed.) Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon, and North West Pakistan² are based on field work in an area not far from my own. These are more detailed and technical works; I shall present here only such facts about Sinhalese caste as are relevant for a discussion of the relation of caste to Buddhism; my picture moreover is based on my own field experience, and thus differs in some details from previously published materials.

The Sinhalese caste system is historically and conceptually related to the Indian; but there are fewer castes, and there is less scope for ritual pollution through the violation of caste tabus than in India. The social distances between most of the castes are very small, and indeed are so unobtrusive in their operation that casual visitors to Ceylon are hardly aware of

1. University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967.
2. Cambridge Papers in Social Anthropology, no. 2, C.U.P., Cambridge 1960, pp. 78-111. This interesting paper is more concerned to analyze than to describe behaviour; some of its main conclusions are convincingly queried by Leach in his introduction to the volume. A good succinct description of the manifestations of caste distinctions may be found on pp. 91-3 of the book. For the rest the chapter mainly repeats material from the paper, adding little or nothing of importance except for some solecisms so bad as to make one wonder: durāva are not lime-burners (pp. 60 and 86) but toddy-tappers; how on earth can bhikkhus (who are mis-spelled throughout the book) be the top Sinhalese "caste category" (p. 61)?

caste, though the effect on attitudes, which find expression for instance in political activity, is more far-reaching. By comparison with India there is far less inequality. This is partly because among the Sinhalese, as they see it, both the top and the bottom strata of Hindu society are missing. Of the four classical Hindu classes of brahmins, warriors, agriculturalists with traders, and menial castes (brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, sūdra), the Sinhalese lack the first two: their highest caste, goyigama or goyikula, consists of goviyō or rice cultivators. This top caste, in striking contrast to the Hindu situation, is by far the largest: in fact in the area where I worked, as perhaps in Sinhalese society at large, it had an absolute majority of the population. The goyigama is the only caste found in the hill country which contains sub-divisions, but in most contexts these are not important, and all goyigama are known among themselves as "good men" (hoḥḍa minissu), in distinction to the "lesser castes" (adu kula). At the other end of the traditional social scale, the Sinhalese hardly have anyone to correspond to the vast array of Hindu out-castes (who among the Tamils in Ceylon may be as numerous as those within caste lines). The goyigama are sometimes equated with vaiśyas. This has considerable historical justification. The Sinhalese words goyi and govi are derived from the Pali gahapati, which literally means "householder". Socially it means something like "bourgeois".

In his study¹ of the society depicted in the Jātukas Fick showed that the word vaiśya was never used to describe actual people, but the term gahapati denoted those who stood in the social structure below the nobility and above the artisans, i.e. where we would have expected to find the vaiśya. All the Sinhalese castes below goyigama are considered, by those who bother their heads about such matters, to correspond to Hindu sūdras (the menial castes), until we come to the rodi at the very bottom. I have not heard the rodi explicitly equated with modern Hindu out-castes, but they are regularly equated with the lowest class in ancient times, the candālas who occur in canonical texts and the Mahāvamsa as out-castes (i.e. below sūdras), so I think the equation could properly be taken a step further. The rodi are beyond the pale of traditional Sinhalese society, the only caste to be "significantly differentiated culturally";² they seem not even to have been allowed into Buddhist temples - a point to which I shall return. There are interesting myths about their origin, which all concur in claiming that the rodi have been degraded from high (royal) status for some heinous offence, e.g. eating human flesh. Traditionally rodi are itinerant beggars, and they are rarely if ever refused, because it is held that their curses are singularly potent. By an extension of this useful

1. R. Fick, Die Sociale Gliederung in Nordöstlichen Indien zu Buddha's Zeit, Haeseler, Kiel 1897.

2. Ryan, op. cit., p. 16.

belief, rodi are considered experts in black magic. However, their existence does not much disturb the comparative homogeneity of Sinhalese society, because they are extremely few, between 1500 and 3000. Most of them have now settled in rodi villages (kuppāyama), and in fact I never saw one in my area, where their place at the bottom of the social ladder was taken by exceptionally depressed Tamils. Before I give a brief description of the operation of caste distinctions in Mīgala, I would like to make a brief excursus into the history of the caste system in Ceylon. In this history different types of social stratification seem to have existed in different periods, all of them usually called "caste" by European scholars; rather than use question-begging terms like "caste" and "class" we might do better to employ some such neutral term as "status group"; but for simplicity I shall here keep to conventional terminology. The Mahāvamsa and Cūlavamsa preserve intact the old Pali terminology according to which society is divided into the four classes brāhmaṇa, ksatriya, vaiśya, sūdra, and the out-castes beneath them; but, as in post-vedic India, this division seems to have been primarily theoretical, and there were in fact many more than four status groups. There were never many brahmins in Ceylon, but one village still has the name Bamuṇugama, which means "brahmin village", so there must have been a few. Ksatriyas were the nobles, the royal and potentially royal families, and they seem to have been divided into clans.

1. Ralph Pieris, Sinhalese Social Organization, The Ancient Period, Ceylon University Press Board, Colombo 1956, is the standard work on Kandyan society, and is unlikely to be superseded.

The terms vaiśya and sūdra did not correspond to any clear-cut social units, even in the ancient period, but various groups were subsumed under each term, and possibly the vaiśyas were farmers and the sūdras artisans, as is theoretically prescribed, though I know of no clear evidence for this. In medieval times (say 500-1500 A.D.), though society was still said to consist of the four classes, this classification seems to have become irrelevant, and the Cūlavamsa usually divides society into kulīnā ("people of family") and hīnā ("inferiors"), the former apparently being the nobility, the latter the common people. The modern caste groupings are never mentioned in the chronicles, which give very scanty information about the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, supplying only a bare outline of their political and religious history; nor are there any other sources to supply us with data on Kandyan society till the European accounts.

The Kandyan system,¹ which is known to us principally from the account of Robert Knox (see pp. 32-33) in the late seventeenth century and, in more detail, from nineteenth century official British observations and reports, was a centralized feudalism in which the king had a basic right to all land, and granted some villages to nobles, temples and shrines, while other lands were held directly under the crown by the village cultivators. But in all cases in return for the land which they cultivated the villagers gave service (rājakāriya), either to the court,

~~and certain groups to undertake certain professions.~~

1. Ralph Pieris, Sinhalese Social Organization. The Kandyan Period, Ceylon University Press Board, Colombo 1956, is the standard work on Kandyan society, and is unlikely to be superseded.

directly or through an administrative official, or to the nobleman or the religious institution which functioned as landlord. In the Kandyan period brahmins and ksatriyas have completely disappeared from Sinhalese society, except in so far as the kings, who latterly were imported from S. India, claimed ksatriya status. Society was thus divided into two principal classes, goyigama farmers and the service castes, identified by the learned as vaiśya and śūdra respectively; but although goyigama people still call themselves "good" and the rest "inferior" this dichotomy does not correspond directly to the medieval one between the kulīnā and the hīnā, if only because, as far as we can tell, the kulīnā were a clear minority of the people, whereas the goyigama were and are an absolute majority. On the other hand there is not the slightest doubt that in the Kandyan period all castes, including the goyigama, were differentiated by occupation; in other words they were professional groups. I am not asserting that occupation was in all cases the original factor of demarcation between groups. Some of the castes were originally ethnic groups, bodies of immigrants from South India; but such groups adopted particular occupations, which came to characterize them. (The same phenomenon continues to-day; e.g. all Pathan immigrants seem to be money-lenders.) How groups came by their professions is not entirely mysterious, for we know of cases in which the king ordered certain groups to undertake certain professions. Ralph

Pieris writes:¹

... in Kandyan times it was considered the lawful function of the king to ordain appropriate functions to various castes: he could also degrade certain villages or families of high caste to a lower status, and there are certain degraded gattara villages [gattara are the so-called goyigama out-castes, the lowest sub-caste of goyigama] in existence to this day. The caste system thus acquired a certain flexibility, and certain groups of people performing specialized functions became, in effect, separate castes - the halāgama people for instance [who became cinnamon pickers, and are now so known] were weavers imported from India some seven hundred years ago.²

I would add that we do not know how many of the Kandyan caste groups, which indeed survive to-day, existed as groups before the Kandyan period; it is even possible that the majority of the castes were created by royal decree. Notice also that the social groups so created have long survived the disappearance of the Kandyan state. The caste system of the Kandyan feudal period is gradually being superseded by the class system of a more mobile and industrialized society, in which wealth, education and power (especially association with the government) confer prestige, but this development has not yet had far-reaching effects on Kandyan village life.

Though the central government and its modern apparatus replaced the court in 1815, a few villages are still owned by

1. Op. cit., p. 180.

2. See also Ryan, op. cit., pp. 108-9.

nobles, temples or shrines. The present government has announced its intention of finally abolishing the noblemen's feudal villages (nindāgam), but vested interests on both sides of the House are in no hurry to pass legislation to this effect and the institution is likely to survive for some time. Moreover, the abolition of nindāgam need not involve villages owned by vihāras (vihāragam) or by dēvālēs (dēvālayagam). Mīgala temple, for instance, owns and will doubtless continue to own most of the rice fields of a village higher in the hills. Such ownership means that the temple gets half the produce from a large block of rice fields; the other half goes to the cultivators who in return also perform services for the temple, which nowadays are virtually confined to ritual drumming. Nowadays if you ask a monk whether his temple has rājakārayō (feudal villeins) he will probably understand the term to mean drummers who are obliged to give their services (rather than hire them out as free agents), whereas formerly the term would have covered all service castes - washermen, smiths, jaggery makers etc. There are in Ceylon, and have been at least since the seventeenth century, some two dozen castes, but only about half of these are found in any number in the hill country. The only castes in the village where I worked were gōyigama ~~rice~~ farmers (a good 80%, including one family of its top sub-caste, radala, which owned a lot of the village rice-fields), washermen, carriers, and a family of drummers. Other castes found in the area of my research were jaggery makers, potters, and smiths. As mentioned

in the Introduction, there were in the village, but in descending order peripheral to its society, Tamils, Moslems, and Low Country Sinhalese, but my remarks apply to local, that is Kandyan, families. Living as I did in a village so predominantly goyigama, with washermen, who are the most leniently treated of the low castes, the largest minority group, I probably have a rather rosy picture of inter-caste relations among the laity. Ryan and Yalman record more discriminatory behaviour. But there are many Kandyan villages of caste structure similar to my own, so my experiences are unlikely to be completely atypical.

There is no visible difference between members of different castes. In the Kandyan kingdom there were distinctions of dress, but these were gradually outlawed by the British or eroded by western contact; for instance, it used to be forbidden for low-caste women to wear blouses, but this mark of social degradation now has no legal sanction, and is confined to itinerant rodi beggars, rarely seen in the area, and low-caste Tamil women from the estates. There is free social intercourse between all the poorer Sinhalese members of the village; people are quite likely to drop in on members of another caste for a chat, although it is unusual to pass beyond the verandah. (Members of different castes do not pay on each other those formal calls which Ryan calls "inter-family visiting", but such visits altogether hardly occur except on ritual occasions, i.e. maybe as little as once a year.) The only houses definitely outside this social round are those of the two richest families in the village, one of them the

radala mentioned above, the equivalent to the lord of the manor, the other an unpopular parvenu with a white-collar job in Kandy; both these houses are distinctive, in their very different styles, by their size and situation. Even among the rest of the villagers it might be found that social familiarity went more by wealth and influence, i.e. "class", than by caste, although as most or all members of one caste in a given village are also relations, who naturally see more of each other, this is hard to assess. Within the framework of this ease in casual intercourse certain distinctions are unvarying and taken for granted. A lower caste person must sit on a lower seat, someone lower still must stand: the drummer family, being the lowest caste in my village, stood in the presence of anyone else. The drummer had become comparatively wealthy by growing vegetables on temple lands leased to him and he rented out a house to a schoolmaster, who was goyigama; but the schoolmaster, a man who had spent a year in the West, told me he could not bring himself to offer his landlord a seat when he came to see him and so he avoided having him in the house at all. Yet he teaches pupils of all castes seated indiscriminately, and I never found children who sit together at school unwilling to do so elsewhere. A high-caste person will not accept food or drink from a low-caste person, though he will accept a chew of betel, which keeps things sociable: he may offer a lower-caste visitor refreshment, but in a vessel which he does not use himself, e.g. a chipped cup; most often tea, the standard drink, is offered in a coconut shell

which is then thrown away. To what extent these distinctions are observed among the low-caste (non-goyigama) I cannot say; I am sure that they used to be, but nowadays low-caste people are becoming an articulate and often solid minority, increasingly opposed to caste discrimination, and their opposition may gradually extend to discrimination from their inferiors as well as from their superiors. Marriage outside the caste is still very rare; there was one case in Mīgala, a goyigama woman married a low-caste man, but he was from Colombo and worked far away, so that he was rarely seen in the village. He was also a communist trade union official - a typical syndrome. Predictably this girl was generally regarded as a bad lot, but to us, perhaps because we were westerners known to care little about caste, her badness was said to consist in her communism, which was purely marital, and her private life, which was subject to various unsavoury rumours, not all of which, I suspect, were untrue. However, this woman was not boycotted by everyone in the village, nor as far as I know was she considered to have lost caste, a leniency in striking contrast to custom under the kings of Kandy, where in theory at least, marriage to a man of lower caste was punished by death. Her children would be ascribed to their father's caste, but will probably move to the anonymity of Colombo, or at least to a government post far away where their antecedents are not known.

Despite the paucity of easily identifiable forms of discrimination, it must not be thought that villagers are for a

moment unaware of caste distinctions. My evidence is linguistic. There are in Sinhalese several personal pronouns of address and reference, graded by status, as well as various forms of address: for instance, an equal or superior is not normally addressed by name. A person's attitude to caste is thus discernible in the pronouns he uses. My experience here is alas rather limited, especially as I myself always used polite forms for low-caste people, so that my interlocutors might politely adopt my style; however, I think that goyigama adults rarely address, and among themselves never refer to, low-caste members of their village as equals. There are of course degrees of inferiority, and I have heard the lowest pronoun, "ū", which is primarily used for animals, used to refer to a low-caste person, though it is very rude for anyone, however socially exalted, to use this form to another person's face. The only time I heard this done was by a young monk, avowedly a communist, to an old service drummer with whom he was annoyed, and it had a most unpleasant ring. This brings us back to Buddhism, and it is time for me to consider the Buddha's own attitude towards caste, as manifested in the Pali canon.

In the Buddha's environment (north-east India round 500 B.C.) the caste system was by no means so rigid and elaborate as it has become in India, or even in Ceylon - in fact sociologists who claim to have found an essence of caste and do not find this essence in ancient India may deny that ancient India had a "true caste system" - and so we must not expect to find

in the scriptures pronouncements dealing with precisely the situation obtaining to-day. The four great classes of brāhmana, ksatriya, vaiśya and sūdra, to which I referred earlier, as well as the out-castes below these, already existed. There were also a few domestic slaves (as was also the case in the Sinhalese kingdom) who could in theory come from any caste though I suspect that they usually came from low castes; what their caste position in servitude was is not quite clear, but from a reference in a slightly later Sanskrit text, the Arthaśāstra, which says that high-caste slaves could not be compelled to do defiling duties, it seems that like their later Sinhalese equivalents they were not necessarily degraded. The institution of slavery, a peripheral phenomenon in Indian civilisation, should be treated with caste because the children of slaves were also slaves (unless specifically manumitted), so that their status was wholly ascribed, not achieved. There was neither intermarriage (though hypergamy seems to have been allowed after the first wife) nor commensality between all members of one class, and a fortiori not between members of different classes, so the modern system was beginning to appear, but we lack details. Hindu law-books, of a slightly later date but pre-dating the modern system, show that ideally people followed the profession of their fathers, but there was provision for a different way of life in misfortune (āpad dharma), by which for instance a brahmin could engage in trade without losing caste.

In north-east India, the area where Buddhism arose, the major question of the day seems to have been whether brāhmaṇa or ksatriya, priest or warrior, spiritual or secular power, was the higher caste. Further to the west the brahmins had already established their supremacy. The Buddha however, came from a tribe in the Himalayan foothills, the Śākya, who claimed ksatriya status. There is a Buddhist tradition that Buddhas are born into either the brāhmaṇa or the ksatriya caste, whichever is higher at the time. Most of the Buddha's sermons dealing with caste are concerned with the problem, "Who is the true brahmin?". Some western interpreters have jumped too quickly to the conclusion that the Buddha ethicized the concept of caste and argued against all such social distinctions. He did ethicize the concept, but he did not argue against the continuing use of the social distinction within its own context; moreover, this ethicization is only half the story. In one text¹ a caste-proud young brahmin is insolent to the Buddha and disparages the Śākya. The first half of the Buddha's response shows the brahmin that ksatriyas are superior to brahmins, for they are more rigorous and exclusive; for instance, if we are to believe the text, a ksatriya outlawed by his own caste would be ritually acceptable to the brāhmaṇas, whereas the converse would not hold. The second half then proceeds to expound the often-repeated doctrine that holiness is not inherited but acquired, that the true brahmin is not a born brāhmaṇa but someone

1. Ambattha Sutta, DN sutta 3.

who has achieved enlightenment. Obviously the Buddha preferred to argue from strength; had he merely told the brahmin that birth was irrelevant he would have been open to the charge of "sour grapes". Similarly, in an amusing mythical account¹ of the origin of the social order, the Buddha heartens two young brahmin converts, who are being reviled by brahmins for associating with him and the other monks, by telling them that the ksatriya order is top because it came first, from men selected to govern the rest; at the same time he is at pains to point out that they were chosen from among equals as primi inter pares. But in talking of laymen the Buddha does not go much further than saying:² "Not by birth is one a brahmin, not by birth an out-caste; by deeds is one a brahmin, by deeds an out-caste." Inter-caste behaviour is not mentioned in discourses on lay ethics, and there are certainly no exhortations to social equality. Indeed, caste is accepted as a fact of life on a par with other forms of status; to be reborn in a low and unimportant family is the result of demerit in this life, typically of failing to respect those of superior status.³

1. Aggañña Sutta, DN sutta 27.

2. Sutta Nipāta 136.

3. Cūla Kammavibhanga Sutta, MN sutta 135. Other texts dealing with caste, not here discussed, are the Madhura Sutta (MN sutta 84) and the Assalayana Sutta (MN sutta 93).

1. DN. I. 99-100 (Aggañña Sutta 2.1).

Questions of inter-caste ethics among laymen seem to have been confined in primitive Buddhism to rivalry between ksatriyas and brahmins for the top position. In all Buddhist texts, contrary to practice elsewhere, ksatriyas are mentioned first when the four castes are listed. Presumably the Buddha's repudiation of ritual, by denigrating the brahmins' religious importance, involved also a denigration of their social importance. Buddhist ethics show a general tendency to esteem wealth and power, rather than birth, as criteria of worldly success, and I see the raising of the ksatriya above the brahmin as fitting into this pattern. However, those who lead the holy life are supposed to pass beyond such rivalries and distinctions. The Buddha draws the line: "In the supreme perfection of wisdom and righteousness there is no mention of notions of birth, of lineage, or of the snobbery which says 'You are as good as I' or 'You are not as good as I'. It is when there is marriage or giving in marriage that there is mention of such notions. For whoever are bound by notions of birth, of lineage, of snobbery or of marriage ties are far from the supreme perfection of wisdom and righteousness. Only having got rid of the bondage of these notions may one realize this supreme perfection."¹

Monks and nuns could come from any caste. This was apparently not a Buddhist innovation, but traditional among those who "went forth to the homeless life" and became hermits or

1. DN. I. 99-100 (Ambattha Sutta 2.1).

2. Sutta Samyutta, Vesala Sutta, prose introduction 1. 7.

3. Sutta Samyutta, Issaraha Sutta, 241.

wandering ascetics. In the aetiological myth just referred to the Buddha says that members of all four orders became the first ascetics. In the Jātakas we hear of a potter¹ and a candāla (out-caste)² who became non-Buddhist ascetics.

That all castes were admitted to the Sangha is stressed both by the Buddhists and by their brahmin opponents, who call them menial, dark-skinned sūdras, or even address the Buddha himself as an out-caste,³ which from their ritual standpoint he was, because of his contacts with out-castes. We know of several monks and nuns that they were low-born, and Upāli, the monk who was the greatest authority on the monastic rules (vinaya) had been a barber, one of the lowest occupations. As for their relations with the laity, monks were told to accept food from anyone⁴ (the doctrine is ascribed to Kassapa, a former Buddha, but I see no significance in this) so they did not recognize ritual impurity in laymen any more than they did among themselves. The Buddha's last meal was a dinner of pork given him by a smith. Most likely conjecture is that this

In no other respect has Buddhism in Ceylon come so far from its original state as in the invasion of the Order by caste, yet another testimony to the remarkable strength of that insidious institution. By most monks the contradiction is realized and admitted; it is not a subject on which they are

1. J. III 381. Says that the former monastery was entered by an

2. J. IV 392. ... the latter by ... This would show

3. Sutta Nipāta, Vasala Sutta, prose introduction 1. 7.

4. Sutta Nipāta, Āmagandha Sutta, 241.

happy to talk. This shame shows that doctrinally they have not changed, though I shall recount one remarkable piece of sophistry, a reinterpretation of a scripture just quoted. Behaviour however is now completely at variance with the original doctrine in all the points I have set out concerning the internal conduct of the Order, as well as in the conduct of many monks towards the laity. probably so in India

There are two pieces of evidence to suggest that caste discrimination within the Sangha is ancient in Ceylon. The introduction to a Jātaka story told by the Buddha says that the occasion for the story was a dispute when monks who had been ksatriyas and brahmins claimed preferential treatment in the monastery. This introduction is commentatorial, and in its present form was written in Ceylon about the fifth century A.D., ~~B.C.~~, but the commentator surely did not invent it himself. At the same time I doubt whether the tradition goes back more than the 700 years which would take its origin back to India rather than Ceylon. The most likely conjecture is that this episode reflects conditions very early in the history of Ceylonese Buddhism. The other piece of evidence has more radical implications but is less certain. Two of the monasteries founded during Mahinda's mission were called in Pali Issarasamanaka and Vessagiri, which names mean respectively "That which has ascetics who are lords" and "The hill of the Vaiśyas". The Mahāvamsa (XX, 14-15) says that the former monastery was entered by men from noble families, the latter by vaiśyas. This would show

caste differentiation on what we shall see is the modern pattern. I say that the evidence is uncertain because the Mahāvamsa was composed over 600 years after the events described, albeit on the basis of earlier materials, and its author may be conjecturing the origin of place names. If however he is right, this would suggest to me not merely that monks in Ceylon were always divided on caste lines, but that this was probably so in India at that time, some 250 years after the Buddha's death; for I cannot believe that Mahinda would have sanctioned so radical an innovation.

However, there is absolutely no clear evidence for subsequent caste discrimination in the Sangha during the Anurādhapura and Polonnaruva periods. The origin of the restriction of entry to the Siyam Nikāya to the goyigama caste is the subject of much learned controversy.¹ Though the Siyam Nikāya was founded in 1753, the custom has far older roots. The first reference to the problem occurs in the Daṁbadeni Kātikāvata,² dated 1266, which says that at the upasampadā (higher ordination) ceremony the ordinand is to be asked his caste.³

1. For the bibliography on this question see Bechert, op. cit., note 739 (p. 216).

2. A kātikāvata is a decree promulgated by a Mahāsaṅghasabhā, a council of monks, and (before 1815) approved by the king, which comments on or modifies vinaya rules, and has the force of ecclesiastical law within the Nikāya in which it is promulgated.

3. Published in D.B. Jayatilaka (ed.), Kātikāvata saṅgarā, Colombo 1922, p. 9.

4. Knox, op. cit., p. 117.

The Portuguese historian Queyroz, writing in the 1670s,¹ says that only men of noble birth (appuhāmis) became monks.² Knox in the same period reports likewise: "the only people admitted into the Sangha are "persons of the most noble birth, and that have learning and be well bred".³ Both these passages suggest that only goyigama men became monks. However, at the great upasampadā ceremony in Kandy in 1753 ordination was not in fact restricted to members of the goyigama caste: among the ordinands were a member of the durāva (toddy-tappers) caste, Siṭināmaluvē Dhammajoti, who became incumbent of the famous ancient monastery of Mulkirigala in the Southern Province, and Vēhāllē Dhammadinna, who by caste was a drummer (beravā). These two were both pupils of Vālivīṭa Saraṇamkara, and most leading monks in the Low Country Siyam Nikāya to-day trace their pupillary succession back to them. However in about 1765 a royal decree, claiming that unworthy monks had been ordained, restricted the holding of upasampadā ceremonies to the monasteries of Malvatta and Asgiṭiya in Kandy. Such a restriction is contrary to the vinaya rules, but has been in force ever since. Though peculiar to Ceylon, it has been copied by the other Nikāyas; they all restrict ordination ceremonies to Nikāya headquarters. Its purpose must have been to tighten central control, in particular royal control, over the Sangha; whether caste had anything to

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1. I am indebted to Mr. K. Malalgoda for almost all the information in the following paragraph.
 2. F. de Queyroz, The Temporal and Spiritual Conquest of Ceylon, trans. S.G. Perera, Government Press, Colombo 1930, p. 114.
 3. Knox, op. cit., p. 117.

do with it we cannot tell, but the fact that the king, Kīrti Śrī Rājasimha, issued a katikāvata repeating the above-mentioned extract from the Daṃbadeṇi Katikāvata inclines one to suspect it. Already in 1769 monks replying to a questionnaire from the Dutch governor of the coastal provinces stated that according to the vinaya any caste was allowed in the Sangha, but that in fact admission was restricted to high caste men. John Davy, who was in Kandy from 1816 to 1820, reports that only goyigama men can become monks.¹ There are cases between 1773 and 1798 of novices from the fisher (karāva) caste which ranks second to the goyigama, receiving the upasampadā, but these seem to have been exceptions allowed on orders from the head (Mahānāyaka) of the chapter.²

It was in 1798 that Aṃbagahapitīyē Nānavimalatissa, a member of the cinnamon-picking (salāgama) caste, went to Burma to be ordained; on his return in 1802 he founded the Amarapura Nikāya. He was soon imitated by members of the fisher (karāva) and toddy-tapping (durāva) caste. These three castes are virtually confined to the Low Country, and are there reckoned below only goyigama in status. The Amarapura Nikāya thus contains several ordination traditions (paramparā). In 1864 the Ramañña Nikāya was similarly founded by Aṃbagahavattē Indāsabhavarañña.

If the Amarapura Nikāya contains more than one ordination tradition, it may well be asked what it is that constitutes a

1. John Davy, An Account of the Interior of Ceylon, Longman, London 1821, p. 219.

2. For exceptions to the goyigama rule in this period see the bibliography in Bechert, op. cit., note 740 (p. 219).

Nikāya. The answer to this question is complicated, but only because the word nikāya has come to have two closely related but distinct uses. In the Introduction was described how throughout most of the Anurādhapura period there were in Ceylon three nikāyas, so that the term "the three nikayas" was locally synonymous with "the Sangha". It may be this historical fact which has determined the modern usage of referring once again to "the three Nikāyas", by which is meant the Siyam, Amarapura, and Rāmañña Nikāyas. (In this sense I am spelling Nikāya with a capital N, and not italicizing it.¹) This usage is universal and has some organizational correlates. From the point of view of ordination tradition, however, none of these Nikāyas is a unity. Nor is its origin the crucial criterion for establishing what is a nikāya in the narrow, technical sense of the word. A nikāya is a body of monks with a head (mahānāyaka) which holds independent upasampadā ceremonies for its novices, whether the line of pupillary succession has been renewed from abroad or there has merely been a fissure caused by a group of monks stating their autonomy. A nikāya in fact can be said to exist when it has been recognized by the Registrar General.²

A list of the nikāyas, based principally on the report of the Śāsana Commission,³ appears on pp. 263-265 of Bechert's book. Only the Amarapura Nikāya contains nikāyas in the true sense.

1. Keeping these Nikāyas in Roman letters has the further advantage of differentiating them from the four Nikāyas (Dīgha etc.) of the Sutta Pitaka.
2. This point was explained by Arnold Green at the conference held on Ceylon in Philadelphia, August 1967.
3. Buddha śāsana komisan vārtāva, Colombo 1959, pp. 29-49.

The Siyam Nikaya has sub-divisions, but these are geographical; although upasampadā are held in their own headquarters by all the sub-divisions listed, this is said to be purely a matter of tradition (in the exceptional case of Malvatta and Asgiriya) or of convenience, and the sub-divisions are called not nikāya but pārsva (translated by Bechert as "Zweig").¹ Although Bechert does not mention this in his list, the Rāmañña Nikāya is similarly divided on geographical lines into the Kandyan branch (Uda rata pārsvaya) and the Low Country branch (pāta rata pārsvaya), though in this case all members of the Nikāya take their upasampadā together. As Bechert remarks in his note 718 (pp. 212-213), there are also some monasteries in Ceylon which do not belong to any Nikāya: these are the creations of modernists, often Europeans, and need not concern us.

There are absolutely no differences in doctrine between the three Nikāyas, merely a few differences in customs. These are listed by Bechert on p. 215. The Siyam Nikāya, as he points out, carries on the old Ceylonese traditions, whereas the other two Nikāyas have imported some customs from Burma. The Rāmañña Nikāya, the most recently formed, has not entirely lost its original reformatory zeal, and its monks, like those of some small Amarapura nikāyas with similar origins, observe the vinaya rules more strictly in certain particulars, also mentioned by Bechert.

1. The Uvē Sīmāvamsīka Nikāya (Bechert's I d) is however called a nikāyā. I do not know whether it is also called a pārsva.
 2. Bechert, *op. cit.*, p. 220, inc. note 743.

The main principle of differentiation between nikāyas is however caste. In general this is well known both to western scholars and within Ceylon; but I found a state of affairs more extreme than that reported by Bechert, whose work on the subject is the most complete and up-to-date published.¹ Between the various branches of the Siyam Nikāya I know of no caste differences, though it is rumoured that certain monasteries in Malvatta and Asgiriya (which are really two groups of monasteries sharing certain facilities) admit only radalas, the top goyigama sub-caste. That the Amarapura Nikāya is divided mainly on caste lines was already stated by Ryan in a passage quoted by Bechert (pp. 219-220).² It does not normally recruit from the goyigama or the very low castes, though in this certain nikāyas are exceptional (see below). Bechert, following Ryan,³ is wrong in stating that the Rāmañña Nikāya is casteless, even though this was its original intention. It is generally believed in Ceylon that the Rāmañña Nikāya occupies an intermediate social position between the other two Nikāyas, and this appears to be correct. I cannot confirm or refute the popular opinion that in the Low Country it recruits predominantly from the top two castes, goyigama and karāva; I was however told by

1. Professor Arnold Green of Rochester Univ. N.Y., has a vast amount of material on the organization of the Amarapura Nikāya, based on field work in Ceylon 1960-61, but this is unfortunately not yet published at the time of writing.

2. Ryan's conjecture near the end of the extract that some of the Amarapura schisms were on doctrinal lines seems to be without foundation.

3. Bechert, op. cit., p. 220, inc. note 743.

all the Rāmañña monks whom I interviewed (and am sure it is true) that the Kandyan (uda rata) branch admits only goyigama men, just like the Siyam Nikāya. Indeed, caste has penetrated the Rāmañña Nikāya so deeply that one of their young monks (30) tried to convince me that they are socially superior to the Siyam Nikāya, claiming (untruly) that the Siyam Nikāya admit some low-caste men while the Rāmañña does not. True indifference to caste is however popularly, and no doubt correctly, ascribed to the famous monastery Vajirārāma in Bañbalapiṭiya, a part of Colombo, which constitutes an independent branch (nikāya) of the Amarapura Nikāya called the Śrī-Dharmarakṣitavaṃśa-Nikāya. Though this nikāya was founded in 1817, the Vajirārāma has become, more than any other monastery in Ceylon, a centre of Buddhist modernism, and is thoroughly untypical. It is deeply involved in Buddhist propaganda abroad and movements for reform at home. Here several men previously eminent in lay life have entered the Order, irrespective of caste, and an Amarapura monk (monk 4) told me in a confidential tone that five of the Vajirārāma monks are rodi; others however (e.g. monk 9) were most sceptical of this information.

In reviewing the answers I got to my questions about caste I must distinguish between the members of the three Nikāyas, because the six Amarapura monks were themselves low-caste while the rest were goyigama, and the Rāmañña Nikāya has an official policy of castelessness while the Siyam Nikāya does not. Common to all however was a readiness to describe the differences between

the three Nikāyas in terms of caste; a couple of monks (20, 42) delicately referred to varying "customs" (sirit pirit). The answers of Amarapura monks held no surprises: they were against caste altogether (see especially monk 25), said they made no distinctions even against rodi, and in support of their views even (monk 27) cited the passage from the passage given above from the Vasala Sutta: "Not by birth is one a brahmin...". Even they however made no bones about stating that the Nikāyas are mainly differentiated by caste (e.g. monk 34). As might be expected, they were perhaps readier than the Siyam Nikāya monks to claim social intercourse (āsraya) with the other Nikāyas, if such a statement can be made on the basis of so small a sample.

The attitude of monks of the Siyam Nikāya towards caste ranged from monk 38, who thought all caste distinctions were false and wrong ("boru vādak") to the unquestioning acceptance of many monks, especially the older ones, coupled perhaps with some dismay at the disappearance of caste barriers (monk 17). A young westernized monk (40) claimed to be against caste distinction (kulabhēdaya) but belied his statements by his conduct, addressing even an old man of the drummer caste by a very low pronoun (ū). Very few monks regard caste distinctions in lay society as something undesirable or troublesome to the conscience; it is a fact of life, and the scriptural position that low caste is the result of sin in a former birth is widely upheld (e.g. monk 23). The origin of caste was referred (monk 17) to the

canonical text on the subject, which tells of the first king (Mahāsammata) and how the four classes arose by a social contract. One monk (24) slightly perverted this story by claiming that castes were created by kings to punish people for their bad acts - a reference perhaps to the origin of certain Sinhalese degraded castes. He then astonished me by interpreting the Vasala Sutta in this way: people are high or low caste "not by birth" but by their acts - so it is the low castes' own fault! Even he however said that essentially all men are equal (ātmē vaśen ekayi), by which he meant that men of all castes have the capacity for enlightenment. This I think no Sinhalese Buddhist could be found to deny.

Siyam Nikāya monks are generally well aware that in the time of the Buddha the Order was open to all. Only one monk (17) stated the opposite. Monk 14 represented such freedom as exceptional, due to special circumstances in their former lives. As an instance he told the story of Upāli: six cousins of the Buddha went to join the Order and took along Upāli, their barber. In the forest they prepared themselves for ordination, and gave him their lay clothes. He thought that if he returned alone with the clothes of the six princes he would be assumed to have murdered them for their valuables, so he took fright and decided to join the Order too. The Buddha ordained him first so that he was senior to the other six and they had to worship (vañdinta) him; he did this to ensure that they would not return to the lay life, because

they would be so ashamed at having worshipped a low-caste man. Upāli had been born in a low caste because in a previous life he was haughty towards his inferiors; but he had good karma to get him into the Order because for innumerable ages (kalpa lakṣayak) he had wished to be a monk under the Buddha. My informant has related the story as it is told in the Vinaya Pitaka,¹ with one twist: in the original text it is the princes who suggest, as a token of humility, that Upāli be their senior; but in the new version it becomes the Buddha's idea, to rub in the degradation of prostrating oneself before a barber.

The story which Siyam Nikāya monks will almost invariably tell when asked why they only admit goyigama recruits is, in view of the historical antecedents quoted above, presumably apocryphal. The king (often specified as Kīrti Śrī Rājasimha, or the last king of Kandy, Śrī Vikrama Rājasimha), who is of course ritually inferior to the meanest novice, was paying a call on a monastery, when a low-caste monk so far forgot himself as to rise from his seat at His Majesty's entrance. The king was so embarrassed by this breach of decorum that he decreed that henceforth only men of good birth could enter the Order. Monks explain that they are bound to obey the temporal power. I would suggest that the temporal power of to-day does not demand caste exclusiveness in the Sangha, and most had no answer to this, but one (24) replied that the king's

_____ prohibited it. John Davy wrote: 'prohibited
1, Vin. II (Cullavagga) 182-3.

injunction is embodied in a katikāvata, and as it has never been rescinded it still has the force of vinaya. I asked several monks (e.g. 1 and 2) what would happen if they gave the lower ordination to a low-caste pupil, and all agreed that he would be refused the higher ordination at Malvatta or Asgiriya. At least half the monks questioned on this point seemed however somewhat ashamed of the state of affairs, and candidly admit that entry into the Order should be unrestricted. In strong contrast, monk 3 said that all respectable (salakayutu) people joined the Siyam Nikāya; some goyigama joined the Rāmañña Nikāya, but this was not good [i.e. letting the side down].

As mentioned above, the three monks of the Rāmañña Nikāya whom I interviewed (9, 19 and 30) were also goyigama, and I gathered from them that locally, and probably in the whole of the Kandyan area (see the precise statement of monk 9) their Nikāya too was restricted to this caste. Monk 30, who went so far as to tell me that his Nikāya was purer caste-wise than the Siyam Nikāya, behaved very ~~little~~ like a Siyam Nikāya monk in telling me that he personally disapproved, but his headquarters would not allow him to ordain a low-caste pupil.

Caste also plays a part in determining the behaviour of monks to laity. The extreme case is that of the roḍi, who were not admitted to monasteries or temples. Monk 14 said that the Sinhalese kings prohibited it. John Davy wrote:¹ "Prohibited

1. Davy, op. cit., p. 131.

from approaching temples, there is a solitary instance on record of a priest going and preaching to them, for which, having incurred his sovereign's displeasure, he replied, 'Religion should be common to all'." That priest would nowadays find more approval but still few emulators. I believe that the settlements of the rodi and the kinnara (the next lowest caste) lack monasteries, so that they do not normally hear preaching; but a famous monk from Vajirārāma, Nārada Thera, has gone and preached to them, and I doubt whether anyone now would censure him. Not surprisingly, the only monks who indicated that they would not allow rodi in were elderly members of the Siyam Nikāya, monks 13, 14 and 17. Monk 3, who was generally reactionary on this subject, said they could go into the vihāra but not come into the pansala. Monk 9, who was in the Rāmañña Nikāya, said that of course rodi could come if they wished, but they would normally not enter a pansala. Most monks however seemed to think that they both could and would come, and welcomed the change.

Monk 1, an amiable character, went so far as to specify that rodi could even give a dānē. Were such a situation ever to arise I wonder what would happen. The question whether goyigama monks (perhaps I should say Siyam Nikāya monks) will accept food and drink from a low-caste person is most curious. There is no doubt that according to doctrine they should, and I was always assured that they do; however, I witnessed a counter-example. A large group of Siyam Nikāya monks were invited to a washerman's home for their mid-day meal; they

came and ate the food, but brought with them a lot of king coconuts, from which they drank the liquid instead of accepting ordinary water from the householder. Though no one would admit to there being any particular reason for this I cannot think that they were actuated merely by gourmandise. They might take pork from a smith, but they refuse water from a washerman.

In considering the attitude of the laity towards monks of different caste, we come perhaps to the nub of the problem. Brahmins reviled the Buddha and his followers for their ritual impurity, but they did not mind; their successors have proved less stoical. Davy brings up this point:¹ "Only the Goewansè ... can belong to the priesthood; not that religion excludes the rest, but pride, - people of the first caste not being able to condescend to pay the respect due to a priest to a low caste individual." A goyigama friend of mine confessed to me that he still feels the same way. The Siyam Nikāya story about the king and the low-caste monk is no doubt an attempt to show this tension between high-caste layman and low-caste monk in another light. In the area which I have observed, the usual solution to this problem is avoidance: high-caste laymen just do not normally go to Amarapura monasteries. If they do for some reason have to go, they fail, unless they are very religious individuals, to pay their traditional respects by kneeling and touching or making to touch the monk's feet. High-caste monks condemn this failure, but in fact they themselves seem to avoid

1. Davy, op. cit., p. 219.

formal contact with their low-caste brethren; monk 12 had been invited by monk 25 to the nētra pinkama at his temple, but had not gone and had never even been to visit him.

So long as this remains the prevalent attitude among goyigama laymen it is hard not to sympathize with the argument of monk 19. Himself a goyigama member of the Rāmañña Nikāya, he amply demonstrated his own freedom from traditional prejudice by planning an alms-giving to be attended by members of all three Nikāyas, an event which would I believe be unique in that area; he said he had friends in the Amarapura Nikāya, and had no time for caste distinctions. However, he had taken only goyigama pupils. He lived, he explained, in a village which was almost solid goyigama; if he took a low-caste pupil they would find fault, and some of them might not even bow down to him. Plainly - if I may expand on his statement - a low-caste pupil would be a disaster, as his parishioners would stop attending the monastery, which would deprive him of his subsistence; some would go to a monastery elsewhere, and some would stop going at all, which would deprive them of merit. In all practical ways the cause of Buddhism would suffer, merely to accommodate a young man who could always find a niche in the Amarapura Nikāya. lay society. Compared to this general

The involvement of monks in the caste system is the result of their active involvement in a caste-ridden society. The Buddha told his monks¹ to travel around "for the public welfare

1. Vin. I. 21.

and happiness, out of compassion for the world", i.e. to keep in touch with the laity. The major unintended consequence of this involvement was the evolution of the Sangha in the first centuries after the Buddha's death from a fraternity of wandering mendicants to a loose federation (or group of federations) of settled monastic communities with communal property. It was given some rationale by the decision in ancient Ceylon (ascribed by Rāhula to the first century B.C.)¹ that learning (pariyatti) was of paramount importance, and therefore book-duty (gantha-dhura) was more essential than meditation-duty (vipassanā-dhura). In this decision was implicit the previous ethical decision that the preservation of the doctrine (Pali: sāsanatthiti) was of paramount importance, a social aim not necessarily compatible with the original doctrine of individual salvation. Although the preservation of the doctrine was seen largely in terms of the preservation of the Sangha, and book-duty meant preservation of the texts within the Sangha, a Buddhist laity is essential for recruitment to the Sangha and for its economic support; book-duty therefore necessarily involves preaching and other religious education, and therefore residence near the laity and considerable contact with lay society. Compared to this general abandonment of the wandering life, a development which began before Buddhism left India, the secularization of monastic

1. Rahula, History, pp. 157-160.

organization in mediaeval Ceylon is of secondary importance. Monasteries became landlords and their incumbents (vihārādhīpati) feudal lords, so that the monks added temporal power to their traditional prestige. An incumbency (ayitivāsakama) became hereditary, so that monks were tempted, not to put too fine a point on it, to keep wealth in the family, and passed their position on to relatives.¹ This tendency for the families of monks to acquire wealth and power, and the general approximation of the rôle of monk to that of feudal landlord, must both have worked towards keeping monasteries in the hands of the top caste;

1. In Sinhalese ecclesiastical law there are two kinds of succession (paramparāva) possible: śisyānuśisya paramparāva and jñāti paramparāva alias sivuru paramparāva. A given incumbency is handed down by one method or the other. By the latter a monk leaves his incumbency to a relative, who to ensure his rights has of course to be a monk too, but may only enter the Order on taking his inheritance. The former covers several procedures somewhat more in accordance with the spirit of the vinaya (there can be no question of accord with the letter of the vinaya, as no such thing as succession was originally envisaged). As explained to me, it means that a monk's first pupil succeeds him: according to printed sources (see end of this note) there are other varieties. In any of these cases, however, the heir to the incumbency may still be a relative; the difference is that in law he does not inherit ipso facto, but by reason of some other claim. When I did my field work this distinction was not clear to me: I thought that jñāti-paramparāva meant succession by a relative under any circumstances. I suspect that my informants may have thought the same. In view of this muddle my remarks in the interview material on jñāti-paramparāva must be treated with caution. I came across several cases of succession by relatives, but whether any of these were jñāti-paramparāva monasteries I cannot say. I owe my enlightenment on this point to Bechert (op. cit., p. 226). In two sections, on the legal condition of individual monasteries (pp. 224-230) and the administration of the Sangha's temporalities (pp. 230-244), he provides an excellent summary of the situation regarding ecclesiastical property in Ceylon since 1815. As usual, his footnotes contain an extensive bibliography on the subject.

since the pattern of family ties and caste exclusiveness had been established it was difficult for other Nikāyas, although founded with reformatory ambitions, not to go the same way.

If I am right the demands of modernists that monks should involve themselves still further in society, after the model (usually not expressed) of Christian priests, would tend to perpetuate rather than diminish caste in the Sangha. This would be an unintended consequence of their actions; their intentions are of course quite in the opposite direction, for like early reformatory movements (e.g. the Rāmañña Nikāya) they hope to restore the primitive castelessness of the Sangha, or even to restore an imagined primitive castelessness among Buddhist laity. My hypothesis is unfortunately unlikely ever to be put to the test, because the influence of the modernists is a puny force compared to the general trend towards modernization which is breaking down caste barriers and other traditional societal patterns. However my observations may support this interpretation. The attitude monks have to caste among the laity, as exemplified in their attitude to rodi, has become far more liberal, in conformity with general modern trends in society and also with the views of Buddhist modernists; but I found no signs that caste within the clergy is losing its grip, for here the ever greater involvement of monks in society works in the same direction as traditional pressures, and the economic forces which play so much part in breaking down caste in society at large have no influence.

It only remains to consider why caste should be so much less rigid in Sinhalese than in Indian society. What has already been said of Buddhism must render the answer obvious. Ritual pollution (killa) plays very little part in Sinhalese society in comparison with its great importance for Hindus. This is probably because the Buddha did not recognize the existence of such a thing, at least as far as he and his fellow-monks were concerned. The only ethic with which he was concerned was a universalist ethic: there is no mention in the scriptures of caste dharma, no suggestion that an action which is right for one man may be wrong for another. Caste originated as a matter of convenience and has no more ethical implications than wealth or beauty. So although caste is not condemned it is de-emphasized. The traditions of Hinduism tend to stress the differences between men; the traditions of Buddhism lay the accent on their similarity.

were then discrepancies between Buddhist principle and Buddhist practice quite as gross as anything found to-day. Around 100 B.C. Dujugampala puts a relic in his spear (magic talisman!) to fight a holy war (counter to doctrine!) for Buddhism, makes a statement of truth (magic spell!) to protect his army, is told by monks that killing non-Buddhists is not killing (intolerance! ignorance of first concept!), puts up vast solid chambers with a statue of the Buddha (ceremonial union!), makes Buddhism the state religion (Buddhism in politics!) etc. etc. The monks in the fifth century who compiled the Anguttara, and predicted Dujugampala's rebirth

CONCLUSION.

At the outset of this work I said I would distinguish what people say from what they do. At its conclusion I wish to emphasize what this means. It is not the same as the distinction made between behavioural and textual Buddhism; for that is a distinction, as I understand it, between what people do now and what they said (or wrote) a long time ago. My investigation centred on what people say now, as well as what they do now, and I found, as will not surprise anyone at all familiar with Ceylon, that there are discrepancies. What people say now has turned out, however, to be remarkably similar to what was being said about 1500 years ago. But are we sure that in those days they really did what they said, that they practised what they preached? I doubt it. The evidence of the Mahāvamsa suggests to me that there were then discrepancies between Buddhist principle and Buddhist practice quite as gross as anything found to-day. Around 100 B.C. Duṭṭugāmuṇu puts a relic in his spear (magic talisman!) to fight a holy war (counter to doctrine!) for Buddhism, makes a statement of truth (magic spell!) to protect his army, is told by monks that killing non-Buddhists is not killing (intolerance! ignorance of first precept!), puts up vast relic chambers with a statue of the Buddha (devotional theism!), makes Buddhism the state religion (Buddhism in politics!) etc. etc. The monks in the fifth century who compiled the Mahāvamsa, and predicted Duṭṭugāmuṇu's rebirth

as the chief disciple of the next Buddha, obviously thought his holy war fully justified. Not all my informants were so sure.

The Reverend Rahula, who knows as much about the subject matter of this book as anyone alive, likes to call all this "popular Buddhism". Duṭṭhagāmuṇi's Buddhism was presumably "popular". I find this term dangerously misleading. It implies, I think, a decline by most people, the plebs, from an ideal standard which is maintained by a few spiritual aristocrats, a relationship analogous to that between "popular" and "classical" music. By some it might even be understood to imply the religion of the laity as distinct from that of monks. To this latter assumption, which would be especially erroneous, I shall return below. To the former I would reiterate a request for demonstration of "classical" Buddhist behaviour, outside the edifying stories in scriptures and text books which are inserted for didactic purposes. Monks fought in Duṭṭhagāmuṇi's army and sanctioned what he did. And how many Buddhists in Ceylon, even in this post-Dharmapāla era, never take part in pirit or transfer merit, practices they brand as "popular"? I think the only sense in which it is accurate to describe these beliefs and practices as "popular" is the everyday one of "widely liked" or "prevalent." But if so used "popular" no longer distinguishes merit transference from, say, the four noble truths or alms-giving.

Gananath Obeyesekere in his lectures has pointed out that Weber too mixed up what the texts say and how people actually behaved. In The Religion of India he paints a picture of

the passionless arhat, the materials for which are drawn (mainly at second hand) from Pali scriptures, deduces from this picture of the ideal Buddhist personality that the first Buddhists were in fact like that, and then from this draws conclusions about their social and economic behaviour. "The mystic, acosmic love of Buddhism (maitrī, mettā) is psychologically conditioned through the euphoria of apathetic ecstasy.... [The arhat's] temper.....remains cool and aloof..."¹ Weber then has trouble harmonizing this picture with the Theragāthā and Therīgāthā, the two canonical collections of religious poems composed by the monks and nuns themselves. "The tone to which the hymns of ancient Buddhism are attuned is triumphant joy."²

This should have brought Weber face to face with the issue, which however he fudged, of whether the Buddhist ideal was really negative, as he contended, or positive, which he claimed to be a later development. To put the matter more clearly, is the ideal self-restraint or love?

It is in the light of this question that I would like to survey the material collected in this work. In chapter six we saw that these two values, self-restraint and love, usually expressed by the adjectives śānta dānta and karuṇāvanta, are dominant among the Sinhalese to-day. The ideals are very different, and not necessarily compatible. The contrast -

1. Weber, op.cit., p. 208.

2. Ibid., p. 212.

if you like, the tension - between them illuminates the history of Buddhism.

We saw at the end of the previous chapter that early in the history of Ceylonese Buddhism the question arose, "Which is the basis of the doctrine, learning or practice?",¹ and that underlying this controversy, which foreshadowed the division of monks into book men and meditation men, was the essentially altruistic concern for the preservation of Buddhism. The same dilemma, though perhaps unrealized, already underlay the Buddha's injunction to monks to keep moving among the laity. This conflict between self-restraint and love, between selfishness and altruism, between negative and positive ideals - put it how you will - can I think be traced back to the Buddha himself. In his biography, which though preserved in late versions Frauwallner has shown to date from only about a century after his death, he hesitates on becoming Enlightened as to whether he should go forth and preach the truth. Only with difficulty is he persuaded to do so. By acceding to the gods' request that he ~~to~~ preach he gives himself forty-five years of unnecessary trouble; but he acts from his universal compassion, and comes as near as anyone can in Buddhism to saving mankind. Of course, being already Buddha he has it both ways: he fulfils the ideals of both self-restraint and love. When he decides to preach he is already an arhat; by founding a śāsana he becomes a samyak sambuddha. What many scholars, especially the older ones on whom Weber relied, have failed to notice is that for all schools of Buddhism the samyak sambuddha, who has added love to self-

1. Manorathapūraṇī (Anguttara Aṭṭhakathā) I. 92, quoted in Pali by Rahula, History., p. 158, note 3.

restraint, is infinitely superior to the mere arhat, who does not benefit others after achieving Enlightenment himself. Even those who regarded the arhat ideal ^{as} ~~the~~ the summum bonum did not consider it the solum bonum: for all Buddhists love is a great good.

For the Buddha there was no incompatibility between the ideals of self-restraint and of love; he could pursue both. Most people are not so lucky. In practice it usually comes down to making a choice. There is not much hurry, because we have many lives, but in this life which shall we make our goal - our own Enlightenment through self-restraint, or the service of mankind?

This tension between the two ideals seems to me fundamental to the distinction between Theravāda and Mahāyāna. To equate Theravāda with self-restraint and Mahāyāna with love is mistaken; it is a question of emphasis. Mahāyāna, which faced the difficulty more explicitly, elevated the ideal of the Bodhisattva, who postpones his own Enlightenment till the goal of his love, the Enlightenment of all others, has been reached. Theravāda too presents the Bodhisattva as a noble ideal - but he does not fit in very well. What is emphasized is not his postponement of his own salvation, but his determination eventually to become a samyak sambuddha, and thus realize both more or less simultaneously.

In this respect Theravāda Buddhism has preserved what seems to me, from the logic of later developments, must have been a feature of Buddhism from the very beginning. If the

summum bonum had always been love, and all other goods had been subordinate to this, there would have been no problem, and it would be hard to account for the appearance of the opposite doctrine, the arhat ideal, in the Pali scriptures. If however the summum bonum was declared to be self-restraint and one's own salvation, there must have been immediate obstacles to the translation of this ideal doctrine into actual behaviour. Firstly, if the ideal is consistently carried out, the religion would have little chance of survival, depending purely on a host of individual conversions unaided by any organization. If the Buddhists were utterly consistent this would not matter. But the second obstacle must have been human nature. All the evidence shows that many Buddhists were neither so consistent nor so averse to the altruistic ideal as Weber suggests and, perhaps, as they were intended to be. Those who kept themselves to themselves as forest-dwelling arhats have departed unsung (except by themselves), and few of their names are recorded in history. But throughout the history of Theravāda Buddhism, by which phrase I would like to subsume nearly 2500 years, there has been this problem: according to doctrine self-restraint is the summum bonum, to which all other values are subservient; but in practice there has been no such clear hierarchy of values, but rather a preferential value system, which at the highest level comprises a choice between self-restraint and love.

It is, I think, this dilemma which has underlined many of

the differences between doctrine and behaviour, between what I have called cognitive and affective religion. (My choice of the word "affective", with its overtones of "affection", turns out to be fortunate.) Again, I am certainly not suggesting that the cognitive religion should be equated with the ideal of self-restraint, the affective religion with the ideal of love - it is rather a question of which way they lean. Nor, I must repeat, should "self-restraint" and "love" be interpreted too narrowly: it is here a question of whole syndromes, the one negative and world-denying, the other positive and world-affirming. (My choice of words in this sentence is an attempt to connect my concepts to those of Durkheim and Weber.) Amplification will make this clear.

The cognitive religion regards withdrawal for meditation as the consummation of religious behaviour, and the utterly negative (and rationally inconceivable) goal of nirvāna as the ideal destiny. In fact most people, even monks, say that meditation is impracticable, offering some such excuse as the pressure of affairs or the decline of the doctrine, and they display very little liking for nirvāna. John Davy's report is graphic: "What this Niwanē is, is a religious mystery: priests are rather averse from answering questions on the subject; they say, it is forbidden to discuss its nature; and on the principle that if men understood it they would not like it but prefer worldly things, as flies do bad smells."¹

1. Davy, op. cit., p. 216.

Accordingly, nirvāṇa has been postponed in the popular mind to the coming of Maitrī, in some remote future era; it is so difficult to attain, and we are not sure that we want it anyway. Most people, monks included, devote themselves exclusively to acts of merit (pin-kam), the aim of which is a good rebirth in heaven or on earth. The aim is made conformable to doctrine by saying that it all counts towards nirvāṇa in the long run; the list of pin-kam conforms to doctrine by including, as two of the ten good deeds (dasā kusala karma), meditation and the negative "morality" (sīla) of the Five Precepts; but if people really want to be sure of merit they do not sit around practising self-restraint: they go out and do something positive like giving alms, which is emotionally more satisfying. Cognitively pin and nivan are hierarchically associated as means to an end; affectively however the two complement each other, and the values are preferential.

In various parts of this work, especially chapter five, I have shown how doctrine has to some extent come to terms with these emotional needs. The history of parts of Theravāda doctrine can indeed be seen as a running battle between doctrine and sentiments. Formulations of ethical prescriptions have moved from the negative to the positive, as just mentioned, without sacrificing consistency. An even better example is the history of the transfer of merit, where the emotional need to do something for your dead relatives, which according to original doctrine was impossible, has been

elaborately rationalized to make it compatible with the fundamental doctrinal principle of self-help. Again, self-restraint has accommodated to love.

Though one of the terms in my explanation is a component of human nature, I have come nowhere near to saying that human nature and human religion are everywhere much the same. The feature of Theravāda Buddhism which I find most striking is indeed the counter-intuitive persistence of the self-restraint ideal, and the victories of doctrine. The latter are achievements of the scholastic intellect; the former is exemplified in the prestige of meditation and the extraordinary veneration in which any self-styled hermit is still held in Ceylon. The phenomenon of Salgala has already been cited in chapter seven. Here monks have retired to meditation in caves, but they are pursued by what Obeyesekere dubs "the relentless piety of the masses", who cement the caves and book a year in advance to offer food. In Obeyesekere's words, "The arhat ideal is still the index of religiosity".

The fate of the monks of Salgala conforms to a pattern which recurs throughout Buddhist history: the few men who really wish to follow the arhat ideal break away and retire to jungle caves, but as they are dependent on the laity for their food they do not break off all contact with the outside world, and so they or their successors run the risk of reverting to the state of an institution. Traditionally these hermits - Paṃsukūlikas, Araññavāsins - have been members of the Sangha,

but this need not always be so: recently the short-lived tāpasa movement¹ consisted of hermits who considered the Sangha corrupt and not worth joining. The recurrence of these movements shows that there is often (or always?) a small group of people for whom the unadulterated arhat ideal is attractive and not as psychologically implausible as it is for most. We may conjecture that some of the Buddha's original followers were of this type.

This brings us to the whole question of the monk-layman dichotomy. The cleft between them is obvious and needs no denying. But writers on Ceylonese Buddhism tend to associate with the two groups in a one-one correlation ^{the} two different types of religiosity, which I have typified by reference to the ideals of self-restraint and love. The monks are all supposed to be "salvation-strivers", and the laity interested mainly in heaven attained by faith and good works. This finds some justification in the texts, but none in social reality. Many monks reject this view of themselves, and I think they are right to do so. They point out that they need pin as much as anyone else. Just like laymen they observe astrological recommendations at the New Year or when embarking on a journey, and they give mataka dānēs for their dead parents; on analogy with laymen they treat their pupils as sons, their fellow-pupils as brothers, and give mataka dānēs for their dead teachers. Indeed, all the inhabitants

1. See Bechert, op. cit., p. 258, and references there given.

of Mīgala monastery used to prostrate themselves every evening before the photograph of the dead incumbent. I found monks, as a group, very kind, hospitable and worldly people. Ethically they are mostly like laymen, - but the point is whether they are like good laymen.

It is perfectly true that this development is only to be expected when monks are selected in childhood, and therefore constitute, personality-wise, a random sample of the population rather than a group with a religious vocation. Bechert suggests that this juvenile recruitment is bad for Buddhism, and prefers the system in other Theravāda countries by which most males enter the Order for at least a short period.

Whichever is more beneficial for society, I am sure the Buddha would have found the latter system at least as surprising a development as the former. However, the point that I wish here to make is that under any system the majority of monks are not likely to be unambiguously devoted to the arhat ideal alone. Already in a canonical text we find references¹ to puthujjana-kalyāṇaka-bhikkhū, quaintly rendered by Mrs. Rhys Davids² as "hoi-polloi-good-fellow-bhikkhus". Puthujjana is originally a technical term for an unenlightened person; it comes to connote, it seems, a person with lay ethics. And, once again, this shift from the arhat ideal has been officially accommodated: these monks are designated village-dwelling book

1. Paṭisambhidā-magga i.176, ii.190, ii.193.

2. In her introduction to Manual of a Mystic, PTS, London 1916, p. x.

men (grāmavāsin and granthadhura). It is doctrinally impossible entirely to abandon the self-restraint ideal, but it has been pushed right into the background, and these monks too are tacitly sanctioned in a course of making merit like the laity. If they do not leave the monasteries, either reverting to lay status, or at least abandoning more vinaya rules than they do, it is because of the fear of disapproval, the material benefits of monastic life, and the continuing demand and admiration for examples of self-restraint.

If we wish to observe where the self-restraint ideal voluntarily functions, apart from the sporadic hermits who furnish the extreme case, we must look not to the ordinary village-dwelling monk, but to the upāsaka. Though an upāsaka originally meant any Buddhist layman, the term is now used mainly for those who, usually late in life, renounce worldly ties. Like the early members of the Sangha, they choose their status rather than having it thrust upon them, and free choice is a prerequisite for the whole-hearted pursuit of any moral ideal. Some old village upāsakas have a knowledge of scriptures and doctrines which would be remarkable in a person of monastic education. Approaching death, however kindly they may be they conceive maitrī primarily as an exercise in solitary meditation; their goal is unambiguously selfish. Might we here find Weber's Theravādin recluse, "cool and aloof"? Obeyesekere interviewed such a man. An inhabitant of a remote village, he had been illiterate but could now read both Sinhalese and Pali; he led a very simple

life, and was respected by the villagers, to whom he preached. One can also assume that he meditated. Yet while he talked of the foulness of the female body, he gave glowing descriptions of the damsels in heaven, which he envisaged as a paradise of sensual delight. According to doctrines which he had studied and accepted, the next life conditioned by his karma would be experienced by a new constellation of impermanent constituents (anatta doctrine); all rebirth is unhappiness, and nirvāṇa the only goal worth seeking; and pious works are in vain unless they are accompanied by freedom from desire, which constitutes the only true progress. But these doctrines are counter-intuitive. He would probably never have admitted it, or been able to see the discrepancy so apparent to us, but we can surmise that he was not interested in nirvāṇa so much as in the female inhabitants of a heaven with whom he felt that the renunciation and other good works of his old age entitled him to associate. He practised restraint now so that he could indulge later; action rationally based on premisses inconsistent with those he professed. ~~He exemplifies most of the tensions and dichotomies with which this work has been concerned.~~ I do not belittle him. I find his principles noble and profound, his conduct virtuous. But the two are not related quite as he imagines. Though he would probably never have admitted that he was more interested in heaven than in nirvāṇa, that was plainly where he hoped to be reborn. His discordant aspirations exemplify the tension between the two ideals, as well as most of the other dichotomies with which this work has been concerned.

Early Theravāda was an uncompromising doctrine. It is continually difficult to be entirely responsible for your fate. "For emotional mass religiosity there have been and are but two possible types of soteriology: magic or a saviour¹." Sinhalese "mass religiosity" has accepted in deed, though not in word, a modicum of both: the saviour we met in chapters 3 and 4, the magic in chapters 4 and 5. These acceptances are as old as the commentaries, some of them far older. The words are hardly changed at all. If this is popular Buddhism, could it be that

Vox populi vox Buddhae?

1. Weber, op. cit., p. 237.