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UNIVERSITY OF CEYLON REVIEW

The University of Ceylon was established on the 1st July, 1942, by the fusion of the Ceylon Medical College (founded 1870) and the Ceylon University College (founded 1921). It has at present Faculties of Oriental Studies, Arts, Science, Engineering and Medicine. Its seat is temporarily in Colombo, but it will be moved to Peradeniya, near Kandy, as soon as its new buildings are ready for occupation. The University has taken over from the Government of Ceylon the publication of the *Ceylon Journal of Science*, which has been developed as its chief means of contact with Scientists elsewhere and has also started the *Ceylon Journal of Medical Science*. The *University of Ceylon Review* was founded in order to make similar contact with scholars in literary subjects, to provide a medium of publication for the research in those subjects conducted in the University, and to provide a learned review for Ceylon. The Review is published four times a year, in January, April, July and October. Exchanges are welcome. Correspondence regarding exchanges should be addressed to The Librarian, University of Ceylon. The annual subscription is Rs. 5.00, and a single copy Rs. 2.50.

THE BRODIE PAPERS ON SINHALESE FOLK-RELIGION

But besides the denunciations of the churchmen, another current of European thought—the rationalism of the eighteenth century—laid the foundations of the new science of anthropology. The new science had to face the charge of irreligion, and although anthropology has nothing to do with truth or falsity in religion, the early rationalist bias fostered the comparative study of religion.³ The mental climate of the Age of Reason is typified in the spirit of critical detachment and curiosity which characterise the Brodie Papers on Sinhalese folk-religion.

Brodie suggests that the 'darker superstitions' originate in the natural and social environment of folk-communities. The importance of the natural environment is implicit in Knox's remark that the voice of the devil was heard only in the forests of Kande Uda, never in the lowlands:

'This for certain I can affirm, That oftentimes the Devil doth cry with an audible Voice in the Night; 'tis very shrill almost like the barking of a Dog. This I have heard myself; but never heard that he did anybody any harm. Only this Observation the Inhabitants of the Land have made of this Voice, and I have made it also, that either just before or very suddenly after this Voice, the King always cuts off People. To believe that this is the Voice of the Devil these reasons urge, because there is no Creature known to the Inhabitants, that cry like it, and because it will on a sudden depart from one place, and make a noise in another, quicker than any fowl could fly: and because the very Dogs will tremble and shake when they hear it; and 'tis so accounted by all the People.

'... When the Voice is near to a Chingulaye's house, he will curse the Devil, calling him Geremoi goulammah, [geriya ulamah, i.e., beef-eating Ghou] Beef-eating Slave be gone, be damned, cut his Nose off, beat him a pieces. And such like words of Railery, and this they will speak aloud with noise, and passion, and threatening. This Language I have heard them bestow upon the Voice; and the Voice upon this always ceaseth for a while, and seems to depart, being heard at a greater distance'.⁴

3. 'Thus the Christian religion has no advantage over the other superstitions with which the universe is infected' (D'Holbach: *Christianism Devoile*, 1761 in K. Urwin: *A Century For Freedom. A Survey of the French "Philosophers"*, London, 1946, p. 73). The French *Philosophers* shared Voltaire's view that belief in gods was born of limited experience and ignorance.

4. Knox, p. 124. Similarly J. Haafner: *Travels on Foot through the Island of Ceylon* (English Ed. 1821) describes a shrill and horrible yell, 'like the barking of dogs', piercing, sharp, and uncommon, which seemed to approach rapidly, continue for several minutes, and retreat with equal swiftness. The Sinhalese attributed it to evil spirits, the vulgar Europeans called them cries of wood-devils. 'The philosophical reader will, however, ascribe them to natural causes, at present untraced'. cp. also J. Campbell: *Excursions, Adventures, and Field Sports in Ceylon*, 1843, I, 40: 'I was certainly much surprised at the extraordinary dismal, or melancholy cry I heard, seemingly about three or four hundred yards off; and I confess I have not the most distant idea by what animal or bird it was uttered'.

The spirits which infest the mountains, woods and streams could thus be threatened and subjugated, or propitiated and cajoled into docility. At times words of abuse are supposed to be effective as a charm to ward off the evil influence of spirits,⁵ but at other times more elaborate ceremonies are necessary, and the *kattadiya* is called in. As Knox observes, the spirits are local, and each district had its peculiar spirits 'under whose subjection the People do acknowledge themselves to be'.

The problem of the existence or otherwise of spirits, perennially debated by metaphysicians, is outside the scope of sociological inquiry. The sociologist is concerned, rather, with the belief in spirits, the frame of mind which prompts such belief, and its effect on human activity. As Sir James Frazer observed in his monumental codex of magic and religion, it requires a conscious effort of our imagination to realise the psychology of peoples whose lives are dominated by belief in the omnipresence of spirits. For we live in an age in which the magic wand of science has dispelled the army of spirits which haunted our ancestors.⁶ We have depersonalised these spirits and regard them as abstract 'forces of nature', or 'natural phenomena'. Whereas the Sinhalese villager, terrified and bewildered by certain inexplicable sounds, attributes them to the Devil, we remain unperturbed, and are convinced that they have a 'natural' cause.

Yet every age has to contend with an uncharted area of human experience. Even in our scientific age the Churches pray for rain to end a prolonged drought, or for strength to triumph in battle. Among other peoples, certain activities which are now regarded as matters of science or technology, were largely questions of religion, as in the case of Agriculture in Ancient Greece and in Mediaeval Ceylon.⁷ It is not that the Greeks or the Sinhalese were totally ignorant of agricultural techniques. The ground had to be cleared, ploughed and irrigated, and if wild beasts destroyed the fences, the remedy lay neither in prayer nor in magic, but in labour guided by rational techniques. But in spite of all forethought and calculation, there remained the uncharted regions of experience, the unexpected drought, flood, or epidemic which, as Brodie says, 'cannot be explained by the ordinary rules which guide the affairs of this world'.

5. Such abusive epithets, sometimes bordering on the obscene, were commonly employed in Ancient Rome as a religious antidote against the Evil One. cf. for instance certain verses of Catullus. 'In such poems the technique of *Vituperatio*, carried on from the coarse flyting and burlesquing of peasant festivals, was to paint as ferocious a caricature on a single trait as possible, and was related to the fear of the Evil Eye. The enemy becomes the evil bogey whom the attack demolishes, and life is saved' (Jack Lindsay's Ed. of Catullus's Poems. London, 1948, p. 66, commenting on poems of vituperation).

6. Frazer: *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion* (London, 1913) Part 6.

7. cf. H. C. P. Bell's Accounts of Sinhalese Paddy Cultivation Ceremonies, (*J.R.A.S. C.B.*, VIII/26, 1883, XI/39, 1889).

In a community haunted by the constant insecurity of life, and the fearful proximity of death, the will to live, which we suppose to be 'natural' or biological ('instinctive'), is in point of fact largely 'artificial' or sociological, being buttressed by a complex of life-giving cults which epitomise the collective desires of the community. And these desires centre around the fundamental concept of fertility, in the widest sense. The earth, as well as the tribe, must be fruitful and multiply. As such, the folk-religion is permeated with a vitality which has led to the observation that primitive religion is *danced*. As we would expect, 'a "lascivious" spirit pervades certain of these fertility dances'.⁸ According to Knox, the religious game *An-keliya*, performed in honour of the goddess Pattini, culminated in rejoicing by the winning team 'expressed by Dancing and Singing, and uttering such sordid beastly Expressions, together with Postures of their Bodies, as I omit to write them, as being their shame in acting, and would be mine in rehearsing. For he is at that time most renowned that behaves himself most shamelessly and beast-like'.⁹ Nevertheless, as Gilbert Murray says of the 'beastly devices' of primitive Greek religion, although there may be some repulsiveness in these primeval life-giving cults, they also have an element of fascination.¹⁰

Brodie suggests that Buddhism lent form to Sinhalese folk-religion. For it is a peculiar feature of Buddhism that it did not wipe away the primary religions of the countries in which it is revered. Philosophically the message of the Enlightened One established a religious ideal and an ethic derived from His wisdom and personal experience. But from another point of view, Buddhism, as a result of its lofty tolerance, became 'an objective centre of crystallization for a variety of sociological developments'.¹¹ In its original form, Buddhism recognised only the *bhikkus* as true members of its religious society, and laymen were left with their ancestral folk-religions, being subject only to the Buddhist moral code.¹² The primeval pre-Buddhist cults did subsequently undergo change, but they were never completely obliterated. Relics of former practices outlived the original system and survived in the practices of ordinary life. Upham aptly compares these survivals to planks from a shipwreck—they retain some slight token or mark whereby the original fabric may be conjectured.¹³

8. L. Spence: *Myth and Ritual in Dance, Game, and Rhyme*. (London 1947) p. 133.

9. Knox, p. 157. The game *An-keliya* is usually performed to avert an outbreak of disease, e.g. a small-pox epidemic. It consists of a tug-of-war of two crooked sticks which are interlocked. (cf. Le Mesurier: *An-keliya*, *J.R.A.S. C.B.*, VIII/29, 1884, and Raghavan: *The Pattini Cult as a Socio-Religious Institution* (*Spolia Zeylanica* 26/II, 1951).

10. Murray: *Five Stages of Greek Religion* (London, 1935).

11. J. Wach: *Sociology of Religion* (London, 1947).

12. cf. Pertold: *The Pilli Charm. A Study in Sinhalese Magic* (*J. Anthropol. Soc., Bombay*, XII/5, 1922).

13. Upham: *History and Doctrine of Buddhism* (London, 1829).

It is sometimes difficult to conjecture the nature of the original fabric, since elements of diverse cults are inextricably fused. It may also happen that the uninitiated observer may fail to recognise a particular form of worship in its proper context. Brodie himself confuses the *dēvāle* worship with the so-called demon dancing.

The *dēvāles*, properly so called, 'connected with the Buddhism of the Island, are temples consecrated to certain gods of the Hindu pantheon, whose character and attributes, as adopted into the Ceylon Buddhist cult, entirely alter their nature and the worship paid to them. With the Hindus these gods are immortal, revengeful, licentious; here they are but mortal, well-behaved, guardian deities, and even candidates for Buddhahood. Shrines are erected to them, and offerings made solely to obtain temporary benefits—not by religious supplication to merit reward in a future world. This essential difference between the Hindu and Buddhist notion of the gods, common in name to both forms of worship, is rarely understood'.¹⁴ Buddhism, already founded on Hinduism, subsequently incorporated some of the Hindu gods which were worshipped in the *dēvāles*.¹⁵ But the *dēvāle* deities like Pattini, acquire a new character, since the Buddhist ethic left a strong imprint on post-Buddhist and pre-Buddhist cults.¹⁶

Whereas the *dēvāles* came to be an accepted form of Buddhistic worship in Ceylon,¹⁷ and like the *vihāres* enjoyed extensive lands for their support, the pre-Buddhist demon-worship was never an integral part of Buddhism, although it may have been tolerated by the clergy. There are numerous royal edicts which forbade the clergy indulging in the 'despised sciences' of magic, such as exorcising devils, making sacrifices, divining by means of omens, and preparing charms for the detection of thieves, as well as the improper practice of astrology.¹⁸ These injunctions indicate that the priests did at times have a hand in the 'despised sciences' and from time to time the *Saṅgha* had to be purged of heresy.

Dēvāle worship must then be distinguished from demon-worship. The former institutions are consecrated to a limited number of Hindu gods, namely Vishnu ('a Buddhist guardian angel, a candidate for Buddhahood and tutelary deity of Lanka'), Nata (the future Maitri Buddha), Kataragama, Pattini (the

14. H. C. P. Bell: *Report on the Kegalle District* (Archaeological Survey, 1892).

15. cf. A. K. Coomaraswamy: *Mediaeval Sinhalese Art* (Broad Campden, 1908) p. 45.

16. cf. L. Meerwarth-Levina: *The Hindu Goddess Pattini in the Buddhist Popular Beliefs of Ceylon* (*Ceylon Antiquary*, I, 1916).

17. 'There is a small *dēvāla* in the courtyard of nearly every Buddhist *vihāra* in Ceylon, and, in some places, they are both found under the same roof, as, for example, at Lankatilaka'. (C. H. S. Ward: *Buddhism*, Vol. I: Hinayana, London, 1947, p. 126.

18. cf. කතකාමන්සහරා (1922 ed.).

goddess of chastity), and Saman who with Vishnu and Kataragama accepted the general trust of guarding Lanka for Buddha.¹⁹ In a few cases there are *dēvāles* consecrated to other powerful deities. Thus the Galakāpu *dēvāle* at Alutnuvara, originally dedicated to Vishnu, was latterly consecrated to Vahala Bandara Deviyo.²⁰ The priest of the *dēvāle* gods, designated *kapurāla* or *kapua*, is a man of good caste. He has no special dress. The *kapurāla* does not usually get into a state of trance. Furthermore, he is not primarily an exorciser. But he can invoke the gods he represents to exorcise demons, by asking the demon to quit the person possessed. The devil speaks through the person possessed, and acquiesces. But if he is stubborn the *kapurāla* beats the possessed individual with a cane, and the demon is eventually exorcised.²¹ More commonly people visit the *dēvāle* for temporary favours from the gods—relief from illness, success in lawsuits, and so on.

The demons must be distinguished from the imported Hindu gods. The former were the pre-Buddhist *yaksas* who sank to the status of demi-gods living on the mercy of the foreign gods, and even having to get permission (*varan*) from the latter to injure men and extort offerings.²² The *yaksas* were probably spirits of the dead worshipped in pre-Aryan times, and are the counterparts of the more recent *Bandāras*. This ancestor worship springs from the common belief among villagers that the dead are re-born as *gevala-yakās* (house-demons) who are malevolent or benevolent.²³ They are responsible for sickness and other misfortunes. The priests of these spirits, named *yakdessa* or *kattadiyas* do not generally officiate regularly at temples, although Knox states that they were attached to *Kōvil* at which they dedicated a red cock when their clients were ill. The *kattadiyas* are really professional itinerant exorcisers, who are sometimes assisted by drummers (*beravayo*). They belong to the sacrificial castes.²⁴

The ceremony performed by the *kattadiyas* is as follows: a *maduva* or ceremonial shed is prepared in a clean place, and is well lit (the ceremony is always performed at night). The drummers beat various rhythms and the exorciser,

19. Bell, op. cit.

20. *ibid.*

21. The *kapurāla* of Alutnuvara devale recently explained that it was really the demon who was thus chastised, and the possessed individual did not feel that he was being beaten.

22. Pertold: *The Ceremonial Dances of the Sinhalese*.

23. cf. Bhikku Walpola Rahula: *Some Aspects of the Early History of Buddhism in Ceylon* (Mss. University of Ceylon, 1950).

24. The *Beravayo*, washermen, and other sacrificial castes are connected with the inauspicious ritual of death, disease, and decay, e.g. the *Kotahalu* ceremonies. Ethnically these castes are perhaps pre-Aryan (cf. R. Pieris: *Caste, Ethos, and Social Equilibrium. Social Forces*, 30/iv, 1952).

wearing a mask, having invoked the demon, begins to dance. Where it is financially possible he is assisted by other dancers. The music gradually becomes louder and wilder, and the gyrations of the dancers become more rapid until the exorciser is possessed by the demon, and falls down in a swoon, thus freeing the sick man from the demon's influence. The whole performance is punctuated by singing ballads relating to the demon in question.²⁵

It is evident that in Brodie's account, the *dēvāle* ceremonies are hopelessly confused with the *yakun-natīma*. This is not due to confusion in practice, but to misinterpretation of two cults by an uninitiated observer. It is interesting, however, to note that Brodie clearly distinguishes the *bali* or planetary ceremonies, since in more recent times the *yakun-natīma* and the *bali* ceremony are frequently confused in practice 'because the exorcists know very little of the ancient lore on account of the discontinuance of the tradition' (Pertold).

RALPH PIERIS

THE BRODIE PAPERS²⁶

I

On the Darker Superstitions of the Sinhalese as Prevalent in the North-Western Province

To depict the features of superstition cannot be deemed a trivial or unworthy task, when one reflects upon the many and interesting deductions which may be arrived at by a careful study of the subject, and this remark applies with special force to those forms of it which exercise a constant influence on the everyday life of a people. Such a system is the *dēvāle* oracle which forms the main subject of the following observations.

By some it has been maintained that a belief in the existence of demons or malevolent spirits and in the propriety and utility of offering to them marks of respect or adoration, was a dark superstition peculiar to the East and to the islands of the Southern seas. A very few words will be sufficient to show that such an opinion is quite untenable. To pass over the celebrated 'witchcraft cases'

25. Pertold, op. cit.

26. From a Mss. volume of papers by Alexander Oswald Brodie in the Colombo Museum Library. This volume is numbered from page 373, and is apparently the second of a set of two or more volumes. The papers relate to the period 1838-1850. Besides this odd volume, Brodie's unpublished manuscripts have disappeared without a trace; his published work includes several articles in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (Ceylon Branch) between 1847 and 1857. For a biographical sketch of an interesting personality, cf. J. R. Toussaint: *Annals of the Ceylon Civil Service* (Colombo, 1935) pp. 128-131. In editing these Papers, which are largely in note form in the Mss., the paragraphing has been altered, and the transliteration modernised. Words in square brackets have been inserted by the editor.

which at no remote date stained the British calendar, it is only necessary to call to remembrance that even at the present day the sturdy raftsmen of the Rhine shudder as the Lurelei song is borne on the gale; that the Scottish peasant talks with timid civility of the 'good people' and reverently removes his bonnet as the groups of invisible beings are swept past him on the eddies of the autumn breeze; that the Kelpie still appears by the side of the lonely mountain loch to lure children to destruction; and that the Saxon miner still sees in deeply subterranean galleries the glimmering lamp of the industrious Kohold, and shuns to disturb the irascible sprite. The virtues of a horse-shoe must also be familiar to all. These and a thousand other instances which might have been adduced prove that the belief in malicious spirits is universal, and not less so the belief that means can and ought to be taken to avert this displeasure—the removal of the cap is an act of reverence, the horse-shoe is a counter-charm.

The origin of such conceptions is evident. The uneducated man feels within himself an innate conviction that there is somewhere a world inhabited by non-substantial beings. Then, observing that many occurrences in common life (such as the misfortunes of good and prudent men on the one hand, or the unexpected destruction of the wicked on the other) cannot be explained by the ordinary rules which guide the affairs of this world, he concludes that these anomalies can only be accounted for by the active intervention of those spirits: from which follows as a corollary that means must be taken to conciliate these mysterious beings, whether their disposition be benevolent or the reverse. This train of reasoning is undoubtedly loose and unsatisfactory but such as it is, it has at one time or another satisfied every nation, and during well-nigh two thousand years has in Europe withstood not altogether unsuccessfully the attacks of Christianity itself. That the demonology of Ceylon is not identical with that of Europe, that there is so far as I am aware, nothing analogous to a *dēvāle* in the Northern latitudes is undeniable.²⁷ The difference is however not greater than might have been expected from the variety of circumstances under which each has been fostered, and not proportionally greater than the differences of system in the various kingdoms of Europe.

Persons inhabiting a thinly populated country, or engaged in occupations which separate them frequently and for lengthened periods from the busy stir of the world are peculiarly liable to adopt a belief in the darker superstitions—mountain shepherds, miners, and sailors are proverbial in this respect. To such influences the Sinhalese have during the ages been exposed. Living in small villages or isolated huts which are situated in the depths of interminable forests or scattered along the sides of rugged hills, in a region where the powers of nature, wind, rain, and lightning exert their full violence, it would indeed have been astonishing if they had escaped unscathed. But that circumstance which perhaps more than any other has given form to the prevalent superstitions is the nature of the national religion.

27. Except among the Red Indians and Esquimaux (marginal note in pencil).

Buddhism is a system of philosophy more pure and elevated than any of ancient Greece or Rome, is yet too refined to be understood by the mass of the people. A thorough knowledge of it has in all ages been monopolised by the priests, and the ignorant have thus been thrown back upon their own vain imaginings or upon superstitions borrowed from their neighbours. Buddhism, denying as it does the existence of one great, good, ever-existent Being, and of one great author of evil, necessarily leaves unexplained those anomalies to which previous reference has been made. The total want of sound principles regarding diseases and the methods of cure proper for these has also not been without its influence. Each sudden or unusual sickness, especially if accompanied by delirium or convulsions, is regarded as the work of some malevolent god or demon and the words uttered by the patient are considered as the effects of inspiration.

In proceeding now to the more immediate subject of this paper, I shall say a few words on each of the three main branches into which it may be divided. These are: Ceremonies of the *Dēvāle*; Influence of the Stars; Charms.

Ceremonies of the Devale

Those beings to whom the ceremonies in the Devale refer are the spirits of the dead. They are designated by the same names which they bore on earth, they are not dreaded in any way, and only respected on account of the oracular answers uttered by their priests at certain moments of inspiration. The favourite spirits in this part of the country are those of Tanniwalli Bahu Rajah, and Kadavara (a *paduva* or matweaver).²⁸

In almost every village there is a neatly kept compound which in general is carefully fenced in. It contains a small square mud building having only one entrance, is elevated on short pillars, and is called a devale; two or three open sheds or madugas for the accommodation of the people, and lastly there is frequently in the centre of the enclosure a neatly carved wooden pillar placed under a thatched canopy and having at one side a niche wherein on festivals a lamp is placed. The entrance to the compound is under a decorated rustic arch. Within the devale is deposited what is called the weapon of the god (*hallmulee*).²⁹ This is sometimes a hook such as is used by mahouts.

To each *dēvāle* is attached a priest or *Kapurāla* who is allowed to engage in the ordinary business of life, but is expected to abstain from unclean food such as the flesh of pigs, fowls, monkeys, etc. Beef and vegetables are not objected to, but indeed these rules are not much insisted upon. He is not regarded with

28. A blank space follows, presumably left for insertion of the names of other spirits in the region (North-Western Province). A list is given on another page (cf. post). The caste of matweavers is *Kinneriya*, and not *padu*.

29. Probably *halan*.

any peculiar official respect. The *Kapurāla* retains office during life and when he dies the vacancy continues until some villager discovers that he has been chosen by the god.

Saturday and Wednesday, devoted to the planets Saturn and [Mercury] are those set apart for the ceremonies of the *dēvāle*.³⁰ On one of these days the villagers assemble at the accustomed place, one anxious to receive information regarding lost cattle, another regarding his health or worldly affairs.

The *Kapurāla* appears neatly dressed and holding in his hand a small vessel containing glowing charcoal. Into this he throws a small quantity of pounded dammer,³¹ which instantly rises in dense fumes. Waving the censer round his head he enters the devale and carefully shutting the door stands for some time before the weapon of the god, having his hands raised to his breast, and the palms pressed together. The tom-tom beaters now commence the demon song or *Kolmure*. The *Kolmure* is a generic name, one song being devoted to each of those beings who are supposed to give oracular responses through their priests, and it generally refers to the life on earth of the supernatural being. The *Kapurāla* becomes gradually excited and at last rushes out fantastically dressed and brandishing the sword or trident. The wild music continuing, he sways his body from side to side, dancing in the most grotesque manner, proclaims aloud that he is inspired by such and such a one, at intervals gives to the spectators that information which they came to seek, and ultimately, overpowered by the long continued violent exertion and excitement, falls to the ground in a deep swoon in which he continues for an hour or more.

It is to be observed that the *Kapurāla* is not throughout life inspired by the same being: this depends on the spectators who when making their offerings of betel leaves, request that the oracular responses may be inspired by such and such a one. A clever *Kapurāla* occasionally declines being told by the people what object has brought each of them to the spot, and while dancing reveals not only this, but the wished for reply; the natives however sometimes confess that the prophecies are often wrong, and that the rest of the mystery is to be explained by the assistance of accomplices who after mingling with the crowd and listening to their conversation, convey themselves furtively into the *dēvāle* and divulge what they have heard to the priest as he stands before the sacred weapon.

I ought perhaps to add that a *Kapurāla* does not consider himself disgraced by uttering responses dictated by the spirit of one who was of lower caste than his own, or of women. Considerable license is allowed to the prophet at the

30. cf. Knox: 'On their Wednesdays, and Saturdays they open their Churches, and perform their Ceremonies'.

31. '... the burning of incense and a kind of resin (dummala) producing a blaze and afterwards thick, heavy smoke' (Pertold).

moment of inspiration. Thus the *Kolmure* regarding —³² is altogether directed against the Buddhist priests, and when in this character the *Kaṭurāla* indulges in the most uncourteous and threatening language towards them, and yet although the whole system is opposed to Buddhism the devale frequently adjoins the vihare and the regular priests seldom if ever object to the people attending the oracle—in fact cases occur where *Ummanses* claim a share in the offerings made at the *Dēvāle*.

On the Supposed Influence of the Stars

Astrology, a belief that the stars exercise a direct influence on man, is native to every clime. The notions of the Sinhalese on the subject are very similar to those entertained elsewhere.

At the birth of a child, some astrologer (formerly *Berevayas*, now any one), draws out the horoscope and declares which is the prevalent star. This planet then is supposed to exert a peculiar influence throughout the life of the child, who may however be also temporarily affected by others of the heavenly bodies.

Should a native be seized with any sickness of a violent or unusual nature, this is supposed to be caused either by the incantations of an enemy or by the malign influence of a star. In either case a *Berevaya* or tom-tom beater is sent for. He appears, ascertains the day and hour of the patient's birth, casts the horoscope, and then declares the origin of the disease. If it results from witchcraft the counter-charm of cutting limes [cf. post] is immediately performed by one of the friends. Should it, however, arise from the influence of a planet, the *Berevaya* proceeds to the ceremony of the *Bali*. His first care is to provide himself with a large oblong frame or hurdle of coarse basket work: on this he moulds in high relief a figure (six or seven feet in height) representing the spirit which presides over that star which has caused the sickness. This effigy is then carefully coloured and placed beside the patient. The *Berevaya* sitting down then continues beating the tom-tom and singing one of the songs called —³³ until morning, when having received his fees, he departs. Occasionally before going away he declares the result of the disease, and should his prophecy prove incorrect, his ready excuse is that false data for the horoscope were given to him.

On solemn occasions such as births, marriages, commencement of journeys, etc. the stars are always consulted in order that a fortunate moment may be selected, and till such arrives no active step can be taken in the matter.

It is almost unnecessary to state that the astrologers are men of no attainments, that they know nothing of astronomy or calculation, and draw out the

32. This word is omitted in the Mss.

33. Not inserted in Mss.

horoscopes quite mechanically from a sort of calendar [*lita*] which is annually renewed.

Note on Cutting of Limes

Cutting of limes or *Dehi-kāpīma* is the cutting of a certain number of limes with an arecanut cutter, reciting a peculiar charm or mantra at every cut. The person who does this is called *Yakdessa* or *Kattadiya*. When two persons get angry with each other and if one of them happens to get sick soon after, it is thought that the sickness was caused by the other by means of charms, which is called *Soonian-kerewala*. It is to be cured of such diseases that the cutting of limes is performed.

Charms

The superstitions of Ceylon, like those of other countries, have peopled the woods, the mountains, and the streams with invisible but active beings, and have not failed to assign to individual spirits the guardianship of particular streams, mountains, or woods. Of these some have always been non-substantial, while others are the spirits of wicked men destined to this state of existence as a punishment for their crimes. They are always invisible and are greatly dreaded, but no particular places are set apart for their worship. By way of protection the natives use little rolls of ola on which few words in Sinhalese are written and which are deposited in small silver or copper capsules tied to the arm or neck.

When the *Berevaya* comes to perform the *Bali* ceremony, it sometimes occurs that he finds all the planets favourable—upon which he at once declares that the sickness has been caused by the machinations of an enemy, and directs the employment of a counter-charm, which consists in cutting with betel clippers successive discs from a lime, certain magical words being uttered before each slice is separated. Charms of this nature are in constant use for protection against wild beasts, poverty, sickness, etc.; and I have frequently heard the natives say that it was useless to shoot at such and such a tank (?) because some one 'had made prayers there' so that even if game were killed, it would suddenly disappear. I have met some persons who professed to be shot-and bullet-proof, but have never been able to meet one who was willing that his powers should be practically tested.

Sometime ago I procured two or three small pieces of copper on which human figures are rudely stamped. There are . . . [The Mss. ends abruptly here.]³⁴

34. The reference is apparently to talismen or amulets which are used as magical antidotes against the evil eye, etc. (cf. W. L. Hildburg: Notes on Sinhalese Magic. *Journal of the Royal Anthropol. Inst.* XXXVIII, 1908).

II

Notes on Sinhalese Belief and Ceremonial³⁵

The Buddhists do not admit the existence of any supreme being, but they say that there are many gods, and by this they mean the Hindu gods such as Siva, Vishnu, etc. When they say that Brahma made the world, they do not mean that Brahma made the heaven and earth, but [that] the world was peopled by those who came from Brahmaloa, that is, the world of Brahma.

That they deny a supreme being is evident by their alleging that Brahma, who alone has to do with this world, was the only being who existed before this world, [and] had himself worshipped Buddha. At the same time he arrived to the Buddhahood. This Maha Brahma is not eternal, for he dies and attains *Nirvāna*.

The present Brahma is named Sahampati, the one who existed previous to him named (Backale) Backlerachma having died and attained *Nirvāna*.

There have been many Brahmas, and there will be many. [They are different beings, for each of the past has attained *Nirvāna*, and that implies extinction.

Each demon has his peculiar weapon, such as the sword of the demon Kadavara, the goad of Paniki Bandara, and the bill-hook of Yapa Bandara.

The *Kapurāla* comes to the devale dressed in clean clothes, and taking burning charcoals in a vessel, throws it into some pounded dammer [dummala], weaves it round his head, after which he goes to the place where the weapon of the demon is placed and stands with his hands joined. Then the tom-tom beater[s] or *Berevayas* begin to sing the *Kolmure*. The *Kapurāla* having stood thus for a while as if waiting to receive the orders of the demon, begin[s] to shudder, and coming before the *devāle* and all the people who assembled to obtain information respecting their stolen goods, etc. and then prophesied. There is no book which treats of upon the origin of demon worship.

It is not the *Kapurāla* that performs the ceremony of *Bali*, but there is a set of people called *Berevayo*.

The natives have nine great planets. The names of these are *Iru*, *Candraya*, *Angaharuwa*, *Budahu*, *Brahaspati*, *Sikura*, *Senasura*, *Ketu*, *Rahu*, and every man is considered to be always under the influence of one or other of these. When a person get[s] sick they ascertain (by means of the horoscope which is generally made out by astronomers at the birth of a native) under whose influence such person is at the time, and then make the *bali* assigned to that particular planet.

35. These notes appear in the Mss. without a title. From the grammar and composition, they appear to have been written by a Sinhalese, for Brodie's information.

Iru. Sunday. Irida.

Chandeya. Monday.

Angaharuva.

Budahu Mercury. Became rock. Attachments on earth

not broken.³⁶

III

Notes of a Conversation with a Buddhist Priest,

Boodhoorowe Kande, 17th June, 1849.³⁷

'He who does wrong will in his next life be a yakka, and if still wicked, in the third a *prētaya* then a wild beast, but ultimately he will return to the shape of man and have a fresh chance. If he acts aright he will be removed to the heaven of the gods (*dēva lōkaya*) but must again return to the world and become a *rahat* and so obtain nirvana, or else he may become a Buddha and so attain *nirvāna*, i.e., it is not necessary to become Buddha to attain *nirvāna*—a *rahat* can attain this ultimate stage.

'A *rahat* is distinguished by the power of working miracles: he can fly through the air, turn the world topsy-turvy, and hold the great rock Meru in his hand. Most *rahats* have been ordained, but it has occurred that some holy men when being shaved previous to the ordination have obtained the miraculous powers. A man can only become a *rahat* by being on earth during the manifestation of a Buddha, or at least before his doctrine has been lost'.

'There is no God—all occurs by chance'.

Query: 'Why did Buddha give Lanka into the charge of Sakkraya if all goes by chance—Chance is in this case meaningless'.

This puzzled the hamuduruvo for a time, then he said, 'Sakkraya can do something, for instance if a father prays to him for progeny, he will grant the request by ordering some being now in another world and which is about to enter the world of men, to appear as the child of the applicant'.

36. The Mss. tails of with these obscure words.

37. This Socratic dialogue was presumably recorded to correct the current impression that Buddhists did not believe in gods (i.e., spirits). Brodie's exposition of the Christian reconciliation between free-will and determinism is hardly more convincing than the naive Buddhist monk's explanation of *karma* (inappositely rendered 'chance'). Elsewhere Brodie confessed that he had an extremely low opinion of the Buddhist monks of the day: most of them were selfish, idle, and inconsistent, and were ignorant of their own history and religion, acknowledging that they had never even read the copies of the *Mahāvamsa* which they possessed. The *Sangha* had suffered from years of persecution and neglect after the deposition of the Kings, and in the decades after 1815 had reached its nadir. 'If no external aid be afforded to the religion, it will soon be practically extinct' (Brodie. *Topographical and Statistical Account of the District of Nuwarakalawiya*. J.R.A.S., C.B. III/1 1856-1858). The revival of Buddhism began only in the latter half of the century. Meanwhile the Sinhalese folk-religion continued to flourish.

Query again : ' If this occurs in obedience to the order of Sakkraya, all things are not ruled by chance '.

After some shuffling this is granted Q.E.D.

' Who is Brahma ? '

' He is the god ruling over sixteen worlds of gods (Sakkraya has only this and another) and must ultimately be born as man and so attain nirvana '.

Q.: ' If he has charge of these sixteen worlds, chance cannot rule there '.

' It does, and Brahma has no power '.

Q.: ' In what then is he a god ? '

' In the contemplation of his own happiness '.

Q.: ' Then Sakkraya having power and Brahma having none, the former is greater than the latter '.

Priest became confused, but acknowledged it must be so.

Q.: ' If all in this world occurs by chance, I might as well imprison men for having long noses as for stealing cattle '.

Puzzled again, then ' No, all things do not occur by chance—Some misfortunes occur because they are fated, but some crimes are committed by the bad will of the actor '.

Q.: ' Then again all are not ruled by chance '.

' No '.

Q.: ' But the cattle stealer can by his own power do something, Brahma can do nothing. Ergo, the cattle stealer is greater than Brahma '.

Here a laugh was produced. I urged the priest about Brahma being placed over worlds in which he has no authority, and after some time he answered : ' Brahma stops there because he has no other place to go to '.

The idea of a god singing with the starling, ' I cannot get out ' was too ludicrous for the priest himself.

Q : ' A being who has once or even repeatedly been degraded to the rank of yakka may yet by subsequent reformation become a Buddha '.

' Buddha is not. No he has ceased to be like all who have attained nirvana '.

I now allowed the priest to put questions. I forget exactly how the first was stated, but it was to the effect that he had read in Sinhalese books that the creator god had one head, two eyes, and so on. He wanted to know why a great God was thus formed.

I explained that the Christian's God has not a bodily form, but is a spirit like a soul or a thought (it is very difficult to explain this owing to a want in Sinhalese of the various abstract terms). I stated at the same time that God knows all things while man knows very few and therefore man can only form a very imperfect knowledge of God's principles or motives of action '.

' Lanka is said in the books to be 1600³⁸ yodun long, and there are perhaps other countries as great. He who made these must have a very great and beautiful dwelling. Where is that ? '

Corrected the geographical errors first, then showed that in asking this he had been led by the notion that existence is necessarily connected with an outward form : a spirit requires no house or shelter. God is everywhere.

Q.: ' If God has no body how can he utter a sound ? '

' God being all-powerful could assume any form he chose and can produce any effect he likes '.

Q.: ' Can you see God ? '

' Can you hear, see, feel, taste, or smell a thought or a soul ? '

Q.: ' Why are some men blind, or lame or otherwise deformed ? '

' Man is not wise enough to know God's reasons in each case, but it is probable that very often such temporary inconvenience is allowed by the Creator for the purpose of restraining the man from wicked acts and thoughts which would have resulted in eternal misery. Thus a man, if he had the full power of his limbs, would have been a robber : being born a cripple [he] is not tempted to steal. He is confined to the house, reads good books, and obeys the laws of God '.

Q.: ' Why are any men allowed to do that which is wrong ? '

' The wrong act of one man may bring about the salvation of fifty, and besides, if it had been impossible for man to choose between right and wrong he would have been a mere machine, like a watch. There could have been neither merit or demerit ' . (Of course I was meeting him on his own ground) ' But man has been formed a noble and intelligent being '.

Q.: ' But if I knew that my servant, if allowed to go to the village, would get into mischief, I would not allow him to go at all, and so would avoid the necessity of punishing him '.

Same as the previous answer, with illustrations.

38. Inserted in pencil.

It is all stuff about Buddhists not believing in a god—they all do. But as the Germans deny God in name and ascribe all to Nature, so the Buddhists will talk of Providence but not of God.

IV

Names of Demons

1. Caddewarea Yakka, [i.e. *Kadavara*, a name given to various demons. A Kadavara kavi in the form of an exorcism describes the kadavara yakas as having formerly dwelt at Sitana Bintänne, and now residing on Santana Gala and Balahela.³⁹]
2. Weeremonde Yakka, [i.e. Vira-munda. A god said in Viramunda-alan-karaya to have been born after a prophetic dream by his mother. For his youthful misbehaviour he was sentenced to death, but escaped and sailed to Kolamba (Colombo). Came to Iriyagama and at Vil-bava constructed shrines. He fed demons in Ceylon, broke the legs of many Demalas (Tamils) warred against the gods of Ceylon (who were led by the Kataragama God), and made Pattini's bangle cease to rattle. He has a red silk kerchief on his head, a red and blue cock in his right hand, and a golden sword and wand.⁴⁰]
3. Calloo Cumare Yakka, [i.e. kalu kumara yakka. Members of aristocratic families figure in the list of demons. Kalu Appuhāmi, for example, was one of the kadavaras. cf. also the various Bandāras mentioned below.]
4. Cabella Yakka. [Kaberi, Kaffir (?)]
5. Devol Yakka. [A Demon in the troop of Dadimunda. 60,000 spirits of this name were created by Gange Bandāra.]
6. Gara Yakka. [The Gara-Yak-paliya gives a ritual to heal sickness by a bali offering to Yaksa Giri, and sacrifices to Kumara Devatar, Vata Kumara, Sanni Yaka, and Gara, adding instructions for distinguishing the kinds of sickness caused by the Yakas Sanni, Riri, Bhuta, Gara, Vata, Kadavara, Gopalu, Bhairava, Sohon,

39. L. D. Barnett: *Alphabetical Guide to Sinhalese Folklore from Ballad Sources* (Bombay 1917).

40. *ibid.* Knox mentions that in cases of sickness, a red cock was dedicated to the god supposed to have caused the malady; when the patient recovers the bird is dressed and sacrificed by the yadessa at the Kovil.

Pilli, and Hūniyan. A Gara Yaku is mentioned in the Kota-halu rite (i.e., a rite of purification performed for a maiden attaining puberty), and is propitiated in the Yak-pidanvila, and kovila-pevima.⁴¹ The Gara-yakuma an all-day dance to propitiate the Gara Yakku, or spirits of poverty, used to be performed by masked dancers of the Oliyo caste.⁴²]

7. Yahpa Bandāre.
8. Calloo Cumare Bandāre (Black prince, son of a good family) [i.e. Kalu Kumara, or Kalu Bandara (Velasse Bandara). A spirit associated with the sanctuary of Visnu at Bintenna, Velasse, Dumbara, Yakini-gal, Runu, the heights of Kalu-gal and Dati gal, and the Kalu ganga river. He recited pirit at Mahiyagama and burned up the yakas. Hence Buddha took him under his protection.⁴³]
9. Menik Bandāre, [i.e. Mānik Bandāra. A demon. One of the nine offspring of a mother who bathed at Diya-kelina-vala, Kandy. They were worshipped as spirits, and perehara processions made in their honour ever since a man named Vanatunga became insane after blood fell on his face as he was cutting down a na tree in a forest. Subsequently he and his kinsmen died. A cloth that had been dipped in the pool in which the mother bathed, took fire and burned like a torch.⁴³]
10. Odoowaireye Bandara. [Vairava (Bhairava) is a demon propitiated in yakpidanta. He is worshipped by Tamils with a victim (preferably human, especially an unblemished first-born boy) to gain his help in searching for jewels.⁴³]
11. Colembe Cumara Bandare, i.e. Kolamba Kumara Bandāra.
12. Hittee Bandāra.
13. Naatchy Cumare Bandāre.
14. Calloo Deniatta Bandāre.
15. Eiyenake Bandāre.
16. Tannievelli Bandāre.
17. Dewattah Bandare, [i.e. Devata Bandāra. A god invoked in Mal-yahan-kavi, apparently one of the names under which Gange Bandāra is invoked.]

41. Barnett, *op. cit.*

42. cf. W. H. Gilbert: *The Sinhalese Caste System* (*Journal of the Washington Academy of Sciences* 35/iii and iv, 1945).

43. from Barnett, *op. cit.*

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18. Waahelle, Bandare [i.e. Vahala Bandāra (Senevi-ratna). The Senivi-ratna-devi-kadavara-kavi relates that when the Asuras tried to prevent the sun from rising in the Dawn-mountain (udagiri), Kataragama Dēva and the gods with the sacred cock fought against them, but as they failed Kataragama Dēva bade Senivi-ratna attack them. He did so, and enabled the sun to rise. For this he received Ceylon and the title Senevi, 'general'. Apparently he rose from the water. He observes the Buddhist Perfections (paramita) in order to become a Buddha. He has charge of Ceylon for 5,000 years. As he guards the portal of Kataragama Dēva he is called Vahala Bandāra. He smites sinners with sickness, gripping them by the throat. He punished the sixty priests who broke the tank. He has blue silken robes, a golden girdle, a red turban, a golden scarf on his shoulder, and a golden armlet; he carries a wand, or a glittering fiery sword.⁴³]

R. P.

43. from Barnett, op. cit.