RELIGION AND SOCIETY AMONG THE COORGS OF SOUTH INDIA
Tradition and modernity in Coorg dress

Photo: T. S. S.
To the memory
of
my brother
M. N. GOPAL
FOREWORD

The study of religions can be approached in many different ways and can present a number of different kinds of problems. For social anthropologists, or for some of them, one major problem is that of the social function of religion—how does religion contribute to the existence of society as an ordered and continuing system of relationships amongst human beings? It is recognized that religion is a binding force amongst individuals, and it would seem that the etymology of the word indicates this. The scientific problem is how religion does this; how, in other words, it functions. The problem is one of very considerable complexity, and it cannot be said that at present we know very much about this subject. The only method by which we can hope ultimately to arrive at an understanding of it is by a number of analytic descriptive studies of religions of diverse types, so that by systematic comparison it may be possible to arrive at some general theory. This work of Dr. Srinivas is an important contribution to that investigation. It gives us a description and analysis of the religious practices of a people of India, the Coorgs of Coorg.

For the social anthropologist the religion of a people presents itself in the first instance not as a body of doctrine, but as what we may call ‘religious’ behaviour as a part of social life. Social anthropology is behaviouristic in the sense that we seek to observe how people act as a necessary preliminary to trying to understand how they think and feel. This book, by a trained anthropologist, who is himself an Indian, and who has therefore an understanding of Indian ways of thought which it is difficult for a European to attain even over many years, gives us a scientifically valuable and objective account of the religious behaviour of a particular Indian community.

In an investigation into the social function of religion in a particular society the first thing required is to examine the relation of the religion to the social structure. In this respect the religion of the Coorgs is of very special interest and value. For we may say that there are three different structural systems in which the individual Coorg is involved, and each of these has its own system of religious behaviour and obligations.
In the first place the Coorg individual is a member of a domestic group, the *okka* or patrilineal joint-family. His closest social ties are with this group and its members, and the well-being of this group is something that is for him of supreme importance. Each such group has its own religious cult. There are daily religious observances of the members of the joint family. There are recurrent occasions on which ritual performances are called for. Any event which affects the solidarity or well-being of the group is an occasion of ritual, such as in births, deaths, and marriages. Piety, for a Coorg, is in the first place the observance of the requirements of this domestic cult.

Dr. Srinivas has described for us the various features of this domestic cult, but he has done more than that. He has helped us to see the social function of these rituals as expressing and maintaining the solidarity and continuity of the structural system. Further, he has sought, with some considerable measure of success, to reveal the meaning of the ritual idiom of the Coorg domestic cult. In any system of ritual each ritual action has its meaning, and the totality of such meanings constitutes the idiom of that system. Just as different societies have different languages so also they have their systems of ritual idiom, and it is the task of the social anthropologist to investigate a system of ritual idiom in the same way that he studies a language. To understand the way a people talk it is necessary to know the idiom of their language; to understand a religion it is necessary to have some understanding of the ritual idiom in which they express their religious sentiments. We do not understand the Coorg domestic cult unless we understand the religious meaning to the Coorgs of the lamp hanging in the hall of the house; and other features of their rites and ceremonies.

Besides being a member of a joint family (*okka*) the Coorg individual is a member of a village community which includes not only persons of his own caste but also members of other castes. The village community has its own religious cult, with its god or gods and its temple or shrine or temples. The village-deities, when properly propitiated, protect the village and its inhabitants from smallpox and plague and other supernatural evils, and afford blessings such as good health and abundant crops. Thus the cult of the village-deities is a collective action of the community. Just as the domestic cult has for its ostensible aim the preservation of the well-being of the particular group, so the village cult has for its
Three other features of social structure have to be considered in connexion with the village cult. In the first place, though the whole village community takes part in the ceremonies, different caste groups have different parts to play and are thus differentiated. Some, for example, take part in the animal sacrifice, while others have nothing to do with it. Thus a caste group within the village is able, within the cult, to establish its own unity and its separation from other groups. This is a significant feature of the caste structure of the village.

In the second place, though each village community has its own unity as exhibited in the cult performances, there is cooperation between different villages, and members of one may take part in the ceremonies of another. Thus the Coorg villages are groups within a single Coorg religious community. It is therefore not only the solidarity of the village that is exhibited in the village cult but also the religious solidarity and unity of the people of Coorg.

Thirdly, there is the fact that the local deities of the villages have been assimilated to the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon, as when a particular local deity is identified with Shiva or Pārvatī. In this way the Coorg religious community has become incorporated as a part of that wider Hindu religious community. The incorporation, however, is only partial. In an orthodox Hindu cult the temple should be served by a Brahmin. Orthodox Hindu deities are vegetarian and dislike alcohol. But some of the Coorg village deities demand the blood and flesh of animals and offerings of toddy. What Dr. Srinivas calls the process of Sanskritization of the Coorg village cults is therefore very far from being complete. There are very important remains of paganism. This need not surprise us when we remember the many survivals of local paganism in the Christian countries. What is significant is that in his participation in the worship of the village-deities the Coorg individual is able to think of himself as a member of the widespread Hindu religious community.

The individual in Coorg belongs to a particular joint-family, and to a particular village, but in addition he belongs by birth to a particular social group of the kind to which we apply the name
"caste". There are some thousands of such groups in India as a whole. A caste is in its essence a religious group, membership of which entails certain ritual observances. The rules of caste behaviour are rules of religion.

The caste system of India presents a kind of social structure that is of special interest to comparative sociology. There are two major features. The first of these is what we may call 'separatism'. There are important rules which limit the social contact of members of different castes. The rule of endogamy prohibits marriage between members of different castes or sub-castes. There are caste rules as to the persons with whom one may partake of a meal, or from whose hands one may accept food or drink. The second important feature is that there is religious or ritual inequality of castes. Any man born as a Brahmin is holy; he might therefore become a priest and perform the priestly functions even if in actuality he becomes a cook or a water-carrier. At the other, lower, end of the scale are the people now called 'Untouchable'—leather-workers, sweepers, and so on, who are by birth 'unclean' or 'polluted' and with whom contact produces pollution in the members of superior castes. The inequality between persons that is an essential feature of the caste system is a religious or ritual inequality. The caste structure is one of a system of rigid partitions dividing caste from caste. At the same time the totality of all the various separate castes constitutes a single religious community the unity of which is provided by Hinduism as a system of ritual and belief. The social separation of caste from caste is something very different from the social separation of Hindus and Muslims.

In connexion with the study of the inter-relations of religion and social structure, therefore, the material presented by Dr. Srinivas is of very special interest and value. To define the position of an individual Coorg in the total structural system of the society in which he lives we have, in the first place, to consider him as a member of a particular joint-family (okka). To this there corresponds, in the field of religious behaviour, his participation in the domestic cult. This cult, with respect to its most general features, may be compared with domestic cults of the kind usually referred to as 'ancestor worship' which are found in many other peoples.

The Coorg individual is also a member of a village community, which is itself part of the Coorg local community, and so part of the wide Hindu community. Religious behaviour in this connexion
is participation in the worship of the gods, who are both local gods and also identified with the gods of the Hindu pantheon.

But the Coorg is also a member of one of the hundreds of caste divisions of Hindu social structure. Religious behaviour in this connexion consists of the careful observance of the caste rules, so that ritual pollution is avoided. I believe that Dr. Srinivas intends to give us at some time an account of how the caste structure actually affects the social life within a village, a subject on which, hitherto, we have had no information.

In the kinds of societies with which anthropologists are chiefly concerned a direct relation between religion and social structure is to be discovered in the belief that is held that the due performance of religious rites contributes to the well-being of a group, or to the maintenance of a certain social order. This is seen in Coorg in both the domestic cult which is carried out in order to ensure the well-being of the joint-family, and also in the village cult. In what are sometimes called the higher religions there appears a different feature in the belief in some kind of personal salvation as something to be aimed at by the individual in his observance of religion. Like Christianity and Buddhism, Hinduism in its more philosophical form also holds out to the individual the hope of personal salvation, often conceived as release from the round of reincarnation. The problem of the social function of religious beliefs of this kind is highly complex. It is clear, however, that to examine the social effects of such religions we have to consider them as formulating for the members of a church an ideal of human conduct.

The rich religious life of the Coorgs is compounded of several strands. We can separate these by successively considering the individual as a member of a family group, as a member of a village community, as a worshipper of the deities of the Hindu pantheon, as a member of a particular caste and therefore having his place in the whole widespread caste structure, and finally as being at least influenced by the religious and philosophical system of Hinduism with its formulation of ideals of human conduct. For the student of comparative religion, and particularly for those interested in the sociological study of religion, this book of Dr. Srinivas offers material of exceptional value.

A. R. RADCLIFFE-BROWN
PREFACE

In 1940 I was awarded, for a period of two years, a research fellowship in sociology by the University of Bombay and this enabled me to do the field-work on which this book is based. I thank the University of Bombay for making it possible for me to study the Coorgs, and I am grateful to Professor G. S. Ghurye for advice and criticism during field-work and subsequent writing.

In June 1942, a few months after returning from Coorg, I was appointed Research Assistant in Sociology in the School of Economics and Sociology in Bombay, and the duties of my new post prevented me from finishing the writing of my field material until the end of 1944. I then came to Oxford, where Professor Radcliffe-Brown's teaching greatly modified my approach to the study of human society. At his suggestion, I started applying some of his ideas regarding the inter-relation of religion and society to the material I had already gathered, and this task proved exciting and, to me, fruitful, even though I was more an ethnologist than a sociologist at the time of my field-work. I am greatly indebted to Professor Radcliffe-Brown for his teaching and for many kindnesses.

I have been greatly helped and stimulated by the teaching and friendship of Professor Evans-Pritchard, who succeeded to the Chair of Social Anthropology at Oxford after Professor Radcliffe-Brown's retirement. I have also benefited from the advice and criticism of Professors M. Fortes and M. Gluckman.

All previous writers on the Coorgs have contributed to my understanding of the social institutions and culture of the Coorgs. I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to them, and especially to Moegling, Richter, N. Chinnappa, and Professor M. B. Emeneau.

Coorg is a beautiful and hospitable country, and I met with kindness everywhere. I should like to thank the people of Coorg generally before mentioning certain individuals who have helped me greatly by giving me hospitality as well as information. I am under a great debt to Shri K. J. Chengappa, who has consistently and patiently supplied me with information over a period of ten years. Shri K. Kālappa and Shri P. M. Ponnappa have also given me information and helped me in other ways. I wish to thank...
PREFACE

Shri H. Tirumala Chår, B.A., B.L., and his family for their hospitality to me in Mercara.

I am very grateful to the Carnegie Research Fund for a generous grant which enabled me to pursue my studies at Oxford. I thank Dr. A.A. Baké, and the Films Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, for the loan of some of the photographs reproduced in this book.

My friends Mr. R. G. Lienhardt, Mr. K. O. L. Burridge, and Dr. Kathleen Gough have helped me by critically reading the typescript.

Oxford
April 1951

M. N. S.

NOTE TO SECOND PRINTING

Nearly twelve years have passed since this book first appeared in print. Since then many changes have occurred in Coorg and in India but I have made no attempt to bring the book up-to-date. I would only like to mention here that Coorg became an integral part of the Mysore State on 1st November, 1956 when the States were reorganised by the Government of India.

I would like to thank the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of the Government of India, and Shri T. S. Satyan and Shri T. S. Nagaraj, for their kindness in allowing me to make use of their photographs. I must also express my gratitude to my colleague Shri G. S. Aurora M.Sc. (Lond) for correcting the proofs.

Delhi School of Economics
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M. N. SRINIVAS
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Tradition and modernity in coorg dress

Between pages 96 and 97

Coorg bridegroom and bride
The Murta ritual for the bridegroom
The harvest festival of Putri: Combat with stick and shield
Typical Coorg landscape
A mountain road in Coorg
The sacred river Kaveri
Terraced rice-land
The harvest festival of Putri: Dancing on the village green
The harvest festival of Putri: Dance with sticks
Women and children at a wedding
A bride’s ornaments
The harvest festival of Putri: Men getting ready for a dance
Children going to school
Coorgs in their Ceremonial Dress—shooting is a popular pastime
A coffee estate
COORG is a tiny, mountainous province in south India, bounded on the north and east by Mysore State, and on the west and south by the South Canara and Malabar Districts of Madras Presidency. Its greatest length, north to south, is sixty miles, and its greatest breadth, east to west, is forty miles. The total area is 1,593 square miles, of which 519 square miles constitute 'reserve forest'.

The Western Ghat mountains which run along the West coast of India from Gujerat to Cape Comorin pass through Coorg. They generally make a precipitous descent to the west while they slope more gradually to the east. The plateau of peninsular India generally slopes to the east, and most of the bigger south Indian rivers flow from west to east.

The main range of the Western Ghats skirts the southern and western frontier of Coorg. Starting from Brahmagiri Peak (5,276 feet) in the extreme south it runs in a north-westerly direction till Tala Kaveri, where it turns east for a few miles before it turns north-west again. It proceeds in this direction for some distance and then runs due north till Pushpagiri Peak (5,260 feet).

Spurs strike out in all directions from the main range of the Western Ghats. In the south they form either a ramification of narrow-ridged hills, or subside into undulating slopes enclosing innumerable broad valleys in which rice is grown.

That part of the main range of the Western Ghats which runs east from Tala Kaveri is called Bengunăd Betta, and a high spur proceeds eastwards from it at the point it turns abruptly northwest. At Mercara this spur forks, the southern fork ending in the peak of Nārokkal Betta, while the northern fork zigzags towards Fraserpet in the east. The Nārokkal spur continuing the Bengunăd Betta is important, as, together with the Western Ghats running south-east from Tala Kaveri, it constitutes the watershed of the upper basin of the Kaveri river.

The western half of Coorg to the north of Mercara is a plateau
ferns and the useful rattan cane creeper and víṭé reeds are also found close to the mountain streams flowing in these forests.

Coorg fauna is the same as that of the rest of south India. In its forests are found elephant, tiger, bison, panther, boar, bear, porcupine, deer, and wild dog and jackal. The extensive clearing of the mountain-sides for coffee and orange plantations, the general love of hunting, and the possession of firearms have resulted in the decimation of wild life in Coorg.

The isolation and inaccessibility of Coorg, with its steep mountains, dense forests, and heavy rainfall, contributed to the maintenance and elaboration of the distinctive mode of life and culture of Coorgs. The Lingāyat Rājas, who saw certain political and military advantages in the natural isolation of Coorg, tried to increase it. Richter tells us that they closed down certain roads leading to Mercara, and prohibited travelling by them. But under British rule the existing roads were improved and new ones were built. Nowadays buses run regularly on all the main roads connecting different parts of Coorg with each other, and Coorg with her neighbours. Yet even now no railway line passes through Coorg and this restricts the amount of contact it has with the rest of India.

The isolation of Coorg in the past was far from absolute. Contact always did exist with neighbours, though such contact was limited and difficult. For instance, Coorgs in south-west Coorg went annually in caravans to Malabar to sell their surplus rice, and to buy jaggery, coconuts, coconut oil, tobacco, and areca-nuts. Coorgs in south-east Coorg bought cattle in Mysore and went on pilgrimages to certain shrines like the Shrikanteshwara Temple in Nanjanagud. Coorgs in central and north Coorg went on pilgrimages to the Subrahmanya Temple in South Canara.

Though Coorg is a very small country, it shows considerable cultural diversity. The areas to the north and east of Mercara, and the entire eastern fringe of Coorg have many cultural features in


2 Crude brown sugar, either in the form of square blocks or small round cakes, made from sugar-cane juice or the saps of various palms.
common with Mysore. The areas to the west of Bhāgamandla, and the north-western parts, have many cultural forms in common with South Canara, while the south-western fringe has many features in common with Malabar.

The quadrilateral formed by Mercara in the north, Siddāpur in the east, Śrīmangala in the south, and Bhāgamandla in the west has been called Coorg Proper by earlier writers. Coorg Proper is an area of greater homogeneity within Coorg, and formerly the bulk of Coorgs lived there. This area might be described as the core and centre of the culture of Coorgs.

When we speak of Mysore (or Kannāḍa) culture, or Malabar (or Malayāḷam) culture, or South Canara (or Tulu) culture, we are not thinking of entities unrelated to each other. Malayāḷam and Tulu cultures have certain features in common and, similarly, Tulu and Kannāḍa. Again, all three share some features. In fact, the whole of India constitutes, in a very broad sense, a single culture-area within which each linguistic area constitutes a region of greater cultural homogeneity. The recognition of the greater homogeneity of each linguistic area should not lead to the ignoring of the larger unity, and still less should it ignore the special connexions with some or all of the neighbouring areas.

A village in the Kannāḍa, Telugu, or Tamil country is a group of houses and huts huddled together in a confined space with fields and gardens stretching all round. But a different type of village prevails in Coorg Proper where Coorgs predominate: every Coorg house is built on its ancestral estate, and near it live the servants of the house, usually men of low caste, in huts of mud and bamboo with thatched roofs. On the other side of the hill or valley lives another Coorg joint family with its satellite families living close by. A few such houses and their dependent huts scattered over the hills and valleys are lumped together and called a village (ṭar). An eastern plainsman used to seeing villages as close physical entities would be tempted at first to assert that there are no villages, in Coorg Proper. Such a view, however, would be wrong. A village in Coorg Proper is real in the sense that its boundaries are known to elders, and the people of the village see themselves as a unity against other villages.

The members of a village have to co-operate on certain occasions such as weddings, funerals, festivals of the village-deity, harvest festival, hunts, dances, and thatching a newly built house. Rivalry
between villages is still prevalent, and formerly feuds (maradālē) between villages were frequent.

Most people in Coorg live in villages, either themselves cultivating or supervising the cultivation of land. Exact figures are available only for 1931 when sixty out of every thousand lived in towns, while the rest lived in villages: i.e. 94 per cent of the population lived in villages. Even now, excepting educated men in government service, or in one of the learned professions, and a few commercial men, others in general prefer to live in their natal villages on account of their close attachment to their ancestral lands.

There are only two towns in Coorg, Mercara, the capital, with a population of 7,112 and Virārājpēt, with 4,106.

The 1941 Census mentions the total population of Coorg as 168,726 but it does not enlighten us as to the composition of this population. The details are, however, available for 1931 when the total population was 163,327 and of this, 146,007 were Hindus, 13,777 Muslims, 3,425 Christians, and the balance of 118 was accounted for by Jains, Buddhists, and Parsis. Coorgs, with a strength of 41,026, formed the largest single group amongst the Hindus.

All the important languages spoken in Coorg are Dravidian, with the exception of Hindustāni and English. Again, detailed figures are available only for 1931 when 62,769 spoke Kannāda, 44,385 Koḍāgi, the dialect of Coorgs, 14,914 Malāyālam, 14,275 Tulu, and 10,026 Yerava, the dialect of the Yerava tribe. There were 3,007 Tamil-speakers, fewer in fact than the speakers of the Indo-Aryan language, Hindustāni, who numbered 4,378.

Professor M. B. Emeneau considers that 'the Dravidian language spoken by Coorgs is an independent language, and shows characteristics that in part connect it closely with Kannāḍa, in part with the languages of the Malabar coast, especially Malāyālam'.

Coorgs make use of the Kannāḍa script on those occasions when they wish to reduce Koḍāgi into writing. Such occasions are not, however, very common. Kannāḍa was the court and official lan-

2 Ibid., pp. 41-42.
3 Ibid., p. 38.
4 In a letter to the author.
guage of Coorg under the Lingāyat Rājas, and nowadays it is the medium of instruction in schools. Besides, every Coorg is able to speak it.

Educated Coorgs are usually trilingual, knowing Kodagi, Kannada, and English. Kodagi is used in the home, Kannada in talking to most non-Coorgs excepting Malayālis, and English in official matters, and occasionally in conversation with strangers. English is popular with Coorgs, and even women, especially those under thirty, have some acquaintance with it.

In 1931 there were 44,585 Kodagi-speakers though the total number of Coorgs was only 41,026. This discrepancy is due to the fact that several castes and tribes have taken over the language of Coorgs, who have throughout been the dominant group in Coorg. In fact, only a few castes have escaped the temptation to imitate Coorgs in dress, customs, and manners. In the past some families of Wynad Chettis, Kannada Okkaligas, Tulu Gaudas, and others did succeed in entering the Coorg fold. Even now some non-Coorgs aspire to be Coorgs. For instance, during the 1931 Census, a number of Kannada Okkaligas and Tulu Gaudas in north Coorg succeeded in getting themselves enumerated as Coorgs as they had been described as ‘Jamma Kodagas’ in the title-deeds conferring on them the right to hold land under the concession tenure of jamma (see pp. 16—17). The enumerators, in spite of their strict instructions to check all doubtful cases thoroughly, had to enumerate such persons as Coorgs. It is presumed, however, that their number did not exceed a thousand.1

IV

Coorg enters history in the ninth century A.D., but the information we possess at present about the period between the ninth and seventeenth centuries is very little indeed. We do know, however, that ever since the period for which we have any information, the fortunes of the powerful south Indian Kingdoms in the east have had effects on Coorg. In the ninth and tenth centuries the Chandālas, who ruled some parts of Coorg, were feudatory to the Gangas of Tikkōd in Mysore. The Chandālas (Kings of Changa-

1 Census of India, 1931, vol. xiii, p. 42
present called Shanivärasanté Rôbli. This latter area was part of the territory ruled by the Kongälva Kings in the eleventh century. Both the Changälvas and Kongälvas were Jains by faith, and Changälva inscriptions have been found in Yadavanál in the north and Beûtjetnád in the south (see Map 3). It is probable that their territory included Tala Kävëri as well.

The Chôlas of the Tamil country defeated the Gangas in the beginning of the eleventh century, and they claim to have conquered Coorg as well. Both the Changälvas and Kongälvas now became feudatory to the Chôlas.

The Hoysalas, a dynasty which rose to power in western Mysore after the fall of the Gangas, succeeded in the twelfth century in driving the Chôlas out of Mysore. The Changälvas, who had accepted the overlordship of both the Gangas and Chôlas, refused to accept the overlordship of the Hoysalas and claimed independence. Several battles took place between the two before the Hoysalas were able to establish their authority. These battles are important for us, for the first reference to Coorgs as a body occurs in an inscription referring to one of them. We find Coorgs fighting for their Changälva ruler against the invader from Mysore.

In 1145 the Hoysala king Narasimha I slew the Changälva ruler in battle and captured his elephants, horses, gold, and jewels. Thereafter the Changälvas appear to have withdrawn into Coorg, for in 1174 Ballûla II sent his general Beûtarasa against them in Pälparâ in Hattugatânád in Kiggatnád (see Map 3). Beûtarasa was victorious, and he built a town at Pälpar which he made his capital. But Pëmma-Virappä, joined by Budigonleya Nandideva, Udiyâditya of Kurchi (village), and others, 'the Koëlagas of all the nãês', marched against Pälparé and attacked Beûtarasa, who seems to have got the worst of it at first, but was finally victorious. This is the earliest reference to Coorgs by name.¹

The defeated Changälvas seem to have accepted the suzerainty of the Hoysalas. In 1252 the Hoysala king Somëshiwar then visited them at Ramanâthapûra, when the Changälva capital was at Shrîrangapatña, south of the Kävëri near Siddâpur. The Changälvas had now changed their faith from Jainism to Lingayâtism, a popular sect devoted exclusively to the worship of Shiva, which arose in the Kannâda country in the twelfth century A.D.

When the Vijayanagar kingdom replaced the Hoysalas in the

fourteenth century the Changālvas became feudatory to them. The Vijayanagar kingdom, extending over a great part of south India, remained in power till 1565 when it was defeated by the Muslims at the Battle of Tālikota.

During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Vijayanagar kings had bestowed on, or confirmed to, vassal chiefs bearing various titles, sundry tracts in Mysore, on the condition of paying tribute and rendering military service. Those in the north were controlled direct from the capital. The southern chiefs were under a viceroy, termed the Śri Ranga Rāyal at Seringaṇapātam. After the disaster of Tālikota, although nominal allegiance continued to be paid to the viceroy, such of the chiefs as had the power gradually declared their independence.1

Among the chiefs who became independent were the Nāyakas of Bējnūr, the Changālvas who ruled over a good part of Coorg, and the Wōdēyars of Mysore. The last-mentioned of these rose to power after the fall of Vijayanagar, absorbing many of its former dependencies.

The authority of the viceroy seems to have been recognized in a shadowy way even after the fall of Vijayanagar until 1610 when Mysore captured Seringaṇapātam, the seat of the viceroy’s government. The Changālvas seem to have been friends with the viceroy who, in 1607, confirmed the Malalavacāl country2 to Piriyarāja (or Rudragaṇa), the Changālva king of the Nanjarājapāṭa branch.

A clear account of the history of the Changālva kings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is not yet available. It is known, however, that in the beginning of the sixteenth century Nanjarāja founded their capital of Nanjarājapāṭa. In 1589 Piriyarāja (Rudragaṇa) rebuilt Singaṇapāṭa and named it after himself, Piriyāpāṭa. A branch of the Changālvas seem to have ruled in Piriyāpāṭa in the seventeenth century. The exact date when this dynasty came to an end is not certain as, according to the existing account, the last Rāja was killed in 1644 while fighting Mysoreans. According to the same account Doḍḍa Virappa (Vira Rāja II) was reigning in Coorg at this time, but we know for certain that he did not ascend the throne till 1686, forty-two years after 1644.

1 Imperial Gazetteer of India, vol. xviii, p. 176.
2 He did this because the deity Annandāni Mallikārjuna on the Bettadapura hill in Hundūr taluk (or Malalavāṭi) was the family deity of the Changālvas of the Nanjarājapāṭa branch, and the viceroy wanted the worship of the deity to continue as long as this branch of the Changālvas continued to exist. Imperial Gazetteer of India, vol. xi, p. 11.
INTRODUCTORY

Firishta, the historian of Akbar and Jahāngir, states that at the end of the sixteenth century Coorg Proper was ruled by its chiefs or Nāyakas, who acknowledged the supremacy of Vijayanagar, but constantly fought among themselves. The chaotic situation was taken advantage of by a prince of the neighbouring Ikkeri or Bēdna dynasty, who at first settled in Hāleri, north of Mercara, as a Jangama or Lingāyaṭ priest, and succeeded in gradually bringing the entire country under his control.

The Nāyakas of Bēdna, the Rulers of Piriyapāṭa, and the Rajās of Coorg were all related to each other. It is even possible that the Rajās of Coorg were thought of as in some way dependent upon the Nāyakas of Bēdna; this would help to explain Haider Ali's regarding himself as liege lord of Coorg when he had conquered Bēdna in 1763.

The prince of the Bēdna dynasty who settled down as a jangama or Lingāyaṭ priest in Hāleri in north Coorg was an astute strategist. He was well aware of the fact that a jangama commanded a great deal of respect from Lingāyaṭs who predominated in north Coorg. He lived in a village council house (chāvārjī), teaching children and preaching to adults. People voluntarily gave him uncleaned paddy (dhuī bhatta) at harvest. Later, when he was certain of his hold over the people, he changed the voluntary contribution to a compulsory levy of one and a half bhattis (bhatti = 80 seers) of rice, and a sum of nine annas and eight pies per house per annum. He also called upon his followers to guard his dwelling in turns. The watchmen were called chāvārjikāras or 'men of the chāvārjī', a name which was later used for the Rajā's troops. The priest-politician next declared himself ruler of Hāleri and surrounding nās, and the chiefs ruling over small areas of Coorg Proper submitted to his authority on condition that he allowed them to keep to themselves three-quarters of the revenue collected by them from their subjects, and pay only a fourth to him as their overlord. The Rajā's authority continued to increase. The troublesome chiefs were gradually eliminated, and only those who did not constitute a threat to his authority were allowed to survive. But their capacity for mischief had not entirely been destroyed, as will be seen later.

Muddu Rajā (1633-86), the grandson of the founder of the dynasty of the Lingāyaṭ Rajās, moved the capital from Hāleri to Mercara.

1 Imperial Gazetteer of India, vol. xi, p. 11. 'Nāyaka' in Kannada means 'leader', and it seems to have been a title assumed by anybody with a following.
in 1681, and this continues to be the capital today. It is not certain whether it was Muddu Raja or his son Dodda Virappa (Vira Raja II) who reorganized the administration, altering the existing boundaries and creating a clear hierarchy of headmen (takkas), and four appellate courts (pattis) for the settlement of disputes.

The consolidation of the authority of the Rajas which began with the founder was completed only during the time of his great grandson Dodda Virappa (Vira Raja II). During the latter's reign we hear of the efforts of Ustu Nayaka, a chieftain in Armari in Bepundit, to get the country invaded from the south by Kotangadi Vira Varma while Vira Raja II was defending the country from the Mysoreans in the east. Vira Raja II was luckily able to beat off both the eastern and southern invaders.

The struggle between Mysore and Coorg which began during the time of the Hoysalas and continued till the end of the reign of Vira Raja II assumed a particularly severe form in the later half of the eighteenth century, after the usurpation of the Mysore throne by Haider Ali. The severity reached its climax during the reign of Tippu Sultan, Haider's son, and only ended with his death in 1799. Coorgs fought repeatedly for their king and country against the invaders, paying a heavy price for their loyalty.

Haider conquered Becnur in 1763, and he seems to have thought that this entitled him to suzerainty over Coorg, a claim which he tried to assert by force as well as cunning. In the complicated struggle between him and the Rajas of Coorg, he does not seem to have made any considerable progress so long as the question of succession to the Coorg throne was clear and undisputed.

But the death in 1770 of Muddu Raja II and Muddayya Raja, who were both jointly ruling Coorg as representatives of the different segments of the dynasty of Lingayat Rajas, gave rise to succession disputes between Linga Raja I, younger brother of Muddu Raja II, and Deyappa Raja, son of Muddayya Raja. Deyappa Raja was successful in the struggle, and the unsuccessful Linga Raja I sought the help of Haider, who was eagerly waiting for such an opportunity. Haider helped Linga Raja I to ascend the Mercara throne, and after the latter's death in 1780 he assumed entire possession of Coorg, under the pretence of being guardian of the dead king's sons till they came of age. Meanwhile the sons were

1 Coorg was traditionally divided into thirty-five nadis, each nadi containing several villages.
made to reside at the Gôrûr fort. A Muslim garrison was stationed at Mercara, the capital, and a former official of the Râja was appointed governor.

These measures were extremely unpopular with Coorgs who rose in rebellion in 1782 and drove out the Muslim garrison at Mercara. They escaped Haider’s retaliation as he was just then busy fighting the English in the south, and died soon after. In 1784 Tippu Sultan, Haider’s son, marched through Coorg on his way from Mangalore to Seringapâtam and threatened Coorgs that he would make an example of them if they rebelled again. Coorgs replied to this by open insurrection in 1785, and a force sent to put them down was driven back. Thereupon Tippu himself marched into Coorg with an army and,

having lured most of the Coorgs to meet him at Talê Kâvērî, under the pretence of peaceable intentions and conciliatory measures, he suddenly seized them, and hunting out their families, drove them, altogether about 70,000 souls, like a herd of cattle to Seringapâtam, where all the males were forcibly circumcised. Coorg itself was partitioned among Muslim Landlords, to whom the slaves of the country were made over, and additional labour provided from Adoni in Bellîry District. The only condition laid on the new owners was that they were to search out and slay all such Coorgs as might have escaped his vengeance, as he was resolved on their extermination. The country was held by garrisons in four forts, at Mercara (Jiîarabad), Fraserpet (Kushalnagar), Bhâgâmnâdā and Beppunâd; and on account of the ascensions he had made to the faith Tippu now assumed the title of Bâdshâh (king).1

The Coorg princes who had been removed from Gôrûr to Piriyâpâtâ by Tippu Sultan managed to escape to Coorg in 1788, after six years’ confinement, and at once Coorgs rallied round their princes. Before long, Vira Râja IV, the eldest of the princes, occupied the entire country. Tippu sent a large force to recapture Coorg but this had to be diverted to the west coast at the eleventh hour to subdue a revolt in Malabar.

From 1788 till the defeat and death of Tippu in 1799, Vira Râja IV helped the English in their wars against Mysore. Richter tells us that in 1792 when Lord Cornwallis had driven Tippu into

1 Imperial Gazetteer of India, vol. xi, p. 13. The slaves referred to above were the Poleya servants of Coorgs and other high-caste masters. The number of Coorgs who were driven out of Coorg into Seringapâtam by Tippu is variously estimated. Lewis Rice, for instance, estimates it at 85,000 in Mysore and Coorg, vol. iii, Bangalore, 1878, p. 111. Shri N. Chinnappa estimates it at 110,000, Pat. & Palamî, p. 45.
Seringapatam and the British occupied that island, 'about 5,000 Coorgs who had been carried away by Tippu, with their wives and children, altogether about 12,000 souls, made their escape in the confusion that ensued and returned to their native country'.

Their old homes and lands were restored to the returning exiles, and they seem to have been accepted back into the Coorg fold without difficulty.

Vira Raja ruled till 1809 when he died, leaving behind only daughters. This gave rise to the inevitable succession disputes in which, in the end, Linga Raja II, younger brother of the dead king, emerged triumphant in 1811. He ruled till his death in 1820 when he was succeeded by his twenty-year-old son Chikka Vira Raja (Vira Raja V). The latter was an incompetent and sensuous tyrant, and in 1834 he was deposed by the British who annexed Coorg. The rule of the Lingayat Rajas had come to an end.

Lewis Rice tells us that Coorgs formed the bulk of the armies of the Rajas. He writes:

these mountaineers (Coorgs) had a considerable share of intrepidity and perseverance; stratagem entered largely into their system of tactics, in war they were remarkable for their predatory habits, and their neighbours accused them on those occasions of adding cruelty to pillage. Like the modern guerilla, though they were unable to contend openly with regular troops, they intercepted their supplies, cut off their communications, and harassed them by surprises, a species of warfare admirably adapted to second the natural difficulties that a hilly country must present. An intimate knowledge of it, a strict obedience, and a singular devotion to their chief [i.e. Raja] accompanied by a remarkable attachment to their wilds and an equal gallantry in defending them, may in some measure perhaps have compensated the want of military skill.

The system of land tenure prevalent in Coorg directly contributed to the maintenance and development of the military tradition of Coorgs. Land revenue was the principal source of the wealth of the Raja. The assessment was based on a survey and classification of all cultivated land in Coorg. In 1812, during the reign of Linga Raja II, a general settlement was made and this was recorded in a book called Hukum Nama. All cultivated land was

3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
divided into fars (urga), and every farm was entered in the register along with the type of tenure it was held under.

The *jonna* system of land tenure under which most Coorgs held (and even now hold) land was the basis of their military tradition. It was an hereditary right passing from father to son, and was for this reason called *jonna*, a corruption of the Sanskrit *janma* which means 'birth'. It was not, however, confined to Coorgs. Kannada Okkaligas, Talu Gudas, smiths (Airis), potters (Kumbāras), and Mapilla immigrants from Malabar enjoyed the privilege and prestige of holding land on *jonna* tenure. The Rājas occasionally offered *jonna* tenure as a bait both to induce certain artisan and trading castes from outside to settle down in Coorg and to induce local people to reclaim forest or waste land.

The *jonna* tenure was a very light one in terms of money, being only five rupees or a hundred *bhātīs* of wet land. A hundred *bhātīs* of wet land means an area of land producing a hundred *bhātīs* of paddy. The area of land required to produce that amount varies according to the fertility of the soil, and arable land is classified into seven grades for purposes of assessment.

Along with the assessed rice-field went two unassessed stretches of land; one was *bāndi*, the highland adjacent to the rice-field and clothed with jungle from which the cultivator's joint family obtained its supply of fuel, timber, and forest produce; and the other was *barīlā*, bearing pasture for the cultivator's cattle.

Legally, *jonna* land was impartible, inalienable, and could not be sublet without the permission of the Rāja, and, most important of all, people holding land on the *jonna* tenure were liable to be called up for military service. Richter writes in 1870 that 'the *jonna* ryots (cultivators) are still liable to be called out to repel outward aggression or quell internal disturbances, and to furnish all police and treasure-guards, escorts, &c., in time of peace'.

Every family holding *jonna* land had to perform guard duties for fifteen days in the year, during which time the guards were maintained at public expense though not paid. Not all the men of a joint family were employed on guard duties at the same time. Some were left free to look after land, and even those who were posted on guard duties were posted near their fields.

*Jonna* tenure conferred a double prestige on the holder in...
addition to the undoubted economic advantage. It signified that the holder had his roots in Coorg, and the duty of rendering military service to the state in times of emergency conferred on him the second type of prestige. The other important tenure in Coorg was *sagu*, in which not only was land assessed at ten rupees per hundred *bhattis* of land, being twice the rate for *jamna* land, but also the holder was liable to render every type of service to the state except military service. During Richter's time, but for forty Coorgs, all the people holding land on *sagu* tenure were non-Coorgs.  

The Rājas occasionally granted land on *jamna* tenure to non-Coorgs as a special mark of favour. Occasionally, Coorgs who held land on *jamna* tenure were transferred to the *sagu* class as punishment for wrongs done by them.

VI

During the two centuries of rule by the Rājas, Coorg underwent a number of changes, political, administrative, and social. The authority of the local chieftains or Nayakas was destroyed and the administration was centralized. The Rājas established a postal service (*anche*) for the use of officials only. Land was surveyed thoroughly, and the type under which each farm was held was recorded in the *Hukum Nāma* of Linga Rāja II (1811-20). The *Hukum Nāma* also contained a few paragraphs dealing with the powers of officials to try cases, civil and criminal, without reference to the Rāja. Serious offences like adultery, murder, and treason were tried by the Rāja himself. The recognition of the authority of the headman of a village and his council of elders was a general feature of the administrative system of the Rājas. They also recognized the authority of caste elders to try and settle caste disputes.

The long and bitter struggle with Haider and Tippu increased the sense of national identity of the inhabitants of Coorg. Coorgs played an important part in this struggle as they formed the bulk of the Rājas' soldiery, and also because they were specially selected for barbarous treatment by Tippu Sultan.

The Rājas were Kannadigas and under their rule the importance of Kannada culture increased in Coorg at the expense of Mala-
yālam. They were also Lingāyats, who are staunch vegetarians and teetotallers, and possess a powerful and highly organized church of their own. Fifty-seven Lingāyat mathas or monasteries, some of them heavily endowed, existed in north Coorg during Richter’s time.¹

The religion of the Rājas left its mark on the general population, and especially on Coorgs. The latter constituted the aristocracy under the Rājas, and a number of them held important posts at the Rājas’ courts. Members of the royal family occasionally married Coorgs. The close contact which Coorgs enjoyed with the Rājas certainly helped in the spread of the culture and religion of the latter.

Many Coorgs even today adorn their foreheads with three horizontal, finger-wide, stripes of vibhūti or sacred ashes, a mark used by devotees of Shiva in all parts of India. Coorg folksongs frequently refer to a man or woman praying to Shiva soon after getting up in the morning. Most of the important temples visited by Coorgs are Shaivite in character.

The annexation of Coorg by the British in 1834 marks the beginning of the operation of vast political, economic, social, and ideological forces on the people of that tiny province. For instance, the British gave jagirs or assessment-free lands to those Coorgs who had helped them in the suppression of the Canara Rebellion of 1837, and later these were allowed to be treated as gifts to the individuals concerned and not to their joint families. Traditionally, the joint family was the unit which owned land, and individuals owned only a little cash and a few moveables. But by 1870, less than forty years after the annexation of Coorg by the British, some individual Coorgs had acquired for themselves farms and coffee plantations. Richter applauds the change:

... these individual enterprises seem to be the natural transition to an impending general social reform—the breaking up of the great houses, and the independent establishment of each married couple residing near their own paddy-fields, and eating the fruit of their own labour. The indolent will then have to work for subsistence or sink into misery, the industrious and thrifty will prosper and after a period of no little angry strife a happier

One of the first reforms introduced by the British was the abolition of slavery. Every high-caste landholder had apportioned to him, from ancient times, one or more families of slaves according to the size of his estate. These slaves belonged to a very low caste like the Poleyas. The legal abolition of slavery did not, however, materially affect the landholders, many of whom were Coorgs. But when, in the fifties of the last century, coffee plantations were opened up all over Coorg and there was a sudden demand for coolie labour, many of the slaves deserted their former masters to work for cash wages on the plantations. It was only then that the condition requiring a person holding land on the jamma tenure not to sublet his land was relaxed to the extent of permitting him to sublet a fourth of his estate.

Before the coming of coffee, rice was not only the staple crop, but also the chief commercial crop, as not many people owned the evergreen forests where cardamom thrived. The cultivation of rice was the most important concern of every landholding joint family and its slave-families. Excess of rice was disposed of in Malabar where articles not available in Coorg were bought.

As a food crop rice has an intrinsic importance which no purely commercial crop can adversely affect, but coffee soon took a place next only to rice in its importance. It is necessary to mention here that the cultivation of coffee, in the beginning at any rate, was subject to the hazards of destruction by pests like the 'bug' and 'borer'. It was also bound up with the vagaries of a world market. Coffee changed the face of Coorg. It brought in European planters who settled down all over Coorg; it cut the bonds binding the slaves to their traditional masters; it induced the seasonal inflow of labour from Mysore and South Canara, and finally it brought money to the planter as well as to the labourers on the plantations and to the total community.

The annexation of Coorg by the British did not mean a complete break with past administration. The British administrative system was at first based on the old system, and the modifications introduced were few and far between. The authority of village elders

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and of the hereditary village headman was recognized and the established administrative institutions were continued.

This phase, however, ended soon after 1858 when the administration of India was taken over by the British Government from the East India Company. Coorg then became part of the territories administered directly by the British in India and of the elaborate administrative and judicial machinery stretching over the whole of India. Numerous Acts like the Indian Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, and Indian Stamp Act applied to every part of India including Coorg.

Under the British, Coorg was a Chief Commissioner's Province, a position which continues even today. Until 1942 the British Resident in Mysore State was also the Chief Commissioner of Coorg, and Coorg was governed from Bangalore, the headquarters of the Resident. In 1942, the two offices of Resident of Mysore and Chief Commissioner of Coorg were separated and a distinguished Coorg, Dewan Bahadur Kettalira Chengappa was appointed Chief Commissioner. Below the Chief Commissioner was the Superintendent who lived in Coorg. A legislative council consisting of twenty members (fifteen elected and five nominated), presided over by the Chief Commissioner, was constituted in 1924. The council had the right to vote on the budget, move resolutions, and ask supplementary questions.

A NOTE ON SLAVERY IN COORG

Slavery was widely prevalent in pre-British Coorg. The slaves and agricultural labourers did most of the actual work of the farm under the supervision of their masters who held the land from the state on one of the several forms of tenure prevalent in Coorg. The number of slaves in 1834, when the British annexed Coorg, was estimated at 6,089, but we do not know whether this included the slaves on the Raja's farms (or panyas), who were variously estimated at 1,757, 1,720, 1,500, and 1,233.

Slaves were referred to as jammada ālu (or 'jamma servants'), and there were two classes of slaves, one praedial, called bhānī jammada ālu (bhānī = land), and the other personal, called okkalu jammada ālu (okkalu = farm, house, family). The former could

1 It probably meant that they were slaves of the man holding land on jamma tenure.
not be sold apart from the land on which they worked, and when land was sold, they went with it automatically. The personal slaves, on the other hand, could be sold or mortgaged, and had to move with the masters wherever the latter went. They were, in fact, the movable property of the masters.

The proprietors of the okkalu jammuada dul in Coorg have the power of setting them [the slaves], but not to a person who will carry them out of the country, unless the slaves themselves consent. The rights of slaves consist in receiving subsistence and protection for themselves and their families from their masters, who are bound to observe the custom of the country with respect to the quantity of food and clothing given to them. Three seers of rice for a male slave, two for a female, and one and a half to a boy or girl, are given by their master, independently of salt and curry stuff which are supplied by them, sometimes monthly, and at other times daily. The slaves are likewise entitled to a load of grain once a year, at the time when the crops are reaped. This quantity is called horay, which varies in different njaps. The slaves reside in houses provided for them by their masters in the small village, and a piece of land is appropriated to their use in which they usually grow vegetables or tobacco. Besides the subsistence given to the slaves, and the allowance above-mentioned at the time of the harvest, they are supplied by their masters with clothing twice a year, first, when the seed is sown, and secondly, when the crops are reaped.

In regard to the treatment of slaves by their masters, it is said that the cultivators in Coorg, activated by self-interest, if not a better motive, pay much attention to their comfort. Aware as they are that any act of severity on their part will induce their slaves to abscond, a circumstance which would subject them to much trouble and inconvenience, they protect and treat them with kindness as forming a part of their family. The proprietors in Coorg possess no power to inflict severe punishment upon their slaves but they have authority to chastise them moderately for any faults they may commit. ... The wealth of a cultivator is generally estimated by the number of his slaves, as in proportion to the number he has lands under cultivation. ...

Certain incidents described in Coorg folklore make it clear that frequently great affection prevailed between master and slave. The slave was a member of the master’s household and a proverb compares him to one’s eldest son. The master had to provide funds for the slave’s wedding and have him looked after during illness and old age. On his side the slave was required to perform

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1 Memorandum respecting the condition of the slaves in Coorg, transmitted with Col. Fraser’s letter to Mr. Secretary Macnaughten, dated 14th July, 1834, in the volume of appendices giving the evidence on the subject of slavery, annexed to the Report of the Indian Law Commission, 1 February 1839, pp. 545-6.
every type of service. He was also liable to be called upon to bear arms in times of war.

The remedy at the disposal of the slave against harsh treatment was running away either to a different part of Coorg, or to cross the border into a neighbouring country. There was, of course, the risk of being pursued, but it is presumed that the slave took this extreme step only when harsh treatment made his position intolerable. Between the farmers of Kiggatnâd in the extreme south and those in Wynâd, however, there was an agreement by which neither followed up absconding slaves who had crossed the frontier. This usually worked in favour of Coorg, where wages were higher than in Wynâd, though work was correspondingly heavier. The slaves in Kiggatnad and Wynâd regularly crossed the frontier once every few year and they had masters on either side. It was very probable that these slaves belonged to one of the several tribes inhabiting the mountains of Wynâd, like the Yeravas, Beâta Kurubas, Jenu Kurubas, and so on. They had the reputation of being absconders and thieves and idlers in comparison with Poleyas from the Kannada country. Yeravas and Kurubas from Wynâd fetched a lower price than Poleyas in the market. In any case the price of a slave never exceeded Rs 13 (about £1).

Slavery had a caste component. The masters invariably belonged to the higher castes while the slaves belonged to very low castes. In Coorg the masters generally belonged to castes like Coorgs, Tulu Gaudas, Kannada Okkaligas, and Airis (smiths) while the slaves came from Untouchable castes like Poleyas, Paleyas, and Mâdigas, and tribes like Yeravas, Adiyas, Kudiyas, and Beâta Kurubas, and Jenu Kurubas. It is probable that very poor members of the high castes and castes just above the Untouchables, like the Mêdas (makers of basketry work), hired themselves out as agricultural labourers.

It has already been said that a large body of slaves worked on the farms of the Râjas. In 1834 when the British annexed Coorg there were twenty such farms producing nearly 47,000 bhâttis of rice with about 1,757 (according to the highest estimate) slaves working on them. The British, who wanted to abolish slavery, started by freeing the slaves on the royal farms, and this was later extended to include all slaves.

There was a landslide in the general economy of the country when the slaves suddenly left their masters to work on the coffee plan-
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The masters then found that they were unable to cultivate all the wet land in their estate, but under the conditions of jamma tenure they were required to pay an assessment of five rupees per hundred bhattis of land on all wet land irrespective of whether it was under the plough or not. It was then that the government permitted them to sublet not more than a fourth of the wet land.\(^1\)

\(^1\)No remission of jamma-rent is ever made, except under extraordinary circumstances, such as the death of several members of a family, the entire destruction of property by fire or the loss of a large number of cattle. In these cases and when the produce of their lands has been very meagre, the jamma ryots [peasants] are allowed to pay Rs 10 per 100 bhattis for the quantity of land which has been cultivated, instead of five rupees for the whole farm. It is also customary, under such circumstances, or when only women and young children are left in the house to permit the whole of the jamma lands to be sublet on vara tenure (division of the crop in equal halves between the tenant and landlord) for periods ranging from one to five years according to the particulars of each case.\(^2\) Richter, op. cit., pp. 402-3.
CHAPTER TWO
SOCIAL STRUCTURE

I

The existence of subdivisions among Coorgs does not prevent them from regarding themselves, and from being regarded by others, as a single group. Coorgs consider themselves to be Kshatriyas, who constitute the caste of rulers and soldiers in the traditional hierarchy, and rank next only to Brahmins, who are priests and scholars. It is necessary to give here a very brief and general account of the caste system in order to make clear the implications of the Coorg claim to be Kshatriyas.

Caste is an institution of great complexity. It has its roots deep in history, and even today it governs the lives of 300 million Hindus in several important respects. It is popularly understood as the division of society into a fivefold hierarchy with the Brahmins at the head, followed in order by the Kshatriyas, Vaishyas or traders, Shudras or servants and labourers, and, lastly, the Untouchables. The first three castes are called ‘twice-born’ (dvija) as they alone are entitled to undergo the ceremony of upanayana which constitutes spiritual rebirth. Only the twice-born castes are entitled to study the Vedas and to the performance of Vedic ritual on certain occasions. Caste in the above sense is referred to as varna and has an All-India application.

The idea of caste as the fivefold division of society represents a gross over-simplification of facts. The real unit of the caste system is not one of the five varnas, but jati, which is a very small endogamous group practising a traditional occupation and enjoying a certain amount of cultural, ritual, and juridical autonomy. Every jati, or the members of a jati in a particular village or a group of neighbouring villages, constitutes a caste court which punishes caste offences.

There are innumerable jatis. Professor Ghurye calculates that there are 2,000 sub-castes (jatis) in each linguistic area.1 This should give some idea of the total number of endogamous sub-

1 Caste and Race in India, London, 1932, p. 27.
CASTES IN INDIA AS A WHOLE. The importance of the varga-system consists in that it furnishes an All-India frame into which the myriad jātis in any single linguistic area can be fitted. It systematizes the chaos of jātis and enables the sub-castes of one region to be comprehended by people in another area by reference to a common scale. Further, the varga-system represents a scale of values, and jātis occupying the lower rungs have throughout tried to raise their status by taking over the customs and ritual of the top jātis. This has helped the spread of a uniform culture throughout Hindu society.

The attempt to fit the jātis of any region into the fivefold hierarchy is a very difficult affair. It is possible everywhere to say who are the Brahmins and Untouchables, but there is great confusion in the middle regions. Confining our remarks to south India for the moment, we find that the claims of local jātis to be Kshatriyas and Vaishyas are frequently questioned by others. For instance, it is well known that a ruling house claiming to be Kshatriyas were originally potters. Similarly, the claim of a local trading jāti to be Vaishya, one of the three twice-born varnas of the Vedas, is hotly contested by the other castes in the area. It is not uncommon to find a jāti included under the Shudra varna claiming to be higher than the local jātis claiming to be Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. Disputes as to relative status are an essential feature of the caste system. This is especially so in the numerous jātis belonging to the fourth varna of Shādra. In south India the term 'Shudra' includes the vast majority of non-Brahmin jātis and even some reformist sects.

A man is born into a sub-caste (jāti) and this is the only way of acquiring membership. According to the traditional view, however, birth is not an accident. Certain Hindu theological notions like karma and dharma have contributed very greatly to the strengthening of the idea of hierarchy which is inherent in the caste system. The idea of karma teaches a Hindu that he is born in a particular sub-caste because he deserved to be born there. The actions he performed in a previous incarnation deserved such a reward or punishment, as the case might be. If he had performed better actions in his previous incarnation he would have been born in a higher caste. Thus the caste hierarchy comes to be an index of the state of an individual's soul. It also represents certain milestones on the soul's journey to God.
Thus the idea of deserts is associated with birth in a particular caste. A man is born in a high caste because of the good actions performed by him in his previous life, and another is born into a low caste because of bad actions performed in his previous life.

The other important concept is *dharma*, which has many meanings, one of which is 'that which is right or moral'. The existing moral code is identified with *dharma*. A man who accepts the caste system and the rules of his particular sub-caste is living according to *dharma*, while a man who questions them is violating *dharma*. Living according to *dharma* is rewarded, while violation of *dharma* is punished, both here and hereafter. If he observes the rules of *dharma* he will be born in his next incarnation in a high caste, rich, whole, and well endowed. If he does not observe them he will be born in a low caste, poor, deformed, and ill endowed. Worldly position and success indicate the kind of life a man led in his previous incarnation.

One may also reap the reward of one's actions very soon after their performance. For purposes of such reward and punishment, a person is identified with his joint family. A man may become blind because his father, the head of the joint family, made money in the black market during the war.

The concept of pollution governs relations between different castes. This concept is absolutely fundamental to the caste system, and along with the concepts of *karma and dharma* it contributes to make caste the unique institution it is. Every type of inter-caste relation is governed by the concept of pollution. Contact of any kind, touching, dining, sex, and other relations between castes which are structurally distant results in the higher of the two castes being polluted. Ordinarily, contact between members of the same caste, or between members of castes which are structurally very near each other, does not result in pollution. Where contact does result in pollution, however, the polluted member of the higher caste has to undergo a purificatory rite in order to be restored to normal ritual status. Such a purificatory rite is fairly simple where the structural distance between the castes is not very great and the type of contact is not serious. Sometimes, as when a Brahmin eats food cooked by an Untouchable, the resultant pollution is so great that he or she has to be excommunicated. Normally, in every caste, women observe the pollution rules much more strictly than men.
SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Contact is culturally defined. Touch is contact in all cases. Frequently the maintenance of a minimum distance between castes is insisted upon. This matter has received systematization in Kerala, where elaborate rules have been laid down requiring the minimum distance that should prevail between the various castes.

Aiyappan, in 1937, gives a scale of distance pollution for several castes: a Nayar must keep 7 ft. from a Nambudri Brahman, an Iravan (llavan, Izhuvan, Tiyan) must keep 32, a Cheruman 64 and a Nayadi 74 to 124. The respective distances between these lower castes are calculated by a simple process of subtraction: the Iravan must keep 25 feet from the Nayar and Cheruman 32 feet from the Iravan. ¹

The ban on contact between castes, and the solidarity of a sub-caste, express themselves in the spatial segregation of castes in a village. The Untouchables live everywhere at some distance from the others, while each of the other sub-castes occupies a street or a quarter of the village or town.

Normally a man may accept cooked food and water from a member of the same or equal or superior caste. Food cooked by a member of a lower caste may not be eaten because such food defiles a man belonging to a higher caste. Mutual acceptability of cooked food denotes equality between the castes concerned, while the movement of food in one direction only indicates that the acceptor is inferior to the giver.

People living in rural areas, and the orthodox, exhibit a preoccupation with the matter of acceptance or rejection of cooked food from different castes. The kind of food, the question whether it is cooked in butter or water, the caste of the person cooking it, and the place (whether temple or home) where the food is cooked, all go to determine its acceptability or otherwise. A tendency to define and systematize is obvious everywhere.

There is a general correlation between diet and status. Brahmins are usually vegetarians, abstaining even from eggs. The Shudra castes eat eggs and meat. Pork is inferior to mutton, and usually pork-eaters to mutton-eaters. Beef-eaters are the lowest of all. The consumption of toddy, too, begins at some point low down in the caste hierarchy.

Facts have been over-simplified in order to make some general

¹Dr. A. Aiyappan, The Anthropology of the Nayadis, pp. 18 seq., quoted by J. H. Hutton, Caste in India, p. 70.
statements. For instance, while Brahmins are usually vegetarians, the Sāraswat Brahmins of the west coast, and some Brahmins of Bengal, eat fish, while the Kāshmiri Brahmins eat meat. Again, castes claiming to be Kshatriyas generally eat mutton. The Lingāyats of south India, who are non-Brahmins, are vegetarians and teetotallers. It must be mentioned here that from the earliest times vegetarianism has been held up as an ethical ideal, it being considered wrong for an individual to kill other sentient creatures in order to keep himself alive. Vegetarianism goes hand in hand with teetotalism, the drinking of alcoholic liquors being forbidden to the high castes.

The acceptance of cooked food by a high caste man from an Untouchable constituted as serious an offence as having a liaison with an Untouchable, and in the old days both offences were punished, by the caste court concerned, with excommunication from caste. It is not only the high castes who are particular about the caste of the person from whom they accept food and water, but the Untouchables too are very particular. In Mysore, Untouchables do not accept food and water from smiths, and from Mārka Brahmins. They believe such acceptance would defile them.

Each caste is traditionally associated with a separate occupation. Some of the earlier students of caste were so impressed with this feature of caste that they ascribed the origin of caste to the systematization of occupational differentiation. In rural India the bulk of the castes continue to practise their respective traditional occupations, though agriculture is common to all castes from the Brahmin to the Untouchable.

Some occupations are considered defiling because of the contact with some defiling object or other necessary to their practice. Swine-herding is defiling because swine defile. Leather defiles, and consequently the making and repairing of shoes is an occupation of the Untouchables. Certain other occupations, while not being defiling, are so strongly associated with low castes that no high caste man will take to them. The tapping of toddy would be a case in point. Finally, any occupation however remotely implying the destruction of sentient life in any form would be prohibited to the high castes. Thus not only butchery, the catching of fish and game, and the raising of sheep and fowls would be prohibited, but even the selling of dried fish and eggs would be regarded as an improper occupation for a high-caste man, especially a Brahmin.
But, nowadays, under the influence of industrialization, the old association of caste with occupation is beginning to break down.

The members of a sub-caste tend to regard their traditional occupation as the natural one for them. Taking up any other occupation is regarded as improper. There is a pride in the skill required for the practice of the traditional occupation, and this skill is a secret which is not easily divulged to members of other castes. In fact, formerly, castes tended to be guilds, and the members of castes regarded their traditional occupation as their monopoly. A violation of this monopoly would result in a fight. The matter could also be taken before the village court and before the king of the region.

Things associated with high castes, their houses, clothes, customs, manners, and ritual, tend to become symbols of superior status. Consequently there is a ban on the lower castes taking them over and, formerly, such a ban was sanctioned by the political authority at the top. In Malabar, until 1865, only the Brahmins were allowed to clothe their bodies above the waist, even the women of the lower castes being prohibited from doing so. In many parts of India the lowest castes were not allowed to have tiled roofs for their houses. Nor were they allowed to build two-storied houses.

A consequence of the extreme stratification implied in the caste system is the tendency of each sub-caste, or each level of sub-castes, to live in a separate social world. The members of a sub-caste inhabit the same quarter of the village or town and frequently are all related to each other by agnatic or affinal links. They share a common culture and ritual idiom. They observe common restrictions regarding food and drink, and have certain caste festivals and rites not shared with others. They practise a common, traditional occupation, the secrets of which they do not share with others. They have caste courts and assemblies where elders of the sub-caste belonging to different villages assemble and decide matters of common concern. The members of a sub-caste share certain common values and are actively aware of this fact when they come into contact with other castes. The autonomy of a sub-caste does not, however, mean that it can live independently of other sub-castes. An Indian village usually consists of a few sub-castes which are mutually dependent and also possess certain interests in common.
The sub-caste or *jātis* is the unit of endogamy. Occasionally we find a *jātis* split up into several groups each of which is endogamous. The rule about endogamy is still strictly observed, though a contemporary tendency among the educated members of the higher sub-castes is to marry into another sub-caste of the same level and sharing the same culture. Thus a member of the Mandyam division of the Sri Vaishnava Brahmins might nowadays marry a member of the Hebbār division of the same larger group, though formerly they would not have done so.

Hypergamous unions occasionally occur between castes. By this a man belonging to the higher caste takes a girl from the lower caste. It is never the other way about. Hypergamous marriages are common in Malabar and Bengal. They occur in other parts of India too.

The caste system is far from a rigid system in which the position of each component caste is fixed for all time. Movement has always been possible, and especially so in the middle regions of the hierarchy. A low caste was able, in a generation or two, to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism, and by Sanskritizing its ritual and pantheon. In short, it took over, as far as possible, the customs, rites, and beliefs of the Brahmins, and the adoption of the Brahminic way of life by a low caste seems to have been frequent, though theoretically forbidden. This process has been called 'Sanskritization' in this book, in preference to 'Brahminization', as certain Vedic rites are confined to Brahmins and the two other 'twice-born' castes.

The tendency of the lower castes to imitate the higher has been a powerful factor in the spread of Sanskrit ritual and customs, and in the achievement of a certain amount of cultural uniformity not only throughout the caste scale, but over the entire length and breadth of India.

Another point which needs specially to be stressed is that the idea of hierarchy embodied in the caste system has been periodically questioned in India. Buddhism and Jainism questioned it quite early in the recorded history of caste. Lingāyatism challenged it in the south in the twelfth century A.D. These attempts more or less met with failure, and occasionally the reformist sect either became a caste or reproduced within itself a caste system.

Many of the sanctions supporting the caste system tended to disappear under British rule. The British withdrew the explicit as
well as implicit support which caste usually enjoyed under an Indian monarch. For instance, people who had been punished by caste courts could sue the caste elders responsible for defamation in courts established by the British.

Formerly, an offender against the code of the caste was punished with either fine or, in very serious cases, excommunication from caste. Between themselves, caste councils and village councils completely controlled the conduct of an individual. Caste elders and village elders supported each other's authority.

Caste guarantees autonomy to a community, and at the same time it brings that community into relation with numerous other communities all going to form a hierarchy. The importance of such an institution is obvious in a vast country like India which has been the meeting-place of many different cultures in the past and which has always had considerable regional diversity. While the autonomy of a sub-caste was preserved it was also brought into relation with others, and the hierarchy was also a scale of generally agreed values. Every caste tended to imitate the customs and ritual of the topmost caste, and this was responsible for the spread of Sanskritization. When this process is viewed on a continental scale and over a period of at least 2,500 years, it is easy to see how Sanskritic ideas and beliefs penetrated the remotest hill tribes in such a manner as not to do violence to their traditional beliefs. Caste enabled Hinduism to proselytize without the aid of a church.

Caste, which was so successful in absorbing autonomous groups everywhere, also provided the pattern for relations with non-Hindu groups. Christians and Muslims were regarded as castes, too, and they accepted such a status. Even revolutionary movements which had aimed at the overthrow of the caste system ended by either becoming castes themselves or reproduced the caste system within themselves. The main body of Hindus regarded these sects as castes and not as sects. Thus the caste system effectively neutralized all attempts to change it.

Caste ties cut across territorial ties, and members of the same caste living in different villages have a great deal in common. This type of solidarity has been called in this book "horizontal
solidarity', and it contrasts with 'vertical solidarity', which is common to a number of castes occupying different positions in the hierarchy. For instance, the members of a village community, whatever their caste, have certain interests in common. Similarly, people speaking the same language have a certain solidarity. The Brahmin and the Untouchable speaking the same language have certain cultural forms in common, even though they belong to the extremes of the hierarchy. The structural situation everywhere in India is subject to the pulls exerted by these opposed types of solidarity.

In any large geographical area in India it is usual to find a minority of sub-castes who speak a language different from the one which is locally dominant. Sometimes two or three such minor languages are found in a single area. Migrations from one part of India to another have been extremely common in the past, and this has been specially so within each of the two major geographical areas of India, continental and peninsular India. The immigrant castes usually claim a higher place in the local caste structure than is conceded by the others.

The speakers of the same language, whatever their caste, possess certain cultural forms in common, and when, in the same geographical area, there are castes speaking different languages, each becomes aware of the cultural forms which mark it off from others. It will be seen that any geographical area in India exhibits enormous structural and cultural complexity. In a tiny province like Coorg, speakers of every Dravidian language, and of Konkani, Marathi, and Hindusthani, are found.

Coorgs constituted the aristocracy under the Lingayat Rājas, holding important positions in the administration and very nearly monopolizing the army. All the other castes in Coorg, excluding the Brahmin, Kōmti (Telugu-speaking trading caste of south India), and Lingayat acknowledged their dominance by taking over their customs and manners, and in some cases even their speech. It has already been mentioned that high castes like Kannada-speaking Okkaligas and Tulu-speaking Gauḍas, both peasants, in north Coorg tried to pass off for Coorgs. In the recent past a few of them, those with a little money, married Coorgs, and
this is probably the reason why we find in the north one branch of a joint family speaking Kōḍagi while another speaks Kannada. Until recently Coorgs living south of Mercara had a prejudice against marrying those living in the north. The latter were regarded as inferior and derisively referred to as those living ‘beyond the hills’ (bēṭṭat mēlē), the implication being that Coorgs south of Mercara were the best Coorgs.

Coorgs formed a compact unit in relation to other castes. They possessed wealth and power, they liked dancing, competitive games involving the exercise of skill and strength, hunting, and soldiering. In the Vēdic or classical caste system these virtues are attributed to Kṣhatriyas, the caste of warriors and kings, who are next only to the Brahmīn in the hierarchy. The resemblances between Coorgs and the Vēdic Kṣhatriyas are striking indeed in the matter of values, and it is understandable that Coorgs should regard themselves as Kṣhatriyas. But the classical Kṣhatriyas, as one of the three ‘twice-born’ castes, were entitled to perform certain rituals at which sacred verses (mantras) from the Vēdas were recited by the priests. Coorgs do not perform any of these rituals and Vēdic mantras are not recited when a Coorg is given a name, or marries, or dies.

Coorgs, like other Caste Hindus, object very strongly to the eating of beef, and the strength of their objection was early recognized by the British who banned all slaughter of cattle for the table in Coorg in 1835. But the Coorg dietary includes pork and liquor, and this is occasionally singled out for comment by the other castes. The correlation between status and dietary is particularly strong in the interior of south India, and the Coorg claim to be regarded as Kṣhatriyas comes up against this fact. Coorgs rightly point out that the Rajputs of north India eat pork and that this has not prevented them from being generally regarded as Kṣhatriyas. However, Rajputs eat only the wild pig and not the domesticated one.

In the Sanskritic myth (Kāvēri Purāṇa or Kāvēri Māhāmya) about the River Kāvēri, Coorgs are said to be Ugra1, or the descendants of the marriage of a Kṣhatriya prince and his Shudra wife. The Kāvēri Myth thus cleverly reconciles the economic and

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1 Ugra means ‘strong, formidable, terrible, violent, angry, passionate, cruel, fierce, pungent, hot, high and noble. It is also the name of a mixed tribe, descended from a Kṣhatriya father and Shudra mother, and of Malabar.’ M. Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Oxford, 1899, p. 172.
RELIGION AND SOCIETY AMONG THE COORGS

The military power of Coorgs with their lack of certain rituals and their somewhat catholic dietary. It is interesting to note that Shri N. Chinnappa considers the account of the origin of Coorgs given in the Kaveri Myth to be a true, historical account. He, however, mentions that the majority of Coorgs regard themselves as Kshatriyas and not as Ugras.1

Coorgs seem to be a distinct community in occupation of the forested mountains of Coorg for many centuries, and with a way of life of their own. But they were throughout in contact with Sanskritic Hinduism, and religious movements like Lingayatism affected them considerably.

There are two subdivisions among Coorgs today: the first division is 41,026 strong, while the second contains only 666 individuals, according to the 1941 Census. Members of the latter division are called Amma Kodagas, or Amma Coorgs, and they are highly Brahminized in their customs and ritual. They are vegetarians and teetotallers, and nowadays they constitute an endogamous unit. Like the Brahmins they wear the sacred thread and observe annual shraddhas or ancestor-feasts at which only vegetarian food is offered to the dead ancestors.

It is said that Amma Coorgs are the descendants of a Coorg man and a Brahmin girl of Wynad, daughter of one Tayikat Tambiran, who expelled his daughter from his home as she attained puberty before marriage. (Formerly, among Brahmins, it was regarded as both sinful and shameful to have in the house an unmarried girl who had attained puberty.) This girl married a Coorg, and her descendants came to be known as Amma Coorgs (amma = mother), and they observed the customs of their mother. The name of an Amma Coorg man has the suffix 'amma' even though 'amma' means 'mother', and is normally a suffix to a woman's name in certain parts of south India. In Coorg, a woman's name has the suffix 'avla' which is the same as 'amma', and a man's name has the suffix 'appa' which means 'father'. It is said that formerly Amma Coorgs, who were concentrated in south Coorg, used to claim kinship with a similar group of people in Wynad.

In the last few years of the reign of the last Raja of Coorg, Amma Coorgs claimed to be 'Kaveri Brahmins', the descendants of the Brahmin disciples of the sage Agastya, husband of Kaveri, before the latter flowed away as a river. The disciples twitted the master

1 Puffole Palamad, pp. 19-20.
with having deserted Kāvēri for Kanakē, a semi-divine woman, who later assumed the form of a river, joining the Kāvēri at Bhāgmandla. This annoyed Agastya who cursed his disciples, 'Brahmins of Matsyaśeṣha (traditional name for Coorg in the Sanskritic myths), let not the people of this land obey you. Let them not give you enough to support you.' The distressed disciples appealed to Mother Kāvēri against her husband’s curse. She took pity on them and told them that so long as they believed in her they would not find it difficult to support themselves.

In November 1834 some Amma Coorgs donned the sacred thread at Balmuri on the banks of the Kāvēri. They became followers of the Brahmin monastery (maṭha) in Rāmachandrapura in Shimoga District in Mysore State. In 1847 the head of this monastery sent them instructions as to the ritual they were entitled to perform. Amma Coorgs from Kīggaṇḍa who had not donned the sacred thread in 1834 did so a few years later at the Irpu temple under the auspices of the Brahmin monastery at Kāṇūr in Uḍipi in South Canara. Sometime afterwards a few Amma Coorgs who still remained unattached to a monastery became disciples of the monastery at Subraṇaṇa in South Canara.1

Amma Coorgs exemplify a tendency which has always been present in the caste system: a small group of people break off from a larger whole of which they are a part, Sanskritize their customs and ritual, and achieve a higher status than their parent body in the course of a few decades.

The main body of Coorgs do not contain any subdivisions today, but formerly, during the time of the Rājas, they were divided into two groups called ‘Sāṇṇa’ and ‘Malla’ Coorgs. These are Kannaḍa, and not Kōdi, terms, and elderly informants say that these terms were used only by the Kannaḍa-speaking outsiders and not by Coorgs themselves. This sounds somewhat far-fetched, though there does not seem to have been a sharp line dividing the Sāṇṇa and Malla Coorgs. ‘Sāṇṇa’ in Kannaḍa means ‘small’, and ‘Malla’ means ‘big’, and the terms were derived from the two different varieties of rice, one big and the other small. The latter variety is superior to the former, and Sāṇṇa Coorgs regarded themselves as superior to Malla Coorgs.

Richter tells us that ‘Sāṇṇa Coorgs may originally have formed a small nucleus connected with their Nīyakas or chiefs who were

1 N. Chinnappa, Past and Present, pp. 20-21.
exterminated by the usurping Rājas of the Ikkeri family, and may in their own eyes have constituted a sort of aristocracy; while Malla Coorgs represented the aggregate main body which was augmented by new accessions from kindred tribes. He further states that Malla Coorgs include 'those whose descent from Wynād Chēṭjis or other foreign connections is traditionally known, for it is no secret among the Coorgs that such additions have been made to their number and the house-names of such bear witness to the fact'.

He also mentions that a poor Coorg was relegated to the inferior group, while a well-to-do Coorg, or one who held a high post in the government, claimed to be a Saṇṇa Coorg.

Cole tells us that Saṇṇa Coorgs greatly outnumbered the Malla Coorgs, that marriages between the two were not frequent, and that the Saṇṇa Coorgs were scattered all over Coorg while Malla Coorgs were more or less confined to north Coorg.

The last point made by Cole seems particularly open to doubt as there seem to have been some Malla Coorgs in the extreme south. Again Saṇṇa Coorgs seem to have been concentrated in Coorg, south of Mercara, and it has already been mentioned that the southerners regarded themselves as being superior to the northerners.

The early writers on Coorg refer to a division of Coorgs called 'Boḍḍha Coorgs'. Coorgs south of Mercara seemed to have regarded the Coorgs settled in north Coorg, in Yēdavanāḍu, Gudināḍu, and Surlabhimuttunāḍu as inferior to themselves in intelligence. Hence the appellation 'boḍḍha', which means 'stupid'. Richter and Cole differ as to who the Boḍḍha Coorgs were, but it seems certain that Boḍḍha Coorgs were small pockets of the Coorg community scattered in areas inhabited mostly by Tulu Gaudas and Kannāda Okkaligas. They were influenced by the customs and manners of the latter castes, and occasionally these groups even intermarried. The situation was further complicated by the fact that both Tulu Gaudas and Kannāda Okkaligas aspired to pass off for Coorgs.

Boḍḍha Coorgs were then Coorgs who lived at some distance from the main core of their group. Marriages between Boḍḍha

1 G. Richter, Castes and Tribes found in Coorg, Bangalore, 1887, pp. 21-22.
3 Ibid., sec. 3; Richter, Castes and Tribes found in Coorg, pp. 21-22.
Coorgs and other Coorgs were not very frequent. Sanna Coorgs looked down upon Boḍdu Coorgs whose customs and manners were somewhat different from their own: differences between cognate groups as to minute points of custom and ritual frequently come to stand for the identity of each of them as against the others. This is a common feature of caste.

A point which needs stressing because it is not very typical of the caste system is the comparative ease with which Coorgs admitted into their fold non-Coorgs belonging to fairly high castes. Moegling wrote in 1855, 'strangers are received among them and naturalised without difficulty, and such as have been excommunicated are received without much ado'. Richter, writing sixteen years later, says that 'even within the memory of the present generation strangers were received by and incorporated with the Coorgs. There is now a dispute pending about six families in Kīggaṭāṇāḍ, who ten years ago were, by the Head Sheristedar Nanchappa, received as Coorgs, but after his death were expelled from the clan [caste] by the rest of the people. The settlement of the dispute will perhaps be only a matter of time...'. Formerly some families of Wynāḍ Cheṭṭis, Kannāḍa Okkaligas, and Tulu Gaudas were received into the Coorg fold. The complete absorption of recruits from other castes naturally took some time, and till it was accomplished the conservative Coorg families did not freely intermarry with the new recruits. Even now one hears a Coorg elder saying, 'such-and-such a family are really Kannāḍa Okkaligas who called themselves Coorgs 50 or 60 years ago. Until recently Coorgs would think twice before inter-marrying with them.'

There are more than forty main castes and tribes in Coorg, but Coorgs come into intimate contact with only a few of them. A very brief account of their relations with each of these castes will now be given. It is important to add that the duties mentioned against each caste might frequently be performed by similar castes of equivalent status: for instance, it might be either a Tulu Brahmin or Malabar Brahmin who performs the priestly duties at a village temple, and the Tulu Brahmin is again split up into Shivalji and

1 Coorg Memoirs, p. 55.
Havik subdivisions. Similarly, Poleya is a blanket term for anyone of the following Untouchable sub-castes, Kembatti, Adiyas, Paleya, Poleya, Kukka Poleya, Badaga Poleya, and Mádiga. Poleyas are split into further subdivisions.

The Brahmans, Kaniyas, and Bagnas (or Panikas) are the three castes with whom Coorgs come into contact mostly in ritual contexts. The Brahmans are priests not only in the great shrines at Tala Kávērí, Bhágamanḍla, and Irpu, but also in numerous small temples scattered all over Coorg. Coorgs from every part of Coorg go on pilgrimage to the great shrines, and at Bhágamanḍla, where the Kávērí and Kanaké meet, it is customary for them to offer balls of rice to their ancestors under the guidance of a Brahmin priest.

In those villages where a Brahmin is functioning as priest he is paid annually, at harvest time, a certain quantity of paddy by every house in the village. In this respect he is treated like the barber, washerman, smith, and others. The priest is an essential member of the village organization.

In addition to being priest of the village temple, the Brahmin performs certain ritual services for Coorgs. These services vary from one part of Coorg to another, and not infrequently from one joint family to another. Coorgs in Kíggatnad, for instance, are more Sanskritized in their ways than Coorgs elsewhere, and again some Coorg families are more Sanskritized than their neighbours. But everywhere the Brahmin priests perform certain minimum duties: at putri, the harvest festival of Coorgs, he comes with consecrated water which he gives the members to drink, and also sprinkles a little of it on certain parts of the house. When a wedding takes place in a Coorg house, he comes to bless the bridal pair and give them consecrated water.

The formation and crystallization of the division of Amma Coorgs is itself an acknowledgement of the strength of the influence of the Brahmans on Coorgs. But the Brahmans do not always operate at the Sanskritic level. Nearly a hundred years ago Dr. Moegging wrote that Coorgs were greatly afraid of the Tantri Brahmans of South Canara.

Coorg Memoirs, pp. 56-57.

The Coorgs have an extraordinary dread of the power of these men. They say that if one of the Tantri Brahmans be offended and curse a man he will lose his sight or hearing or even his life. It is enough, they believe, for one of the masters of the black art to say to a man, 'do you not see?' or 'do you not hear?' and the poor fellow is doomed to blindness or even death.¹

¹ Coorg Memoirs, pp. 56-57.
Occasionally temples dedicated to Bhagavati or Bhadrakāli were under the control of Tantri Brahmins in South Canara. The latter had the right to appoint the priest and oracle to each of these temples: the priest was a Brahmin while the oracle belonged to any high caste like Coorgs.

The Tantri Brahmins knew the ritual surrounding the construction of a temple and consecration of images. They visited the temples under their management once every few years when their Coorg followers made money-offerings to them. Moegling tells us that a single such visit would yield the priests between Rs 200 and Rs 300, a substantial sum in those days, and which testifies to the hold exercised by the Tantri Brahmins over Coorgs.¹

The fact that the Tantris sanctioned the institution of oracles at their temples shows the extent to which they had compromised with non-Sanskritic modes of propitiation:

Some Coorg is also chosen as a subject for possession by Bhagavati. He likewise, and his successors, must be instituted by the ruling Tantri. They are selected from a large number of candidates presented by the community connected with the temple. The Tantri takes one of the men, pronounces some mantra and puts some holy ashes upon his face, when immediately the individual commences to shake and to dance and to speak as one possessed.²

The Kaniyas are another caste with whom Coorgs come into intimate contact in ritual contexts. They are astrologers and magicians from Malabar who have settled in Coorg for a long time, and their hold on Coorgs was very much greater in the past than it is today.

Every important task must be begun in an auspicious moment, or it will fail. Only the Kaniya knows the auspicious and inauspicious moments, and this is revealed to him by his knowledge of astrology. The first ploughing of the rice-fields, the first sowing, and the cutting of the sheaves have all to be performed during auspicious periods. A wedding has to be performed on an auspicious day and at an auspicious hour, and if there are horoscopes for the boy and girl, they are examined to find out if they are mutually compatible. But not all Coorgs have horoscopes, and marriages are frequently arranged without resorting to the Kaniya astrologer.

Coorgs formerly resorted to the Kaniya on every conceivable occasion. If an ox strayed, or if someone was ill in the house,

the Kaniya was consulted. It was believed that he was able to
tell, by consulting the planets, whether the strayed ox would re­
turn and whether the patient would recover. Sometimes he
suggested the performance of some rite which would enable,
for instance, the ox which had strayed to return home and the
patient to recover. Perhaps a minor deity or spirit like Gulika, or
an ancestral spirit, was annoyed because it had not received the
necessary attention from the members of the particular joint
family. The Kaniya would then suggest the performance of appro­
priate propitiatory ritual.

The Banna and Panika are two low castes, originally from
Malabar, who are very similar to each other and who actually
perform the ritual which the Kaniya prescribes for his Coorg
client. These two castes stand in a relation similar to the one in
which the dispensing chemist stands to the doctor in the Western
world. The Kaniya says, for instance, that the ancestors of his
client are angry because they have not been propitiated for a long
time, and he suggests the performance of the kāraṇavai térē which
is an elaborate propitiation of ancestors lasting over a day. The
Banna (or Panika) actually performs the elaborate ancestor­
propitiation at which the ancestors of the Coorg joint family
possess the Banna oracle.¹

Each Banna family serves a group of villages which they are
under an obligation to serve. Besides ancestor-propitiation and
other occasions when their services are wanted by families, Ban­nas
play very important parts at the festivals of village-deities where
they are oracles, dancers, and cutters of the sacrificial animals.

Coorgs come into contact with the blacksmith, carpenter, and
goldsmith usually in non-ritual contexts. The blacksmith and
carpenter make the agricultural implements and domestic articles,
and also help in building the massive houses of Coorgs. Some of
the articles made by them, like the bier and palanquin, are used on
ritual occasions.

The goldsmith, in addition to making the gold and silver orna­
ments, ritually bores the ears of boys and girls. Formerly, the
ritual boring of a boy's ears was an important initiation rite, mark­
ing his transition from boyhood to adulthood.

The clothes washed by the washerman (Madivāḷa) are not only

¹ Richter's Manual of Coorg, pp. 169-70, contains an example of the kind of
service which the Kaniya performed with the aid of the Banna.
clean but ritually pure (maṣi), and ritually pure clothes should be worn on ritual occasions. The washerman's services are necessary on every ritual occasion. For instance, at a Coorg wedding he has the duty of supplying clean cloths for the bridal pair to walk on, and cloths to cover the ceiling above the bridal seat. He has similar duties at the festival of the village-deity. He also acts as the ritual purifier when a birth or death occurs in a Coorg house. But some Coorgs, especially those in Kiggatnād, resort to the Brahmin for ritual purification.

Contact with a barber defiles a Coorg, and every Coorg has a purificatory bath after being shaved by a barber. Such a bath is necessary in order to restore the shaved person to normal ritual status. The barber's services are, however, indispensable at a wedding and a funeral, and shaving is an essential preliminary act for men on ritual occasions.

The Méda occupies a very low position in the caste hierarchy. He makes artifacts like baskets, fish-traps, and receptacles of cane, vētel reed, and bamboo. He is indispensable at a Coorg festival, dance or hunt, where he beats his tom-tom. The Méda is a byword for stupidity in Coorg folklore.

The strength of the bond prevailing between the Coorg master and his Poleya servant expressed itself in ritual. Formerly, one or two members of the Poleya servant-family observed ritual mourning for their dead master or mistress. On the day their mourning terminated they were given gifts of cloths and provisions by their masters. The Poleya servants (men) also performed a mourning dance (anga kāli) in front of the master's house before the corpse was removed to the burial-ground.

At a Coorg wedding, just as the bridal pair are about to leave the bride's house for the groom's, a Poleya servant of the bride's family comes forward, holding a torch in his left hand, while he spreads a cloth before them. The groom throws money, equivalent to a pana (about three annas), on the cloth. The Poleya then removes the cloth, thus enabling the bridal pair to proceed: contact with a cloth touched by a Poleya defiles a member of a high caste.

Sometimes ritual occasions stress the structural distance that prevails between the higher castes and Poleyas. For instance, Poleyas may not come out of their huts during the first eighteen days of the biennial festival of the deity Kēṭrappa at Běṅgūr. It is
believed that they will suffer some misfortune if they come out and see the festival-priests (kāvukāras) going about their sacred work.

Quite the opposite attitude prevails towards Poleyas at the festival of the Bhadragalī of Kunda. The Poleya oracles have many duties at the festival, though they are not permitted to enter the temple of Bhadragalī. They may not touch a high caste person, but they have the right of barring anyone from entering the temple. They stopped me presumably because they considered my dress— I was wearing a suit—improper, and they let me in only after a Coorg friend had explained who I was.

Ritual occasions might either emphasize the structural cleavages that normally exist between high and low castes, or they might tend to minimize them. The former leads, among other things, to the exclusion of the lower castes from ritual, while the latter leads to their inclusion. But inclusion does not mean that structural distance is abolished totally for the duration of the ritual occasion. What happens may be more accurately described by stating that certain individuals belonging to the low castes have ritual roles which place them temporarily in a superior position vis-à-vis the high castes.

At an ancestor-propitiation in a Coorg house, a Bāṇṇa acts as oracle: he is possessed by each of the ancestor-spirits in turn, and while the possession lasts, he is identified with the particular ancestor possessing him. As the temporary vehicle of the spirit of an ancestor he is entitled to say and do things which he normally would not dream of saying and doing. As ancestor, he might censure the head of the joint family for not attending to his duties properly.

Nowadays young Coorgs who are sceptical about their traditional beliefs tend to see the Bāṇṇa oracle at an ancestor-propitiation as an actor playing several roles in a play, and not as the vehicle of the spirits of their ancestors. A young Coorg told me that he had seen a Bāṇṇa oracle saluting a big official while he was alleged to be possessed by an ancestor-spirit, and this was proof to him of the fact that all possessions were just make-believe and not real.

Another Coorg youth told me that while he was witnessing an ancestor-propitiation at a friend's house, the Bāṇṇa oracle, addressing him, said 'bā kunyi' (come, child). My informant, incensed at being called a 'child' by a low-caste Bāṇṇa promptly slapped him. The term 'child' is normally used by an elder towards a youth, but
only an elder of the same or equivalent or superior caste is entitled to this privilege, and not an elder of a low caste. My informant regarded the oracle as a BanNa, and not as the ancestor of a friend; he had projected the normal structure into the ritual context. Needless to say he did not believe that a Coorg ancestor possessed a BanNa oracle at an ancestor-propitiation.

The BanNa normally occupies a low position in the hierarchy, but the fact that he is the master of the complicated technique of ancestor-propitiation, and that he is possessed by these spirits during the propitiation, temporarily put him in a high position. The contemporary decline of belief in ancestor-spirits, as well as the increasing lack of appeal of the mode of propitiation adopted by the BanNa, have tended to confine him to the position normally occupied by him in the caste structure.

The Brahmin occupies the highest position in the hierarchy and is also the master of a highly complicated ritual technique. But in spite of this there is frequently a certain inconsistency between the positions occupied by him in ritual and secular contexts respectively. In secular affairs power is actually possessed by the man who has wealth and a large following, whatever his caste might be. But even he has to accord the Brahmin the highest place in ritual contexts. The complex relation prevailing between a wealthy and powerful Shúdra Hindu and his poor Brahmin priest comes to mind: the Brahmin is in the Shúdra's pay and protection, but still he has to be respected as a Brahmin and especially in ritual contexts. Where the Brahmin priest is also a scholar or holy man there does not seem to be any inconsistency between his ritual and secular roles.

Caste has a tendency to stress horizontal ties. It unites members of the same caste living in different villages and distinguishes them from other castes in the same village. It is extremely unlike the village community in which members of different castes are united by certain common values and are marked off from other villages. The existence of feuds between villages in the past emphasized the solidarity of the village and offset the separating influence of caste.

The solidarity prevalent between the various castes in a village
(or nādi) finds ritual expression during putri, the harvest festival of Coorgs. On this occasion, the representatives of the priestly, artisan, and servant castes living in the village (or nādi) visit the house of every Coorg in their area, and either give a gift or perform a service characteristic of their caste. They are given in return gifts of provisions like rice, rice-flour, pepper, salt, jaggery, coconut oil, coconuts, and a giant yam (putri gigasse) which is harvested during putri.

The local Brahmin priest visits, in turn, each Coorg house in his village (or nādi). He purifies the house by sprinkling it with a little consecrated water which he carries in a ritually pure vessel. He also gives each member of the house a tiny spoonful of consecrated water to drink. The priest is sent away with a gift of provisions.

Like the priest, the Kaniya astrologer visits the various Coorg houses in his village (or nādi). He informs the head of each house when the rites of nērē kattuvudu (see pp. 230-1) and cutting the paddy sheaves should be performed. These rites are performed only during auspicious periods.

The members of the artisan castes follow the Kaniya. The Tachchāyiri or carpenter brings with him a gift of a new wooden ladle with which to stir the festival curry made with all the vegetables grown at this time of the year. He also brings a bamboo receptacle (kutti) in which the severed paddy sheaves are brought home. The Kolla or blacksmith brings a new sickle with which the sheaves are cut. The Mēda brings a new harvest basket (putri pachchiya) which is used in the festival. The Kumbāra or potter brings a new pot in which the harvest curry is cooked. Finally, the Poleya brings a new mat which is used in the festival.

The harvest festival is the biggest of the various calendar festivals of Coorgs, and on this occasion each of the several castes with whom Coorgs live in close and intimate contact does some service, or brings some gift, characteristic of it. Gifts are given in return to each of them. The exchange of gifts strengthens the bonds prevalent between Coorgs and other castes.

At the harvest festival each of several interdependent castes living in a village performs some essential service which cannot be performed by another, and this fact is brought home to the villagers on a ritual occasion. If the institution of caste has a tendency to lay stress on ‘horizontal unity’, the harvest festival tends to counterpoise it by stressing the unity of the village.
The nuclear unit of Coorg society is the okka or patrilineal joint family, and only the male members of an okka have any rights in the ancestral estate. Women born in the okka leave it on marriage, while the women who come into it by marriage have extremely limited rights in the ancestral estate. No woman may be head of an okka. A Coorg proverb says, 'a woman may not be the head of an okka, and a bitch may not be given a share of the game it helps to kill in a hunt'.

Only sons can continue the okka. But when there are no sons, a daughter, or widow of a dead son is married in either the okka parisé or makka parisé way (see pp. 129-30), which has the effect of granting the children of either form of union membership of their mother's natal okka. If it is not possible to perpetuate the okka in either of these ways, a boy from another okka is adopted.

There is a sexual division of labour, men generally doing the work outside the house while women do the work inside. The tasks done by men are in a vague way regarded as superior to those done by women. The men cultivate or supervise the cultivation of land by low-caste labourers. However, agriculture is not, and has never been, their sole occupation. The army has always attracted Coorgs, and nowadays educated Coorgs are to be found in every profession.

Village-assemblies and nag-assemblies were formerly vigorous institutions and only men normally took part in them. The men went in annual caravans to Malabar, in the dry season, to sell their surplus rice and buy salt, jaggery, coconut, coconut oil, tobacco, and fish. They also had the privilege and duty of conducting the elaborate festivals of village-deities and calendar festivals such as the harvest festival.

Coorg women's activities are on the whole confined to the house. They cook food for the twenty or thirty members of the okka. They look after the children and servants, the storing of food, the raising of pig and fowl, and so on. The younger women have to bring water from the domestic pond or well and carry manure in reed baskets to the fields.

The sexes are generally segregated. The outer veranda serves as a club for the men, and they sit down on the benches there,
drinking, chewing betel, and talking. The women rarely visit the veranda. Similarly, men rarely join the women who are all presumably sitting in the kitchen, or in one of the inner rooms. Men and women dine separately, the women dining after the men.

When relatives visit a Coorg house, the men guests join the men hosts in the veranda, whereas the women guests join the women hosts in an inner part of the house. During the harvest festival and festival of the village-deities the men sing and dance while the women watch them from a distance. Usually the men play a more active part in the festivals than the women. There is an oracle in the festival of every village-deity, and the oracles are usually men. Women oracles are indeed rare, but where they function they are important.

Women are expected to observe a stricter code of conduct than men. For instance, formerly, a Coorg woman who had committed adultery with a low-caste man was summarily thrown out of caste, whereas a lapse on the part of a man was not treated with equal seriousness. Again, there was some difference in the punishment meted out to a man and woman: a man was liable to be fined or excommunicated, whereas excommunication was the only punishment for a woman.

Different ideals are held up for men and women. Strength, skill in fighting and hunting, and courage are admired in a man. A proverb states, 'men should die on the battlefield, and women should die in child-bed'. The killer of a tiger or panther and mother of ten children were both accorded the honour of a mangala ceremony. (See Chapter III.)

Formerly women seem to have enjoyed greater freedom than they do nowadays. Elderly informants remember that even as recently as fifty years ago women used to sing and beat cymbals in public on festive occasions. Coorg folksongs tell us of women who killed tigers and held assemblies of men to ridicule. In some folksongs it is the woman who takes the initiative in a love affair and seduces the man with whom she falls in love.

The general impression one gets from the folksongs is that women enjoyed much greater freedom in the past than they do today. It is

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1 Frequently a Coorg house has a separate entrance which enables the women to move in and out of the house without being seen by the men who are gathered in the veranda.
probable that in the last 200 years Coorgs have orientated themselves more and more towards the patrilineal Kannadigas and moved away from the matrilineal Nāyars. This was accompanied by denying women active roles at the caste dances and festivals, and the home was seen more and more as their proper sphere of action.

But nowadays, under the influence of Western ideas, the Coorg woman is once again coming to the fore. Education is more widespread among Coorg women than among the women of other casts, including Brahmans. They are nurses, teachers, and doctors, and do not hesitate to live outside Coorg. The economic position of Coorgs and the fact that they marry comparatively late are some of the factors responsible for the greater spread of education among Coorg women. The greater ease with which Coorg women have 'emancipated' themselves is probably because they have not been as long under patriarchal ideas regarding womanhood as their sisters in the eastern part of the Peninsula.

VII

Among Coorgs, as among other Indians, respect has to be shown to elders. When a Coorg meets an elder on a ritual occasion he has to salute the latter by bending the upper half of his body and touching the elder's feet thrice with both hands. After each touch the younger man takes his hands to his forehead, where he folds them together. The elder touches the bent head of the younger man with both hands and then brings them together at the chest or forehead. A woman elder is expected to take only her right hand to the right side of her forehead, but I have seen women acknowledge a salutation in exactly the same manner as men.

When he is saluted an elder usually utters a blessing like 'may you live long', or 'may you live happily'. But sometimes the blessing might be a long one, carrying a prayer to God and the ancestors to grant the younger person longevity, happiness, and 'eleven children, boys as well as girls'.

When two equals meet they salute each other merely by bringing their palms together at the chest, and one asks the other 'saukhyā? (happy?)', and the other replies 'saukhyā' (happy).

Shri K. J. Chengappa tells me that, over fifty years ago, when he was a boy, he had to go on a walk every evening with his male
cousins and elders. The boys walked, with their arms folded across their chests, several yards behind the elders. They took care to speak in a low tone and to avoid laughing aloud. Young people had to behave very circumspectly in the presence of their elders: they were forbidden, for instance, to cross or stretch their legs before an elder.

A senior, let alone an elder, has to be addressed by the appropriate kinship term. It shows disrespect to address him by name. Even when one meets a senior who is not related he is addressed by a suitable kinship term. For instance, a very old man is addressed as 'grandfather', whereas someone only a few years senior to the speaker is addressed as 'elder brother'. An elder usually addresses a younger person by name, or by some term like 'child'. Two people address each other by name only when they are approximately equal in age and when there is some familiarity between them.

There is an important exception to the rule that an elder may address a younger person by name: a woman may not address her husband's younger brother by name, even if the latter is her junior by many years. In such a case the ancient Coorg rule, 'even a seventy-year-old woman should salute a seven-year-old boy', applies. Leviratic unions are preferred in Coorg, and this means that a woman's husband's younger brother might one day be her husband. And a husband may not be addressed by name. A man's wife uses the honorific plural towards him, whereas he uses the singular towards her.

Relatives who are placed in a position of respect are not addressed by name, but by the suitable kinship term. This is because calling a person by name is not regarded as consistent with putting him in a position of respect. A woman is required to show respect to her husband and to his younger brother who is her potential husband. She calls him bava (brother-in-law).

Respect for seniority of age is so deep-rooted in Coorgs that whenever they want to place a person in a position of honour they endow him with artificial or social seniority. There is the classic instance of Kaiyandira Appayya who saved the honour of his nad and its temple by defeating and killing the fighter Kullachenda Chondu. A grateful nad decreed that none, not even elders to Appayya, may address him by name. He was not permitted to

1 Both the folding of the arms across the chest and walking behind the elders show the respect the younger people have for the elders.
salute an elder by touching the latter’s feet. He was also prohibited from doing a number of things which ordinary Coorgs did, as, for instance, wearing the black Coorg gown (only the white gown is sacred), ploughing, and eating bamboo-shoots.

At the harvest festival the astrologer may choose a young boy to perform the rite of cutting the sheaves. Such a boy is put into a position of ritual respect till the festival is over. He wears a white gown and he may not be touched till he has brought the severed sheaves home. Further, he is not permitted to salute an elder till the ritual is over. In other words the accorded of extreme respect to him necessitates the endowment of seniority for the duration of the ritual.

The Coorg okka seems to be stronger and more sharply structured than the joint family elsewhere in south India, with the possible exception of the matrilineal tarwaṭ of the Nāyars, and the patrilineal illam of the Nambūdris. Every okka has an ancestral house (ātin mānuṭ) built on the ancestral estate. Formerly, most of the members of the okka lived in the ancestral house, but nowadays only one or two segments inhabit it, while the rest are scattered all over Coorg and, occasionally, all over India. All the members of the okka gather together only on certain occasions, such as the marriage or death of a member, the harvest festival, the festival of the local village-deity, and the periodical ancestor-propitiation.

The ancestral house and estate are accorded respect, and it is usual to have ancestor-shrines (kāmāṭa) or ancestor-platforms (kārāṇya iare) near the ancestral house. Coorgs, even those who are living away from the ancestral house, have some attachment towards it, and this expresses itself in having marriages and ancestor-propitiations performed there in preference to anywhere else. Also, a Coorg prefers to be buried after death in his ancestral burial-ground which is a corner of the ancestral estate used for disposal of the dead members of the okka.

The ancestral house is usually a substantial building of stone and mortar, with solid, carved woodwork. Masons and carpenters from Malabar build them, and Coorg ancestral houses consequently resemble greatly the houses of well-to-do Nāyars. The house is usually situated on an elevation, and a narrow, high-
walled and winding lane (onji) leads up to it. From the windows in the upper story one usually obtains a fine view of the surrounding country. Formerly, in the days when feuds, or kudupi (kudippaka in Malayalam), between joint families were common, and a surprise raid (kalpa padé) from a hostile okka was always a possibility, anyone coming with unfriendly intentions exposed himself to view from the windows of the ancestral house. The house was built like a fortress and was able to stand a siege for several days.

The ancestral estate usually includes an extent of jungle, some grazing land, and valleys in which rice is grown. The jungle provided the household with the necessary timber and fuel. A part of the jungle is reserved for burying or cremating the dead members of the okka. There is a kitchen-garden near the main building. A well or pond provides water for domestic purposes.

Every house includes an ancestor-shrine or ancestor-platform. Uncarved stones, representing cobra-deities, are planted on platforms built around the trunk of a milk-exuding tree. There may also be other uncarved stones representing minor deities like Pūda and Galijka.

According to Lewis Rice,¹ in the seventies of the last century the Coorg okka frequently consisted of twenty or thirty, and occasionally even fifty members, all residing under one roof. He further tells us that previous to the invasion of Coorg by Tippu Sultan in the later half of the eighteenth century, it was not uncommon to find in a house thirty or forty adult male relatives living together. Many okkas seem to have had 120 to 150 people, all living in the ancestral house.

Nowadays the okka commonly consists of two or three generations of agnatically-related males, their wives, and their children. Girls born in the okka go out on marriage as residence is patrilocal, but it sometimes happens that a woman remains unmarried for a variety of reasons. In such a case she stays in her natal okka. An okka also includes the widow of a deceased member. As mentioned earlier, leviratic unions are preferred amongst Coorgs, and a widow of marriageable age marries a younger brother of her dead husband. Even if she does not do so, she stays in her husband’s okka looking after the children. She goes out of her conjugal okka only if she marries a member of a different okka.

¹ Mysore and Coorg, Bangalore, 1878, vol. iii, p. 329.
SOCIAL STRUCTURE

All the members of an okka are descended from a common ancestor. The spirits of the dead ancestors (kāraṇovas) are regarded with great reverence and propitiated periodically. It is believed that they continue to take an interest in the affairs of the okka. They expect the surviving members to look after the property and interests of the okka, to observe the rules of the moral code, and to show piety towards the various deities and themselves. They have the power to reward those who are pious and to punish with disease and misfortune those who are impious.

The eldest male member of the most senior agnatic branch is the head (korvukara or pattēdēkra) of the okka whose properties he looks after and whose affairs he administers. The younger male members are called kikkararu and they have to obey the head in all matters concerning the okka as a whole. The head of the okka is usually also the eldest male member of it, and this union of headship and seniority in the same person results in his enjoying a great amount of power in domestic matters. Personal qualities such as hard work, sobriety, chastity, piety towards manes and gods, selflessness and impartiality increase the headman's powers.

The headman's powers are balanced by his duties: he has to see that the expenses of the household are met, the members of the okka do not quarrel with each other, the ancestral lands are properly cultivated, and so on. He has always to weigh in his own mind how every act of his is regarded by the adult men in the okka. It is not known whether formerly every okka had a council composed of the adult men in it, but it is known definitely that when a headman proved himself very incompetent all the adult men in the okka met together and proceeded to elect a new headman. In the last seventy years the Karavanda okka twice elected new headmen to replace the existing ones. The right to replace an old but incompetent headman with a young and competent man is sanctioned by the Coorg law (palanjol—old saying), 'ariyuvavanē periyavan', which means 'the wisest is the eldest'. We call attention here to the equation of wisdom with seniority, an equation which is used even in replacing an old man by a young one.

Until the beginning of the last century the immovable property of an okka was regarded as impartible, and property descended from one generation to another without being split up in the process. In this respect Coorgs differed from other Hindus and, consequently, Coorg agriculture escaped the two great drawbacks...
of agriculture elsewhere in India, the subdivision of land into minute holdings and fragmentation or scattering of holdings over a wide area.

All earlier writers on Coorg—Connor, Moegling, Cole, and Rice—were unanimous in holding that the immovable property of a Coorg okka is traditionally impartible. But some time after the defeat of Tippu in the closing years of the eighteenth century, some Coorg okkas were permitted by the Lingayat Rajas, used to the Hindu idea of partition, to divide off. The example of these Coorgs was followed by many others. Consequently, 'in 1858 the takkas (social heads) and headmen of the Coorgs represented that the loss and ruin occasioned to their ancient houses by this innovation (was very great), and the Judicial Commissioner in additional Special Appeal Suit No. 117 of 1858-9 passed a decree declaring that division was contrary to the ancient custom of Coorg.' The fact that the ancestral property was impartible was responsible to a great extent for preventing the okka from splitting.

The British also encouraged, although indirectly, the idea of partition of the ancestral property. They granted, for instance, jagirs or assessment-free lands to Coorgs who had taken part in the suppression of the Canara Rebellion of 1837. These jagirs were granted to individuals and not to the okkas of which they were members. Coorgs who were government officials under the British bought farms and coffee-and orange-gardens with their savings, and the law courts established by the British permitted these to be regarded as the property of the individual acquirer and not of the okka of which he was a member. In addition to this, recent changes in Hindu law, which apply to Coorgs also, have been such as to encourage individual acquisition at the expense of the okka.

The ancient custom of Coorgs recognized individual property only to a very limited extent, and that too only in movables. For

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2 Rice tells us that the Lingayat Rajas encouraged the idea of partition in order to break up the huge joint families of Coorg. The Rajas wanted to increase the area under cultivation and also, according to Rice, they disliked intensely the fraternal polyandry of Coorgs. Rice remarks, 'Coorgs still viewed any deviation from this ancient custom of polyandry with the greatest abhorrence.' Op. cit., p. 329.
instance, the younger members of an okka could cultivate, in the non-paddy season, and after they had contributed their daily quota of work to the joint estate, crops like ginger and turmeric. When these were sold a share was given to the okka for having provided the land on which they were grown.

The encouragement given to the ideas of partition and individual acquisition, the uprooting of Coorgs from their ancestral estates owing to the new political and economic structure stretching all over India, and the growing appeal of individualist ideas to the people, are all adversely affecting the solidarity of the okka. The elementary family, which was a weak entity in the traditional structure, is emerging with greater distinctness nowadays.

IX

In a sense, only men are full members of the okka, but such rights as women do possess in it are of paramount importance to them, and the granting of these rights in the bridegroom's okka is the crucial point in the marriage ritual. The granting of rights to the bride in the groom's okka is accompanied by the severance of her connexion with her natal okka. But such severance is not complete and irrevocable. The entire process is symbolized in the transference of twelve pebbles from the bride's natal okka to her conjugal okka.

After marriage, then, a girl is a member of her conjugal okka, and her membership does not become extinct even if she becomes a widow. She is entitled to stay in her conjugal home and to be maintained out of its income. She has also the right to be buried after death in its burial-ground.

The bride is given membership in the groom's okka, and not rights in the groom's share in the ancestral property of his okka. The entire idea of an individual having a share in the ancestral property of his okka is a comparatively recent introduction into Coorg law. Traditionally, the immovable property of an okka was both inalienable and impartible. But when partition did actually take place, it was done with the consent of all the members.

Nowadays, occasionally, a Coorg widow who is marrying her dead husband's younger brother is given rights anew in the okka of her new husband. This novel custom proceeds from the idea referred to above, that the bride is only given rights in her husband's share
RELIGION AND SOCIETY AMONG THE COORGs

of his okka's property. It indicates, however, the growing importance of the elementary family among Coorgs.

When, however, the widow wants to marry someone who is not a member of her dead husband's okka, her connexion with the latter is first of all ritually broken. She then reverts to her natal okka, and at her new marriage her connexion with her natal okka is ritually severed, and rights are granted to her in her (new) husband's okka.

That is to say, a woman is compensated for the lack of the same quality of rights which a man has in his natal okka by the fact that she always enjoys a double membership: she never completely ceases to be a member of her natal okka, and at the same time she is a member of her husband's okka. She can go back to it under certain circumstances like widowhood or divorce.

Membership of the okka is extremely important, and lack of membership in some okka or other is tantamount to social extinction. Elders consequently try hard to see that the children of extra-marital alliances get berthed somewhere. It is right and proper that the father of the children should secure them membership of his okka, but if for some reason or other he cannot be persuaded to do so, the children are made members of their mother's okka.

X

The wife of the headman of the okka is the mistress of the household. She is called 'manepañythāri' (house-work-woman). Ideally, all the women in the okka have to work under her guidance. The relationship between the various women in the joint family is frequently one of conflict. There is first of all the relationship between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, which is celebrated in Coorg and other South Indian folklore as one of conflict. In a society where the sexes are segregated even inside the household and where elders are very highly respected, the mother-in-law, at least in the first few years of marriage, is a much more important relative for a girl than even her husband. And this relationship is basically one of conflict. A girl is also in a relation of conflict with her husband's sisters, married as well as unmarried, and with her husband's brother's wives.

The conflicts between the women in the patrilocal okka strike
at its solidarity. Elsewhere in south India where partition lead to division of the joint family. But in Coorg where the okka is a very strong entity, and where partition is legally forbidden, they make the harmonious working of the okka extremely difficult.

Besides the conflicts mentioned above, certain lines of cleavage in the okka are obvious. The distinction between the sexes, which is present in the whole of the society, is also present in every unit of it. So is the distinction between members of different generations. Enormous emphasis is laid on seniority, and this is visible not only between members of different generations, but also between members of the same generation. The younger member has to behave deferentially towards the older.

Before the introduction, in however grudging a form, of the principle of partition, and of the new ideals associated with industrialization and Westernization, the elementary family was not a powerful unit. It obtained only a grudging recognition in ritual, which was quite consistent with its relative lack of emphasis in the total structure. A tendency of recent times is the strengthening of the elementary family at the expense of the okka. The elementary family is increasingly becoming the real residential, commensal, and economic group with certain ties with the okka from which it is emerging, or has just emerged.

The existence of these divisions inside the okka did not prevent it from acting as a unit in relation to other okkas. The okka was the basic unit of society, and certain offices like the headmanship of the village, nad, and the local temple traditionally ran in certain okkas. Again, contribution to collective tasks was on the basis of the okka. For instance, each local high caste okka had to send at least one man and one woman for every Coorg wedding in the village. Similarly, it had to send representatives to the festival of the village deity, and for repairing roads and building bridges. All the adult men in an okka were required to attend a collective dance or hunt.

Individual responsibility was not entirely ignored, however. An old usage lays down the maximum fine that could be levied on a guilty man (as distinct from the okka of which he was a member) as nine annas and three bhattis of paddy. Again, when a person was guilty of a grave offence even his okka joined with his caste in excommunicating him.

It is likely that the fine was paid out of the private funds of the guilty man and that where he had none, his okka came to his rescue.
The institution of family friendship (aruvame) was formerly far more important among Coorgs than it is today. In a Coorg village houses are scattered over a wide area, and a Coorg's nearest Coorg or other high-caste neighbour is usually several hundred yards away on the other side of a hill or valley. Formerly, the jungle was heavier and there were no good roads, and these increased the difficulties of communication between neighbours. Besides, feuds were common, and hostile raids from unfriendly villages or nads were always a possibility. A Coorg sometimes had to get up in the middle of the night to fight for his life.

Under the circumstances it is easy to see the need for socially stressing the tie of neighbourhood. Two okkas usually, though not always, stood in the relation of family friendship to each other, and were frequently related by marriage. The tie of family friendship was a traditional one, so that two okkas found that they had inherited this relationship. In the marriage rites, the aruva, or head of the friendly okka, is asked whether he is the traditional aruva or the aruva hired with gold for the occasion. The traditional family friend, it is hardly necessary to add, commanded much more respect than the family friend 'hired' for the occasion.

The relationship of family friendship was between two okkas and not between two individuals. The headman of the okka and his wife were certainly more important than the other members in this relationship, but this was in virtue of the positions they occupied in the okka.

At a wedding or death in an okka the members of the 'friendly' okka had certain duties, duties which are even now performed. The headman of the 'friendly' okka is the master of ceremonies on ritual occasions. The younger members of his okka and womenfolk are also required to render help. For instance, at a funeral the womenfolk of the 'friendly' okka were required to cook and serve food to the mourners.
during the harvest festival. The village is the smallest and most important of the territorial groups, and the nāḍ, consisting of several villages is the next bigger group. Traditionally Coorg was divided into thirty-five nāḍs and twelve kombus. A Kombu literally means ‘horn’ or ‘branch’, and in the administrative context it means the area covered by the sound of a brass horn. It is not known what purpose was served by this unit. The twelve kombus together formed the kingdom of Coorg ruled by the Lingayat Rājas.

It has already been mentioned that a village in Coorg Proper is not as physically compact as a village in the eastern plains. But this does not make it any the less real. The village acts as a unit on certain occasions and its unity obtains ritual expression. The people of a village have a great attachment for it. Besides, every village has a council of elders, and the council is presided over by the ur takka or village headman, whose office is hereditary. The headmanship (or any other traditional office) is always conceived of as belonging to a certain okka and not to an individual.

Like the village, the nāḍ is a unit which corresponds to the sentiments of the people, and is not merely an administrative division imposed by the Rājas. The number of villages in a nāḍ varies from nāḍ to nāḍ: there are 11 villages in Bāṅgunāḍ, 5 in Ballatnāḍ, 16 in Kāḍiyetnāḍ, 10 in Ēdēṅālknaḍ, and 9 in Mūrnāḍ. These are ancient nāḍs, but the boundary of a nāḍ has frequently been changed in the past. It was changed, for instance, when the entire administration of the country was reorganized by either Muddū Rāja (1638-86) or his son Doḍḍa Virappa (Vira Rāja II, 1687-1736). The number of nāḍs remained 35 as before, but their boundaries were changed. Subsequently, under the British, the number of nāḍs were reduced successively to 28, 24, 19 and 11.

The headman of a nāḍ is called nāḍ takka, and while every village has only one headman, a nāḍ might have an indefinite number varying from one to seven.

In Map 3 (c. 1850) Coorg is divided into 28 nāḍs, and this is the earliest map we have of Coorg. If the nāḍ-headmen existing today are related to the 28 nāḍs of Map 3, it will be found that 9 nāḍs have 1 nāḍ-headman each, 10 have 2 each, 3 have 3 each, 2 have 4 each, another 2 have 5 each, 1 has 5, and another 7. Only 1 of the 9 nāḍs having 1 nāḍ-headman each is in Coorg Proper, and 2 of the 10 nāḍs having 2 nāḍ-headmen each are in north Coorg. All the nāḍs which have more than 2 nāḍ-headmen each are in
ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS IN AD 1850
(According to Richter)

3. Map Showing Administrative Divisions in *circa* 1850
SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Coorg Proper. Out of a total of 70 nāḍ-headmen, 58 are in Coorg Proper and only 12 in north Coorg.

It has been mentioned earlier that Coorgs predominate in Coorg Proper, which more or less forms a distinct culture-area within Coorg. Most headmen are Coorgs, and it is well-known that the few non-Coorgs who hold headmanship have done so by virtue of having bought the lands of okkas in whom headmanship was vested. It is then not unreasonable to conclude that nāḍ-headmen are indigenous only to Coorg Proper and that they have been extended to north Coorg by the Rājas. This is the reason why the takka-organization in north Coorg has such a formal appearance. Again, there are neither simē-(or dēsha-) takkas, the highest category of headmen, nor ōr takkas, in north Coorg. In this part of Coorg the headman of a village (ūr) is called paṭē as he is in Mysore, and he is usually not a Coorg.

It is likely that the proliferation of nāḍ-headmen in Coorg Proper is due to the fact that every okka which achieved prominence in local affairs claimed headmanship. After the annexation of Coorg by the British, individuals occupying high positions in the administration and who had acquired wealth were able to call themselves headmen. This fact is very generally known to old Coorgs.

Like the village, the nūḍ, too, has an assembly consisting of the representatives of the various okkas in it; and it acts as a unit on certain occasions. An appeal lies from the decision of the village-assembly to the nūḍ-assembly.

Above the nāḍ-headmen there are simē-(or dēsha-) headmen, of whom there are eight in all. The simē-headman has precedence over the nāḍ-headman at a gathering where both are present.

The division of the country into twelve kombus or 'horns', and the establishment of four paṭṭis (literally, the open paved yard before a Coorg's house) for hearing appeals from village and nāḍ-assemblies, appear to be only administrative devices imposed from above, and not traditional institutions of the people which functioned vigorously. The dēsha keṭṭ pāṭ, a folksong which gives an account of the administrative system introduced by either Muddu Rāja or Doḍḍa Vīrappa, mentions the existence of the lands of the two simē-headmen in Tāvanāṇ, Pōrēyanda and Paruvanda, who were Coorgs, have now been bought by the Kuḍuḍpajje and Sūrataḷi okkas respectively, and the latter are immigrants from South Canara belonging to the caste of Gauḍas or peasants.

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2 N. Chinnappa, op. cit., p. 29.
twelve kombus, and gives a list of the eight simi-headmen and four appellate courts. A caution should be entered here against treating this song as evidence of the system as it actually existed. The picture it presents is too tidy and systematized, and it is not improbable that it sacrifices accuracy for neatness and order.

It is likely that before Coorg was conquered by the Lingayat Rajas the biggest territorial unit was a group of two or three or more nāds led by a chief who called himself Nayaka. The chiefs constantly fought among themselves, and this made it easier for the Lingayat Rajas to conquer them and extend their authority over the whole of Coorg.

Two or three nāds seem to have also come together for purposes of defence against a common enemy, for hunting, and for hearing appeals from the decisions of lower assemblies like the village-assembly and nāif-assembly. It is interesting to note, however, that while folklore contains occasional references to an appeal to an assembly composed of the men of two or three nāds, there is no reference to an appeal to a patti, one of the four appellate courts mentioned in the dēsha kēt pāṭi.

XIII

The village represents a different type of solidarity from caste. The latter stresses the ties prevalent between members of the same caste scattered in different villages, whereas the former stresses the ties of the different castes living in the same village. Caste stresses the importance of the high castes and more or less ignores the lowest castes. When a Coorg says that when there is a wedding in a village every okka must send at least one man and one woman to help in the work of the wedding, what he really means is that when there is a wedding among Coorgs or other high castes, every high caste okka must send one man and one woman. This does not, however, apply to the lowest castes. The latter, of course, do their share of the wedding work, but they are not included in the rule mentioned above. The contribution of the low castes is essential on every occasion, but they co-operate at a different level from the high castes. Again, where there is a wedding or death among the lowest castes, the high castes certainly help, but do not otherwise participate in the event. In brief, the solidarity of a caste results in a stressing of the ties between the members of the
same caste living in different villages, while the solidarity of a
village results in stressing the ties between members of different
castes living in the same village. Caste ties cut across village ties,
while village ties both limit the extension of caste ties beyond the
village and stress the interdependence of the various castes forming
a local community.

The unity of the village is stressed when disaster overtakes one
of the okkas. For instance, when a house is destroyed by fire every
okka in the village has to contribute in cash, kind, and labour
towards the building of a new house and the maintenance of the
unlucky okka till they are able to stand on their own feet. The
latter are required to repay the money and goods given to them
some time after they have recovered from the disaster. Several
years ago the Kotera house in Bādaga village was destroyed by fire
and the entire village co-operated in building them a new house.

When a death occurs among Coorgs, the news is announced by
the firing of a rifle at regular intervals. Everyone who hears the
shots has to suspend all work, including agricultural work, and
proceed at once to the mourning house. The news of the death is
also communicated through messengers belonging to the Poleya
caste, and the Poleya servant of any Coorg house may be com­
mandeered for this purpose. The master may not object.

Every okka in the village has to stand by the bereaved okka
during the mourning period. They are required to attend to the
fields and gardens of the bereaved okka till the latter are freed
from the ritual mourning. They have also to supply the bereaved
okka with food until the corpse is removed from the house; there
is a taboo on cooking being done in the mourning house till the
corpse is removed.

On certain occasions the entire village co-operates, though the
lower castes co-operate at a different level from others. An example
will make clear what we mean. Every caste in the village co-operates
during the harvest festival of Coorgs. It is the harvest festival of
Coorgs alone, and not, for instance, of the Medas or Poleyas. The
Medas beat the tom-tom and Poleyas play on their pipes to the
dancing of Coorgs. Every Coorg okka has to send all the adult men
in it to the village dance and hunt. Poleyas and Medas act as
beaters at this hunt while the other castes do the shooting. Later,
there is a dinner for the entire village, called, appropriately
enough, gromę, i.e., 'village harmony', where the game killed in
The hunt is cooked. Every male member of the village participates in this dinner, Coorgs and equivalent castes sitting together, while Medas and Poleyas form separate groups. The meat is cooked by Coorgs and equivalent castes, while every house brings its own supply of 'put', or cooked rice-flour, which is eaten with the curry. The Brahmin does not participate in the village dinner as it is cooked by castes lower to him in the hierarchy. Besides, he is a vegetarian and teetotaller. It may be noted that the Brahmin is almost as frequently excluded from village activities as the Untouchable. The Brahmin does not hunt or dance, nor does he favour the propitiation of deities with animal sacrifice and liquor.

Every member of the village is required to observe certain rules during the harvest festival. He has to keep the door of his house open and the sacred domestic lamps lit. He must be hospitable to parties of singers and dancers and mix with other villagers. He must refrain from abusing and fighting even if there is provocation from the other party.

Though parties of Coorg singers did not visit the houses of Medas and Poleyas, even the latter were required to observe the rules. Every caste, including Medas and Poleyas, was present when inquiry into cases of breaches of rules took place. A wedding in a Coorg house requires the co-operation of all the castes in the village, and the fee payable to them is fixed by custom. It is the same with the festival of the village-deity, though sometimes the Poleyas are almost entirely excluded from this festival. During the festival of Ketrappa at Bengir, the Poleyas may not be seen by any high caste villager till the eighteenth day of the festival, but on the eighteenth evening they march in procession with pipe and drum to the Ketrappa temple and watch the ritual from a nearby knoll. They bring offerings of fowls to Ketrappa, and the birds are decapitated by Medas, who have an important part in the festival. The Ketrappa festival seems to be an extreme instance of the exclusion of Poleyas. In the festivals of other village-deities they participate to a greater extent, though on a different level from the rest.

Every village has an hereditary headman called takka. It is the headman's duty to see that the village greens (mandus) where dances and dinners are held, and the village assembly meets, are kept in good condition. He has to ensure that the bridges and
ferris in the village are in constant repair and that the village tank is clean. He has to look after pilgrims and travellers passing through the village.

Coorgs have a keen appreciation of leadership and precedence. From their folklore it appears as though they are incapable of conceiving of any group, of no matter what, without a leader. The epithet consistently applied to a headman is 'māpayanda' which means 'precedence-having'. A sense of precedence and respect for seniority helped to introduce order into their meetings, just as a respect for precedents produced a consistent body of decisions on any particular matter.

Formerly a headman wielded great influence in his village (or nāṭ) and a good headman was a powerful factor for stability. If the headman was a bad man, the entire village was ruined: as a proverb has it, 'when the takka is a loafer the entire village is like the area inhabited by Untouchables'. In the management of village affairs and the settlement of village disputes the headman was assisted by an assembly consisting of the representatives of the various okkas in the village. The assembly was called kūṭa, which means a 'gathering' or 'group'. It met on one of the several greens in the village. There were separate village greens for transacting business (panchāyati mandu), for dancing at the harvest festival (ūr mandu), a third for dancing at the festival of the village-deity (dēvara mandu), and so on. Sometimes there was a roofed enclosure (ambale) on the green, which provided shelter from rain and sun for the assembly to meet, and for women to watch the dances.

The village-assemblies were far more powerful in the past than they are today. They controlled the public conduct of a Coorg very thoroughly. The principal sanctions at the disposal of the assembly were polevādu or fine, and poramaḍi or excommunication. There was a regular scale of fines laying down the maximum that could be levied on an individual, and on an entire okka, village, or nāṭ. The maximum fine on a village headman guilty of an offence was very much higher than the maximum for an ordinary individual, and similarly, the maximum for a nāṭ-headman was higher than that for a village-headman.

Fines are levied for minor offences such as failure to attend a communal dance or hunt, or to observe the requisite food restrictions during the festival of a village-deity. Failure to pay the fine resulted in the guilty person being excommunicated from the village. He
was not permitted to attend the village-assembly or a communal
dance or hunt. He was not allowed to enter the village temple or
take part in the festival of the village-deity, but he was allowed to
remain in any house in which he had a right to stay, such as his natal
house, or his wife's natal house. The guilty person could resume
his normal social status after he had paid the fine, half of which
went to the village temple and the other half to the elders who
levied the fine.

Serious offences were punished by the offender's being ex­
communicated from caste. Such a punishment was usually for a
prescribed period, during which the offender was not entitled to
stay or dine even in his natal house. Not only was he prohibited
from attending a dance or hunt, but he was also prohibited from
going into any house in the village. The barber was not allowed to
shave him, the washerman was not allowed to wash his clothes, and
similarly artisan castes could not make anything for him. Even his
cattle were not allowed to graze on the common pasture.

After the prescribed period of punishment was over, the offender
had to go on a pilgrimage to Bhagamandala where the river Kanake
joins the Kaveri. He had to have his head and face shaved, and
bathe in the sin-cleansing waters of the sacred Kaveri. He then
went to the temple of Bhagandeshwara for worship, and this was
followed by a visit to the source of the River Kaveri, which is
probably the most sacred spot in Coorg. He bathed in the bigger of
the two springs and worshipped the smaller spring. He then
returned to his village and gave a feast to the headmen and
villagers. This completed his readmission to society.

The man who commits an offence against the moral code of the
community is treated as an extremely impure person; and the
purificatory rites which he performs before being readmitted to
society are the same as those which first-grade mourners perform
before attaining normal ritual status. An offence against the ethical
code results in pollution, a fact which makes clear to everyone the
nature of the offence. Such an offence also angers the ancestors and
deities.

When a person was, however, guilty of a very great offence
against the caste code, like adultery or fornication with someone
belonging to a very low caste, the offender was irrevocably excom-

1 A person polluted by the occurrence of a birth or death suffers from similar
disabilities.
Moegling mentions the case of a Coorg woman who was guilty of adultery with a man belonging to one of the Untouchable castes and who was consequently thrown out of the caste irrevocably. She was forced to live among Untouchables. Finally, both she and her Coorg husband, who was personally ready to forgive her, became converts to Christianity.

A person guilty of the offence mentioned above was considered as good as dead, and the rite of excommunication was called, appropriately enough 'kādi kittuvudu' or 'tearing the cloth'. The offender and his relatives held a hemmed cloth, such as the one used by Coorgs for tying round the head, between them, and this was torn in two. Thereafter the offender ceased to exist for them. Even his son was not bound to maintain him while alive or perform funeral rites after his death.

A nad is a bigger unit than a village, and it is usually more homogeneous culturally than a larger area which includes it and a few other nads. The differences between nads are considerable if we compare geographically extreme instances like Kiggatnad and Nalknad, but even if we take two neighbouring nads they are bound to differ in certain respects, differences in matters of detail which might appear unimportant to the outsider, but which appear as extremely important to the inhabitants of the nads in question. In fact, each nad sees the points in which it differs from its neighbours as symbols of its identity and individuality, if not superiority. The saw 'ār nādku nūr pāst', which might be translated as 'six nads, hundred customs', testifies to the great cultural diversity within Coorg.

A nad might differ from other nads in the matter of the date of observance of important festivals such as the harvest festival and festival of arms. It might also differ in the articles used in the festival ritual: for instance, the plants used in the harvest festival ritual vary in different nads, and this is due to the fact that in each area the plants locally prolific are chosen to express a wish for growth.

The various villages of a nād co-operate on certain occasions as the harvest festival and the periodical festival of the local

village-deity. During the harvest festival, on the day after the village dance (ōr kōlu), a dance for the entire nāḍ (nāḍ kōlu) is held in which all the men of the nāḍ take part. Games testing the strength and skill of individuals are also held on this occasion, and this provides an opportunity for the canalization of inter-village rivalry, just as at a festival in a village the games played canalizes inter-okka rivalry.

When the bridegroom is marching in state to the bride’s house it is customary for the villages in the groom’s nāḍ to offer him the ‘plantain honour’ (bālē birudu): a row of three stout plantain stems are fixed to the ground near the boundary (mundale) of the village or nāḍ, and the groom is asked to cut the stems with his sword. The groom delegates someone to cut the stems on his behalf. The man offering the groom the ‘plantain honour’ should be wearing a Coorg gown, and he offers the party warm water to wash their hands and feet mats to sit on, and betel leaves and areca-nut to chew. (Warm water, mat, and betel and nut are all symbols of hospitality and respect in Coorg as elsewhere in India.) If the party arrive at night the host provides them with torches for the road. The groom has to pay a money gift of two pānas (about six annas) to the host in acknowledgement of the honour and hospitality done to him and his party.

A man has a great love for his nāḍ. This comes out repeatedly in Coorg folklore. An infant boy, called Chondu, was orphaned, and the nāḍ elders had to make arrangements for his care. When Chondu reached the years of discretion he wanted to show how deeply he appreciated what his nāḍ had done for him. He determined to become a great fighter: he would challenge every village and nāḍ to produce someone to fight him in single combat (ottē pojit). He would defeat them all and this would bring great glory to his nāḍ. He travelled about Coorg sitting in a palanquin, challenging every village either to produce someone to fight him or give him a sum of money in acknowledgement of defeat. His technique was to go to the village temple and order the priest to stop worshipping the deity till either his challenge was met or the sum of money asked for was paid. The latter course was chosen by most villages.

His challenge was, however, accepted by a mere boy called Appayya (of the Kaiyandira okka) in Arapat village in Kaiyeta nāḍ. When Appayya’s mother remonstrated at his having accepted the
challenge of a great fighter like Chondu, the spirited boy replied, 'Until now you were my mother, but from now on my nād is my mother.' Appayya defeated and killed Chondu by resorting to trickery: he first of all blinded Chondu by suddenly throwing sand into his eyes and then stabbed him.

Honours were showered on the boy-hero by a grateful nād. The ceremony of mangala (see Chapter III) was performed for him. He was placed in a position of seniority to everyone in the nād and none was allowed to call him by name. He had to be addressed as 'periya moli' which means 'big elder'. He was prohibited from touching anyone's feet in salutation. Also, as he had ensured the continuity of worship at the Choli Povvedi temple in Arapaṭ, certain privileges were conferred on Appayya viś-dviś the temple: he could go there even when under pollution (pole), and he could go to the annual festival of the deity sitting in the palanquin in which his opponent had sat during his journey through Coorg.

The office of the ‘big elder’ was hereditary in the Kaiyandira okka till the latter became extinct. The headman of the okka was the ‘big elder’, and when he died his successor became the ‘big elder’. The honour was conferred at a mangala ceremony which was performed in the open quadrangle of the Kaiyandira house.

Coorg was traditionally divided into twelve kombus, but the kombu appears as a shadowy unit beside the nād and the village; and the occasional coming together of two or three nāds under a chief during the pre-Lingāyaṭ days, or to discuss a matter of common interest, cannot be treated as a permanent feature of the structure.

While groups wider than the nād are shadowy, the same cannot be said of the simē-headmen, who are higher than nād-headmen. There are eight simē-headmen in Coorg Proper, and they are usually mentioned in pairs. Each pair of simē-headmen comes from the same nād: Kallangala and Bollera from Tāvαlaγērīmūnāḍ, Māṭanda and Buḍuvāḍa from Beppunāḍ, Pāṇḍira and Paradanda from Nālmāṇḍ, and finally, Pōreyāṇḍa and Paruvanda from Tāvunāḍ.

Feuds between okkas seem to have continued well into the latter half of the last century. In 1870 Richter wrote: ‘It may still happen, that the head of a Coorg house on his dying bed will solemnly charge his sons to seek vengeance on his personal enemies, a bequest
which occasions calamitous feuds between succeeding generations.\textsuperscript{1} A feud between okkas was called kwjupi, while a feud between villages or between nāds was called maradale. It is likely that feuds between okkas in the same village were extremely rare as the village was too compact a unit to permit of feuds within it. But the same cannot be said of villages within the same nād. The annual dance, at the harvest festival, for all the villages of Ballatnād, is nowadays attended only by Pērūr, and this is attributed to the former prevalence of feuds between the various villages composing this nād.

Formerly feuds between nāds were very common, and folklore bears ample testimony to this fact. There was a long feud between Bēgunād and Ballatnād in the course of which they conducted raids on each other. A hero called Appanga, who later came to be famous as Kappanga or 'robber', was born in Ballatnād, and when he was born all the people of Bēgunād suffered from headache. Later he raided the Povvedi temple in Bēngūr, and robbed it of the two wooden pins (kīla) with which the temple's see-saw (ɾatē) was fixed to two wooden posts. Pilgrims used to sit on the see-saw at the periodical festival of Povvedi of Bēngūr.

The robbing of the wooden pins belonging to the Bēngūr Povvedi temple was a triumph for Balmāvī. The latter had a see-saw made and used it at the biennial festival of the Povvedi of Balmāvī. At the beginning of the festival of Povvedi of Balmāvī there is a rite at which a festival-priest enumerates the restrictions which have to be observed during the festival period, and one of these restrictions states that no one from Bēngūr may approach the sacred see-saw. Several years ago my friend Shri Puṭṭamāḍa Ponnappa of Bēngūr was asked, during the biennial festival, not to touch the see-saw.

The entire atmosphere of Coorg folklore is martial: secret raids, fights, heroes, and intrigues are the stuff out of which a folksong is made. The bards delight when a hero is born in their nād. They describe the event with gusto. There is a storm, the earth trembles, and the men in the hostile nād suffer from headache. On the other hand, the bards wail with self-pity when their nād suffers a defeat in a fight. The men of the nād go on pilgrimage to their patron-deity and pray to him for the birth of a hero in their midst.

In a fight between two nāds, the temples belonging to either side

\textsuperscript{1} Manual of Coorg, p. 126.
were commonly attacked. In fact, a temple constituted the most sensitive part of a nad. The prevention of the offer of worship to the deity of another nad inflicted a very deep humiliation on the latter; and the stealing of the property of the temple of another nad was as bad. In a struggle between two nads which centred round their temples, the deity of the triumphant nad was regarded as having triumphed over the deity of the defeated nad. A devotee of the deity of a nad was also a patriot of that nad. He had to take up arms to ensure the continuance of the offer of worship at the temple of his nad or village, and to see that raiders did not succeed in carrying away the property of the temple.

Patriotism for one’s nad was widespread and deep, and even women and children were imbued with it. Women were in an unfortunate position as they were torn between their love for their natal nad and their duty towards their conjugal nad. There are instances of women working for their natal nad against their conjugal nad when the two were at feud with each other.

The widespread prevalence of feuds did have one important structural consequence. They very effectively counteracted the tendency of caste to stress the horizontal ties at the expense of the vertical ties. But with the conquest of Coorg by the Lingayat Rajas and the decrease of feuds, the horizontal emphasis of caste increased. Thus wider political integration strengthened caste.
CHAPTER THREE

THE RITUAL IDIOM OF COORGS

(1) THE RITUAL COMPLEX OF MANGALA

I

Every society has a body of ritual, and certain ritual acts forming part of the body of ritual repeat themselves constantly. Not only ritual acts, but also ritual complexes, which are wholes made up of several individual ritual acts, frequently repeat themselves. Several such ritual complexes and some individual ritual acts might be together knit into a still wider ritual whole which repeats itself occasionally.

Salutation is an individual ritual act. It might be of two kinds, either elaborate as that adopted by a young person towards an elder on a ritual occasion, or simple, like that prevailing between two equals. In the former case the younger person thrice touches the older man's feet with both hands, and after each touch he takes the hands to his forehead where he brings them together. In the simpler form of salutation which prevails between equals, each person folds the palms before his chest, and as he does this he moves his head slightly to indicate a bow. The folding of the palms and bowing of the head are the most important parts of the ritual act of salutation.

Salutation of the elaborate kind is only one of several ritual acts in the ritual complex of miirta (vide infra), and miirta is again part of mangala. Formerly there were several kinds of mangalas and the narrowing down of mangala to mean marriage exclusively is a fairly recent phenomenon.

Formerly mangala was performed to mark the attainment of social adulthood by a boy when his ears were ritually bored by the goldsmith. This mangala, the first to be performed for a boy, was called kemmi kutti mangala, or 'the mangala at which the ears are bored'. The wearing of ear-rings was symbolical of the attainment of social adulthood. One who was physiologically an adult, but
who had not undergone the ear-boring *mangala*, did not count as an adult for ritual and social purposes.

The counterpart of the ear-boring *mangala* for a girl was the *mangala* performed when she attained puberty. This was called ‘*polé kanda mangala*’ or ‘*mangala performed on the sighting of defilement*’. The menstrual flow was regarded as defiling, and formerly a woman observed seclusion for three days during her periods. *Mangala* was also performed when a woman became pregnant for the first time (*kuliyanné mangala*). A woman who had given birth to ten children, all of whom were alive, was entitled to a form of *mangala* known as *paitiçek alapa*.

A man who killed a panther or tiger had the right to *nari mangala* or ‘tiger *mangala*’ being performed in his honour. Marriage increased a man’s status, and a bachelor was regarded as socially and ritually inferior to a married man. *Mangala* was performed to a bachelor’s corpse before burying or cremating it, presumably in order to raise the status of the soul of the dead bachelor.

A man who had lost two wives in succession was ritually married to a plantain tree before marrying his third wife. The marriage to the plantain tree was called ‘*bâlek mangala*’, or ‘*plantain mangala*’, and the tree was cut down soon after the *mangala*.

The number three, in certain contexts, is considered very unlucky everywhere in south India. When a man has lost his first two wives in succession, and intends marrying again, the third wife is considered certain to share the fate of the first two. The performance of ‘*bâlek mangala*’ and the cutting down of the tree soon after frees the human wife from the fate which would have otherwise overtaken her.

Formerly when a man built a new house he performed ‘*mané mangala*’ or ‘house *mangala*’. *Mangala* was performed for the head of the house on this occasion. Another form of *mangala* which has entirely disappeared now is ‘*ettu mangala*’ or ‘*ox mangala*’.

The ideal and usual marriage in Coorg is for a virgin to marry a bachelor and this is called ‘*kanni mangala*’ or ‘virgin *mangala*’. The marriage rites are fullest when a virgin marries a bachelor, and they are abbreviated to some extent when a widower marries a virgin. They are still further abbreviated when a widow marries a widower, and many old Coorgs would even refuse to accord to such a marriage the name of *mangala*.

The ritual that is performed at the ‘marriage of a virgin’ may be
divided into two parts, one which might be called the *mangala* part, and the other the *non-mangala* part. The *mangala*-part of marriage is considered in this chapter while the *non-mangala* part is considered in Chapter V.

There are, then, several *mangalas*, of which marriage is one, and at each of these *mangalas*, *mūrta* is performed. *Mūrta* may be regarded as a typical ritual complex. The ritual complex of *mūrta* consists of several ritual acts, and it is proposed to discover the meaning of each of them by the application of the three rules formulated by Professor Radcliffe-Brown. (1) 'When the same or similar custom is practised on different occasions it has the same or a similar meaning in all of them.' (2) 'When different customs are practised on one and the same occasion there is a common element in the customs.' (3) 'If two rites are found associated with one another on different occasions then there is something in common between the different occasions.'

The central figure of a rite is referred to in this book as the subject. But the subject of *mūrta* is referred to as the 'subject of *mangala* as *mūrta* is always a part of *mangala*. The term has been retained even where the rite in question is peculiar to marriage, as marriage is also a *mangala*, and the term 'subject' is applicable to the bride as well as the groom. It is only when a rite is performed by either the bride or groom exclusively that 'subject' is discarded in favour of either of the former, more specific terms.

II

The astrologer selects an auspicious day for the performance of *mangala*, and an even more auspicious part of that day for the performance of *mūrta*, which is the most important part of *mangala*. It is interesting to note that the Coorg term *mūrta* is the corrupt form of the Sanskrit *māhūrta*, which means a 'particular division of time, the thirtieth part of a day, a period of 48 minutes'.

The house in which the *mangala* ritual takes place is cleaned, and its walls are colour-washed, and a decorated booth (*pandal*) of five pillars, one of which is a branch of a milk-exuding tree, is erected in front of the house. Poleyas and Medas beat tom-toms

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2 Ibid., p. 2.
3 *Taboo*, Cambridge, 1939, p. 36.
and play pipes in front of the house, and Coorg youths dance to the music.

Four Coorgs beat the small Coorg drum called 'dugi' and sing some traditional songs at various points during mangala. These songs give an account of the ritual that is being performed. The singers also sing the 'road song' (hardt pät), while conducting the subject of mangala from one part of the house to another, and the road song gives a traditionally exaggerated account of everything that is found en route. At night, after dinner, Coorg singers sing songs about the groom, bride, their ancestors, and the guests who are present.

The elaborate preparations for mangala and the selection of an auspicious day for its performance stress the social importance of the occasion. Mangala indicates the movement of the subject from one position in the social structure to another, it marks a change in his social personality. Mūrti ritual is the most important part of mangala, and, consequently, it is performed during the most auspicious part of the auspicious day, and the subject undergoes a series of preparatory and purificatory rites before sitting down for mūrti.

The subject of mangala, if male, is ritually shaved by the barber, after which he is given a bath by three women relatives whose husbands are alive. Women whose husbands are alive enjoy a higher ritual and social status than widows. Only an unmarried girl, and a woman whose first and only husband is alive, are entitled to take part in auspicious ritual. Not only widows, but also remarried widows, are excluded from auspicious ritual, but such exclusion is not as thorough among Coorgs as it is, for instance, among the Brahmins.

After a bath, the subject wears ritual garments, and proceeds to the sacred central hall (nellakki nādhādē), where all rituals ought to take place, ideally speaking. In the central hall is the sacred tripod stool (makkādlī=three-legged) on which the subject sits, and on either side of the stool stands a bell-metal lamp (kuttum bolichā). The subject thrice walks round the tripod stool and lamps, and then salutes the lamps and the tripod stool before sitting down on the latter. Circumambulation is clockwise in auspicious ritual and anti-clockwise in mourning.

\[^1\] The subject sits on the floor fully clothed while the women relatives pour vesselfuls of hot water on him.
In front of the sitting subject is another such stool covered with a red silk cloth. An earthen lamp burns in a metal dining dish (tali) which is kept on the stool before the subject. The lamp rests on a thin bed of rice spread inside the dish. A few betel leaves and areca-nuts are also kept alongside the lamp. The dish, rice, lamp, and betel leaves and nuts are all collectively referred to as 'talfiyakki-bofok' which literally means 'dish-rice-lamp'. It will be referred to as 'dish-lamp' in future, and a dish-lamp is considered essential on all ritual occasions.

At mangala, in addition to the earthen lamp, a kindi full of milk is kept on the dish-lamp. A kindi is a bell-metal vessel with a long spout at the side. At mangala every relative performs vis-a-vis the subject a series of solidarity rites collectively called murta, and one of these rites consists in giving the subject a little milk to drink. This is done by the relative holding the kindi in such a way that the tip of the spout touches the subject's mouth. The subject sucks in a few drops of milk through the spout.

Each of the assembled relatives singly performs murta, described below, towards the subject of mangala. Three married women, close relatives of the subject, are required to perform it before anyone else. If the subject's mother is alive and not a widow, she is entitled to be one of the three, and what is more, perform it first, even if the other two are her seniors.

The mother, or senior married woman, begins by sprinkling rice on the two bell-metal lamps on either side of the subject, and then salutes them. The sun-god is saluted next after throwing some rice backwards, over the shoulders. This is followed by the relative depositing a little rice successively at the joints of knees, elbows, and shoulders, and on the head of the subject. The relative then holds the spouted vessel before the subject and he sucks in a little milk through the spout. After this she presents the subject with a gold or silver coin. The subject salutes her by touching her feet with both his hands and carrying the latter back to his forehead. This is done thrice. The married woman blesses him by touching his head and saying, 'may you live long', or 'may you live happily'.

III

It has been mentioned before that mangala is an auspicious or
good-sacred ceremony and that it has to be performed on an auspicious day. All over India, among Hindus, it is believed that certain periods of time have ritual value while others do not. 'Ritual value' is synonymous with the term 'sacred' in its widest sense, as inclusive of good-sacredness as well as bad-sacredness, auspiciousness as well as inauspiciousness. Certain periods of time are auspicious while others are inauspicious. One occasionally finds in Coorg homes a sheet of cardboard nailed to the wall which mentions the inauspicious periods in each day of the week. Important work is not begun during an inauspicious period.

Adjacent Coorgs are usually able to read the *pancânga* which may be described as the ritual calendar of the Hindus. *Pancângas* are nowadays printed and sold in towns, and it is customary for a Coorg house to have a *pancânga*. It is frequently referred to as it gives the auspicious and inauspicious periods in each day, the days on which one may have one's face shaved, the days on which one may travel in a particular direction, when an eclipse will occur, and so on.

Hindu astrology is based on the idea of *karma* and touches Hindu theological beliefs at every point; and, strange as it may seem to Westerners, astrology involves a knowledge of astronomy. Events like an eclipse, and the day and period of time when the sun passes from one zodiacal sign to another are significant for ritual purposes, and they are all mentioned in the *pancânga*.

Astrology may be regarded as a Sanskritizing agent, and the more a tribe, local group, or caste resorts to astrology the more do its beliefs become Sanskritized. Sanskritic Hinduism is Hinduism which transcends provincial barriers and is common to the whole of India.

IV

*Mangala* has not only to be performed on an auspicious day, but also in an auspicious place: a Coorg likes to have it performed in his ancestral house which he regards as sacred and for which he has a strong attachment. Only certain high castes like the Brahmins, Okkaligas, and Gaudas may enter all parts of the ancestral house. Médas and Poleyas, on the other hand, have to stop at the paved yard in front of the house. Castes like the smiths (Airis), washermen (Maṭivālā), and Baṇjas may come to all parts of the house.
except the kitchen, central hall, and south-western room. If, however, they have to come in to perform their duties on certain occasions like a marriage or an ancestor-propitiation, then the house is purified after their departure.

The sacredness or ritual purity of the ancestral house was better preserved by the fact that a woman was not allowed to stay within it during her periods. Such a woman is in a defiled condition and defilement is contagious. It also cuts off the person affected by it from normal participation in social life.

Every ancestral house has an outhouse called *ālē poré* in which a woman stayed for three days during her periods. She attained normal ritual status only on the fourth day after taking a bath. During her periods she had to avoid going near people and objects in a condition of normal ritual status.

The death of even an unrelated adult in the house defiles it and the members of the particular household. After the corpse is removed, both the house and the members of the household have to be purified.

Certain parts of the ancestral house are more sacred than the others. The central hall is very sacred. In the western wall of the central hall is a niche in which burns an earthen or metal lamp. The container is filled with oil, and there is a cotton wick, one end of which comes through the lamp's lip while the rest trails in the oil held by the container. The wick is lit just beyond the lip, and the lamp burns with the lip facing east, the sacred direction. This lamp is called *nellakkī boluk* (central-hall lamp). It is lit every morning and evening by a woman of the house who salutes it after lighting it. It will be referred to as wall-lamp throughout this book.

A bell-metal lamp, hung from the ceiling of the central hall, is a common sight in Coorg houses. It is called *tāg boluk* or hanging lamp, and it is saluted on all ritual occasions. Shri K. J. Chengappa considers the wall-lamp to be the more ancient and more sacred of the two lamps.

The south-western room (*kanni kōmbarē kōṅe*) and the kitchen (*umbala mānd*) are very sacred parts of the ancestral house. The south-western direction is a sacred direction, and the south-western pillar (*kanni kamba*) in the central court of a quadrangular house receives ritual respect. On certain occasions like an ancestor-propitiation, a lamp is lit in the south-western room. The kitchen is sacred as food is cooked there: food ought to be cooked in a pure
place and care is taken to see that impure persons and objects do not get into the kitchen. Sometimes the periodical offerings of food to dead ancestors, which are made in every Coorg house, are made in the kitchen alone instead of in the ancestor-shrine or anywhere else.

There are two types of houses in Coorg, one which has an open quadrangle in the middle and the other in which there is no such open quadrangle. In the former type, the four corners of the open quadrangle are supported by four pillars, and four planks (aimaras) connect the four pillars at a height of about 2½ feet from the ground. These planks are regarded as sacred: none may step across them, and no woman may sit on one of them.

Planks are affixed to the top of the parapet wall in the veranda. One of these planks is called the 'ancestors' plank' (kāraṇavājada aimara), and it is regarded as sacred. None may sleep on it. I have heard that anyone sleeping on the 'ancestors' plank' in the house of the Karavaṇa okka is thrown down to the floor by the spirits of the ancestors.

Women very rarely visit the veranda (katīyāle), and when they visit it they may not sit on one of the planks there. Nor are they allowed to sit on the planks in the central hall, though very old women occasionally take the liberty of doing so when the senior males are away. On the second day of marriage the bride sits on a plank in the veranda of the groom's house, and this is part of the ritual of admitting her into her husband's house.

At some distance from the main building is a shrine (kāsimada) devoted to the worship of the ancestors. During the periodical ancestor-propitiations (kāramara tērē), small figurines representing the ancestors are kept in the shrine and worshipped. During festivals, a lamp is lit in the shrine, and cooked food is placed before the lamp.

Kāsimadas or ancestor-shrines seem to be a recent phenomenon, and before they became popular the dead ancestors were represented by unhewn stones fixed in earthen platforms which were built round the trunks of milk-exuding trees. These platforms were called 'kāramara tērē' or 'ancestors' platform'. Even today in Kīg-gatnād there are only ancestor-platforms and no ancestor-shrines.

Like the ancestors, cobra-deities are represented by unhewn
and fixed in platforms built round the trunks of milk-exuding trees. The vegetation growing near a cobra-platform is considered sacred, and it is not permitted to cut it down. A woman in her periods is not allowed to go near the platform as cobra-deities are considered to be specially sensitive to defilement. If this rule is not respected, she, and probably the okka of which she is a member, will suffer misfortune. The cobra is a sacred creature and he who kills it will suffer from a skin disease like leucoderma.

There is an attitude of ritual respect towards the ancestral rice-field. This is specially noticeable when the crop is standing: a man may not wear sandals while walking through it, or hold an umbrella over his head, or whistle.

The rice-field is divided into a number of ridged-up plots and the central plot of the rice-field is regarded as particularly sacred. Formerly it was the custom to bury the umbilical cord of the eldest son in the central plot. A man is supposed to have a special affinity to the place where his umbilical cord is buried. If a Coorg boy is found going to a particular place frequently, his elders twit him, "Is your umbilical cord buried there?" Nowadays the umbilical cord is buried in the yard of the palace of Mercara, or in a school-compound, because Coorgs want their sons to do well in examinations and become high government officials.

A part of the ancestral estate is used for burying or cremating the dead members of the okka. The part where corpses are buried is called kekala while the adjoining part used for cremation is called titangala. It is sacred, but in an undesirable way: the term 'bad-sacred' has been used to denote such a ritual condition. (Bad-sacredness includes within itself both 'defilement' and 'inauspiciousness'.) A visit to the burial-ground defiles a person and a bath is necessary to restore him to normal ritual status.

The burial-ground for children may be near the house, whereas that for adults must be as far away as possible. The ghosts of adults are harmful, while children's ghosts are comparatively harmless. An adult has a social personality, whereas a child does not have one. An adult occupies a social role or several social roles. The ghost of

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1 Minor deities like Piida and Gujika are also represented by similar stones, and occasionally found alongside stones representing cobra-deities.
2 Amongst Coorgs, the corpses of elders and important people are cremated, while the corpses of children and unimportant people are buried. The Brahmins, however, cremate all dead persons except infants, and in many parts of south India cases which want to rise in status give up burial for cremation.
a headman or a hero or a particularly evil man is more powerful than that of an ordinary man. The mourning-period also varies according to age and social importance of the deceased.

V

It is not only places which have ritual value, but also points of the compass. East is a sacred direction because the sun rises there, and Hindus in all parts of India regard the sun as a deity.

The ancestral house faces east and so does the ancestor-shrine. The lip of the sacred wall-lamp in the central hall faces east. The subject of a mangala ceremony sits facing east.

On getting up from his bed in the morning a Coorg salutes the wall-lamp and the sun. The cultivation of rice is accompanied by ritual at every stage, and on all these ritual occasions the subject of the rites begins by saluting the sun.

South is an inauspicious or bad-sacred direction. A corpse is buried or cremated with its head towards south. In Sanskritic Hinduism, south is the abode of Yama, the god of death.

Coorgs, like Hindus in other parts of India, regard east as a good-sacred direction and south as a bad-sacred direction. East is associated with Churriya (sun-god), and south with Yama. Both these deities have an All-India spread. Coorgs worship these two deities along with other Hindus all over India. The possession of common values binds people together and Coorgs form a single community with Hindus all over India when they worship the same deities.

VI

Mūrtaka is the crucial part of mangala, and the rites performed prior to mūrtaka prepare the subject for it. The subject is shaved by the barber, given a bath by three married women, and dressed in ritual robes and ornaments before sitting down to mūrtaka. Shaving, the first of several preparatory rites, will be briefly considered here.

It is necessary to repeat here that shaving is done by barbers who form a caste. Contact with the barber defiles a member of a higher caste, and consequently shaving is invariably followed by a purificatory bath.

The subject of mangala wears a white cotton kupya while he is
being shaved by the barber. The _kupya_ is like a dressing-gown, and it is either black or white. The white gown is of cotton, has long sleeves, and covers the neck up to the throat. This is the traditional ritual dress of Coorgs. The black gown is a Westernized version of the white original: it is of wool, has short sleeves, and a V-shaped neck permitting the display of a collar and tie. The white gown is ritually superior to the black gown.

Usually the gown is secured at the waist by a tasselled red silk sash called _eMle_, but when the subject is sitting for the shaving rite, a red cotton scarf is used instead of the silk sash.

The subject salutes the lamp in the south-western room, the south-western pillar, and the wall-lamp before sitting on the tripod stool placed on a mat. Near the mat is a dining-dish (_tali_) containing milk, and a harvest-basket containing some rice, a coconut, a bunch of plantains, and betel leaves and areca-nut.

Water may not be used for shaving on this occasion. Milk is used instead. The shavings are put into the dining-dish, and later the barber empties the dish at the foot of a milk-exuding tree.

A distinctive form of shaving prevails at marriage, and perhaps at subsequent _mangalas_ (it does not, however, prevail at the ear­ boring _mangala_). The front of the head is shaved in such a manner that it leaves two ‘horns’ above the temples, formed by the shaved patches. This mode of shaving is called ‘_kombanjavara_’ which means ‘horn shave’.

The harvest-basket containing rice, plantains, and the bell-metal dining-dish, and the scarf at the subject’s waist, are given as gifts to the barber.

Two other men get themselves shaved after the subject. All over south India it is common at a wedding for two or four companions of the subject to ‘accompany’ him (or her) in certain rites. For instance, two men are given a bath along with the groom, and two girls are given a bath along with the bride.

In the south-western parts of Coorg the bride undergoes, before _mûrta_, a rite called ‘_kûrangoli marîpa_’, which is analogous to shaving. The bride’s brother’s wife removes from the bride’s head a thin wisp of hair, and pares her nails. (The barber normally pares the nails after shaving a man.) These are put into a dining-dish containing milk. Later, the dining-dish is emptied at the foot of a milk-exuding tree.

Coorgs are generally more Westernized in their ways than others
in Coorg, and there are more cropped heads among them than among others. But formerly they, like other Hindus, had their entire heads shaved but for a tuft of hair at the crown. Tufts started giving place to cropped heads towards the close of the last century. The exclusive shaving of the face as distinct from the shaving of the face along with the head also came into vogue at the same time, and moustaches, which were only removed at the death of a very close relative, began to disappear entirely.

Marriage conferred on a man the right to have his head shaved periodically, and a bachelor was not entitled to it unless he had undergone the ear-boring mangala. The latter ritual conferred social adulthood on a male: in the folksong about the hero Kiyandira Appayya it is seen that he successfully claims to be an adult on the strength of the fact that his friends, all boys tending cattle, performed this ritual for him in the jungle.

The ear-boring mangala has now entirely disappeared, and I learn that even fifty years ago it was only performed very rarely, and that, too, as a votive offering to a deity. But though the ritual had disappeared the concepts associated with it continued to exist for some time afterwards. It was considered improper for an adult to be without ear-rings, and such men were not admitted to the temple of Iggutappa in Nalknad. If a Coorg died without his ears being bored, the corpse's ears were pierced before burial.

The ear-boring mangala was the first of several mangalas for a male, and the head was shaved for the first time on this occasion. The performance of this mangala conferred certain privileges on the individual in question, one of which being that he could have his face shaved periodically by a barber.

At the various mangalas shaving is a preparatory ritual act. On these occasions it is followed by a bath and by the wearing of ritually pure robes. These preliminary rites make the subject pure, and while in this condition he performs certain rites, or others perform certain rites towards him.

The form of shaving prevalent normally is different from that prevalent at mourning. Normally the tuft at the crown and the moustache have to be left untouched at shaving, while at mourning it is obligatory, at any rate for the chief male mourners, to have their heads and faces shaved entirely. Other close relatives who are junior to the dead person are recommended to follow the example of the chief mourners, but it does not seem to be obligatory for
them. The mourners get themselves shaved on the morning following the disposal of the corpse; and this shave marks the beginning of ritual mourning. The mourners may not have another shave while ritual mourning lasts. In the case of the eldest son and widower, ritual mourning lasts sometimes six months, and during this entire period shaving is forbidden.

The restriction on shaving is only one of several restrictions imposed on the mourners, and in order to understand its meaning completely all the restrictions have to be taken into consideration. The mourners are forbidden to consume meat, honey, betel leaves and areca-nut, mushrooms, and liquor. They may not go to a temple, or wedding, or dance. They have to wear mourning dress, and they have to perform certain ritual. It is necessary to emphasize that these restrictions have to be observed. They show to the outside world that the mourner is 'concerned' in the death that has occurred.

There are degrees of 'concern': the close relatives have to show greater concern than distant kindred. The mourning period is longer for them, and they are marked off from the others in other ways too. The obligatory expression of concern in the culturally defined manner serves to maintain a certain kinship and social structure.

VII

The preparatory, purificatory ritual act which comes after shaving is a ritual bath. It is usual for three married women to give this ritual bath to the subject. The guḍḍa or bathroom is a room outside the main building of the ancestral house, and the subject marches in state to it. The procession is headed by pipers and drummers followed by four Coorgs beating a tiny drum and singing the traditional 'road song'. At a wedding, after the groom returns in state from his bath, the best man helps to dress him in ritual robes and ornaments.

A Coorg washes his hands, feet, and face before saluting the sacred wall-lamp every day, morning and evening; and on festival

Odd numbers have ritual value in Coorg as elsewhere in south India. Number '3' is specially sacred. A person usually walks thrice round a sacred object like a tripod stool, temple, and funeral pyre.

The best man (bājākara) is a married man, and the bride has a matron of honour (bājākarati).
days he takes a bath and changes into clothes washed by the washerman. Both bath and change of clothes are preliminary to prayer.

It is usual to approximate physical impurity to ritual impurity. An unwashed state is an impure state, and taking a bath and changing into clean clothes alter the ritual status of the subject. While this is generally true we must, however, guard ourselves against completely identifying physical purity or cleanliness with ritual purity. It is not every bath that changes the ritual status of the subject.

A ritual bath alters the subject's ritual status. It adds to his ritual purity and makes him fit to pray, or to be possessed by a deity. But sometimes the emphasis is on the bath terminating a condition of ritual impurity. That is to say, instead of a bath adding purity to normal ritual status, it might only be putting an end to ritual impurity, which is a condition inferior to normal ritual status. For instance, a mother is ritually impure for fifty-nine days after the birth of her child. On the twelfth day, however, she attains partial purity after a bath and this enables her to enter the central hall and kitchen but not the south-western room. The child is ritually given a name on the twelfth day.

But complete purity is only attained on the sixtieth day when a ceremony called aruvud (literally, the sixtieth) is performed. The mother has a bath, changes her clothes, marks her forehead with three horizontal stripes of vibhuti or sacred ashes, and then performs certain rites.

The important point to note here is that on both the twelfth and the sixtieth days a bath marks the termination of ritual impurity. It is also preliminary to the performance of certain rites.

That a ritual bath is different from an ordinary bath is made clear from the fact that the confined mother has an elaborate massage and bath every day, beginning with the day the baby is born. The massage and bath last several hours, but their object is therapeutic and not ritual. It is only on the twelfth and sixtieth days that a bath alters the ritual condition of the mother. All baths clean the body, but only some purify as well as clean.

1 All over south India devotees of the god Shiva mark their foreheads every morning with three horizontal stripes of vibhuti or sacred ashes.

2 Orthodox Brahmins frequently keep a cloth which they dip in water and squeeze dry and tie round their waists while performing certain rites. This
Greater ritual purity or merit ensues from a cold-water bath than from a hot-water bath. If the subject takes a cold-water bath while wearing his ritual robes, even greater ritual merit is acquired. Thus mourners are required to perform certain rites while their clothes are wet and dripping.

On the twelfth or sixteenth day of the death of a person the ceremony of miida is performed and this puts an end to ritual mourning for all except the first-grade mourners. Until the performance of miida, the mourners offer food every day to the spirit of the dead person. When making these offerings they are required frequently to take a plunge in a well or pond with their clothes on. But this is not a pleasant thing to do, and especially so in the wet and cold seasons, and consequently, after the first plunge for the day, the mourners content themselves by washing their hands and feet, and wetting a corner of their waist-cloths. This is regarded as sufficient to meet the ends of ritual purity. Such a traditionally sanctioned mechanism makes ritual simpler and less inconvenient to the persons concerned.

The widower (or widow) and eldest son, after the mourning period is over, go to Bhagamannda where the rivers Kavéri and Kanaké meet. After a shave, they bathe in the confluence of the two rivers, and then offer balls of rice-flour to the dead person's spirit. This is followed by a visit to the temple of Bhaganéshwara where the mourners offer worship. Subsequently they go to the source of the River Kavéri, bathe in the larger spring, worship the smaller spring, and then return home.

Two ideas can be distinguished in the above ritual acts: (1) a ritual bath alters the ritual status of the subject; and (2) bathing in a sacred river is not only purifying in a ritual sense, but also removes the sins of the bather. This latter idea is shared by Hindus all over India, and when a Coorg bathes in the Kavéri he participates in a ritual idiom that spreads all over India. The Kavéri is a sacred river for Hindus in every part of south India, and it is even called the 'dakshilJa ganga' or the Southern Ganges. Bathing in the Ganges, or in any other sacred river, rid a person of the sins he has committed both in this and in a previous existence. It confers on him spiritual merit (punya).

Sanskritic Hinduism has incorporated into itself the idea that cloth is frequently not very clean, whereas a snow-white dhoti brought by the washerman is ritually impure.
bathing changes the ritual status of the bather, and has elaborated it in such a manner that pious Hindus believe in the sin-cleansing and merit-conferring powers of sacred rivers.

On the seventh or twelfth day after the birth of a child in a Coorg house, the washerman comes with a vessel full of water in which coula or salt-impregnated earth has been dissolved. With the aid of a few mango leaves he sprinkles the solution all over the house and this act rids the house of its impurity and restores it to normal ritual status. Nowadays, however, Coorgs increasingly call on a Brahmin to purify the house on the twelfth day.

It is probable the washerman was employed as purifier because of his occupation. But such a duty is not consistent with the position he normally occupies in the caste hierarchy. For instance, he is prohibited from entering the more sacred parts of an ancestral house, like the kitchen and central hall, as he defiles them by his presence. If, however, he has to enter them in the exercise of his duties—at marriage he covers the ceiling of the central hall with clean white sheets—they are purified subsequently. But no such inconsistency exists in the case of the Brahmin, and the increasing tendency to employ him is part of the general process of Sanskritization of Coorg customs.

VIII

After having been given a bath by three married women, the groom is helped into his ritual robes and ornaments by the best man. He has to wear a white cotton gown for the mitrta, and this is worn in such a way that the right side comes over the left side. A red silk sash secures the gown at the waist. The ornamental Coorg knife, piché katti, is tucked into the sash in front, and the broad Coorg sword, odí katti, hangs from its clasp at the groom's back. The clasp is fixed to a chain which is tied round the groom's waist. The groom also wears a number of ornaments.

The groom wears the Coorg turban (pañí mandé tuni) which is flat at the top and also covers the back of the head. He may not wear any sandals, however, as leather defiles. He carries in his hand a staff (gejé tand) with small bells tied to it near the top.

The bride wears a uniform of red silk: a red silk sari, a red silk full-sleeved Coorg blouse (kala kupy), and a red silk scarf which

1 The washerman uses coula for washing clothes.
is tied round her head. She wears bangles, necklaces, ear-rings, and also ornaments on her ankles, feet, and toes.

The best man and matron of honour hold a white cloth umbrella over the groom and bride respectively.1

Nowadays, the black, woollen, half-sleeved gown is coming into fashion. Every Coorg who can afford it sports it at festivals, dances, and weddings. It has become a mark of wealth and status, and the white cotton gown which has superior ritual status is becoming almost a symbol of poverty. But even now the subject of a mangala, as distinct from others who are not as important, wears a white gown. Any suggestion that he should discard the white gown in favour of the black would meet with opposition from one and all. It may be mentioned here that the hero Kāyandira Appayya, to whom reference has already been made, was prohibited from doing a number of things which an ordinary Coorg did, such as handling a plough, eating bamboo shoots, and wearing a black gown. He was required to wear a white gown always.

The corpse, which is in some respects treated as similar to the subject of a mangala, is dressed in a white gown, but with the underside on top if it is going to be cremated, and with the left side over the right if it is going to be buried.

Formerly, mourners also wore the white gown, but in a particular way: the right hand did not pass through the right arm of the gown, but instead it was allowed to hang limp from the right shoulder. The gown was secured at the waist by a black sash instead of a red one.

The white gown is worn on all important ritual occasions. Ritual occasions are either auspicious or inauspicious, and there is need to differentiate between them. Hence, though the subject of mangala, corpse and mourner, are all dressed in a white gown, the mode of wearing it is different in each case. The subject of mangala wears it in the normal way, while in the case of a corpse it is reversed, and in the case of the mourner the right arm drops loosely from the shoulder.

1 Round about Mercara the bride and groom both wear a red silk veil during mlira. In the southernmost part of Coorg, however, the veil is not worn by either party. Between Mercara and the Wynial border, in Kaggalid, only the bride wears a veil, and the groom removes her veil prior to consummating the marriage on the second night. The veil is generally uncommon among Hindus in south India and is worn only by the women of the ruling castes. It is likely that the women of the royal families in pre-British Coorg wore the veil regularly.
Nowadays, however, all active mourners wear a white waist-cloth (mumju) and shoulder-cloth (tunlu). In the case of women mourners, two of the four corners of the shoulder-cloth are tied in a knot in front in such a way that the breasts are covered. A waist-cloth and shoulder-cloth are normally the ritual dress of Hindus in Malabar.

Red colour seems to have greater ritual value than white, and silk greater ritual value than cotton. For instance, at a wedding the ceiling of the sacred central hall is covered with white cloths, except for the part just above the bridal seat which is covered with red clothes. All the bride's clothes are of red silk, and according to the ancient marriage song the groom wore a red silk gown and red silk turban.

When a man (or woman) dies his relatives have to carry gifts of white cotton cloths to him. But the dead man's sisters' children, or dead woman's brothers' children, have to carry gifts of red silk cloths. Those who bring gifts of red silk cloths are considered to be closer relatives than those who bring white cotton cloths. It is those who bring red silk cloths who take part, along with the dead man's eldest son and widow, in the important pot-breaking rite (koda kakkava) which ritually severs the dead man's connexion with his living relatives.

The ritual preference of silk to cotton is widespread all over peninsular India among Brahmins, and it is very likely that Coorgs borrowed the use of red silk from the Brahmins of the west coast. The use of red silk in ritual is not very clearly defined—at least it is not as clearly defined as the use of the white gown.

The turban is worn on very important auspicious occasions like a wedding. On less formal occasions a Coorg ties a scarf round his head. Both men and women tie a scarf round their heads out of doors. But no form of head-dress, turban, scarf, or cap, is worn inside the house. When a kinswoman comes into the house the hostess removes her scarf. Failure to do so would be an insult, as it would amount to treating the kinswoman as a stranger. Absence of head-dress indicates the intimacy that prevails among the members of a household. It is presumably for this reason that everyone, including the senior mourners, has to remove his scarf and sandals before the corpse. Such removal shows that the dead man and mourners are members of one household. They are kindred, and kinship is intimacy. When two people are able to appear before
each other without scarves they are intimate, they are members of the same household. It is an expression of the solidarity prevalent between the two.

There is a great social and ritual elaboration of the distinction between a married woman and a widow. A married woman or garati is one whose first and only husband is alive. Remarried widows and divorcées have a slightly higher status than widows, but this does not entitle them to be classed as garatis.

The Coorg widow’s dress consists of a white cotton sari, a white cotton blouse, and a white cotton scarf. None of these clothes may have a coloured border. The corpse of a widow, too, is dressed in clothes without a coloured border. The corpse of a married woman, on the other hand, is dressed in a coloured sari with a coloured, or silver, or gold, border.

The distinction between a widow and married woman is absolutely fundamental in every part of south India. Married women have a great number of privileges, whereas widows have a great number of ritual disabilities. A married woman is auspicious, she is everywhere welcome, whereas a widow is inauspicious, and she is unwelcome everywhere. This deep cleavage expresses itself in the matter of dress also.

IX

After being dressed in ritual robes, the subject of mangala salutes the various lamps in the house before sitting down for mūtra. On either side of him is a dish-lamp placed on a tripod stool. The dish-lamp is indispensable on every ritual occasion.

Every day, early in the morning and again just before nightfall, the housewife sweeps the house and sprinkles it with a purifying solution of cow-dung. She then lights the wall-lamp and salutes it. While saluting it she prays to the ancestors of the okka, to Mother Kāvēri and Shiva. Every member of the okka salutes the wall-lamp after getting up in the morning, and again at night.

The ending of night as well as of day is marked by sweeping and purifying the house, and by lighting and saluting the wall lamp. The period between the ending of the day and the beginning of night is regarded as critical time, and children are not given food or allowed to sleep at that time. This is a common south Indian custom.
It is regarded as a bad omen if the lamp goes out while a Coorg is having his dinner. The sudden extinction of the lamp indicates the approach of disaster. The diner gets up from his meal, cleans the dish and washes his hands. He sits down to dinner again a few minutes later. This makes it a different meal altogether and not the one that was interrupted.

A Coorg never says that a lamp has gone out. He says instead, ‘the lamp is brighter’ (boficha dumb pöchi). This kind of euphemism is employed on other occasions also: the Kodagi word for a tiger is ‘nari’ which means a jackal in every other Dravidian language.

Again, no Coorg says that ‘a cobra has bitten So-and-so’. He says instead, ‘a creeper has bitten So-and-so’. Finally, after nightfall no one mentions the barber. If they have to refer to him they say instead, ‘the scraper of heads’. Amongst the Hindus in Mysore the barber is referred to after nightfall as ‘one whose name may not be mentioned’. A barber is inauspicious, and contact with him is defiling. He is also associated with inauspicious occasions such as death, as mourners have to be shaved. Women specially dread the barber, as until recently among the highest castes widows were required to have their heads shaved entirely.

In every one of the cases we have mentioned circumlocution is employed to avoid reference to an unpleasant object or event. The bite of a snake is always unpleasant and frequently fatal; a barber suggests death and widowhood; and it is much better to think of a tiger as a jackal. The euphemistic reference to the extinction of a lamp has a similar purpose: a lamp is the symbol of the solidarity and strength of the okka, and its sudden extinction refers to the decay and extinction of the okka. It also refers to the withdrawal of the protective power of the ancestors and the deities who are invoked while saluting a lamp.

Among the Hindus of the eastern plains it is obligatory to light a lamp in the house as soon as it is dark. A house without a lamp suggests that everyone is dead in the house, or that they are too poor to light one.

The ritual attitude prevalent towards the domestic lamp is easily extended to fire generally, and to the sun. These again provide points of contact with Sanskrit or All-India Hinduism.

The kitchen stove is a convenient focus for the general ritual attitude existing towards fire. The kitchen stove, like the domestic lamp, stands for the unity, strength, and protective power of the
okka and this fact finds ritual expression. When a member of the okka is dead and it is decided to cremate his body, the funeral pyre is fired with a torch lighted from embers from the kitchen stove. The torch is made with twigs collected from the domestic burial-ground.

The belief in the protective power of telī nir is again the result of a ritual attitude towards the kitchen stove. A few embers from the kitchen stove and a few grains of cooked rice from a vessel on the stove are put into a dining-dish. Water is poured on the embers and rice, and a thick, ashy liquid is formed in the dining-dish. This liquid is telī nir, and great protective powers are attributed to it. The mourners returning home on the eleventh day after performing the rites in the burial-ground, a daughter-in-law returning to her conjugal home with her baby born in her natal home, a member of the house returning from a long journey, and a newly bought calf are all sprinkled with it.

In the foregoing instances telī nir removes some inimical or dangerous power in the person or object that is coming into the house. People who are 'strangers' to the okka have this power in them. A child of a male member of the okka born in its mother's natal house, a newly bought calf, a member long absent from home, and a mourner are all 'strangers' for purposes of telī nir. Members of the okka enjoy its protection and strength while persons and objects outside it do not do so. Things that stand for the okka represent its strength and protective power, and the kitchen stove is an appropriate object to stand for the okka. The embers and the cooked rice are both taken from the kitchen stove. The kitchen stove and the dining-dish also stand for commensality which is a basic feature of the okka in every part of India. In fact, commensality is a legal criterion of 'jointness'. Commensality denotes the unity and strength of the okka. Commensality is an act of solidarity. Absence of commensality indicates division. In a country like India where all kinds of ritual rules surround eating, commensality assumes even greater importance than what it would have in another society.

The domestic lamp, as long as it is burning, indicates that the protective power of the okka is active, and its going out indicates the withdrawal of such protective power. Such withdrawal spells dangers to the members of the okka. The domestic lamp led to a consideration of the significance of the kitchen stove, and this in
turn led to a consideration of fire generally and the sun. In Sanskrit or All-India Hinduism, Agni is the god of fire and he is related to Sūtvār or Sūrya, the sun-god. Agni and Sūrya are deities in the Vēdas and they are known and understood all over Hindu India. The local phenomenon of the attribution of sacredness to the domestic lamp and kitchen stove is absorbed into the All-India worship of Agni and Sūrya. Coorgs are drawn into an All-India ritual idiom which is mainly Sanskritic in character.

The sprinkling of rice on a person or thing is a common ritual act in Coorg, and it is one of the several acts which together form the ritual of miirta. An instance of the ritual sprinkling of rice will be considered now with a view to discovering its meaning.

Birth results in pollution for the mother, the new-born infant, and the okka of which the mother is a member. While the other members of the polluted okka attain normal ritual status on the twelfth day of birth, the mother herself remains polluted till the sixtieth day. On that day, after a bath which ends her long period of pollution, she performs a certain ritual which signifies her resumption of her normal, pre-pollution duties.

One of her normal duties is the bringing of water from the domestic well into the kitchen, and the resumption of this particular duty is dramatized in 'Ganga puja' (worship of Ganga or Ganges). The confined woman has a bath, after which she changes into ritually pure garments. She then goes to the domestic well accompanied by two married women. First of all she salutes the sun by throwing some rice grains into the air, and this is followed by putting small quantities of rice thrice into the well. She then drops a few betel leaves, with the smooth side on top, into the well, and also empties the milk of a slit coconut into it. Finally, the confined woman and, after her, her two companions draw water from the well in vessels and carry the latter into the kitchen.

During the later stages of pregnancy, and for two months after the birth of the child, the confined woman has been freed from all domestic duties. The resumption of her domestic duties on the

1 It may be argued, however, that the attribution of sacredness to the domestic lamp and stove is derived from the worship of Agni and Sūrya, and not vice versa.
sixtieth day of the birth of the child is dramatized in the ritual of ‘Ganga pūja’. Her relationship with the domestic well has been broken for some time and the resumption of this relationship is not without a certain amount of ‘awkwardness’, as in the case of two human beings. The worship of the domestic well, the solidarity rites performed towards it, the offering of betel leaves and a coconut all make the process of resumption of contact smoother.

While white rice is used in auspicious ritual, rice yellowed with turmeric is used in inauspicious ritual. At the very important funeral rite of ‘breaking the pot’, each of the mourners sprinkles a little rice, yellowed with turmeric, on the corpse before saluting it.

The ritual sprinkling of rice on objects and persons usually accompanies salutation. In mūrta, the sprinkling of rice occurs with salutation and with the giving of milk and money presents. All these rites affirm a bond which exists between the subject and all those who perform them to him. These are members of his kin-group, caste-group, and village. They constitute his community. These rites of solidarity which affirm the existence of a bond between the subject and the community serve also to stress the importance of the particular mangala the subject is undergoing.

It is entirely proper that rice and not any other grain or article should be used in the most common solidarity rite in Coorg. Even today rice has a very important place in the social and economic life of Coorgs, and formerly, before the introduction of coffee and oranges into Coorg, it was the most valuable crop.

The ritual of giving milk to the subject follows the sprinkling of rice on him. This, like the other ritual acts mentioned earlier, is performed at every mangala including marriage. While the structure of every mangala is, broadly speaking, the same, there are minor differences between one mangala and another. The ritual giving of milk at marriage makes the meaning of ritual milk-giving particularly clear.

On the first day of marriage mūrta is performed separately for the bride and groom in their respective homes. The bride’s relatives and the high-caste members of her village perform mūrta to her in

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1 Among the Brahmins of south India the assembled priests and relatives bless the bridal pair by sprinkling on them rice yellowed with turmeric.
her house, and the groom’s relatives and members of his village perform mārta to him in his house.

On the second day, the groom’s relatives go in state to the bride’s house, and the groom’s relatives perform mārta to the bride. For this purpose they carry some of their own rice and milk with them.

The bride’s relatives perform mārta to the groom and, finally, the groom performs mārta to the bride. Later in the day the bride leaves her natal home and accompanies the groom to his home. Relatives of the groom who did not accompany him to the bride’s house now perform mārta to the bride.

When a marriage takes place, it is not only two persons who come together but two kin-groups. They come together through the acquisition of two common objects of interest. But before marriage the bride was only an object of common interest to her natal kin-group, and the groom to his natal kin-group.

When a marriage takes place, there is a change in the social personalities of the bride and groom. It gives them new rights and obligations. Some of this is symbolized in marriage ritual: for instance, the bride loses her rights in her natal okka and acquires them, instead, in her conjugal okka; she carries water from the groom’s okka’s well to his kitchen; and finally she carries manure to the groom’s ancestral paddy-field.

Every mangala marks a change in the social personality of the subject: he moves from one position in the status system to another. On such an occasion the group concerned performs towards him a series of solidarity rites. The performance of these solidarity rites shows that the group concerned authorizes and approves of the change in the social personality of the subject. A casteman or relative who fails to attend the particular mangala is understood as not approving of it. Relations between him and those who attend become strained. He has effected a breach in the solidarity.

Like the sprinkling of rice, the giving of milk is a common ritual act in Coorg. At the naming ceremony of a child, the mother puts the infant into the cradle and says, ‘Chengappa, get up to eat rice mixed with milk.’ She smears the child’s tongue with a little cream, using a gold coin to scoop the cream contained in a bowl.

A child is given solid food to eat six months after birth; and this food usually consists of cooked rice mixed with milk and sugar. On the second day after marriage, when the bride enters her con-
jugal home, her mother-in-law combs her hair and gives her rice mixed with milk to eat. The latter dish is considered a great delicacy.

Milk is used not only on good-sacred occasions but also on bad-sacred occasions. When an infant dies, a coconut-shell containing milk from its mother's breasts is placed over the grave; and if it is a few months old, rice mixed with milk is placed there instead.

On the day after the cremation of a corpse, the dead man's son goes to the burial-ground, and on the spot where the dead man was buried he pours successively a vessel of water and a vessel of milk.

Milk is a very valued commodity, and the ritual giving of milk indicates that solidarity is, or ought to be, prevalent between the giver and the recipient. It is also a symbol of pleasure, luxury, and happiness, and consequently mourners abstain from it while they offer it to the spirit of the departed person. The mourners also abstain from other valued objects like curd, honey, mushrooms, meat, and betel leaves and areca-nut, which are again offered to the dead person's spirit.

A kinsman who drank milk during the mourning period would be guilty of impiety towards the dead person. In the neighbouring Kannaḍa country it is considered a very bitter abuse to tell a person, 'I will drink milk when you die.'

The use of milk is extended from solidarity rites to other rites which have either no reference to solidarity at all or at best only a very indirect one. While ordinarily water is used in shaving a man, milk is used while shaving a bridegroom. The dish containing the milk and the shavings is later emptied at the foot of a milk-exuding tree like the jack tree (artocarpus integrifolia). The placenta is similarly buried at the foot of a milk-exuding tree. One of the five pillars of a marriage pandal has to be a branch of a milk-exuding tree. After a corpse has been cremated the bones are consigned either to a river or buried at the foot of a milk-exuding tree. At mourning, leaf-cups made from the leaves of the jack tree are used to offer food to the spirit of the departed person.

Everyone who performs mūrta to the subject should give a money-gift, and the three married women are expected to give a gold coin (pombaga) each. At a wedding the mother of the bride
(or groom), and the groom while performing mātra to the bride, have to give a purse containing several coins, one of which should be a gold coin.

A money-gift has to be given not only at mangala but on other occasions as well: relatives who come to pay their last respects to the dead man perform a series of solidarity rites at the end of which they give a money-gift. Again, an infant has to be given a money-gift on the occasion of giving him (or her) a name. In fact, a relative who is seeing an infant for the first time must give a money-gift. On the second day of marriage, when the bride visits the groom's house, she gives a money-gift to every infant in her conjugal okka. Later the groom does the same in the bride's okka.

It is hardly necessary to state that the giving of a money-gift does not always constitute a solidarity rite. It may be given in return for a service, which, however, might be purely nominal. A guest to a wedding gives a pata to each of the two girls holding a dish-lamp in his honour at the entrance to the bridal house.

At the wedding the elders of the groom's village publicly examine the box containing the bride's trousseau. They are collectively given five pata (fifteen annas), and this money is called 'witness money' (sakshi pata). Subsequently, if there is a dispute as to the contents of the bride's box the elders will be called upon to give evidence. Such disputes do not normally occur, however; except in the event of the woman wanting to return to her natal okka on becoming a widow, or after being divorced. Again, when the bride's family friend consents to hold himself responsible for her good behaviour in the groom's house he is paid a pata as 'witness-money'. The groom's family friend is paid similarly for holding himself responsible for the good behaviour of the groom's relatives.

In the above instances the passing of money from one hand to another has the effect of sealing a contract. It may also be interpreted as payment in advance for some service to be rendered in the future. An occasion might not, and usually does not, arise requiring the elders or either of the family friends to render the service expected of them or him, and the strictly nominal character of the payment might be attributed to this fact. Such an interpretation is plausible, but does not appear to us to be true. In the instance just mentioned the emphasis seems to be much more on the fact of the acceptor of the money binding himself to a particular
course of action in the future rather than on the services to be rendered in the future.

A gold coin is placed in the mouth of a dead man if the latter was a married man. This coin is referred to as 'money for the road'. It probably refers to the expenses which the dead man's soul incurs on its journey. No gold coin is, however, placed in the mouth if the dead man was a bachelor, or had the reputation of being very wicked. In such a case a very bitter fruit called 'kānyum kāy' is placed in his mouth. A bachelor and a wicked man are both in a spiritually unsatisfactory condition, and it is believed that their ghosts are likely to trouble survivors. The bitter fruit is an appropriate symbol of his unsatisfactory spiritual condition, of the fact that he is a danger to the surviving relatives and others.

It may be recalled here that a gold coin is used in ritually feeding a child on the occasion of conferring a name on it. A gold (or silver) coin which is used in solidarity rites itself becomes a symbol of a satisfactory spiritual and ritual condition. It was seen that this happened to a much greater extent in the case of milk.

XIII

The various forms of salutation prevalent among Coorgs have already been described. It is interesting to note that there is no difference between the mode of salutation adopted towards another Coorg and that adopted towards a deity. A deity might be saluted either by bowing the head and folding the palms at the chest, or by first of all prostrating oneself completely before the image and then getting up and bowing the head and folding the palms. The former mode is adopted normally towards the wall-lamp, while the latter is adopted at a famous temple, or towards the wall-lamp on a special occasion.

The Coorg form of salutation is prevalent among Hindus all over India, and it is only one of several instances where Coorgs participate in a ritual idiom common to all Hindus.

Salutation brings into relief a particular aspect of solidarity rites: solidarity does not necessarily mean the equality of the persons participating in the particular solidarity rite. Conversely, inequality between the participants does not denote lack of solidarity. When a young Coorg salutes his father's elder brother he is not claiming to be his uncle's equal. The very act of salutation
Coorg bridegroom and bride

[Photo: T.S.S.]
The Murta ritual for the bridegroom

The harvest festival of Putri: Combat with stick and shield
Typical Coorg landscape

A mountain road in Coorg

[Photo: T.S.S.]
The sacred river Kaveri
Coorgs in their ceremonial dress—shooting is a popular pastime

A coffee estate
expresses that the junior is inferior to the senior: the former's head is bent and he touches the latter's feet with both hands. The junior's hands are later carried back to his forehead.

In fact, a junior who failed to show the respect due to a senior by not saluting him would be effecting a breach in the solidarity. Hostility would be the result. Everyone would say that such a youth did not know his place, that his elders had not brought him up properly, and so on.

A band is considered essential to every ritual occasion: at mangalas, calendar festivals, and festivals of village-deities a band plays most of the time.

A close relative comes to a wedding accompanied by his own band. He must be received by the hosts with band, and again, when he departs, the hosts must accompany him a little distance with their band leading the way. When the relative finally takes leave of the hosts he pays the latter's band three papan, one for the men blowing the horns, another for the pipers, and the third for the drummers.

 Relatives coming to pay their last respects to the dead man are also required to be accompanied by their band. If they are not accompanied by their own band, they arrange to hire the services of the local band, at some distance from the mourning-house.

A band plays before a mourning-house too, but the beat (chāru parē = death-beat) employed on this occasion is distinctive, and it may not be employed on an auspicious occasion.

The presence of a band testifies to the social importance of the occasion or person. A wedding at which there was no band would be inconceivable to a Coorg. Again, if at a wedding an important guest were not received with a band, he would regard it as an insult. Coorgs have an elaborate code of courtesy, and this has to be scrupulously observed.

The okkas of the bride and groom have each to give several dinners during the wedding. These dinners are of two kinds: one in which the chief guests are the members of the particular bridal party's own village, and another in which the important guests are from other villages.

The above distinction is important, as it throws light on the
social structure. A village forms a unity, and ideally speaking it is not only the bride’s (or groom’s) okka, but her (or his) entire village which ought to act as hosts. Formerly they did not sit down to dinner with the guests from other villages, but waited on the latter along with the members of the host okka. They sat down to dinner later.

On the day before the wedding, every house in the village has to send one man and one woman to the bridal house to help in the wedding work. They have to do every kind of work which the wedding involves, but their primary duties seem to be cooking the huge dinners and serving them to the guests, and looking after the guests generally.

After the villagers have arrived the head of the bridal house requests them to take charge of the wedding for him and to exercise due economy in the discharge of their duties. In the evening there is a dinner for the villagers which is called ārā patti (village dinner), and which seems to mark their assumption of responsibility. There is another village dinner on the day after the marriage at which the villagers return the ‘ladle and spoon’ to the bridal okka. The return of the ‘ladle and spoon’ marks the end of the villagers’ duties at the wedding. The villagers apologize to the head of the bridal okka for any faults they might have committed in the discharge of their duties, and the head thanks them for the great help rendered by them.

The members of a village in which a death has occurred are required to help the bereaved okka in several ways during mourning and the latter okka give the villagers two dinners at the conclusion of ritual mourning to express their thanks. The services rendered, and the dinners given, are both obligatory, and they are among the many links which bind together the members of the village community.

Besides the above dinners the members of a village occasionally dine together and this is referred to as ‘urorme’ or ‘village harmony’. The solidarity of the village expresses itself at these dinners, even though all the castes in the village do not sit together at them. It has to be remembered in this connexion that the nuclear unit of the Coorg community, the okka, is normally a commensal unit. The sub-caste too occasionally dines together, and one of the punishments inflicted on the excommunicated man is that he may not be admitted to the caste dinners.
On the day after the wedding the bride goes to the groom's house where a few rites are performed which symbolize the admission of the bride into the groom's okka. The marriage is consummated that night, and the bride returns to her natal house after spending a few days in the groom's house. She is not allowed to be seen by members of her natal village until a dinner has been given to them.

Richter tells us that formerly the bride returning to her natal home was 'treated as unclean', 'shut up like a woman after childbirth', and that she was kept in seclusion 'for a fortnight, or a month, or even two months, according to the wealth and respectability of the family'. Elderly informants deny that she was regarded as unclean, but they do confirm the fact that she was not allowed to see the villagers before a dinner had been given to them.

The bride becomes a member of the groom's okka at marriage. The consummation of the marriage in the groom's house on the second night also indicates to her that her future position is that of a mother who contributes children to her husband's okka. Marriage in a patrilocal and patrilineal kinship system affects a greater change in the bride's social personality than in the groom's. She is a new person, and this is recognized in her not being allowed to meet the members of her natal village before a dinner has been given to them. When there has been a break in the continuity of a relationship, or when a relationship with a new person has to be begun, the best way to do it is with a dinner. Dinner, as we have noted earlier, is an act of solidarity, and the villagers forge their solidarity with the new person, the bride returning to her natal house from the groom's.

XV

All mangalas except marriage have either become defunct or so rarely performed that nowadays mangala is almost synonymous with marriage. The ritual performed at marriage may be divided into two parts, one part being mangala, and the other concerned with the jural aspect of marriage. Only the former part has been analysed in this chapter. By means of this analysis it is hoped to give content to the concept of ritual idiom and to understand the

*Manual of Coorg, p. 139.*
meanings of certain ritual acts which are very common among Coorgs.

Mūrti is the crucial part of mangala, and the subject of mangala is prepared for mūrti by a series of preparatory and purificatory ritual acts such as shaving, bath, and the donning of ritual robes and ornaments. The various occasions on which each one of these preparatory ritual acts is performed have been considered in order to discover their meanings.

Mūrti itself consists of a series of solidarity rites performed on the subject of it by each member of the concerned group. The process of discovering the meaning of each one of the ritual acts gave us an idea of the ritual idiom of Coorgs.

Solidarity rites are performed on the subject of mangala, and each mangala marks a change in the subject's social personality. Thus the ear-boring mangala marked the attainment of adulthood by a youth. His social personality altered again at marriage as he then acquired new rights and duties.

A man who killed a panther or tiger in a hunt was entitled to mangala being performed. A man who had built a new house performed mūnē or house mangala, at which mūrti was performed to him.

Pole kanda mangala was performed to a girl some time after she had attained puberty. This corresponded to a boy's ear-boring mangala. Marriage is another mangala occasion for her and, formerly, mangala was performed to her in the fifth or seventh month of her first pregnancy. This marked the attainment of the status of a mother by her. Motherhood is a valued status, and a woman who gave birth to ten children, all of whom were alive, was the subject of a mangala ceremony known as paśṭāṅgabh alaga.

A child is ritually given a name on the eleventh day of birth, but this does not constitute a mangala as the child does not count socially till either the ear-boring or puberty mangala has been performed.

Mangala is confined to auspicious occasions, and this is the reason why the ritual disposal of a corpse does not assume the form of a mangala.

Mangala carries with it the approval of society. This is brought out clearly in certain cases. For instance, the marriage of a widow does not constitute a mangala, while the marriage of a widower does. This is because Coorgs, like Brahmins and other high castes, do not approve of the marriage of a widow. But in the case of
Coorgs the disapproval is not sufficiently strong to prohibit altogether the marriage of a widow, as it is among the Brahmins. When a man killed a panther, *mangala* was performed for him on the village green (*air mandu*), whereas it was performed for him on the *nād* green if he killed a tiger. Killing a tiger is worthy of more honour than killing a panther.

When the youthful hero Kaiyandira Appayya killed the great fighter Chōndu and thus restored the prestige of Kaiyetnaḏ, the general approval with which Appayya's action was regarded expressed itself in a *mangala* being performed for him.
CHAPTER FOUR

THE RITUAL IDIOM OF COORGS

(2) THE CONCEPTS OF POLE AND MADI

The external world is divided into two parts, the sacred and non-sacred. The term 'sacred' is used in its wider sense as inclusive of 'good-sacredness' as well as 'bad-sacredness'. Good sacredness includes all forms of ritually desirable states and conditions like auspiciousness and purity, while bad-sacredness includes all forms of ritually undesirable states and conditions such as inauspiciousness and impurity.

The Kodagi term for ritual purity is madi, and this term is found in all other Dravidian languages except Malayālām; and pole, which means ritual impurity, is found in all Dravidian languages except Telugu.

Pole is used in Kodagi in two senses: one, in which it means ritual impurity generally; and another in which it means certain specific forms of ritual impurity. In the latter cases it is usual to add the necessary prefixes: for instance, kuruju pole (blind pollution) or tinga pole (monthly pollution) refers to the impurity of a woman in her periods, and petta pole or purudu pole refers to birth impurity.

The pollution resulting from the death of a person is called tikē. Tit in Tamil means death-pollution, while tit in Kodagi means faeces. A house in which an adult has died is referred to as tikē mane (polluted house) till the end of ritual mourning. On the day ritual mourning ends, in the afternoon, after the mourners have returned from the burial-ground, the family friend says, 'Until now mourning, from now on festival' (indākaṇṭē tammē inyā pinya namme). Tamme is used to mean mourning, while namme is used to mean festival.

All over India there is a ban on a member of a higher caste

1 Purudu which means the pollution consequent on birth occurs in all Dravidian languages excepting Malayālām.
touching, or coming very close to, a member of a lower caste. This is specially so where the structural distance between the two castes is very great. In Malabar and Coorg the ban on contact between different castes has been elaborately systematized. People belonging to two different castes have to maintain a certain minimum distance between them, and failure to do so results in the member of the higher caste being polluted. *Tinda pòlè* means the pollution that results from the failure to maintain the requisite distance between two people belonging to different castes.

A man is in a condition of ritual impurity in relation to a member of a higher caste while he is in a condition of ritual purity towards a member of a lower caste. The concepts of ritual purity and impurity systematize and maintain the structural distance between different castes. Caste hierarchy, on the other hand, makes these concepts relative, except with reference to castes at either extreme. The Brahmin is in a condition of purity in relation to all other castes, while the Untouchable is in a condition of ritual impurity to them. One of the most important Untouchable castes are the Poleyas (*pòlè*+*yà*). Holeyas are an important Untouchable caste of the Kannada country, and Pulayans of Malabar. The names of each of these contain the local term for pollution.

Events like birth and death result in polluting the *okka* in which the event has occurred, and certain other relatives. The pollution resulting from birth is milder than the pollution consequent on death. But in both cases pollution affects only the concerned kindred, and it is the means by which concern is defined and made known to everyone.

A woman is in a condition of *pòlè* for three days during her periods, and she becomes pure only on the fourth day after a bath in the morning. Formerly, the women of an *okka* had to live in an outhouse, at a little distance from the main building, during their periods. They had to maintain a certain distance from other members of the *okka*, and from other people in a condition of normal ritual status. They were specially required to keep away from the ancestor-shrine and from the cobra-platform. The cobra-deity was specially sensitive to defilement, and it was believed that if a woman approached the cobra-platform during her periods, the wrath of the deity would descend on the *okka* of which she was a member.

Coorg women do not nowadays observe any restrictions during
their periods. This is surprising as elsewhere in south India these restrictions are still in force.

Unlike birth and death, menses do not affect the entire okka. They only affect the particular woman, but the important point to note is that she is required to avoid touching other members of the okka and abstain from going near the sacred places on the ancestral estate. The safety and well-being of the okka will be jeopardized if she does not observe these restrictions.

It was seen that the concepts of ritual purity and impurity are very intimately related to permanent features of the social structure like caste and okka, and later on it will be seen that they are also related to the village, but these concepts also occur in certain non-structural contexts. A man, irrespective of the caste to which he belongs, is in a condition of ritual purity while praying or sacrificing to an ancestor or deity. He attains this ritual purity by the performance of a series of ritual actions like taking a bath and wearing ritually pure clothes. He comes into contact with an ancestor or deity when he is praying or making a sacrifice, and such contact requires that he should be in a condition of ritual purity. This principle is carried even into ritual mourning: mourners making an offering of food to the spirit of the departed person are in a condition of extreme ritual purity while they do it, though their general ritual condition till the conclusion of mourning is tihē, an extreme form of pollution.

II

Bodily emissions and waste matter are ritually impure. Sexual intercourse resulting in the production of certain fluids from the bodies of both the partners is prohibited while a person is in a ritually pure condition: the festival-priests at the festival of Kētrappa have to observe continence during the twenty-one days of the biennial festival. In order to ensure that they do observe this rule they are required to sleep in the outer veranda which women do not normally enter.

A person who is in a ritually pure condition may not answer a call of nature. He becomes impure if he does so. Spittle is also ritually impure. This is so all over India, especially among the upper castes. A person may not touch his tongue or teeth with his fingers, and should he do so, he has to wash his hands. Elders come
THE RITUAL IDIOM OF COORGS

down heavily on a child who puts his finger into his mouth. A person is required specially to avoid putting his finger into his mouth while cooking or serving food.

The Kodagi term for spittle is tupmir (tupparada in Tamil means 'to spit'), and it is essential to distinguish between spittle and objects which have come into contact with spittle directly or indirectly. The Kodagi term for the latter class of objects is esji (Kannada, enjiço, Tamil and Malayalam, echcha). A man who touches his tongue with a finger defiles his entire hand. This is prohibited normally and especially so while cooking, or serving food, or praying. If he touches a dish of food with a finger which has come into contact with his tongue, he defiles the entire dish. None may eat it.

A Coorg folk-tale illustrates extremely well the power of spittle. Seven deities, six brothers and a sister, set out from Malabar in search of shelter. Three brothers manage, however, to find 'shelter' in Malabar villages alone. The other three brothers, together with their sister, cross over into Coorg. As soon as they cross the border a struggle for supremacy develops between the brothers and sister. The latter defeats the former in several trials of skill. The brothers then conspire to overthrow the sister. After dinner they all chew betel leaves and areca-nut. One of the brothers takes the chewed stuff out of his mouth and, holding it before the others, says, 'See how red my stuff is!' The others follow suit. The sister's stuff is redder than everybody else's. The brothers then pretend to take the chewed stuff back to their mouths. The sister is taken in and actually puts the stuff into her mouth. The brothers, after making certain that the sister has put her stuff into her mouth, throw their stuff behind their backs. They all exclaim, 'You have eaten enji; you have lost your caste'. The unfortunate sister is heartbroken, but the brothers are adamant, and force her to become the deity of Poleyas!

Nail and hair parings are impure, and they have to be thrown far away from the house. Poverty will result if they are scattered in the house.

While a person occasionally pares his finger and toe nails, he does not cut his own hair. This is the barber's job, and the barber's touch defiles a Coorg. The latter takes a bath and changes his clothes after he has been shaved. The place where the barber and his customer sat is purified.

Faeces, urine, semen, menstrual blood, spittle, and parings of
nail and hair are all ritually impure. As such they are inconsistent with a condition of ritual purity. It is obvious that in the above instances physical dirt has been identified with ritual impurity. Purification consists in taking a bath and wearing pure clothes. Dirt, then, is seen as ritual impurity, and cleanliness as ritual purity. It is necessary, however, to stress that they are ritual and not natural states.

Birth and death both result in ritual impurity for the entire household for several days. This ritual impurity will not disappear even if the impure person has a dozen baths a day. But, once the prescribed period is over, the individual attains his normal ritual status after a bath. It is necessary to stress that ritual purity is fundamentally different from cleanliness, though they overlap frequently. A simple association of ritual purity with cleanliness and ritual impurity with dirtiness, would be a neat arrangement, but it would falsify the facts. One comes across ritually pure robes which are very dirty, and snow-white clothes which are ritually impure.

A corpse is ritually impure and contact with it results in pollution. The crow, which is a scavenger bird, and is everywhere associated with death, is also impure. The spirits of dead ancestors assume the forms of crows on certain ritual occasions when they are propitiated. The conclusion of funeral rites is marked everywhere by the offer of balls of rice to the dead man's spirit. These balls are kept either on the roof of the house or on the ground at some distance from the house. If the crows fall to these balls soon, it is believed that the dead man is satisfied. Delay in the arrival of the crows indicates that the dead man is dissatisfied.

If the crows perch on a roof and caw, the death of someone under that roof is presaged. A man who sees two crows mating will die soon after unless he sends a false message announcing his death to his kinsmen. Nowadays it is not unusual for a person who has seen two crows mating to send a telegram announcing his death to his kinsmen. The mating of crows means their increase, and the man who sees it is likely to die. The way he can counteract this is by announcing his death as soon as he has seen the crows mate. The ends of justice are met by such an announcement.

The natural functions of the body are a great source of pollution, and this idea is at the bottom of the asceticism which is present in Hinduism.

Needless to say, this causes the unfortunate kinsfolk a considerable amount of worry and suffering.
If a crow's droppings fall on a person, he or she will have to dip in a tank or river a thousand times. This is extremely inconvenient, and so the person in question sits under a sieve while water is poured on him through it. The sieve has a few hundred holes, and every time a vessel of water is poured into it the person underneath has a few hundred baths. When the proper observance of a ritual rule or prohibition involves great trouble and inconvenience, there come into existence ritual mechanisms which take the edge off the rules.

III

Bad-sacredness is a wider concept than pollution or ritual impurity; and there are several degrees of ritual impurity. The birth of a child results in a mild form of ritual impurity called petta pole or purudu for seven or twelve days for all members of the okka except the mother of the new-born baby, who attains normal ritual status only on the sixtieth day. During birth-pollution the members of the okka avoid going to a temple. But they may go to a dance or wedding where they are bound to touch people in normal ritual status.

Tiké or death-pollution is quite a different matter, however. The members of the dead man's okka have to avoid touching people in normal status for a period of at least twelve days after death. During this period they have to observe certain taboos regarding food and dress. Tiké might be described as an acute form of pollution, while petta pole or purudu pole is a mild form of it. But the latter is a more serious form of pollution than normal ritual status.

Normal ritual status is the status which a person enjoys most of the time. From this point of view, both madi and polé, both ritual purity and impurity, are deviations from the normal. Death-pollution is also an abnormal ritual condition, lasting only for a short period, comparatively speaking.

There is no term in Kodagi for normal ritual status. When Coorgs want to describe this condition they resort to the Kannada (and also Telugu) term mailige. It is interesting to note that the soiled clothes which a washerman takes away are mailige, and the clean clothes which he brings back are madi. The washerman himself is referred to as mailīvalī.

Ritual impurity, normal ritual status, and ritual purity form a hierarchy. If a person in an impure condition touches another in a
condition of either purity or normal ritual status, the latter becomes impure. If a person in a condition of normal ritual status touches another in a pure condition, the latter loses his purity and is reduced to normal ritual status. That is, normal ritual status is a mild form of impurity.

Tiké or death-pollution represents the highest degree of ritual impurity, polé or birth-pollution comes next, and maliqé or normal ritual status is the mildest form of ritual impurity. But maqi or ritual purity is of a different quality altogether, and contact with impurity in any form usually destroys it.

It has been mentioned earlier that there is an opposition between good-sacredness and bad-sacredness. This implies that maqi which is good-sacred and polé which is bad-sacred are opposed to each other. In concrete terms, a man who is in a condition of polé or tiké may not go to a ritually pure place like the temple and village green. Conversely, a person who is in a condition of maqi like the man who is chosen to cut ritually the paddy sheaves at the harvest festival may not come into contact with a man enjoying normal ritual status, still less with someone in a condition of polé. A person in maqi avoids a person in polé.

There are exceptions to this rule, however. Kailandira Appayya, the boy-hero who saved the honour of Kailandira, was showered with honours and privileges by a grateful nadi. One of the privileges permitted him to visit the temple even when he was suffering from polé. A similar privilege is even today enjoyed by the Bellatanda okka in the temple of Byturappa in north Malabar. Byturappa, a form of Shiva, is the patron-deity of a number of okkas in southwest Coorg. The Bellatanda okka have the special privilege of being able to send offerings to their patron-deity even while under polé. This is because a pregnant woman of the Bellatanda okka who was fleeing from Tippu’s troops sought and found sanctuary in the Byturappa temple. She gave birth to a boy in the temple and the boy spent sixteen years in the temple before returning to his okka in Coorg. There is thus a special bond between the Bellatanda okka

1 At the annual festival of the deity Kikkōt Achchayya, the Brahmin priest carrying the idol of the deity flies into the temple at the sight of the Bellatanda oracle. The Brahmin and the idol he carries would both be defiled if he did not do so.
and the deity Byturappa, and this is recognized in the fact that the former are permitted to send offerings even while under polé. Madí and polé are opposed to each other, and the normal relation between them is one of avoidance. But where very great solidarity is prevalent between two persons or parties, the existence of such opposition between madí and polé is overruled. In the folksongs there is an explicit recognition of the fact that the waiving of such opposition in certain special cases is a favour granted to a human being for certain reasons.

V

The ritual concepts of madí and polé are intimately related to the social structure. A member of a high caste is in a condition of madí in relation to a member of a low caste, and the latter is in a condition of polé in relation to the former. There is a ban on contact between castes belonging to different strata. It is interesting to note that when a low-caste man touches a high-caste man, the latter is defiled and the former is not purified. It is argued by some that this is a structural necessity as the essence of a stratified society consists in maintenance of the structural distance between various castes, and this distance would be destroyed if contact between two men belonging to different castes led to the lower being purified instead of the higher being defiled. This argument ignores that egalitarianism is reached not only when everyone attains purity but also when everyone is defiled. In any case, normally the change of ritual status consequent on members of different castes coming into contact with each other is only temporary. It does not lead to a permanent change of ritual status.\(^1\)

A high-caste man is no doubt in a condition of ritual purity in relation to a low-caste man. But considered by himself, his normal ritual status is mailigé, which is a mild form of impurity. He attains purity on certain occasions, and polé and tıké on certain other occasions. Similarly, the low-caste man, considered by himself, is mailigé normally, and polé and madí only occasionally.

One last point needs to be made before completing our account of the relation between polé and madí. The mourner who is in a condition of ritual impurity.

\(^1\) It is not always that a madí-object becomes defiled when it comes in contact with a polé-object; the sprinkling of consecrated water purifies a person or house in a condition of ritual impurity.
condition of tike, an extreme form of defilement, is required to perform certain rites. Usually these rites consist in the offering of food in one form or another to the spirit of the departed person. The mourner has to observe punctiliously a number of rules and restrictions while making these offerings: he has to have a bath in cold water, wear ritually pure robes, and observe a fast. He starts cooking his food only after he has made the ritual offerings for the day. Many kinds of food are prohibited to him during mourning, and he may have only one proper meal every day.

Conditions like a bath, the wearing of ritually pure robes, and the observance of a total fast till the completion of the ritual are also observed while performing good-sacred ritual. A person takes a bath and wears ritually pure robes before worshipping a deity. He breaks his fast only after the worship is over. While polê and maatı are normally mutually opposed, the mourner who is in a condition of tike fulfils the same preliminary ritual rules as the devotee about to pray. The mourner when offering food to the spirit of the dead person is inhabiting a world which is very far removed from that of the devotee about to pray. The former is living in a world of ritual impurity, whereas the latter is living in the world of ritual purity. But within the world of ritual impurity the mourner attains a form of ritual purity prior to performing the most important rites: in other words he attains maatı in polê.

The concepts of normal ritual status, pollution, and purity apply not only to Coorgs but to all castes, including Untouchables. An Untouchable, like any high-caste man, is normally mailigé, and only occasionally and for comparatively short periods is he maatı or polê. It should not be assumed that an Untouchable is in a permanent and unalterable condition of ritual impurity. While contact with an Untouchable always pollutes a high-caste marl, an Untouchable, considered by himself, is as subject to the various ritual states as any one else.

VI

A few words are necessary here on the length of the period of mourning. For everyone except the dead person’s spouse and eldest son, ritual mourning ends on the day the nūda ceremony is performed. Nowadays, nūda is usually performed on the twelfth day. But sometimes, in the case of a big headman or official, it is
performed on the sixteenth or twenty-eighth day. The length
of the mourning period is thus an index of the social importance
of the dead person. This statement receives additional support
from the fact that no ritual mourning is observed for an infant: only
the parents of the dead infant take a bath and change their robes
after the corpse has been buried. An elder, unlike an infant, is
socially important and has a voice in the affairs of hi- okka and
village. Ritual mourning is quite different from grief at the death of
the person in question. The parents of the infant might be steeped
in sorrow, while the death of a decrepit and senile elder might
actually mean very little grief. Still, in the former case no ritual
mourning is observed, whereas in the latter case it might be pro-
longed to the sixteenth or twenty-eighth day.

Elderly Coorgs say that mourning periods are becoming shorter,
and this is not surprising as the kin-groups are becoming smaller
and the old values are giving place to new ones. Formerly māḍa was
usually performed, for an elder, on the twenty-eighth day and not
on the sixteenth. Māḍam in Tamil means ‘month’, and there are
twenty-eight days in a lunar month.

As has already been mentioned, the performance of māḍa puts
an end to ritual mourning for all excepting the surviving spouse
and eldest son. These two have to observe ritual mourning until
they have performed dikkhe uttuva (untying of mourning), which
is usually a few weeks, if not months, after māḍa. Between māḍa
and dikkhe uttuva the two most important mourners do not perform
any rites, but merely observe some of the food taboos and wear
mourning dress.

Speaking very broadly, the length of the mourning period is an
index of the closeness of the bond prevailing between the dead
person and the mourners. This holds good for birth-pollution too;
while pollution ends for all relatives on the twelfth day, it ends for
the mother on the sixtieth day. The mother-child bond is the
closest of all kinship bonds, and this fact finds expression in the
mother being subject to birth-pollution longer than everybody
else.

VII

Senior relatives of the dead person do not play an active part in
ritual mourning. This does not, however, mean that they are
completely exempt from it, especially those who are members of the same house as the dead person. As members of the pollution house (tiké mante), they may not salute anyone, nor allow anyone to salute them. They may not go to a wedding or dance. In general senior relatives are not supposed to observe any food restrictions or wear a special mourning dress, but when they are members of the same house as the dead person they observe the food taboos, refrain from shaving, and wear only white. They have been classed as mourners of the third grade.

The widow or widower is the most important mourner among Coorgs, even more important than the eldest son of the dead person. The conjugal tie receives the maximum amount of emphasis: the surviving spouse has to be a mourner of the first grade except when prevented by serious illness. The eldest son, too, is usually a mourner of the first grade, though he does not seem to be as essential as the surviving spouse. It is interesting to note that a daughter may sometimes be called upon to be a mourner of the first grade.

The widower is usually senior to his dead wife except in the case of a leviratic marriage when he might be her junior. With the exception of the surviving spouse, all 'active mourners' are invariably the dead person's juniors. They are either mourners of the second or first grade. The Kodagi term for mourning of the second grade is mengate, which means 'standing apart', or 'not mixing', and for mourning of the first grade, kulik nippad, or 'standing for bathing'.

All juniors to the dead person in the okka of which the dead person was a member have to observe mourning of the third grade at least. Certain relatives, such as a married woman's younger brother and a man's married sister, are also required to observe mourning of the third grade even though they do not belong to the same okka as the dead person.

Formerly, a male and female member from the servant Poleya family observed mourning of the third grade for a dead member of their master's household. They observed all the food and dress restrictions which third-grade mourners observed, but they did not perform the rites which the Coorg mourners perform. The headman of the master okka gave the Poleya mourners mourning-dress to wear, and at the conclusion of mourning gave them provisions for a dinner, and a sari for the woman mourner, and cloth for a

1 The Poleya mourners had to be juniors to the dead person.
gown for the man mourner. Nowadays members of the servant family do not observe ritual mourning: the tie is not strong enough to express itself in ritual.

Mourners of the third grade have to abstain from meat, fish, mushrooms, liquor, honey, milk, and betel leaves and areca-nut.

The men are required to have their heads and faces shaved completely. They may not wear any jewellery, nor tie the red sash round their waists. They have to avoid wearing coloured garments, especially garments coloured red.

Women mourners of the third grade are required to remove their jewellery, except such as is symbolical of the married state. The widow of the dead man has to remove even that. Women mourners dress themselves in a white shoulder-cloth and waist-cloth. The upper ends of the former are tied in a knot at the chest.

It has been mentioned earlier that all men mourners indicate the beginning of mourning by having the head and face shaved on the morning following the disposal of the corpse. They may not have another shave till the mādu day, when ritual mourning ends for all except the first-grade mourners.

Nowadays mādu is performed usually on the twelfth day of death, and on this day, after the afternoon meal has been eaten by all the mourners, three men mourners have their faces shaved by the barber. This shave is one of the ritual acts marking the end of mourning and the resumption of normal social life by all except the first-grade mourners.

The men who are observing first-grade mourning have to wear either a white gown or a shoulder-cloth (tunr/u) and waist-cloth (munr/u). A mourner does not usually wear a gown nowadays, but if he wears one, he may not pass his right arm through the right arm of the gown.

Until the māda day, first-grade mourners take a cold-water bath every morning, after which they perform the rites prescribed for the day. They then start cooking their meal, which is done in the cattle-shed, or any other sheltered spot outside the main building. They may not have more than one meal per day, and they have to pay scrupulous attention to the various food restrictions. They are, however, allowed to eat a few fruits at night.

The surviving spouse has to observe more restrictions than other first-grade mourners. He (or she) may not sleep on a cot, or sit on a plank. He may not eat from a dining-dish (tali), but has to
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use a leaf instead. He may not ford a river. A silver chain is wound round his left wrist, and in his left hand he holds a knife.

The mëdda ceremony frees all mourners from ritual mourning, but not, however, the first-grade mourners, who are only freed at the dikshë uttwa ceremony, which is performed long after the mëdda. Until then, honey and milk may not be consumed, ornaments and coloured cloths may not be worn. A woman mourner has to wear the mourning uniform of white shoulder-cloth and waist-cloth. A man mourner may not have his face or head shaved.

VIII

The offer of food to the spirit of the departed person is a dominant motif in Coorg funeral ritual. When the corpse is still seated in the paved yard of the house, one of the mourners carries some cooked rice on a plantain leaf and places it at the bottom of the lane leading to the house. He also places on the plantain leaf a lighted cotton wick on a piece of coconut; this serves as a lamp. As he does this, double shots are fired from a gun. He salutes the leaf as he would a corpse, and other mourners follow him in saluting the food-offering and lamp.

The family friend places a food-bundle on the grave directly above the spot where the corpse’s head rests. In case of cremation, the bundle is placed at the spot where the head lay before cremation.

On the second, third, and fourth days, the first-grade mourners offer raw, uncooked rice to fish in a pond or lake, and this is called ‘water sacrifice’ (nîr beli). On the fifth, sixth, and seventh days, ‘shore sacrifice’ (káre beli) is performed: the first-grade mourners go to the pond or lake, and each of them cooks a little rice on an improvised stove on the edge of the pond or lake. No vessel may be used for cooking this rice. A flat bit of a broken pot is used instead. This rice is then removed on to a plantain leaf which is kept on a purified spot near the stove.

On the eighth, ninth, and tenth days food is offered to crows. A sacrificial post (bell mara) of wood is erected in the yard before the mourning-house. A plank is fixed horizontally to the top of the post. The dead person’s spouse cooks rice and prepares vegetable curry, and these are mixed and placed on a plantain leaf. The leaf is then kept on the plank on top of the post. As he (or she) keeps
this, he claps his hands and shouts 'kā, kā' (in imitation of the cawing of crows).

On the eleventh (pannand) day, each of the second-grade mourners attains partial freedom from mourning after he has offered rice mixed with ghī, curd, and plantain to the spirit of the departed person. The food is carried on a plantain leaf to the sacrificial post, where it is placed to be eaten by crows. As each of them comes into the house from the sacrificial post the family friend gives him (or her) a few betel leaves and areca-nut. The mourner chews the leaves and nut for a while, and then takes the chewed stuff out of his mouth and throws it on the roof. The chewing of the leaves and nut on the eleventh day is one of the ritual acts symbolizing the end of mourning.

On the māda day curried meat, rice, arrack, water, and betel leaves and areca-nut are offered to the dead person's spirit. A plantain leaf on which some curried meat and rice are heaped is placed at each of the three spots where the corpse was rested en route to the burial-ground. At the burial-ground itself the surviving spouse and two other mourners sprinkle water on the spot where the dead person was buried or cremated. Above the spot where the corpse's head rests are kept three leaves, each containing curried meat, and rice, and three leaf-cups (chalē) containing arrack, water, and betel and nut respectively. Each of the mourners takes a betel leaf and nut from the leaf-cup in which they are kept, and chews them.

Food is offered to the dead ancestors of the okka at the periodical ancestor-propitiations. It is also offered to them as a body on the last days of Taurus and Cancer, and on the tenth of Libra. Besides, at every festival celebrated in the house, food is offered to the ancestors before the members of the household sit down to their meal.

The idea of offering food and drink to the dead person has a very important place in funeral ritual. The departed ancestors of the okka are remembered constantly, and food and drink are offered to them. They are also saluted and prayed to every day.

IX

A village is in a condition of ritual purity during the festival of the main deity of the village, a festival which usually lasts nine or
eleven days, and sometimes even twenty-one days. No woman in her periods may stay in Bêngûr village during the festival of Kêtrappa. She has to leave the village at once and may return only on the eighteenth day, in the evening, after the shot has been fired freeing the village from the restrictions in force during the festival. Similarly, no Poleya may leave his hut and show himself to a member of a high caste during the first eighteen days of the festival. They are specially forbidden to show themselves to the festival-priests (kâvûkdras). The Poleyas are very greatly afraid of Kêtrappa, whom they call ‘big god’ (dôpô dêwaru), and it is believed that Kêtrappa will punish them if they show themselves to the villagers during the festival.

The festival of the village-deity usually includes a ceremony called tappadaka (enumeration of restrictions), in which all the adult villagers assemble together at the temple and take a vow to the effect that they will observe certain restrictions for the duration of the festival.

No villager may fire his gun during the festival nor may he kill an animal for his food. He is not permitted to break an egg or coconut, or prepare liquor or season his curries. He may not spread a mat or carpet on the benches in the veranda or hall.

Sometimes the villagers are permitted to import meat from another village, the prohibition being only on the animal being killed within the village. Even where such concessions are made to the ordinary villagers, the festival-priests are strictly enjoined to keep off even imported meat.

The festival-priests have to refrain from sexual intercourse during the festival. They are also enjoined not to touch the ordinary high-caste villager who, it must be remembered, is himself in a condition of ritual purity. Such contact defiles them for the rest of the day, and only a bath in cold water early next morning restores them to their condition of great ritual purity. There are different levels of ritual purity, and each level is impurity with reference to a higher level.

The festival-priests are much more important for the festival than ordinary villagers. They dress and worship the idol. Usually one or more of them are oracles of one or other of the deities in the village temple. Their duties require their being frequently very near the idols and other representations of the deities they
worship. Consequently, they have to be in a condition of great ritual purity. They have to observe more restrictions regarding food and other matters than ordinary villagers. The degree of ritual purity becomes, in this case, an index of the degree of concern in the festival. What is interesting to note is the widespread systematization of ‘concern’ in Coorg culture. The mother of the newly born infant has to observe pollution for a longer period than other relatives; and first-grade mourners have to observe mourning for a longer period than others. Not only the length of the period but also the number and character of the restrictions observed are used to mark off those with greater ‘concern’ in the event from those with less ‘concern’. The greater the ‘concern’ the greater the bond.

The festival of a village-deity usually includes a ritual fast or *patni*: a day towards the end of the festival is called ‘*patni* day’ and the villagers observe a ritual fast on this day. The fast day usually occurs before the festival (*namni*) day. The festival day is regarded as the most important day of the festival, elaborate ritual being performed on this day, at the end of which animals are sacrificed. The various restrictions observed during the festival are broken on the festival day, usually towards evening. A big feast follows, which includes meat dishes and liquor, prohibited until now.

A ritual fast does not necessarily mean actual abstention from food. Frequently a ritual fast means only abstention from everyday food, and that too interpreted very narrowly. For instance, cooked rice grains and vegetable curry are the normal food among Coorgs, and this is prohibited at a ritual fast. But while cooked rice grains are prohibited, dishes made with rice-flour are not.

On the fast day Coorgs miss a meal, instead of which they consume pancakes made of rice-flour, and *pañasa*, a sweet liquid dish made with split green gram. Pancakes and green gram *pañasa* are very commonly eaten during ritual fasts in the Tamil country.

Coorgs are forbidden to eat pancakes and green gram *pañasa* during weddings and while birth-and death-pollution last. As far as they are concerned this diet seems to be confined to the fast day during the festival of a village-deity. It is difficult to see the purpose of the fast day during the festival of a village-deity. While the observance of a ritual fast on the festival day til the rites are completed is understandable, a ritual fast on the day
before the festival day is not easy to understand, especially if the villagers are permitted to eat the normal festival diet on the morning of the festival day. The fast day seems to exist quite unrelated to the rest of the structure of the festival of a village-deity.¹

Some of the ritual acts performed and practices observed at mourning are obviously reversals or inversions of the acts and practices performed on good-sacred or auspicious occasions. For instance, the corpse is made to lie on a mat spread with the underside on top. It is true that like the subject of *mangala* the corpse is dressed in a white gown but the latter is reversed in some way: it is worn with the underside uppermost, or with the left end of the gown coming on top of the right end. On auspicious occasions the proper side has to be on top, and the right end should rest on top of the left.

After the corpse has been laid in the grave, the surviving spouse throws three handfuls of earth into the grave. He (or she) twists his (or her) hand (*terangai*) while throwing the earth into the grave. The eldest son and other relatives follow the surviving spouse. If the corpse is going to be cremated instead of being buried, the surviving spouse sets fire to the pyre by thrusting a firebrand into it. Again, he employs the twisted hand while setting fire to the pyre (*terangolli* = twisted firebrand).

In ritual circumambulation, movement in the clockwise direction is prescribed for auspicious occasions, while anti-clockwise movement is prescribed for inauspicious occasions. The groom goes round the sacred tripod stool clockwise. A devotee goes round the temple clockwise. But the mourners go round the funeral pyre in the anti-clockwise way. Similarly, the bier is thrice carried round the paved yard before the mourning-house, the bier-carriers moving anti-clockwise.

There is an interesting little problem here: while clockwise

¹ The restrictions observed during the village-deity’s festival vary from village to village. As regards the food restrictions observed on the fast day the general idea seems to be to avoid everyday diet and to starve oneself as far as possible. In some festivals only roots and boiled plantains are allowed. Steam-baked pudding (*nurti*), a favourite dish of Coorgs, is prohibited in some places. Green gram puliyosur (liquid dish) is generally allowed except in a few villages.
movement is restricted to auspicious occasions and anti-clockwise movement to inauspicious occasions, on both kinds of occasions the subject goes round thrice. That is to say, both the mourner as well as the groom goes round thrice. How is it that the principle of 'reversal' operates in some instances while 'identity' operates in some others? If the principle of 'reversal' had been consistently carried out in the above instance, the mourners should have gone round an even number of times.

White rice grains are used in auspicious ritual, whereas rice grains yellowed with turmeric powder are used in inauspicious ritual. This is not the same as 'reversal' though akin to it. It is called 'confinement' here: certain ritual acts are confined to mourning and they may not be performed on auspicious occasions.

A mango or pavili tree which is growing in the burial-ground, and green, is cut down for the funeral pyre. The entire tree has to be used for cremating the corpse. If a branch or twig remains over, a chicken is killed and cremated with it. It is inauspicious not to use up the entire tree. Similarly, if a grave which is being dug has to be abandoned and another has to be started, a chicken is buried in the former. Otherwise there will be another death in the house in the near future.

The leaves of the bainé palm (caryota urens) are associated with death: on the day before māḍa a pandal is put up before the mourning-house and the roof of the pandal is covered with bainé leaves. The corpse is fanned with a fan of bainé leaves. Again, when a man without relatives wants to have his obsequies performed during his lifetime alone, a pandal of bainé leaves is put up before his house.

While bainé leaves are used exclusively in funeral ritual, toddy is used on all kinds of ritual occasions. Systematization has not been carried to the extent of confining all products of the bainé palm to funeral ritual.

Rice yellowed with turmeric is sprinkled all along the way from the mourning-house to the place where the corpse is buried. Usually a man sprinkles the rice with his hands as he accompanies the funeral procession to the burial-ground. Sometimes, however, the rice is put into a bag and loaded on a pack-bullock. Two tiny holes are bored in this bag and the bullock is driven behind the corpse to the burial-ground. The bullock may not be used for any other purpose subsequently.
On the day before māda, first-grade mourners offer to the spirit of the dead person rice mixed with curd, plantain, and ghi. A quantity of this mixture is carried by him to the 'sacrificial post' in front of the mourning-house and placed on the plank on top of the post. After crows have consumed the offerings, the family friend kicks the post away. On the next morning he cuts it down with an axe. The first-grade mourners pull down the stoves they had erected to cook their food.

In the above ritual is seen the destruction of articles used in mourning ritual, and the purpose of such destruction is to ensure their 'confinement' to mourning. Things associated with bad-sacredness and pollution themselves become bad-sacred and polluted. Consequently, they have to be destroyed.

'Inversion' and 'confinement' underlie more funeral rites than 'identity'. But it is important to note that 'identity' also exists. For instance, the corpse, which is ritually impure, is made to lie on a pure bench in the central hall. Besides, its head is made to touch the south-western pillar.

Almost every Coorg adult chews betel leaves and areca-nut, and addicts chew all day. Lime paste is spread over the rough side of the leaf and the leaf is put into the mouth along with small bits of areca-nut. Frequently bits of catechu and tobacco are chewed along with betel leaves and areca-nut.

At night, after dinner, the men chew betel leaves in the veranda, and the women in one of the inner rooms. A man or woman looks forward to this part of the day: there is no more work to be done and everyone is at leisure. Talk flows freely.

The chewing of betel leaves is also intimately associated with married life. The husband and wife frequently chew betel together. The wife applies the paste, folds the leaf, and gives it to her husband. Until recently, among the upper castes in south India, unmarried boys and girls were told to keep away from betel leaves and areca-nut. Indulgence in betel leaves was a symbol of the married state.

Guests are offered betel leaves and areca-nut both to chew and to carry home. Failure to offer betel leaves to a guest would almost amount to an insult.
Betel leaves and areca-nut are indispensable on any ritual occasion. They must accompany every ritual gift or payment, whether it is made to another person or spirit or deity.

The chewing of betel leaves represents full participation in social life as well as a happy state. Mourners who have been withdrawn from participation in social life have to abstain from betel leaves, and the ritual chewing of betel leaves is one of the symbols of the end of mourning.

On the twelfth day, at the burial-ground, mourners offer the dead man's spirit betel leaves and areca-nut along with meat and liquor. Each of them then takes a betel leaf and areca-nut out of the leaf-cup in which they are placed and chews them. When they come home the family friend hands to each of them a few betel leaves and areca-nut which they chew for a while, and then take the chewed stuff out of their mouths and throw it on to the roof of the mourning-house. This is one of the ritual acts symbolizing the end of mourning.

It is pertinent to recall here that the second-grade mourners are given betel leaves and areca-nut on the eleventh day alone after the performance of a particular rite called mënguva. The first-grade mourners perform the latter rite on the day before mëda, but they are not given betel leaves and areca-nut to chew at the end of it as the most rigorous part of mourning ends for them only on the mëda day, after returning home from the burial-ground. It is appropriate then that they should not be given betel leaves and areca-nut till the mëda day.

A relative who chewed betel leaves during mourning would be regarded as lacking in affection towards the dead person, if not actually gloating over his death. It is not very easy to hide the chewing of betel as the mouth and lips become very red after chewing.

It has already been mentioned that there is a great difference, if not opposition, between the ritual treatment of the mourners and the corpse. Things forbidden to the mourners are offered to the spirit of the dead person. For instance, while mourners have to abstain from meat, liquor, and betel and nut, the spirit of the dead man is offered these articles. The mourners have to show their sorrow by abstaining from dietary articles which have come to stand for happiness or wealth or participation in social life. While the mourner denies to himself things that he likes or values, he offers them to the dead man's spirit to show his affection and
regard. While the mourner abstains from chewing betel leaves, a paste made by pounding betel leaves and areca-nut together is put into the corpse’s mouth. Later, the dead person’s spirit is offered betel leaves and areca-nut.

If the ritual chewing of betel leaves takes place earlier than the mūda day, the chewing only confers partial freedom on the mourners. The third- and second-grade mourners are completely freed from ritual mourning only after the mūda day, while the first-grade mourners are freed only after performing the dikshē uttua ritual, several days, if not weeks, after the mūda. The latter may chew betel leaves after mūda, but they have to observe certain other mourning taboos till they perform the dikshē uttua ritual.

XII

The dikshē uttua ritual consists in the offer of pīṃja, or balls of rice or rice-flour, to the spirit of the departed person. The offerings are made under the guidance of a Brahmin at a centre of pilgrimage. The dikshē uttua ritual is frequently performed on the first of Libra, or on the Shivarātrī day. The former occurs in October-November, the latter in February-March. On both these days, which are regarded as sacred, people go on pilgrimages to various places along the course of the river Kāvēri, and especially to the source of the river, Tala Kāvēri.

The first of Libra and Shivarātrī are not, however, the only occasions for the performance of dikshē uttua. It may be performed on a new-moon day. Generally, first-grade mourners perform dikshē uttua after the lapse of what is considered to be a ‘decent interval’.

Formerly, first-grade mourners sometimes observed ritual mourning for as long as six months before performing dikshē uttua. This very rarely happens nowadays. The present tendency is to cut short the mourning period, but even now anyone who performed dikshē uttua before a month had elapsed after the death would be regarded as either wanting in affection or extremely Westernized, or both.

The first-grade mourners go to Bhāgamanḍla, where the river Kanakē joins the Kāvēri. The men mourners have their heads and faces shaved completely, after which they bathe in the confluence. They then dress themselves in the mourning uniform of white
shoulder-cloth and waist-cloth. Women mourners similarly bathe and put on ritual robes.

Each of the first-grade mourners then offers a ball of rice-flour mixed with plantain fruit, honey, and a small quantity of gugelley grains. The ingredients of this offering are sold near by, and they are mixed and offered to the spirit of the dead relative under the guidance of a Brahmin priest who is paid a fee for his services.

The performance of dikshê utulva restores first-grade mourners to normal ritual status. Until then they are ritually impure, though this impurity is not as great as that which prevailed until the performance of mäde, which puts an end to the mourning of all except the first-grade mourners.

The mourners then go to the temple of Bhagandâshwara and offer worship there. This is followed by a visit to the source of the river Kâvëri at the top of the Brahmagiri mountain. The river rises in two small perennial springs, after which it disappears underground for some distance to re-emerge near Bhâgavânâlî. One of the springs is larger than the other, and the mourners bathe in the larger spring, after which they offer worship to the very sacred smaller spring. The priests of these springs are Brahmans who live near by. Frequently a tiny representation (dï rîpa—man form) of the dead person embossed on a thin sheet of silver is dropped into the smaller spring. (It is in the smaller spring that the Kâvëri is annually reborn on the first of Libra, at the moment of the sun’s transition from Virgo to Libra. Thousands of pilgrims from all parts of south India go to the source of the river to witness the annual rebirth.)

The Coorg custom of terminating mourning at a centre of pilgrimage is a general Hindu custom. It is one of the numerous points where Coorgs touch the general Hindu ritual idiom. Every caste, sect, and tribe touches the general Hindu ritual idiom at varying numbers of points, but some part, small or large, of the ritual idiom of each group has a more restricted spread. The number of points where the ritual idiom of a local group touches the general Hindu ritual idiom has a tendency to increase with time.
The okka, or the patrilineal and patrilocal joint family, is the basic group among Coorgs. It is impossible to imagine a Coorg apart from the okka of which he is a member. It affects his life at every point and colours all his relations with the outside world. People who do not belong to an okka have no social existence at all, and the elders always bring pressure on the parties concerned to see that children born out of wedlock obtain membership in their father’s or mother’s okka.

Membership of an okka is acquired by birth, and the outside world always identifies a man with his okka. His association with his okka does not cease even after death, because he then becomes one of a body of apotheosized ancestors (kranavala) who are believed to look after the okka of which they were members when alive. The ancestors are worshipped, and offerings of food and drink (bharavi) are occasionally made to them.

Formerly the boys in an okka, all sons of agnatically related males, grazed the okka’s cattle together, hunted birds, and played games. When they grew up, all of them jointly looked after the ancestral estate under the guidance of the head of the okka.

Membership of an okka determines to a very large extent the choice of a spouse. First of all, marital relations are forbidden between members of the same okka. Where agnation overflows the okka, the taboo extends to agnatic relatives who are not members of the okka. Again, children of sisters may not intermarry.

The ancestral, immovable property of an okka was formerly regarded as impartible. It usually descended from one generation of agnatically related males to another without being split up in the process. Partition did, however, occur when every adult member of the okka wanted it. But such cases were unusual—at least that is what one is told. Both the difficulty of partition and the preference for leviratic unions added to the strength of the okka.
Offices like the headmanship of a village or nad or temple were hereditary in certain okkas. The eldest member of the senior agnatic branch succeeded to the office in question.

Every high-caste okka has to send at least one man and one woman to a wedding, festival, or a common village task like repairing a road, or weeding a temple compound; and all the adult males in an okka are required to attend a village dance or hunt. A defaulting okka is fined.

The members of an okka have to live together from birth till death. They are bound together by numerous strong ties, and they co-operate in performing common tasks. After death, they become ancestors who continue to show an interest in their okka and demand propitiation from their descendants. The okka is something very much more than the group of living members in it at any given moment. It is a continuum through time, and the body of living members at any particular moment form only points on it.

Coorgs themselves clearly state that the okka has a longer life than its members. They are also aware that an individual lives, in a social sense, as long as his okka. There is a great desire for the continuance of the okka, and there is no greater calamity than its extinction. When an okka is threatened with extinction certain traditional devices are resorted to perpetuate it.

The ancestral house and estate are sacred, and even today a Coorg likes to have a wedding or funeral performed in the ancestral house. The unity and solidarity of an okka find expression in ritual. Its strength is projected to the 'mystical' plane.

An individual is normally identified with his okka, but such identification of the individual with his okka is in extra-okka contexts, and it does not at all mean that the okka in question is undivided from within. Normally the elementary families inside an okka are potential groups of fission. The principles of segregation of the sexes and the unity of the members of a generation which run right through Coorg society are also at work inside the okka, uniting some members against the others. There are also tensions between individuals, especially among the women members.

Every Coorg okka is bound by the ties of friendship (aruwane) to another neighbouring Coorg okka. This is a traditional relationship between two neighbouring Coorg okkas, and it involves certain ritual and social duties. It is frequently mutual, and affinal relations between the two friendly okkas are common.
Formerly every Coorg okka had one or more Poleya or other low-caste families attached to it as slaves. This was again an hereditary relationship, and between families and not between individuals.

In Coorg the agnatically related males form a corporate body enjoying the bulk of the rights in the okka. Men, thanks to patri locality, are assured of continuous residence in the okka to which they belong, whereas the women have to leave their natal okka on marriage and become members of their conjugal okka. The men have a sense of belonging to the okka which is absent in all but the oldest women. A girl has to leave her natal okka on marriage, and this break in residential continuity is an important factor having legal and other consequences. It takes a long time for her to be accepted into her conjugal okka: only when her children are grown up does she have the assured sense of belonging to her conjugal okka.

Sons are the comfort and hope of parents. They are the pillars of the okka. They are the means by which the okka continues to exist, and the continuity of the okka is a matter of the most profound concern to the members. Daughters are destined to leave their natal okkas and the children that are born to them enrich and perpetuate a different okka.

A woman is not a member of an okka in the sense a man is, and the legal rights she enjoys are always inferior to a man’s. There are compensations, however. A man enjoys his legal rights in one okka, whereas a woman enjoys hers in two, her natal and conjugal okkas. A girl is maintained in her natal okka till her marriage, or throughout her life if she decides to be a spinster. She has the right to return to her natal okka if, for example, her husband is impotent, or suffers from an incurable illness, or if her mother-in-law does not treat her properly. She has a right to return to her natal okka if she is divorced, assuming of course that she had not been divorced for a serious offence such as adultery with an Untouchable. Should she be guilty of such an offence she is thrown out of caste irrevocably and this means that she loses her rights in both her natal and her conjugal okkas.

At marriage her relatives give her gifts of jewellery, clothes, and

1 Cross-cousin marriage makes it easier for the girl to be absorbed into her conjugal okka.
THE CULT OF THE OKKA

vessels. These remain her property, and in the event of her divorce she brings them back to her natal okka.

A person's rights in his or her okka are represented by twelve pebbles, euphemistically called 'twelve pieces of gold' (panuaran-daechhi pott). At marriage a girl loses most of her rights in her natal okka and obtains them in her conjugal okka instead. The bride's family friend transfers eleven pebbles to the groom's family friend. Eleven pebbles are transferred and not twelve. One pebble is retained by the girl's natal okka and this is because the bride retains some rights in her natal okka. She never loses them entirely. She has always a home from home. Her natal home is called tā manē (mother's home?), and a woman always feels tenderly towards it.

A woman has a right to be maintained out of the funds of her conjugal okka. She is expected to do her share of domestic work under the guidance of the mistress of the house (manipanikērī). Not infrequently the mistress of the house is also her mother-in-law.

A woman is entitled to cultivate a patch of ground for ginger and turmeric, and to raise fowl and pigs, and the income from their sale is entirely her property which she may hold even against her husband or children. But she may work on this patch only after doing her share of domestic work for the day. The preference for leviratic unions helped in the assimilation of a woman with her conjugal family. The Coorg saw, 'I will not come down the steps I have climbed up', refers to the fact that once a girl entered her conjugal home she usually stayed there for good, marrying one of the brothers of the husband in the event of the death of the latter. A girl on marriage becomes a member of her husband's okka and widowhood by itself does not alter her legal status. She continues to be a member of her conjugal okka. In fact, if there are no heirs to her dead husband's okka she might be called upon to raise up seed for it by entering into 'okka pariţē' or 'makka pariţē' alliance. She is not permitted, however, to raise up seed for her natal okka. There was an instance of this in Nālknād many years ago and it resulted in bitter hostility between the widow's natal and conjugal okkas.

Rights in a joint family are referred to as sammanda, and sam-

1 Similarly, in the non-paddy season, men could cultivate small patches of land for ginger and turmeric. But they could only attend to them after they had done their share of the day's work on the ancestral estate.
manda may be conferred or withdrawn. At marriage the bride acquires rights in the groom's house, and this is referred to as the 'giving of sammanda'. Sammanda refers to the legal aspect of marriage, whereas mūtra refers to the solidarity aspect of it. These two together make up marriage. Mūtra has already been discussed at considerable length, and sammanda will be considered now.

III

The rights of membership in the groom's okka are conferred on the bride at the ritual of sammanda. The term sammanda is used both to indicate the rights of membership in an okka as well as the ritual in which such rights are conferred or withdrawn. The Koḍagi term is a corruption of the Sanskrit sanbandha which means, 'connexion, relation, connexion by marriage, matrimonial alliance, relationship, friendship, intimacy, kinsman, friend, ally'.¹

Usually, when a person acquires rights of membership in one okka, he (or she) by implication loses rights in another okka, even though such loss of rights may not be either complete or irrevocable. At an ordinary marriage, for instance, the sammanda ritual only confers rights on the bride in the groom's okka, but this acquisition of rights in another okka implies that the bride loses most of her rights in her natal okka. When a wife is divorced, the sammanda ritual that is performed severs the divorcée from her conjugal okka and she automatically reverts to her natal okka. In the case of a widow who wants to marry someone who is not a member of her late husband's okka, sammanda is first of all performed severing her connexion with her late husband's okka. On such ritual severance, she reverts to her natal okka, and sammanda is again performed, conferring on her rights in her new husband's okka. Between the loss of rights in her late husband's okka and the acquisition of rights in her new husband's okka, she is a member of her natal okka.

The two most important parts of marriage ritual are mūtra (part of mangala) and sammanda. There are three mūtras in an ordinary marriage, two of which give expression to the solidarity prevalent between the groom or bride and his or her kindred respectively. In the third mūtra the creation of the new bond between the bride

and groom is recognized by the groom’s kindred expressing their solidarity with the bride and the bride’s kindred with the groom. The two groups of kindred are brought together by the acquisition of two objects of common interest.

While the murta part of marriage refers to the creation of a new bond between two individuals and the kin-groups in which each of them is born, sammanda defines and clarifies the new structural situation which has come into existence. It brings home to the participants that a new legal situation has arisen, that an individual has been transferred from one okka to another. Sammanda ritual is performed whenever such a structural and legal alteration is brought about. (See ‘Table of Sammanda Rights’ on pp. 173-5.)

1. The sammanda ritual performed at kanni mangala (‘marriage of a virgin’), which is, incidentally, the most frequent type of marriage performed, confers on the bride rights of membership in the groom’s okka.

2. (a) When a widow wants to marry a brother of the late husband, no fresh sammanda need be performed as no new legal situation has come into existence. The girl is a member of the second husband’s okka even before marriage and she continues to be one after marriage.

When a girl marries in the kanni mangala way she acquires rights of membership in the okka of her husband. This is a simple enough fact, but in recent years the acquisition of property by individuals for themselves and not for their okkas has confused the issue. A few educated Coorgs have tried to maintain that a girl, on marriage, acquires only a share in her husband’s share of the ancestral property, and consequently, when a widow marries the husband’s younger brother, a fresh sammanda has to be performed. This is absurd. The whole idea of individual ownership of immovable property is recent in Coorg, and even more important is the fact that sammanda is more than the acquisition of rights in property. It is the acquisition of membership in an okka, with all its consequences, social, economic, legal, and ritual.

(b) When a widow wants to marry someone who is not a member of her late husband’s okka, she is first of all made to sever her connexion with it, and such severance restores her to her natal okka. She is then given sammanda in her second husband’s house.

(c) The children of the widow are (usually) members of their
father's okka except in certain cases which will be mentioned presently.

3. When a woman is divorced she loses her membership in her conjugal okka and reverts to her natal okka. Such reversion is automatic and not conditional upon the unanimous consent of the members of her natal okka. But if a woman has been divorced for a grave offence, her natal okka might decide to have nothing to do with her.

4. Children of unsanctioned unions are referred to as mai kenat makka and they do not enjoy membership of their father's okka as legitimate children do. In fact, they are not members of any okka. Usually, however, elders bring pressure on the lover's kindred to the grant of membership for the children in the lover's okka. But if this is impossible, the children are made members of their mother's natal okka.

If the children of an unsanctioned union and their mother are given membership in the lover's okka while both the woman and her lover are still alive it is called bendu (relative) pariţê. If, however, the father dies before the children and their mother have been given sammanda in his okka, then the elders try to see that sammanda is given at least before the corpse is disposed of. Such a belated granting of membership is called kutta (funeral pyre) pariţê. This enables the widow to take part in the funeral rites.

5. A boy from outside is adopted when there are no agnatic descendants in an okka. Sammanda is performed, giving the boy in question membership of the heirless okka.

6. Adoption is not, however, necessary if there is an unmarried girl (or even the widow of a dead member) in the okka without an heir. The girl is then married according to the custom of okka pariţê by which the children of the marriage become members of their mother's natal okka. The man himself ceases to be a member of his natal okka and becomes instead a member of his wife's natal okka.

The institution of makka (children) pariţê is resorted to when it is impossible to find a man willing to leave his natal okka and become a member of the heirless okka. Makka pariţê is a sanctioned union between the daughter of the heirless okka and a man who, while remaining a member of his natal okka and performing his duties by it, also agrees to raise up seed for the heirless okka. He usually stays in his natal home and visits his makka pariţê 'wife' only occasionally. The children of this alliance are members of their
mother's okka. It is usual for the makka parițe 'husband' to have a wife married to him in the normal way and living with him in his natal home. The children of the latter union, unlike the children of makka parițe alliance, belong to their father's okka. Thus the makka parițe husband remains a member of his natal okka with a wife living with him, and in addition to this he undertakes to raise up seed for another okka which has no male heirs, but has instead only an unmarried girl. He only occasionally visits his makka parițe wife. Makka parițe has the sanction of custom behind it and it has to be distinguished clearly from extra-marital alliances which are disapproved.

7. Children normally and usually belong to their father's okka. Consequently the children of a divorcée, or a widow who wants to marry someone not belonging to her late husband's okka, do not follow their mother but continue to remain in their natal home. In certain exceptional circumstances, however, the children of a widow or divorcée are allowed to become members of their mother's natal okka. The unanimous consent of the children's natal okka as well as that of their mother's natal okka is required in order to effect the transfer. If such consent is forthcoming from both sides the children's rights in their natal okka are ritually severed, after which they are given sammanda in their mother's natal okka. The marriage of the widow or divorcée subsequent to the children being given sammanda in her natal okka does not affect their legal status. They do not follow the mother into her new husband's okka. This would again require the unanimous consent of the members of the mother's natal okka and her new husband's okka.

Rights of membership in an okka are an extremely important matter affecting all the members in a variety of ways, social, economic, legal, and ritual. Both the loss as well as the acquisition of a member make a profound difference in the day-to-day interrelations of members. The granting of membership and the loss of membership both become subject to sammanda ritual. Sammanda dramatically brings home to the parties concerned the implications of granting or withdrawing membership. As sammanda is a public occasion, the parties concerned in it will not be able to go back on it at a future date. The ritual that surrounds the giving or withdrawal of sammanda rights brings ritual sanctions into operation.
The most frequent form of marriage is ‘the marriage of a virgin’ (kanni mangala), in which the bride leaves her natal okka and becomes a member of the groom’s okka. Sammanda ritual effects the transference of the bride to the groom’s okka and makes clear the legal implications of marriage to everyone concerned.

The sammanda ritual is performed at the entrance to the kitchen of the bride’s ancestral house. The bride stands inside the kitchen while the groom stands outside, with the threshold in between them. The bride’s family friend and two of her kinsmen stand on one side of the groom, while the latter’s family friend, and two of his kinsmen stand on the other side. The other relatives and guests watch the proceedings from a distance. The family friends utter the traditional sammanda formulas.

I give below a free translation of the Kodagi text, and I should like to stress the fact that there is some elasticity in the formulae uttered.

Bride’s Family Friend: ‘The people of both the nulis, men of the house, relatives and family friend, are they all standing in rows?’

Groom’s Family Friend: ‘They stand.’

Bride’s Family Friend: ‘To the girl Parvati of Nuchchimane­yanada okka whom we are about to give in marriage to the youth Muttanqa of the Malehira okka, will you give the girl sammanda (rights) in the property of the groom’s okka? Will you give her rights in the Malehira okka’s land which yields a thousand bhattis¹ of paddy, in the ten kanças² of pasture, in the cattle-stand, in the ten pairs of bullocks, in the house, in the garden, in the ten milch cows, in the bamboo receptacle used for milking, in the cattle-shed where the cattle are herded, in the paddy-flat,³ in the ridges of the paddy-flat, in the manure-heap, in the land which has silted up, in the paddy-field encroached upon by neighbours, in the runaway servant, in the elephant on heat, in the axe which, swinging, they cut, in the knife which, lifting, they cut, in the paddy in the granary, in the two-seer measure used for measuring paddy, in the seer-

¹ The term ‘aivar bhatti bhāmint’, or ‘land which yields 1,000 bhattis of paddy is a conventional term and only means that the groom’s okka is rich.’
² A kança is a plot of land of a certain size.
³ Rice is cultivated usually in small ridged-up flats or plots. It is very necessary at various stages in its cultivation to stand water for days, if not weeks, in the flats.
measure used for measuring rice, in the bell metal dish leaning against the wall, in the wall-lamp, in the stock of salt, in the kitchen stove, in the buried treasure, in the stock of thread, in the piece of cloth used for extracting thread, in the piece of iron used for making needles, in the tiny chandekka\(^1\) fruit, and in brief, in everything from one to one hundred, will you give her rights (sammanda)?'

Groom's Family Friend: 'We give.'

Bride's Family Friend: 'On the marriage of our child into your okka our servants will carry on their heads goods worth a thousand birdas\(^2\) in a box worth five hundred birdas. If this goes, who is the family friend to be held responsible for the loss?'

Groom's Family Friend: 'I.'

Bride's Family Friend: 'Who are you?'

Groom's Family Friend: 'I belong to Chiranda okka, and I am the family friend of Malehira okka.'

Bride's Family Friend: 'Are you the family friend attached to their soil (manjarava), or have you been hired with gold for the occasion (ponnarava) ?'

Groom's Family Friend: 'I am both the traditional family friend and the family friend hired with gold for the occasion.'

Bride's Family Friend: 'Here, take these twelve pieces of gold.'

'Pieces of gold' is only a euphemism, however: the groom's family friend is actually given pebbles. He is given only eleven pebbles, one pebble being retained as already mentioned.

Groom's Family Friend: 'I have received eleven pieces of gold. If your innocent child, the girl who is married to our boy, complains that the rice is too hot, or that the curry is too pungent, or that her father-in-law is abusive, or that her mother-in-law is niggardly, or that her Husband is impotent, or that she cannot stay in her husband's house, or that her husband’s people are poor, and thus complaining, she goes back to her natal okka and sits there, who is the person to be held responsible for telling her what is right and repairing the wrong, and for providing us (who have gone to fetch her), for our return journey, with servants for company and torches to light our way?'

\(^1\) Chundekka is a tiny fruit growing on a bushy plant used for hedging. It is a vegetable, and in the above context it means a thing of small value, or a contemptible thing.

\(^2\) Birin is a corruption of varaha, an ancient Indian coin worth about Rs. 3.50.
Bride's Family Friend: 'I.'
Groom's Family Friend: 'Who are you?'
Bride's Family Friend: 'I belong to Appachettolaand okka, and I am the family friend of Nuchchimanyanda okka.'
Groom's Family Friend: 'Are you the traditional family friend, or have you been hired with gold for the present occasion?'
Bride's Family Friend: 'Both.'
Groom's Family Friend: 'Here, take witness-money.' He pays a paga to the bride's family friend.
Bride's Family Friend: 'If our young girl comes upon some misfortune, who is the family friend to be held responsible for sending her to her natal okka with servants for company and torches for the road?'
Groom's Family Friend: 'I.'
Bride's Family Friend: 'Here, take witness-money.'
He pays a paga to the groom's family friend.
The ritual of sammanda is now over.

The transfer of pebbles is an essential part of sammanda. According to an old saying, 'the weight of a person in gold is twelve pieces' (ponnu tuka manushya pannaranjachchi). The totality of rights which a person has in the okka of which he is a member is represented by twelve pebbles referred to as 'pieces of gold'. At marriage the bride's family friend gives eleven pebbles to the groom's family friend as most of the rights which the bride had in her natal okka have been given up and acquired in the groom's okka instead. One pebble is retained because the bride's connexion with her natal okka is too deep and fundamental to be totally destroyed. In fact, if the bride happens to be divorced later, she has a right to return to her natal home. As the old saying has it, 'when a girl falls upon evil days, she goes back to her natal home'.

Some Coorgs have taken the theory of the estimation of the value of the rights of a person in his (or her) okka rather literally. They argue that each 'piece of gold' represents the traditional estimate of the price of a part of the ancestral property and at the marriage of a virgin the bride's relatives buy up her rights in her natal okka and pay her the price. The bride buys herself membership of the groom's okka with the money she has acquired.
Pieces of gold do not seem to have been used in the past instead of pebbles. The use of pebbles is clearly symbolic and it enables the persons concerned to understand the legal implications of marriage.

The groom’s family friend who receives the eleven pebbles hands them over to the matron of honour who ties them up in a bundle. She ties the bundle to the frontal breast-knot (molekali) of the bride. Just before the bride leaves for the groom’s house this bundle is put into the box containing the bride’s trousseau.

Nowadays it is not usual for the pebbles to be kept for any length of time. Neither do Coorgs regard these pebbles as sacred. But elderly informants consider that the pebbles ought to be kept in the groom’s house and returned in the event of divorce or widowhood.

When a woman is returning to her natal okka on being divorced, or when a widow is returning to her natal okka preparatory to marrying someone who is not a member of her late husband’s okka, the divorcée’s or widow’s connexion with her conjugal okka is ritually severed. This is referred to as ‘giving up the pebbles (kallumbara kaipa).’ The bride’s family friend and groom’s family friend break the connexion in set formulas which are the same as those used in marriage but for certain necessary alterations.

In the sammanda ritual performed at the ‘marriage of a virgin’, the emphasis is on the fact of the bride obtaining rights in the groom’s okka, and not on her losing her rights in her natal okka. When a widow or divorcée is returning to her natal okka, the sammanda ritual that is performed severs her connexion with her conjugal okka. In both cases, however, the loss of membership of an okka is accompanied by gaining membership of another. The difference in emphasis however leads to the one being described as the ‘confering of sammanda’ and the other as the ‘giving up of pebbles’.

Children normally belong to their father’s okka, and they remain in their natal home even when their mother leaves her conjugal house on widowhood or divorce. Very young children, however, accompany their mother to her natal or new home, but they return to their father’s house on attaining their third or fourth year.

1 The same ceremony is also referred to as ‘kal mara kaipa’, i.e. ‘giving up stone and tree’. Stone and tree are said to stand for the estate of the okka in question. See N. Chinnappa, op. cit., p. 508.
When a divorcee (or widow who is remarrying into a different okka from her late husband’s) is given permission to visit her children in their father’s house, the eleven pebbles are not returned by the first husband’s family friend to the family friend of her natal okka. Her connexion with her conjugal house is, however, ritually severed with the usual formulas.

In some rare cases the children of a widow or divorcée are given rights in their mother’s natal okka. In such a case the rights which the children have in their father’s okka are ritually given up before they are acquired in their mother’s natal okka. The pebbles are transferred from the family friend of the children’s father’s okka to the family friend of their mother’s natal okka. The adopted son similarly loses his membership of his natal okka and acquires membership of the adoptive okka. The okka parijé husband also transfers himself from his natal okka to his conjugal okka. Pebbles are transferred in both the above instances.

The conferment as well as withdrawal of membership has important results on the relations of the various members towards each other. The ritual brings home to those present the meaning of what is taking place. Publicity is ensured by the presence of a few local and caste elders in addition to the representatives of the okkas concerned. Such publicity gives the event a certain finality. Lastly, as the ritual takes place in a very sacred part of the ancestral house, before the domestic deities and ancestors, solemnity is added to the occasion which is also invested with ritual sanctions.

Sammanda constitutes the legal part of marriage; for instance, the bride will become a widow if the groom dies after sammanda, whereas his death before sammanda would not have such an effect on her.

It is usual for a Coorg widow to remarry. If, however, she is past middle age and has grown-up children, she does not remarry, but continues to stay in her late husband’s house looking after her children.

A widow who wishes to remarry might marry either a brother, real or classificatory, of the late husband, or a total stranger. As mentioned earlier, there is a preference for leviratic unions among Coorgs, and where it is possible, a widow marries someone who is
not only related as brother to her late husband, but also belongs to the same okka as him. In the latter event, no new sammanda is necessary.

The ritual conferment of membership has been described earlier, and consequently only the ritual withdrawal of membership will be described here. Set formulas very similar to those used for conferment of membership are used at the withdrawal.

The ritual is performed in the central hall of the late (or divorced) husband's house. Two kinsmen of the widow (or divorcée) and the family friend of her natal okka stand in a row facing two kinsmen of the dead (or divorced) husband, and the family friend of his okka. The articles which the widow (or divorcée) brought with her to her conjugal house are kept in the central hall in the boxes in which they were brought at the wedding. The presence of the widow or divorcée herself is not deemed necessary.

The widow's family friend opens the proceedings by asking the late husband's family friend whether all the concerned men are present, and the late husband's family friend replies in the affirmative.

Widow's Family Friend: 'Muthamma of such-and-such an okka married Ponnappa of such-and-such an okka. Ponnappa was short-lived. Owing to Muthamma's evil destiny, she was not permitted the good fortune of living together with her husband for a long time. We will now take back your girl Muthamma according to the adage, "when a girl comes upon evil days, she goes back to her natal okka".'

Late Husband's Family Friend: 'Yes, that is according to old usage.'

Widow's Family Friend: 'When Muthamma married Ponnappa, her servants carried on their heads goods worth a thousand birais in boxes worth five hundred birais. Whatever goods now remain, after having been eaten and worn, may I take them back?'

Late Husband's Family Friend: 'Yes, that is according to old usage.'

Widow's Family Friend: 'Here, take witness-money.'

Late Husband's Family Friend: 'I have received it. When Muthamma married Ponnappa she was given membership of Ponnappa's okka. She lost membership of her natal okka and you gave us eleven pieces of gold on that occasion which we now return.'
He returns eleven pebbles to the widow’s family friend.

Widow’s Family Friend: ‘I have received them.’

Late Husband’s Family Friend: ‘Here, take witness-money.’

Widow’s Family Friend: ‘I have received it.’

The goods which the bride, now widowed, brought into her conjugal house are then removed to the veranda. The widow’s family friend selects two or three pieces of cloth from the widow’s possessions and puts them into a box. He carries the box into the central hall and says, ‘Since our girl ate here we should like to leave this box here’. The elders of the late husband’s okka are theoretically free to accept or reject this gift. But in practice a definite sentiment seems to exist against its acceptance.¹

VII

Coorg marriages are very stable, and divorce is not at all common. In fact, an exceptionally able and well-informed elder could not recall more than seven cases of divorce in the last fifty years. The most frequent ground for divorce seems to be adultery on the wife’s part. Incompatibility between the husband and wife, impotence of the husband, cruelty, and lack of thrift on the wife’s part are also grounds for divorce, though these seem to have been very rare. A wife was expected to obey the husband in most matters, and she worked under the supervision of the mistress of the house in matters of domestic economy, and consequently incompatibility and lack of thrift became significant only in rare cases.

Where a Coorg woman committed adultery with a member of an Untouchable caste she was summarily thrown out of caste. Adultery with a Coorg man was not as serious a matter, but still far from trivial. In the latter case, her husband was certain to turn her out of his house and her natal okka would be not at all friendly to her. If, however, her parents were alive, they would offer her shelter even though they strongly disapproved of what she had done.

The attitude of the public towards a divorcée is different from that towards a widow. Widowhood is a misfortune, decreed by

¹Shri K. J. Chengappa tells me that where the widow has children by her first marriage and it is decided to allow these children to remain in their late father’s okka, all the widow’s goods are not removed to her natal okka. A good part is left in the late husband’s okka because of the children. She takes to her second husband’s house only a small part of her original trousseau.
God or the result of karma, whereas divorce reveals a serious flaw in the divorcée's character. This is natural enough if the woman has been divorced for adultery, or lack of thrift, or incompatibility. It is a woman's duty to adjust herself to her husband and his okka, and failure to do so renders her suspect. It is fairly easy for a widow to secure a husband, while there is great reluctance to marrying a divorcée. Again, a widow is permitted to marry after a minimum period of six months have elapsed after the death of her husband, while a divorcée may remarry only after a year has elapsed since the granting of divorce. A widow is entitled to visit her children in their father’s house, whereas a divorcée is not entitled to do so. Finally, a widow who has returned to her natal okka may marry again into her late husband’s okka, whereas the doors of the former husband’s okka are for ever shut to the divorcée. 1

But the divorcée and widow are alike in this, that neither has a husband, and a woman, normally speaking, should not be without a husband. An unattached woman is a threat to the stability of existing social relations and to the moral code of the community. The widow and divorcée are both regarded with a certain amount of suspicion.

VIII

The children of an ordinary marriage are members of their father’s okka. The fact of birth confers this all-important right on them and no special ceremony conferring membership is necessary. In okka parižé and makka parižé unions, however, the children belong to the natal okka of their mother, and this is only natural as the object of such alliances is the continuation of the mother’s natal okka, threatened with extinction for lack of an agnatic male descendant.

The important fact is that the children of a sanctioned union are members of an okka, either their father’s or mother’s, and such membership they acquire by reason of birth. But the children of an unsanctioned union do not have membership in any okka, and they have to be given membership in either their father’s or mother’s okka some time subsequent to their birth.

In those rare cases where the existence of very special reasons lead

1 A Coorg saw says that one may marry a widow but not a divorcée: keṭṭa poṇṇana bāvalu, keṭṭa poṇṇana bāvukālīga.
to the children of a widow or divorcée being permitted to be transferred to their mother’s okka from their father’s okka, the unanimous consent of the members of both the concerned okkas is regarded as essential. After the widow or divorcée has been ritually severed from her conjugal okka the children are also severed from their paternal okka. While the widow or divorcée automatically reverts to her natal okka, her children have to be given rights at a special sammanda ceremony.\(^1\)

If, however, the widow or divorcée marries again, the children do not follow her automatically into her new husband’s okka. They are members of their mother’s okka, and the unanimous consent of the members of their mother’s okka and that of the members of the mother’s new husband’s okka is necessary to transfer them from one to the other.

Elders usually make efforts to ensure that the children of an unsanctioned union are given membership of their father’s okka. It is clearly recognized that he who had the pleasure of being genitor has the duty of becoming pater as well, and this means that the children of an unsanctioned union have to be made members of the genitor’s okka. Where, however, for various reasons the children cannot be given membership of their father’s okka, they are given membership of their mother’s okka. It is feared that if the children do not have membership in any okka people will refer to them contemptuously as ‘the children born of adultery’ (mai kanat makka).\(^2\)

When a girl becomes pregnant as the result of union with a man not married to her, the girl’s relatives press for recognition of the union. The man involved and his people might agree at once, in which case the girl’s relatives have to go to the boy’s home and give a feast to the relatives of the man and members of his village. The girl’s relatives should carry with them all the provisions of this dinner, excepting mustard and salt.\(^3\)

\(^1\) The sammanda formulas used on this occasion are fundamentally similar to the formulas used in other cases. That is why I have not described them.

\(^2\) In the folk tale of Kanniaḍa Kāmayya, the boy Kāmayya’s playmates refer to him contemptuously as ‘one who is without a father’. Kāmayya is greatly hurt by this and tells his mother that he will fast unto death if the identity and whereabouts of his father are not disclosed. His mother tells him that he is miraculously born, and that his father is the very sacred axe (chandrayudha) which is a symbol for a deity.

\(^3\) Among Coorgs as among other patrilineal and patrilocal castes of south India, a girl has her first confinement in her natal home. The first confinement is
After the dinner is over, the girl is given sammanda in the man's okka. When the members of the man's okka agree to give sammanda after the girl has given birth to a baby, both the mother and newly born child are admitted to membership.

Sometimes the agnatic relatives of the man might refuse to give sammanda to the woman and her children as long as both the man and woman are alive. But death of one of them might bring about a change in their attitude as the surviving spouse and children have important parts to play in the funeral ritual. If it is the woman who is dead, the giving of sammanda enables the corpse to be buried in the man's okka's burial-ground.

The members of the genitor's village who are present when sammanda is given should be collectively paid witness-money of a rupee.

The procedure which has been described above holds good whether the woman concerned is a spinster or a widow.

A Coorg proverb says, 'When the cattle-shed was destined to come to an end only bull calves were born, and when the okka was destined to come to an end only girls were born'. As mentioned earlier, an okka is threatened with extinction if there are no male heirs. If, however, there is an unmarried girl in such an okka she is married in either the okka parije or makka parije way. In both these forms the children born of the union perpetuate the mother's natal okka.

In the sammanda ritual performed at an okka parije marriage, the bride's family friend definitely asks the groom's family friend whether in view of the absence of heirs in the bride's okka the groom is prepared to stand as 'the trunk' of the bride's okka.

No sammanda ritual is, however, necessary at a makka parije marriage as the groom does not become a member of the bride's natal okka. It is believed to be a dangerous and critical affair, and it is considered best for the girl to have her mother and other relatives of her natal home with her at this time.

During the fifth or seventh month of a girl's first pregnancy, her mother and other relatives go to their affines carrying with them all the provisions of a dinner, barring salt and mustard. The salt and mustard are provided by the affines. The affines and members of the affines' village are invited to this dinner which is called kil beppa (keeping food). After the dinner has been given, the girl's relatives take the girl to her natal home.
okka. A rite is performed which makes clear the implications of the kind of union entered into: the bride’s family friend says, ‘Since there is no heir in Muthamma’s natal okka, Ponnappa of such-and-such an okka has agreed to unite with Muthamma, and it is the responsibility of Mother Kāvēri and the ancestors of Muthamma’s okka to see that the couple have sons, and prosper’.

It is essential to note that in a makka pariţē union the husband does not acquire any rights in the makka pariţē wife’s house, except the right to food and clothing during his stay there.

Adoption is resorted to only when there is neither an agnatic male descendant nor an unmarried girl in the okka. Formerly, during the time of the Lingayat Rājas, the ruler’s permission was necessary for an adoption, and for an okka pariţē or makka pariţē union. This was because these devices could be used to shut out a distant agnatic male relative. But it is certain that the local elders would have tried to prevent an adoption to defraud a distant agnatic kinsman.

Two of the three devices for ensuring the continuity of an okka threatened with extinction because of the lack of agnatic descendants involve the granting of membership to an outside male, while the third does not. But whether membership of the okka is granted or not, each of the three customary devices is enveloped in ritual and involves the gathering together of the concerned relatives, family friends, and villagers. The legal and social consequences of each device are made clear at a solemn ritual occasion held in the sacred ancestral house of the okka whose continuity is threatened.

The implications of marriage, its rights and duties, are made clear at the performance of sammanda ritual. Most of the rites performed subsequent to sammanda dramatize the transfer of the girl from her natal okka to her conjugal okka.

To begin with, the groom goes to the bride sitting alone in the kitchen of her natal house, performs mūrtta to her, and presents her with a purse containing coins (chīla pa7;la). The groom ties the purse to the frontal breast-knot of the bride’s sari, but before

1 Makka pariţē is not restricted to unmarried girls only. For instance, a widow might be called upon to raise up seed for her conjugal okka by entering into a makka pariţē alliance.
THE CULT OF THE OKKA

doing so he unties the purse presented earlier by the mother. Thus the purse presented by the groom replaces the purse presented by the bride’s mother. The newly created affinal bond replaces the uterine bond. In a patrilocial and patrilineal society, when a girl is married she passes from her mother to her husband. Her mother is the person for whom she has the greatest affection, and the replacement of the mother’s purse by the groom’s purse explains much better what happens than mere words can.

After performing murta to the bride, the groom helps her to get up, and walks with her to the door of the kitchen. He crosses the threshold first, and then, standing on the outer side of the threshold, he offers his right hand to the bride standing in the kitchen. The bride takes his right hand with her right hand and then crosses the threshold. This act symbolizes her exit from her natal home: the kitchen is the normal sphere of activity of a woman, and it stands for and is associated with women in the minds of ordinary people. Thus when the groom helps the bride to cross the threshold of the kitchen of her natal house, the participants are made to realize the loss occasioned to the bride’s natal okka at marriage.

The bridal pair go in state to the groom’s house. The bride salutes the sacred wall-lamp, and then sits on a sacred bench in the central hall, after which she salutes the elders in the groom’s house. Normally a woman may not sit on the sacred benches either in the central hall or veranda, and when an exception is made in the case of the bride it is as a recognition of the fact that she has acquired membership in the groom’s okka.

Later, the bride goes with two married women to the cattle-shed where three new reed-baskets, filled with cow-dung, are kept. Each carries a basket to the groom’s rice-fields and empties it in one of the ridged-up plots where rice is grown.

Accompanied by her two companions the bride then goes to the domestic well. She worships the water in the well, and this is called ganga pujà or ‘worship of the Ganges’. Each of the three women carries a vessel of water to the kitchen.

The duties of a woman normally include carrying manure to the fields and fetching water from the domestic well. When the bride carries manure to the groom’s fields and carries water into the kitchen of his house she is doing something which she will have

1 In some parts of Coorg she also salutes the south-western pillar and the amp in the south-western room.
to do every day for the rest of her life. She ritually takes up her duties in her husband’s house, and frequently on ritual occasions two people accompany the subject in the tasks he or she performs.

The reed-baskets are left at the field for Poleya servants of the groom’s okka to collect. The water in the well is worshipped before taking a vesselful into the kitchen. (It was seen earlier that the confined woman similarly worshipped the well before resuming her contact with it after an absence of several months.)

At night, on the same day, the bride is given a new name by the women members of the groom’s okka. This may be the name of a dead woman of the groom’s okka. Even when the bride is not given a totally new name, some change is effected in her old name. If the bride is divorced later, or if she becomes a widow and wishes to return to her natal house, at the ceremony in which her connexion with her conjugal okka is severed, the family friend of her natal okka refers to her by the name given to her in her natal house, while the family friend of the groom’s okka refers to her by the name given to her at marriage. Thus the giving of a new name marks a change in the bride’s social personality: she loses her membership of her natal okka and becomes a member of the groom’s okka.

Soon after the bride has carried water from the domestic well into the kitchen, the groom’s mother gives her a cup of milk to drink, or a dish of rice and milk sweetened with sugar. In some parts of Coorg she also combs the daughter-in-law’s hair on this occasion.

In the patrilocal okka the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is very intimate and important. One might say that in the first few years of marriage it is even more important than the husband-wife relationship. The fact of social segregation of the sexes operates against the young husband and wife spending any considerable time together before bedtime. Again, it is not thought proper for the young husband and wife to spend too much time in each other’s company. Such a couple will be ‘talked about’. A young man must attend to his work, must not encourage his wife to be indifferent to her share of domestic work, and must be

1 *Akkamma* might be changed, for instance, into *Akkavva*. ‘Amma’ indicates girlhood while ‘Avva’ indicates womanhood. Some westernized Coorgs do not change names at marriage. The names of dead relatives are not very popular nowadays as they are considered old fashioned.
responsible to his elders. All this means that he does not get a real chance to be with her till he retires to bed at night.

The daughter-in-law must try and please her parents-in-law: this is one of the main aims of her life. She must do her share of the domestic work under the close supervision of her mother-in-law. She spends most of her time with the latter.1

The mother-in-law, too, has her duties towards her daughter-in-law, though in her case her rights vastly outweigh her duties. The ideal mother-in-law is one who is 'like a mother' to her daughter-in-law. She is expected to be kind and protective, and she is usually sensitive to what her neighbours and others say about the way she treats her daughter-in-law.

It was seen earlier that the ritual giving of milk is an expression of the solidarity that is, or ought to be, prevalent between the persons concerned. In the foregoing instance, the giving of milk (or sweetened dish of rice and milk) is frequently accompanied by the mother-in-law's combing the daughter-in-law's hair. Before a girl's marriage it is usually the mother, or some older female relative, who combs the former's hair and plaits it. Combing is an expression of friendliness. Marriage transfers the bride from her natal house to the groom's house, and the bride passes under the control of her mother-in-law. Solidarity rites are performed on this occasion. That the mother-in-law is equated with the mother is shown in her performing some of the duties which a mother usually does towards her daughter.

It is not correct, however, totally to identify the mother-in-law with the mother. The mother-in-law—daughter-in-law relationship is usually one of conflict and the reasons are not far to seek. The daughter-in-law has to obey and respect the mother-in-law as long as the latter is alive. Until her mother-in-law dies her social personality does not attain completion. Also, there is a struggle between the two women for the possession of the son, and this conflict is especially acute in the first few years of marriage. Frequently, the daughter-in-law's relatives do not help to minimize this conflict. The birth of children, however, reduces the intensity of the conflict.

1 All over patrilocal India the mother-in-law—daughter-in-law relation is recognized as a very important relation, and as basically one of conflict. See the author's Marriage and Family in Mysore, Bombay, 1942, pp. 191-9.
The Coorg okka is an exogamous unit. Sexual relations with a daughter or sister of a member of the okka are regarded as incestuous. A man may not marry the daughter of his father's brother (classificatory): the father's first, second, and third cousins are his 'brothers', and a daughter of any of these relatives is avoided for marriage. Coorgs remember their agnatic connexions even where they overflow the okka, and marriage with the daughter or sister of an agnatic relative is avoided.

Every okka has a distinct name, a fact which helps in the avoidance of incestuous relations. When a branch of an okka splits off and in course of time becomes a separate okka, there is no inter-marriage between the parent-okka and the offspring-okka. Thus there are two Biddanda okkas, and there is no intermarriage between their members as they remember that they are agnatically related and that in the past they constituted a single okka.

Sometimes the possession of a common name by several okkas does not indicate the prevalence of any connexion between them. For instance, there are several okkas called Mukkâṭira, a name originally acquired, in each case, by the founder of the okka holding a certain office in a temple. In such a case, there is usually a prefix specifying which Mukkâṭira okka is meant: Kunjalâgiri Mukkâṭira refers to the Mukkâṭira okka of Kunjalâgiri village and not to any other Mukkâṭira okka.

A man is also prohibited from marrying the daughter of his mother's sister (classificatory). Terminologically a man's mother's sisters are identified with his mother, and their daughters with his sisters. The mother's line may be called the 'buried line', and it comes into prominence negatively in the avoidance of a mother's sister's daughter for marriage, and positively in the latter relative's being identified with the sister. Such accordance of importance to maternal relatives is an attempt to balance the enormous importance accorded to paternal relatives in a kinship-system the foundation of which is the patrilineal, patrilocal okka.

The only relative a man may marry is his cross-cousin, his mother's brother's daughter or his father's sister's daughter. Coorgs, like other speakers of the Dravidian languages, have a classificatory kinship terminology which accords with cross-cousin marriage.
Cross-cousin marriage is preferred and common. It is of the symmetrical variety though there seems to be a slight preference for marriage with the father's sister's daughter as compared with the mother's brother's daughter. A proverb tells us, 'The father's sister's daughter's body is sweet; the juice of the blue sugar-cane is sweet'. In the ancient marriage song which is sung at every marriage the bride is made out to be the daughter of the groom's father's sister. An old saying tells us, 'tàn banda battena marapakaga' (one should not forget the path by which one has come): a woman is enjoined not to forget her natal okka from which she has come into her conjugal okka. One daughter at least ought to go in marriage to the natal okka of her mother. Such a system binds two okkas very closely, and the loss of a girl to an okka is compensated later by the return of the latter's daughter to her mother's natal okka in marriage. This is unlike the other variety of cross-cousin marriage in which one okka is perpetually recruiting girls from another okka without ever repaying.

The traditional preference for marriage with a cross-cousin comes out in a rite which is performed at marriage. When the groom is leading the bride out of her house after the performance of sammanda, he is obstructed at the main door of the bride's house by the bride's cross-cousin. The cross-cousin says that the bride belongs to him and that he will not let her go. It is only when the groom has given him a gold coin that he lets the bride go. The cross-cousin adds another gold coin to the one the groom has given him and ties the two together in a corner of the bride's sari. The gold coins now belong to the bride. The incident is nowadays looked upon as a joke.

The preference for cross-cousin marriage expresses itself in ritual, and there are structural reasons for such preference. Among the patrilineal castes all over India, not only is the conflict between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law a common feature of joint family existence, the inability of the daughter-in-law to get on with her affinal kindred is frequently cited as the chief reason for fission in the joint family. The Kannada peasants of Mysore have a proverb, 'A thousand moustaches can live together, but not four breasts'.

The daughter-in-law is a stranger to the groom's kin-group and her interests frequently do not harmonize with the interests of the groom's kin-group. The latter want the joint family to remain...
united, and the bride obedient to her mother-in-law, and able to get on with her husband's brother's wives and the husband's sisters. The bride finds such an existence irksome, and she would like her husband to leave his joint family and found a separate household. Her kin-group are usually behind her in this, either overtly or covertly. But there are other balancing factors: a girl is told from childhood onwards by every elder in her natal household that she should obey her husband and parents-in-law, and that the greatest thing she could do would be to be approved by her affinal kindred. Besides, a man is bound by the most powerful ties to his joint family; and even more important than this is the fact that he does not want to be known as the one who split his joint family.

Where an adult male is entitled to demand his share of the ancestral property, marriage with a stranger girl increases the chances of the division of the joint family. On the other hand, marriage with a relative makes such a division less likely. But among Coorgs certain relatives like the sisters and daughters of agnatically related males and the daughters of one's mother's sisters' daughters are tabooed for marriage. Only cross-cousins remain eligible.

As has already been mentioned, the Coorg okka is a very much stronger institution than the joint family of the higher castes of south India. The theory of the impartibility of its traditional property and the preference for leviratic unions buttress it strongly against fission. Add to it the fact that a cross-cousin is commonly chosen for marriage and it becomes almost impregnable.

The departure of a bride from her natal to her conjugal house on the second day of marriage is an occasion charged with emotion: I have seen an adult Coorg brother break down with grief when his sister left for her husband's home after the sammanda ceremony. Parents are aware that when they marry their daughter they lose her. This breaking of the brother-sister bond which is inevitable in a patrilocal society leaves a void which is only filled when the children of the brother and sister intermarry. It may be said that the wound takes a generation to heal. This is only so if it is regarded as an individual instance, as the completion of a single cycle. But it is seen differently if each marriage is regarded as the repayment of a debt incurred a generation ago, as the working out of the principle of reciprocity. The links which are forged today by marriages between two okkas are only a continuation of the links which have
been forged in the past. The individual instances appear only as points on two or more parallel lines which are linked all the way through. Such a view mitigates the sense of loss which the parents of the girl experience, and also gives them a sense of security as far as the girl is concerned. The prior kinship bonds which prevail between the two affinal groups ensure not only the stability of the marriage, but also contribute to the solidarity of each of the two okkas connected by the marriage, and especially of the groom's okka.

XII

A woman is socially identified with her sisters, and a person's mother's sisters are identified with his mother. As sororatic unions are preferred among Coorgs, a mother's younger sister steps into the mother's shoes in the event of the mother's death before her sister's marriage. It is regarded as natural for the step-mother to hate her step-children, and a widower marries his dead wife's younger sister because he believes that the latter is more likely than anybody else to treat her step-children well.

A man's mother's sisters' children are regarded as his brothers and sisters. He may not marry his mother's sister's daughter: such a union would be incestuous. The importance of the mother's sisters is stressed in their identification with the mother and in identifying their children with one's brothers and sisters.

It has been remarked earlier that the marriage of a girl causes a change in the established relations of the members of her natal as well as conjugal okka. The former okka loses a member, whereas the latter gains one. The members of one group have to adjust themselves to the loss of a member who was with them for seventeen or eighteen or more years, and whom they all love deeply, whereas the other group have to admit a grown stranger into their okka. This is the inevitable result of the rule of patrilocal residence. The marriage of a daughter means her exile from her natal home. But cross-cousin marriage ensures that the daughter in question goes into an okka with which strong bonds of solidarity already exist. Further, the daughter's daughters return to their mother's natal okka on their (former's) marriage, while the daughter's sons provide a home for their mother's brother's daughters. In other words, marriage with a cross-cousin minimizes the disturbances resulting from marriage.
The maternal uncle is an important relative: he is the mother's brother, and represents the mother's natal okka. Perhaps he himself has married his sister's husband's sister—cross-cousin marriage is symmetrical among Coorgs. He is also likely to be father-in-law to his sister's children. But he belongs to a different okka from his sister's son. His importance is stressed in ritual and in the exchange of gifts.

A man whose maternal uncle is alive may not eat curry made of bitter oranges or green plantains. A proverb tells us that a diver for pearls must make certain that his maternal uncle is holding the rope above. Diving for pearls is a notoriously hazardous occupation and the life of the diver is in the hands of the man who is holding the rope above. It requires the greatest vigilance on the latter's part. It is significant that the maternal uncle should be chosen for this task. It is a tribute to the strength of bond between a man and his mother's brother.

The maternal uncle, paternal aunt, and the married sister are all required to bring gifts, provisions, and sheets of cloth called kettiime at the marriage of a man. An informant told me that he remembered his mother carrying twenty head-loads of kettiime gifts to her younger brother's wedding.

A party bringing kettiime gifts is honoured with 'plantain honour' (bâfe birudu): the leader of the party is asked to cut with his Coorg sword a row of three stout plantain stems fixed to the ground. A man who cuts through a stem at one stroke is a skilled swordsman: the blow must fall at an acute angle and must be delivered with firmness and strength.

The bringers of kettiime gifts are given in return token gifts of cooked pork and sweet dishes. The host's band accompanies them a little distance when they leave.

Those relatives who brought kettiime at wedding bring gifts of provisions and cloths called adatalé at death. They come accompanied by their band, and they are again given in return token gifts of cooked meat and sweet dishes.

Just before the corpse is buried or cremated certain important relatives perform a rite of segregation called koda kukkuva, the purpose of which is to break the bond between the dead person and his (or her) relatives. The relatives who have to take part in this rite are the dead person's spouse, eldest son, and 'cross-nephew' (i.e. a man's sister's son, or a woman's brother's son). The surviv-
ing spouse takes a mud pot, the son a tender coconut, and the 'cross-nephew' a bell-metal vessel with a spout at the side (kindi).

The three relatives march to a pond or well in the burial-ground after the bier has been deposited near the funeral pit or pyre. They have a dip in the pond, after which the family friend or his wife places on the spouse's head the mud vessel filled with water, the coconut on the eldest son's head, and the spouted vessel full of water on the 'cross-nephew's' head. The family friend marks the forehead of each of these mourners with a few rice-grains yellowed with turmeric, and adjusts a ring of twisted grass on the ring-finger of the left hand. A mango leaf is put into the mud pot and another into the spouted vessel, while the eldest son is given a third leaf to carry in his hand. A hole is bored in both the mud pot and coconut to enable the liquid inside to trickle down to the ground from the head as the mourners march in state from the pond to the bier. The 'cross-nephew' has to carry the spouted vessel in such a way that a little water drips from it through the spout all the time.

The mourners go round the bier thrice, moving anti-clockwise, and at the end of the third round the spouse stands near the corpse's left shoulder, the son by the right shoulder, and the 'cross-nephew' near the feet. A little of the water in each of the three 'vessels' is poured into a dining-dish.

The three mourners then salute the corpse, after which they again go round the corpse thrice, moving anti-clockwise, sprinkling rice yellowed with turmeric as they go. After the final round is completed each takes up his original position by the corpse. The spouse touches the bier thrice with his (or her) pot and then smashes it to pieces by knocking it against the frame of the bier. As he (or she) does this, he utters the funeral cry, 'Thou art ruined... (husband, father, &c.).'

The son follows next and he cuts the coconut into two halves after touching the bier thrice with it. He throws the halves underneath the bier and utters the funeral cry. The 'cross-nephew' who comes last repeats his predecessors' actions, at the end of which he throws the spouted vessel under the bier.

Shri K. J. Chenappa tells me that the pot represents the affinal bond which is destroyed at death, while the seed (coconut) is carried by the son who continues the okka, and the 'cross-nephew' carries the spouted vessel. He represents another okka which is
linked to the dead person's by the fact that the dead person was a sibling of the 'cross-nephew's' parent.

Husband and wife constitute a legal, economic, ritual, and moral unity among Coorgs, and the sense of this unity is so great that the surviving spouse plays an even greater part in funeral rites than the eldest son, who represents the dead person's okka. The 'cross-nephew' stands for the solidarity of a man with his sister.

Close relatives of the dead person bring gifts of white cloths (muri). These cloths are carried by women and are received by a woman member of the mourning okka who keeps them folded behind the corpse's head. They are used for certain purposes at various points in the mourning ritual: for instance, the mourners of the first and second orders use them for the mourning uniform of waist-cloth and shoulder-cloth; they are used to cover the corpse while it is lying in the house; if it is decided to cremate the corpse, it is stripped of the white gown and then the body is covered with white cloths; and, finally, some cloths are given in charity to beggars and servants of the Coorg okka.

Relatives who bring gifts of cloth are usually accompanied by their band consisting of horn, pipe, and drum. They also bring a rifle with them. As they near the lane leading to the mourning house, all the relatives junior to the dead person dress themselves in a waist-cloth and shoulder-cloth. In addition, the women mourners unplait their hair and allow it to fall loosely over the back and shoulders. They keep the gift-cloths on their heads and they perform certain stylized movements with their hands which are suggestive of the beating of breasts and head, a common symbol of mourning all over India. As they come up the lane leading to the mourning house, a member of the party fires double shots. The band, rifle, and gifts of cloth are collectively referred to as kella!i.

Relatives who brought ketiime gifts at marriage are required to bring kellari at death. The obligations of kinship require the bringing of such gifts at marriage and death, and such obligations are usually mutual between groups of kindred. In addition, the bringers of these gifts are honoured according to the traditional ritual idiom and given small gifts of cooked meat and sweet dishes. These gifts are not equivalent in economic value to the gifts brought, but still they embody the principle of reciprocity. Reciprocity does not mean equivalence of return on every
occasion: equivalence is usually achieved over a long period of time.

While other relatives bring white cloths, the dead person's 'cross-nephew' or 'cross-niece' has to bring a gift of a red silk cloth (kendanoli). Red silk is more sacred than cotton, and the bringers of gifts of red silk are more important than those who bring cotton cloths. The 'cross-nephew' or 'cross-niece' is required to bring a gift of red silk cloth. The funeral song, however, tells us that both 'he who took and he who gave [daughters in marriage]' (konjaavana kodavana) brought gifts of red silk cloths. The divergence between current usage and ancient custom can be explained by the supposition that cross-cousin marriage was widespread in the past. The custom of cross-cousin marriage leads to the overlapping of different kinds of kinship-bonds; and what was to begin with a cognatic bond becomes later an affinal bond.

When a man marries, his sister's husband acts as his 'best man' (bójakará), and when a woman marries, her brother's wife acts as her matron of honour (bójakdrati). This no doubt gives importance to affinal kindred, but ultimately it may be looked upon as one of the numerous expressions of the solidarity prevalent between brother and sister. Again, it may also be an instance of the overlapping of several kinds of kinship-bonds, as the sister's husband or brother's wife might have been a cross-cousin before marriage.

Sameya gifts are brought by affines at death. These gifts consist of coconuts, coconut oil, puffed rice (pori), cooked meat, rice yellowed with turmeric, and three kajjayas (a sweet dish) fried in castor oil. Mourners going behind the corpse scatter the sameya articles all the way from the mourning house to the burial-ground.

When a man is dead, representatives of his mother's natal okka have to bring sameya, and when a woman is dead, representatives of her natal okka have to bring sameya. Sameya is also prepared in the mourning house.

Sameya gifts stress the importance of the natal okkas of the women who have married into the mourning okka. They may also be regarded as giving importance to cross-cousins, as an affine is frequently also a cross-cousin.

Affines, when they are not already related to each other, are expected to be extremely formal towards each other. At marriage.

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1 I attended a wedding in which the bójakarati was the bride's mother's sister's daughter, but I was told this was not very usual.
RELIGION AND SOCIETY AMONG THE COORGS

The groom's party are treated with extreme courtesy—warm water is offered to them to wash their hands and feet, a mat is spread for them to sit on, and puffed rice, coconut, and parched grams (huu'kulu) are given them to eat. They are also given betel leaves and areca-nuts to chew. They come accompanied by their band. As they stand at some distance from the bride's house, a party from the bride's house goes to them carrying the articles mentioned already and accompanied by the band of the bride's house. The leader of the groom's party is asked to cut down a row of six plantain stems, whereas other relatives are asked to cut down only a row of three stems. The bride's party is treated similarly at the groom's house later.

The fathers of the bride and groom do not meet at marriage. Within a year of the performance of the marriage the bride's natal okka invite the groom's father to a feast and the groom's okka invite the bride's father to a feast. This is known as 'knowing the relatives' (bendu ariva).

The formality which surrounds the relations of the affinal groups lessens with the years. The two groups concerned come together more and more as the years advance and children are born of the marriage. But the formality never totally disappears. Distance and respect may be said to characterize affinal relations for ever. The earlier occasions in which they come together are covered with ritual—ritual respect is scrupulously shown, feasts are given, and gifts are exchanged.

Respect should be shown to parents-in-law, and this is especially required from a girl towards her mother-in-law. A girl does not come very much into contact with her father-in-law, whereas she spends the best part of the day with her mother-in-law, working under the latter's supervision in or about the kitchen.

XIII

The parents of a girl have a right to recover the presents of cloth and vessels which they gave their daughter at her marriage if the girl dies without leaving behind any children in her conjugal okka. But if children have been born of the marriage, the mother's personal property goes to them.

The legal position is not, however, as clear as we have made it out to be owing to the fact that lawyers trained in Hindu law have
regarded the presents given to the bride by her natal okka as Stridhana (woman's wealth), according to which the movable property presented to a bride by her relatives becomes her own property absolutely. If such an interpretation is accepted, the presents given by Coorg parents to their daughter at her wedding will come to be governed by the same laws as those prevailing among high-caste Hindus all over India. This seems to be another instance of the silent and effective transformation of an original Coorg custom into a similar, though not identical, Sanskriti custom.

A girl ought to get married and become a mother, and a mother is honoured among Coorgs. The bond between a mother and child is the most intimate of bonds and this fact expresses itself in ritual. While other relatives, including the infant's father, become free from birth-pollution on the twelfth day, the mother becomes free from pollution only on the sixtieth day. The stronger the bond prevalent the longer is the period of pollution, and this is so in birth as well as death.

When an infant whose milk teeth have not appeared dies, it is buried without ceremony, and a half of a coconut shell containing milk from the mother's breast is kept over the grave. Only the mother is required to take a bath and change into pure clothes.

The special importance of the maternal bond is recognized at marriage also: the mother is the first person to perform murta to the bride or groom, provided she is not a widow. The mother has to give her money-gift enclosed in a purse, and this is tied to the frontal breast-knot of the bride's sari.

It is not only in ritual that the strength of the mother-child bond is acknowledged: a number of proverbs testify to its strength. One compares the motherless child to a crop in drought. Another tells us that the father becomes a firebrand after the mother is dead. In proverbs the mother is the tender figure and she contrasts with the father who is comparatively lacking in affection and fickle. He can be trusted only as long as the mother is alive, and once the mother dies, his affection for his children decreases. He is likely to take up another wife who will be the focus of his interest and attention.

The dependence of children on their mother later gives way to great regard and respect for her, and this fact complicates the husband-wife relationship. A man does not like his wife's criticizing his mother, and even if he discovers that his mother does not treat his wife properly he would be loath to intervene.
The bond prevalent between a mother and her daughter is always a very deep one, and has a great poignancy because the daughter, on marriage, has to leave her natal home for her conjugal home. The mother is aware that her sons have all the rights, privileges, and power in the ancestral house, whereas her daughters have to leave their natal home and spend their lives among people who will, to say the least, be critical of her in the first few years. The daughter looks upon her natal home as a haven of refuge in the first few years of married life. Her first confinement takes place in her natal home because it is considered proper for the girl to be with people with whom she can be at ease.

A proverb tells us that 'the mother's love for her daughter rendered her unfit to live with her husband, the sitting hen's love destroyed the egg'. An overfond mother tries to drag her married daughter away from her husband, and this might eventually break up the marriage.

The elementary family, which is a part of the okka or joint family, is weakly structured among Coorgs. This is because the okka is so strong that it does not permit the elementary families inside it to be strong units. There is no separate term for the elementary family.

The solidarity of the elementary family does not obtain expression in ritual. It is true that the affinal tie is very strongly emphasized in mourning, and the eldest son is a mourner of the first grade, and sometimes a younger son or daughter is also called upon to become a first-grade mourner. But usually the younger children of the dead person are not distinguished from the other younger members of the okka.

The fact that the elementary family is weakly structured among Coorgs does not mean that it has no solidarity; and in the last 120 years its solidarity has been increasing at the expense of the solidarity of the okka of which it is a part. Coorg ancestral houses are large, sprawling affairs, and the members of each elementary family within an okka occupy either a room, or a couple of rooms, or an entire wing. Sometimes they occupy one of two or three houses belonging to the okka. A member of the M-okka once told me, 'When this house was built over seventy years ago there were only two or three people in it. But our ancestors were so wise that they built a large house with a number of rooms so that all their descendants could live in it.' Now each of the married
brothers and his children occupy a room or a couple of rooms inside it.

The unity of the elementary families within the okka appears in certain non-ritual contexts. For instance, parents take sides with their own children against the children of another member of the okka in the frequent quarrels of children. A proverb tells us that 'the okka went to ruin over the children's talk'. Quarrels arise when 'the children of the okka play together, and these children's quarrels lead to the elders having an argument, an argument which might later split the okka. Another proverb tells us that 'children's play leads to the okka's ruin'.

Marriage is very nearly universal among Coorgs, and bachelors and spinsters are very rare indeed. A man's social personality is fully developed only when he has married and become a father, and consequently a bachelor is regarded as one who is not fully developed.

It is believed that a bachelor dies with many unsatisfied desires in his heart. While a gold coin is placed in the mouth of the corpse of a married man, a bitter fruit is kept in the mouth of a bachelor's corpse. A bachelor's ghost is regarded as mischievous, and the ghost of a bachelor-warrior as even more mischievous.

During the periodical ancestor-propitiations in a Coorg okka, songs are sung recounting the deeds of each ancestor. The name of a bachelor-ancestor is omitted from such a song unless he had proved an exceptional success in life, or had died while fighting in battle. Such exceptional qualifications are not, however, required from a married ancestor. A bachelor's personality is normally incomplete, and only the achievement of exceptional social importance can outweigh this fact.

Sanskritic Hinduism prescribes marriage for every adult. And only a married man may perform certain important rites. A man and his wife constitute a single spiritual entity, and a wife shares in the spiritual merit acquired by her husband. Sanskritic Hinduism also enjoins on the wife the duty of effacing herself completely for her husband.

The strength of the husband-wife bond and the subservience of

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1 A Brahmin friend of mine married soon after the lapse of the required period of a year after the death of his father because the performance of certain rites like the periodical offerings to dead ancestors and the worship of the deities traditionally worshipped by his family required him to be married. He was the eldest son of his father.
the wife to the husband express themselves in ritual. When a Coorg couple bathe in the source of the river Kāveri during the Kāveri Festival, the ends of their garments are tied together: Hindus in every part of India observe this custom when they are bathing in a sacred river or tank.

Until recent years a Coorg bride and groom never sat together for the performance of mūrti. Mūrti was performed separately for the groom and bride in their respective houses on the first day of marriage. On the second day the groom's relatives performed mūrti to the bride, and the bride's relatives to the groom; and finally the groom performed mūrti to the bride. The groom and bride sat in different parts of the bride's house while mūrti was performed for each, and when this ended the groom walked over to the bride sitting in the kitchen.

Nowadays, however, on the second day, the bride and groom are made to sit together in the central hall of the bride's house while mūrti is performed for each. Some Coorgs call this 'double mūrti'—the English word 'double' is used by them. I learn that this modification of the original Coorg custom was introduced over thirty years ago by a Coorg who occupied a high position in the government of a neighbouring province. This modification is clearly an attempt to Sanskritize a Coorg custom.

A Coorg woman whose husband is alive enjoys a higher ritual and social status than a widow. This is so among high-caste Hindus all over India, and the Coorg phenomenon may be regarded as an attenuated instance of the Sanskritic phenomenon. A Coorg woman whose husband is alive wears a necklace of black glass beads and black glass bangles, and these ornaments have become the auspicious symbols of the married state for a woman. No widow may wear them.

There is need to distinguish between a woman whose first and only husband is alive and another who after being widowed has remarried. The latter's ritual status is inferior to the former's, but it is higher than that of a widow who has not remarried.

A widow who decides not to remarry wears a uniform of a white sari, a white blouse, and a white scarf. None of these garments may have a coloured border.

In Sanskritic Hinduism a wife is expected to regard her husband as her deity. Widowhood is the result of evil actions performed in a previous incarnation. A widow is denied the ritual and social
privileges of a married woman. She is not permitted to remarry. She is regarded as an inauspicious person.

Sanskritic Hinduism emphasizes the affinal tie in a variety of ways, but chiefly rituals. Ritual ideas tend to be all-pervasive. The worship of symbols of the married state by women, the ritual and social inferiority of the widow to the sumangali, coupled with the ban on widow remarriage, and the linking of widowhood to the idea of karma, all contribute to the strengthening of the marital bond. It is obvious that among Coorgs, Sanskritic Hinduism has had such a strengthening effect and has contributed to subordinating the wife to her husband.

**XIV**

At any given moment of time the *okka* is made up of a group of agnatically related males descended from a common ancestor, and their wives and children. When the older members of the *okka* die, the younger members take their places. The dynamic element in the *okka* consists in the younger members succeeding to the positions left vacant by the death of the older members. The *okka* may be looked upon as a certain configuration of persons bound together by agnatic and affinal ties, and this configuration remains more or less constant over a period of time. The generation-depth of an *okka* might expand by a birth, or contract by a death, a segment may cling on or split off, but in the main there is a certain constancy of configuration which makes it an *okka*. The members of an *okka* come and go, but the *okka* goes on for ever. They are like people on an escalator, those on the bottom stairs moving gradually up to the top and finally disappearing.

An *okka* not only looks forward to the future but also stretches back into the past. Each *okka* has a distinct tradition with which its living members are acquainted. The 'house song' (*mane pat*) sung at the harvest festival and ancestor-propitiation enables the younger members to learn the 'history' of the *okka*.

The dead ancestor of a Coorg *okka* is called kāraṇava. Kāraṇa in Sanskrit means, among other things, "the cause, instrument, origin, principle, the cause of being, a father".¹ All the ancestors are not of the same rank: the founder of the *okka* has a higher status than the others. He is called mūla purusha (original man) or ādi

¹ Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary, p. 274.
guru (first preceptor), or ddi kārānava (first ancestor), and his higher status is reflected in the fact that at the periodical ancestor-propitiations a pig must be sacrificed to him, while to the other ancestors a fowl will do.\(^1\) Also the Baṅga oracle dons the upper part of his tērē equipment in the Founder’s honour. For the others he wears only the lower part, which covers him below the waist like a skirt. The Founder is reverenced more than the other ancestors. But sometimes the Founder\(^2\) is outshone in importance by one of his descendants who was a famous fighter, or a commander of the Rāja’s armies, or one of the Rāja’s ministers, or a famous magician, or was noted for his pīty. The Founder has a start over the other ancestors, but this start does not prevail against a very powerful descendant. Thus, a Coorg carries the social importance which he achieves for himself into the world of his ancestors.

People who die on the battlefield, or who die a violent death, become biras, and biras are regarded as more powerful than other ancestors. The Karavanda, Biddanda, and Kalyāṭanda okkas have separate shrines for biras called biru kēṭe.\(^3\)

A man who is killed by a tiger or panther becomes a ‘tiger spirit’ (nari pūda), and at the ancestor-propitiation the Baṅga oracle paints his face yellow and marks it with black stripes or spots just before he is possessed by the ‘tiger spirit’.

The wife of an ancestor is called a kārānava kachchi or sōdela kachchi or torjapijji. It is believed that ancestresses are particularly liable to possess children, another instance of the Coorg belief in the strength of the bond which binds a mother to her children.

Every ancestral house has some place for the worship of the ancestors of the okka. This might be a separate shrine called kaimajya, or a low, earthen platform (kārānava tare) built round the trunk of a milk-exuding tree. The kaimajya is a single-room

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\(^1\) Pigs are also usually sacrificed to bachelor-ancestors who died a violent death, and to elderly males who died subsequent to the performance of the previous ancestor-propitiation. But elderly women who died after the performance of the previous ancestor-propitiation are offered only fowl.

\(^2\) The Founder is usually a man, but in certain exceptional cases the honour may fall on a woman. In a certain okka in Nākkād the men were all slaughtered in a fight over 160 years ago, and the only survivor was a pregnant woman who fled to the shrine of Pūyilappā in Malabar. This lady gave birth to a son and returned later to her conjugal okka in Nākkād. She is regarded as the Founder of this okka, and is propitiated annually at the end of the harvest festival.

\(^3\) Bira is a corruption of the Sanskrit vīra, which means a ‘hero’. In the Kannada country memorial stones called Iragallu were formerly erected for heroes dying in battle.
The cult of the okka

The ancestor-shrine usually facing east, the sacred direction. When an ancestor-propitiation (kēraṇava tēre) is performed, wooden figurines representing each of the ancestors, or crude figures embossed on sheets of copper or silver, or gold, or even slabs of stone with figures sculptured on it, are kept before a lamp lighted in the ancestor-shrine. The Paṭṭamāḍā okka perform an ancestor-propitiation whenever an elder dies, and on this occasion they have wooden representations of ancestors made which they deposit in the river Kāvērī at the end of the propitiation. Sometimes personal possessions of the ancestors such as walking-sticks or the small Coorg sword called pichē katti are kept in the shrine during the ancestor-propitiation.

Ordinarily the ancestor-shrine does not contain sculptured images, or unhewn stones, representing the ancestors of the okka. But during an ancestor-propitiation wooden or other figurines representing ancestors might be kept in the ancestor-shrine. In those parts of Coorg where there are no ancestor-shrines, every house has an earthen platform built round the trunk of a milk-exuding tree, and a rough, unhewn stone embedded in the platform stands for all the ancestors of the okka collectively. An unhewn stone embedded in an earthen platform might also stand for a deity like Pūda, Gulika, Kētrappa, and Nāṭa (cobra-deity).

Some Coorgs consider that the ancestor-shrine or platform is built over the grave of the Founder of the okka, and that the cobra-platform is built at a spot where a cobra breathed its last. There is no evidence to support either of these views.

Ancestor-platforms are the rule in Kiggatnāḍ in south-east Coorg. It has been mentioned that Kiggatnāḍ has a great deal in common with Kannaḍa culture, and contrasts with Nāṭkāḍ and Kāḍyētnāḍ in the south-west which are influenced by Malabar. The Baṅgas and Paṇikas, masters of the technique of ancestor-propitiation in a Coorg house, are both Malayāḷam-speaking castes and their influence normally does not penetrate as far east as Kiggatnāḍ. The elaborate propitiation of ancestors, with the Baṅgas or Paṇikas acting as oracles of the dead ancestors, does not

1 All over south India village-deities like Māṭi are frequently represented by rough unhewn stones. The Coorg instance is only a part of a wider phenomenon spreading over south India, but there are other features which link up Coorg especially with Malabar and South Canara.
Ancestor-shrines or *kaimadas* are found in Coorg to the south-west of Mercara, but they are far from universal. Moegling, writing in 1855, tells us that only 'seven of the Armeri [village near Virarajpet] houses have regular little temples where *kōla* or *bhārani* is performed'. Even today several prosperous and well-known *okkas* such as the Kolandēra, Manēpalanda, Maneyapanda, and Koravanā have no ancestor-shrines.

Originally, odd stones embedded in earthen platforms built round the trunks of trees seem to have represented the ancestors everywhere in Coorg Proper, but later the ancestor-shrine seems to have replaced the earthen platforms in certain houses. The richer Coorgs then seem to have increasingly taken to such shrines: Moegling writes, 'those who cannot afford to build a *kaimada* make a sort of mud bank for the purpose called *kōla* under a tree in the fields where the family's first house stood'. It is likely that the possession or lack of an ancestor-shrine soon came to indicate, in certain areas, the economic and social position of an *okka*.

The next step in the elaboration of the *kaimada*-complex was the building of special shrines for ancestors who died on the battlefield. Yet another step was taken when a sculptured image representing an ancestor or an ancestor's benefactor was placed in the ancestor-shrine. For instance, the chieftain Achen Nāyaka was helped by the Kanna ruler of Piriyapata, Nallunā Arasu (c. 1670), to regain his chieftaincy. The grateful Achen Nāyaka built a shrine in which sculptured images of himself and his benefactor were placed.

In the ancestral house of the Kōdana house in Kadanga Marīr village there are two tombs built over the graves of two ancestors who attained to very high positions in the service of the Rājas. These tombs have been built just outside the ancestor-shrine, and are crowned with figures of the Nandi Bull, the 'vehicle' of Shiva. Tombs, and especially tombs crowned with figures of the Nandi Bull, are very popular among the Lingāyāts of south India. Coorgs who were in the employment of the Lingāyat Rājas borrowed the customs, manners, and ritual of their rulers.

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1 *Coorg Memoirs*, p. 62.
During festivals like harvest festival, and at marriage, a little meat curry and rice are offered on a plantain leaf to the ancestors. A leaf-cup of arrack is also kept on the plantain leaf. The ancestors consume the essence of the offering and thereby consecrate it. All over Hindu India food, or any article which has been offered to a deity, is called prasāda, and worshippers have to partake of the prasāda. Food which is offered to a deity is later distributed among the worshippers, who eat it. Where flowers which have been placed on the image of the deity are given to a worshipper, he or she sticks them in his hair, or keeps them in his pockets. When such flowers wither, they are either put in a well or pond or on a tree. They are not thrown where people are likely to tread on them.

Quite apart from festivals and other occasions when the dishes cooked in the house are offered to the ancestors before the members themselves partake of them, there are special occasions when the ancestors have to be offered food and drink, and these occasions are the last days (changrāndi) of the months of Taurus and Cancer, and the tenth of Libra.

The propitiation of ancestors with food (invariably non-vegetarian) and liquor and lights is called kāraṇavāhī bhrārānī. There is also a more elaborate propitiation of ancestors called kāraṇavāvā tērē or kāraṇavā kōla, at which Baņnas or Panikas officiate as priests and oracles.

This elaborate propitiation of ancestors is prevalent everywhere except Kīggaṁnad. Also there is no uniform rule as to when the propitiation should be performed: each okka seems to follow a different rule in this matter. For instance, the Māttandra okka perform it annually in May, while the Paṭṭamāda okka perform it once every few years, while some other okkas perform it before a wedding in the house and still others perform it some time after the death of an elderly male. In the last case the object of the propitiation is to convert the spirit of the dead person into a kāraṇavā. An old saw has it, ‘The eleventh should be added to the group of ten’.

The propitiation is invariably performed at the ancestral house. The latter is whitewashed, colour-washed, and the floors washed with a solution of cow-dung. Nowadays the head of that branch of the okka which is resident in the ancestral house writes a letter to the heads of the branches living elsewhere, and to other relatives, informing them of the date of the propitiation. On the appointed day they all gather together at the ancestral house, bringing with
them their votive offerings of fowl or pig or both. A daughter of the house who has married out might bring with her a votive animal to a kóramaya of her natal okka.

The propitiation begins after sundown. Everyone takes a bath, and the head of the house dresses himself in a waist-cloth and shoulder-cloth. If he is very pious he even observes a fast.

The Bannas perform the propitiatory ritual in the central hall of the ancestral house. One of the Bannas acts as oracle (śitrulkaṭra or bojchapāḷ) while another, or two others, beat drums and sing the house song of the propitiating okka. The song gives us an account of the life of each ancestor and ancestress. The oracle wears an elaborate equipment called tērē which consists of two bamboo frames covered with red cloths. One of the two frames covers the lower part of the oracle's body, and the other, the upper part. The lower part is really like a skirt, while the upper part, which is flat and tapers towards the top, is tied to the back by means of a stout cord going round the waist. The tērē is decorated with tufts and frills of the pith of pāmbalē.

The Banna oracle mimics the ancestor who has possessed him. If the ancestor possessing him had a game leg, the oracle limps about, and when an ancestress is possessing him he ties a scarf round his head in the way a woman ties it.

The possession has the quality of drama. Sometimes a certain incident which occurred in the past is restaged during the possession. For instance, A of X okka was in the service of one of the Rājas, and he was put to death by the Rāja's order. It is alleged that this was due to the machinations of B of Y okka. Now, when an ancestor-propitiation is performed at X okka, the Banna oracle who is possessed by A shouts, 'I was betrayed by B of Y. I have descendants to proclaim my name. B of Y has none.' The okka Y was about to become extinct through the absence of male heirs when a girl of the okka Y was married in the okka parije fashion to a boy of okka Z. Okka Y no doubt continues to exist today, but through the descendants of a female member and not through an unbroken line of agnatic kinship. Agnatic continuity has more prestige than continuity otherwise achieved. Of course, continuity, however achieved, is better than cessation.1

1 This incident makes it clear that a grave offence against the ethical code results in the ending of the offender’s okka. It is surprising to note, especially in view of the existence of special customary devices like okka parije and makka.
A of X was induced to enter the Raja's service by his father, who was a renowned magician feared by all on the Wynāḍ side of Tanḍra river. At the ancestor-propitiation mentioned above, the Balṇa possessed by the son (A of X) accuses the Balṇa possessed by the father of being the real cause of the former's death, for, but for the father's pressure, the son would not have entered the service of the Raja. 'Father' and 'son' start fighting with swords, and blood is drawn. The descendants of the X okka who are looking on intervene and stop the fight.

Sometimes the oracle, possessed by a particular ancestor, inquires into the state of the ancestral estate. He asks the members of the okka to take him to the paddy-fields, and he might even sharply criticize them for not paying sufficient attention to the ancestral estate. He might inquire after the welfare of the members of the okka. It is said that sometimes these oracles point out treasure troves.

The living members ask the oracle questions concerning the various matters affecting them. 'Will my child recover from illness?' 'Why is a son not born to me?' And so on.

Before a particular ancestor leaves him, the oracle goes to the ancestor-shrine, where one of his party sacrifices a fowl or pig. Liquor, parched rice, coconut, and plantains are all offered to the ancestor represented by the oracle. The latter eats the parched rice and drinks the liquor, after which the ancestor who is possessing him leaves him. He gets ready to impersonate the next ancestor named by the head of the okka.

The last ancestor to possess the oracle is the Founder, in whose honour the oracle wears the upper part of his tērē equipment. A pig is usually sacrificed to the Founder. The head of the okka requests the Founder to bless the descendants.

On the next morning the sacrificed animals are cooked and the entire village is invited to dinner. Thus an ancestor-propitiation is also an occasion for the expression of the solidarity of the village. The Balṇas get as their perquisites the heads of the animals sacrificed, provisions, some cooked meat, and also a little cash. This is in addition to the fixed amount of paddy they are paid annually at harvest. The Balṇas in a village serve the Coorg okkas in that village or māḍ during ancestor-propitiations and other occe-
sions when their services are required, and in return for this they receive a certain amount of paddy annually. The relationship between a Banya family and a Coorg okka has a certain continuity and members of the former are well acquainted with the history of the latter. The Banya family almost becomes the repository of the traditions and history of the Coorg okkas it serves.

The Banja oracle is identified with the ancestor who is possessing him, and his acts and words are considered to be the ancestor's acts and words. In fact, an oracle is always identified with the ancestor or deity whose mouthpiece he is believed to be. But unbelievers are quite common among Coorgs, and an old man of sixty-five had not seen a single ancestor-propitiation, which he described as 'nonsense imported from Malabar'. A sub-inspector of police considered both ancestor-propitiation and the worship of village-deities to be 'superstition'. Several educated Coorgs have told me they do not believe in ancestors and village-deities. The worship of fierce deities with pigs and arrack does not find favour with many, both Sanskritic and Western influences being opposed to it. Such opposition to propitiation of ancestors and village-deities frequently goes with a preference for Vedanta of a kind. But still one comes across elders like Kuttayya who tell you, 'they (the people) continue to disbelieve in ancestors till they get a knock on the head'. Repeated failure or illness makes a man go back to his old beliefs. Sometimes the Kanjya astrologer who is consulted says that the trouble is due to the failure to propitiate ancestors.

Sometimes a man or woman is possessed by an ancestor or ancestress, and while possessed, he or she might demand merely an offering of meat and liquor, or a full-fledged ancestor-propitiation with oracles, sacrifice of animals, &c. A person is identified with the spirit or deity possessing him, and consequently the demands of the person possessed by an ancestor are treated as the demands of the ancestor who is possessing him.

The offer of meat and liquor to ancestors as well as the elaborate ancestor-propitiation are non-Brahminical and non-Sanskritic modes of propitiation involving the offering of non-vegetarian food and liquor. Also no Brahmin priests are present and no Sanskrit mantras are chanted. The non-Sanskritic modes of propitiation of ancestors contrast with the Sanskritic which consists in the offer

1 This particular person was very irreligious. He had not even gone on pilgrimage to the source of the Kaveri.
of pinda, or balls of rice or rice-flour, under the guidance of a Brahmin priest.

Amma Coorgs, the highly Brahminized section of Coorgs, do not make offerings of curried meat and liquor to their ancestors. Instead, on a certain day in the year they offer balls of rice to the ancestors, and this resembles the annual propitiation of ancestors with purely vegetarian offerings and Sanskrit mantras, which prevails among Brahmins and other high castes all over India.

Both the Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic modes of propitiation exist cheek by jowl as far as the bulk of Coorgs are concerned. The more inquiring of the men see the two modes of propitiation as mutually inconsistent, but such an inconsistency does not seriously trouble anyone. All over India Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic customs, often involving beliefs regarded as mutually inconsistent, are found existing together. Usually, the non-Sanskritic custom either drops out or is transformed to suit the Sanskritic custom, but this process takes a very long time. There is also no doubt, however, that the non-Sanskritic customs of every caste as well as those of sects and peripheral groups are continually being Sanskritized. This has been happening for over 2,000 years all over India.

Splinter groups like Amma Coorgs are decades, if not centuries, in advance of their parent-groups; the former have solved their problem by Sanskritizing their customs entirely while the latter are more conservative. Sometimes the splinter groups are so far in advance of their neighbours that they incur the wrath of everyone. They might even be ostracized by the other castes.

XV

It has already been mentioned that every okka has a nāta, which is a platform where unhewn stones representing cobra-deities are embedded. Vegetation is allowed to grow freely around this platform. There is a ban on women approaching the cobra-platform during their periods as the cobra-deities are extremely sensitive to impurity of any sort. Though women no longer observe seclusion during their periods, they are even now afraid of going near the cobra-platform because of the belief that its defilement would result in some misfortune to their okka. The angered cobra-deity may be roused to bite a member. This is clearly seen in the ancient
saw, 'The deceit of women is very great, O, Snake, please do not bite us' (pommaakkada māya māmāya pāmbē, ariyatē tiriyatē koriyorē pāmbē): a member prays to the cobra-deity not to bite even though it has been angered by women going near the cobra-platform during their periods. Women are likely to conceal such violations from others, especially males. If they are frank enough to tell what they have done, purificatory and expiatory rites could be performed to appease the cobra-deity.

Among Hindus all over India, cobras and the ant-hills in which they live are worshipped on certain occasions. In south India there is a belief that a cobra lives to a very great age, and that as it gets older its tail becomes shorter. During the last period of its life it is said to develop wings. Coorgs share these beliefs, and some of them assert that a cobra-platform is built above the spot where a cobra ended its earthly existence.

All over India there is a reluctance to kill the cobra even though it is a dangerous creature. Coorgs abstain from killing cobras found in temples and believed to be harmless, whereas they do not hesitate to kill cobras found outside temples.

The following incident is significant: A's brother did not consider it a sin to kill cobras. He one day found two cobras copulating and shot one of them dead. Several years passed without A's brother obtaining a son. Some Brahmins told him that he had committed a great sin in killing a sacred creature like the cobra and that he would not have a son till he had performed the necessary expiatory ritual. They further told him that the sin was so great that even after he had performed the expiatory ritual no more than one son would be born to him. He duly performed the necessary expiatory ritual under the guidance of Brahmin priests, and later he made a pilgrimage to the great cobra-shrine of Subramanya in the Tulu country. Sometime afterwards his wife gave birth to a son, and together with his wife and son he again visited the shrine of Subramanya to express his gratitude to the deity.

Formerly, in the month of Scorpio, lamps were lit before the cobra-platform every evening. In addition, in a few Coorg okkas, a Brahmin priest visited the platform and worshipped the cobra-deity, using Sanskrit mantras.

In the cobra-worship of Coorgs are to be found certain elements which are common to Hindus all over India, others confined to Hindus in Peninsular India, and yet others which are found only
in Malabar, South Canara, and Coorg. The worship of cobras takes certain forms in Malabar which are very similar to those in Coorg; in the former area it is common to find in the houses of high-caste Hindus a shrine for cobras in the south-western corner of the large compound round the ancestral house. The cobra-deities in a house are intimately associated with it. The vegetation growing around a cobra-platform may not be cut down, and no one in a condition of ritual impurity may approach the platform.

In the Kannada, Tamil, and Telugu countries, on the other hand, cobra-worship has a different orientation. In each village or locality, a platform is built round a peepul-tree (*ficus religiosa*) and on this platform are kept sculptured images of single snakes, or of two intertwined snakes. Such a platform is worshipped by all the people in the locality.

Cobra-worship among Coorgs has the same orientation it has in Malabar but for one important difference: in Malabar the deity Subramanya does not seem to be connected with cobras, whereas everywhere else in south India cobras are identified with Subramanya, the second son of Shiva. Shrines dedicated to Subramanya, some of them well-known centres of pilgrimage, are commonly found in south India.

The identification of cobras with Subramanya demonstrates the way in which Sanskrit Hinduism operates. The worship of cobras is very popular among all Hindus, and the identification of cobras with Subramanya provides a door for the entry of Sanskrit Hinduism. People who until then had only been worshipping cobras came to know about Subramanya, the son of Shiva. They also learn of the story of Subramanya's birth, which is a tiny slice of Hindu mythology; and of Shiva, his relation to other gods like Vishnu and Brahma, and so on. Pilgrimages to shrines dedicated to Subramanya became popular, and these shrines again are a source for the further spread of Sanskrit Hinduism. There are usually myths about these shrines and each such myth tells the pilgrim a little more about Sanskrit Hinduism.

Stones representing Puda and Gulika are frequently found in the compound of a Coorg's house. Puda is the Tamil corruption of the Sanskrit bhûta, which means a spirit. Puda is frequently one of the deities in a village temple.

*Gulika* in the Tamil country is the name of one of the eight serpents supporting the earth in Hindu mythology. In Malabar
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and Coorg, however, he is better known as the son of Saturn. He is also referred to as Māndi. Gulika is associated with death: a man is supposed to see Gulika just before dying. Horoscopes drawn up in Malabar and Coorg show the position of Gulika, and this is said to indicate when the native is going to die. When a number of deaths take place in a Coorg’s house it is customary to plant a stone called Mrityu Gulika (death Gulika). This is believed to put an end to the deaths.

Gulika is different from Kōli which merely means a spirit or ghost. Kulis are troublesome spirits which cause illness, possess people, and have to be propitiated with offerings of food and drink.

The ancestral house has a special importance to a Coorg: he regards it as sacred, he is bound by very powerful ties to it, and he considers it the proper place where the marriage of a member should be celebrated and where his funeral should be performed. Even today the various branches of an okka gather together at the ancestral house during the harvest festival and during the Kaveri festival. They also gather together for the festival of the local village-deity which may be held annually or biennially, and for the performance of ancestor-propitiation.

The house is swept and cleaned every day, and on special ritual occasions such as a festival or ancestor-propitiation, its walls are colour-washed, and the floor washed with a solution of cow-dung, a common purifying agent all over India. A festival is also a holiday, and the men abstain from agricultural work and perform festival tasks such as hanging up festoons of mango leaves on the lintel above the main door. Everyone has a bath and changes into clean clothes brought by the washerman. A festival also means a feast and the feast may be either vegetarian or non-vegetarian. All over South India the feasts which are a part of calendar festivals may not include non-vegetarian dishes—this is an idea implicit in Sanskritic Hinduism. Non-Brahmins usually prepare non-vegetarian dishes on the day following the feast.

Coorgs follow other Hindus in preparing purely vegetarian dishes on festival days. Even the ancestors are offered vegetarian dishes at these calendar festivals. But on those occasions which are...
exclusively devoted to the worship of ancestors meat and pork dishes and arrack are the preferred offerings to them. Some village-deities again require offerings of non-vegetarian dishes and liquor at festivals in their honour.

Another aspect of calendar festivals needs to be referred to here: festivals such as the festival of arms and the harvest festival include games like shooting at a target, running a race, throwing a stone, &c. These games prove an occasion for the expression of the rivalry that exists between the okkas in a village or nad. Such an occasion also canalizes the rivalry that exists in certain forms that are not destructive of the social order. Coorgs themselves treat this part of their calendar festivals as providing an arena for the expression of inter-okka rivalry.

Co-operation between okkas also receives emphasis at these festivals. Every okka in the village (or nad) is required to send all the adult males in it to the collective dances which are held at the harvest festival. Again, there is a collective hunt at the end of the harvest festival (and usually at the end of the festivals of the village-deities) to which every okka has to send all the adult males in it. Failure to do so would result in a fine being levied on the defaulting okka.

When the festival of a village-deity is being performed, every okka(excluding okkas of very low castes) has to send a man to help in festival work such as clearing the weeds growing in the temple compound and on the road along which the deity will be taken out in procession.

There is also a minute division of the ritual tasks among the high caste okkas in the village. For instance, the representative of one okka carries the image of the deity, while the representative of another okka carries a lamp and the representative of yet another okka carries the money-box (cheppu), and so on. Formerly these tasks were looked upon as privileges, and an okka was jealous of the privileges to which it was entitled by tradition and custom.

The village is a unity made up of the various okkas in it. The individuality of each participating okka and the unity of all the okkas in the village are both brought out in Professor Emeneau's description of a dance held at the festival of Bhadrakali at Karavalé bādgā near Mercara. Professor Emeneau writes:

1 Castes like the Poley are excluded from this unity. It is recognized that such castes perform extremely useful tasks both in day-to-day living and at
this dance is performed on several days both at the temple and on the dancing-green. In this the essential performers are a male member of each sib [okka] in the village, carrying each a kodi or staff surmounted by cloth tied in the form of two cones with their bases together and the apex of one pointing upward. Each performer has the right arm bare and a fold of the turban hanging down his back. If all the male members of a sib should be unable to dance because of age or infirmity, the kodi must be carried by a member of another sib along with that of his own sib. It is the sibs that are represented at the performance and individuals who dance in the line after the men carrying the staffs are a non-essential part of the performance, carry no stays, do not wear their dress in the distinctive manner of the sib-representatives, and may at any time drop out of the dance which is forbidden for the staff-carriers.1

The calendar festivals as well as the festivals of the village-deity emphasize both the solidarity and the individuality of the okka in a variety of ways. The games which are a part of some festivals give expression to and canalize inter-okka rivalry. All the okkas in a village have to co-operate in certain common tasks and games, but even this co-operation is on the basis of the acceptance of the okka as the nuclear unit of society. The participation of all the okkas in the common tasks stresses not only the unity of the larger groups such as caste, village, and nag, but also of the unity and individuality of the participating okkas. This is clearly brought out in the dance at Karavalebadga.

XVII

Every Coorg okka has a relationship of friendship with another Coorg okka living not far away. Such friendship is between two okkas, and not between the individual members of them. It is traditional and institutionalized. It is usually, though not always, mutual, and the headman and mistress of the friend-okka have duties, ritual as well as social, on occasions such as birth, marriage, and death. These duties are in addition to those derived from common membership of the village. (See Chapter II, Section XI.)

It has been stated earlier (see Chapter II, Section XI) that the social stressing of family friendship offset the disadvantage of the

1 'Kinship and Marriage among the Coorgs', F.R.A.S. (Bengal), iv, 1938, p. 124.
lack of any real neighbourhood in a village in Coorg Proper. But isolated as a Coorg okka was, it was not completely without neighbours. Only they were not the right kind of neighbours. The Poleya or other low-caste servants of the Coorg okka lived in huts near by, but the few small Poleya families could not give effective help in beating off a raiding party from another village; and their caste prevented them from participation in the ritual of a Coorg house. They could only do menial jobs and carry messages.

The relationship between a Coorg okka and its servant families has been considered earlier. The economic part of the relationship was certainly very important, but it was only a part of a total relationship which had several aspects. In Coorg folklore there are instances of a servant's great loyalty to his master, and of the latter's great affection for the former. Achchu Koṭṭa, a Poleya servant of Kallumāḍa Ayanaṇa, threw himself on the funeral pyre of his master. Ayanaṇa was very ill when a caravan from Bēṅgūr set out for Malabar, and Achchu Koṭṭa joined this caravan against his master's wishes. Before the caravan had crossed into Malabar, Achchu Koṭṭa heard that his master had died. Torn with grief and remorse, Achchu Koṭṭa ran back to Bēṅgūr only to see the flames of the funeral pyre consuming the body of his dead master. Without a second thought Achchu Koṭṭa jumped into the fire. The members of the Kallumāḍa okka erected a stone in memory of Achchu Koṭṭa outside their ancestor-shrine. When an ancestor-propitiation is held in the Kallumāḍa okka, offerings of food and drink are made to Achchu Koṭṭa's stone.

Formerly, a man and woman from the servant family or families observed ritual mourning for their dead master or mistress. The bond between master and servant was strong enough to find expression in ritual.

The de facto abolition of slavery by the opening of coffee plantations in the middle of the last century, and the great changes of the last hundred years, have contributed to the weakening of the bond between the master-okka and the servant families. But even now, when a Poleya does a piece of work, the mistress of the house gives him a small quantity of castor oil in addition to the wages (kochezhi), paid in paddy. The application of castor oil to the head is supposed to have a 'cooling' effect on the entire body. Hard work, especially in the sun, brings about 'heat' in the body which
needs to be 'cooled' by the application of castor oil to the head. The giving of castor oil by the mistress shows her concern for the health and well-being of the servant; it is an act of friendship.

### TABLE OF SAMMANDA RIGHTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Occasion</th>
<th>Subject of the rights</th>
<th>Where the subject had rights originally</th>
<th>Where now given</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The marriage of a virgin (καννί mangala)</td>
<td>Bride.</td>
<td>In her natal okka.</td>
<td>In the grooms' okka.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The marriage of a widow:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No rights are given as the widow already has rights in her new husband's okka.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>To her dead husband's brother.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The recent tendency to give her rights anew in her new husband's okka shows that the elementary family is becoming more important among Coorgs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>When the new husband belongs to a different okka from her dead husband's.</td>
<td>Widow bride.</td>
<td>In her dead husband's okka.</td>
<td>In the new husband's okka.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Divorce</td>
<td>Divorcée.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The widow's connexion with her dead husband's okka is first of all severed and this restores her to her natal okka. At her remarriage she is given rights in the new husband's okka.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Her connexion with her husband's okka is severed and she then reverts to her natal okka.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. *Kođa uflangu sam-

In their father's okka.

In their mother's okka.

Children normally are members of their father's okka, and only under exceptional circumstances are they transferred to their mother's natal okka. Such transference requires the unanimous consent of the adult males of both the concerned okkas.

5. Legitimization of a pre-or extra-

marital liaison:

(a) bendu pariţė, when both the parties are alive.

The woman is a member of her natal okka, whereas her children do not have membership anywhere.

(b) kotta pariţė, when one of the parties to the liaison is dead.

The woman concerned and her children.

In the okka of the genitor.

(b) The performance of *kotta pariţė enables the surviving partner to the liaison and the children to take part in the funeral rites for the dead person.
### Table 6: Rights of Subjects in Various Occasions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial No.</th>
<th>Occasion</th>
<th>Subject of the rights</th>
<th>Where the subject had rights originally</th>
<th>Where now given</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>(a) Okka pariţę. Son-in-law.</td>
<td>In his natal okka</td>
<td>In his wife’s natal okka</td>
<td>(a) The consent of the son-in-law and of all the adult males in his okka is necessary to effect the transfer.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) makka pariţę.</td>
<td>do</td>
<td>do</td>
<td>do</td>
<td>(b) The son-in-law retains his membership of his natal okka in makka pariţę. The children of both okka pariţę and makka pariţę are members of their mother’s natal okka.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) Adoption. The boy to be adopted.</td>
<td>In his natal okka</td>
<td>In the adoptive okka</td>
<td>Only when there are no agnatically-related males may a stranger be adopted to continue the okka threatened with extinction owing to lack of heirs. The adopted son loses his membership of his natal okka and becomes a member of his adoptive okka. The consent of all the adult males of the natal okka of the adoptive son, and the consent of the caste-eldest is necessary for the adoption to be valid.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER SIX

THE CULTS OF THE LARGER SOCIAL UNITS

I

There is a considerable body of ritual directly referring to the okka, but this is not the case when we come to larger social units such as the village (ūr), nāḍ (each consisting of a few villages), and simē or dēsha (each consisting of a few nāḍs). These large social units were never as closely-knit as the okka. The festivals of the village-deities constitute an important source of information on these units, even though only a small part of each festival refers directly to them. Of the calendar festivals, only the harvest festival is important. The festivals of the village-deities, the harvest festival, and folklore are the chief sources for this chapter.

A ‘village-deity’ does not necessarily mean the deity of a single village. In fact it is common to find two or three villages combining to celebrate the festival of a village-deity. There is usually more than one deity at the festival of a village-deity. Every temple in a village usually contains more than one deity, one chief deity from whom the temple derives its name, and the rest secondary. For instance, the Kundat Bhadrakāli temple in Kuklūr derives its name from the fact that the chief deity in the temple is Bhadrakāli. There is a shrine containing her image, and the other deities in this shrine are Gañēśa, Sārtāvū (Ayyappa), and a linga (representing Shiva) said to have been brought from Benares. Outside the shrine, but inside the temple compound, are stones representing Ayyappa, Patru Kūṭ Patāḷa (literally, ten spirits of the underworld), and Kuṭṭamamē (the mother of Kuṭṭa). Besides these, the Poleyas of Kuklūr keep representations of some deities worshipped exclusively by them, outside the temple compound on an improvised platform. All the deities in Kuklūr are considered to be subordinate to Bhadrakāli. Very frequently there is more than one

1 Kuttamamē has a temple to herself in Kuṭṭa in South Coorg. She is a famous deity and an annual festival is held in her honour.
temple in a village. In Arměri in Beppunād, for instance, there are several temples: one dedicated to Bhagavati, another to Mahādeva, two to Ayyappa, and six to Rakṭēśhwari (identified with Chamundi). The temples dedicated to Bhagavati, Mahādeva, and Ayyappa have Brahmīn priests who worship the deities by using Sanskrit mantras, whereas those dedicated to Rakṭēśhwari do not have Brahmīn priests, and pigs are sacrificed annually to her. There are two modes of worship, the Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic, and in the festival of a village-deity these two modes are found mixed in varying proportions.

Usually there is more than one temple in a village, and a temple contains more than one deity. The temples in a village might be either Sanskritic or non-Sanskritic, or might represent varying degrees of compromise between the two elements. Finally, a village-deity might also be the deity of more than one village.

The festival of a village-deity requires a certain amount of cooperation between the various temples in a village, and not infrequently between villages. For instance, the festival of the various deities in a village are so arranged that they do not clash if not actually dovetail. The festivals of the deities Ketrappa and Chaundi in Bēngūr occur at the same time, but they dovetail remarkably considering the elaborateness of the ritual that is performed. A kind of offering known as tērmūdi (usually a man wearing tērē equipment) is sent by both the Bhagavati (in common parlance, Povvedi) and Chaundē temples to the Ketrappa temple on the eighteenth day (which is also called the nammē or ‘festival day’) of the biennial Ketrappa festival.

A few miles from Bēngūr is Balmāvtī, which has an important temple dedicated to Bhagavati (Povvedi). This deity also has a very elaborate biennial festival, similar to Ketrappa’s, but the interesting point is that the two festivals are performed in alternate years. When the ‘big festival’ of Ketrappa is being performed, Bhagavati of Balmāvtī has a ‘small festival’, and vice versa. That is to say, this arrangement implies some cooperation between Bēngūr and Balmāvtī. This is all the more surprising as formerly there was a feud (maradali) between these two nāḷē, and this feud seems to have been a long and bitter one.

There is another type of co-operation to which reference must be made here. The Bāŋgas and Malēyas who officiate as oracles and dancers (wearing tērē) at the festival of Ketrappa come from the
villages Sañña Pulikōṭu and Balmāvī respectively. The services of Banğas and Maléyas are in demand in surrounding villages, but they manage to fulfil all their ritual engagements. Similarly, Pañikas from the village Biligunda officiate at the festival of Kundat Bhadrakāli. These Pañikas too are very busy people, serving as they do a number of villages. But the people of Kukūr have ensured their services by giving them, in the past, an advance (idu) of Rs50 and two gold bangles. This is paid in addition to the customary fees paid after every festival. The payment of the advance guarantees the Pañika’s attendance and service at the festival. It is clear that the Pañika or Banña or Maléya can only fulfil his engagements if the festivals do not clash with each other. The Banña is essential at the festival of a village-deity, and it is perhaps his list of engagements which ensures co-operation between the villages he serves.

The saying ‘ketrappang pattraddanē’, meaning ‘the entire pot of toddy for Ketrappa’, testifies to the deity Ketrappa’s great liking for toddy. Part of the ritual of the festival of Ketrappa consists in fetching toddy from the Kopatti hills, about seven miles from Bengur. The Kuḍiyas (a tribe) in the Kopatti hills tap the toddy, and the festival-priests go to the Kopatti hills on the seventh day of the festival carrying new earthen pots (kalėyas) filled with paddy, which is the perquisite of the Kuḍiyas. These pots are brought back on the sixteenth day, and toddy is offered to Ketrappa and other deities in Bengur on the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth days. The Kuḍiyas visit the Ketrappa temple on the eighteenth day to offer their homage to the deity, watch the ritual, and receive a share of meat and toddy.

Every priestly (kavukiira) okka in Bengur sends at least one representative to the Kopatti hills on the seventh day. They all leave the village at about 4 a.m., after taking a bath in cold water and donning ritually pure robes. They are in a condition of purity and other villagers may not look at them till they have crossed the boundary of the village. Both when they go to deposit the pots and to bring back the pots full with toddy some esoteric ritual takes place in the Kopatti hills. The festival-priests are very secretive about it, but I learn that all the ritual centres round the possession of a Kuḍiya oracle by Ayyappa, a deity of the Kuḍiyas in the Kopatti hills.

The festival necessarily implies co-operation between Bengur
people and a hill tribe living in inaccessible hills covered with heavy jungle. A festival of a village-deity usually implies co-operation with the people of another village or nāḍ, or with certain castes or tribes living in different villages or nāḍas.

II

Village-deities are an All-India phenomenon. By this it is meant that the deities who are worshipped in villages in various parts of India have more or less the same character and attributes, and that the technique of propitiating them is broadly similar. These statements no doubt sound vague and general, but any attempt to make them more precise will have to take account of exceptions at every point.

While the phenomenon is broadly similar all over India, there are important regional variations. Generally speaking, within India, each region or district has a greater unity than the larger area of which it is a part. Inside peninsular India, for instance, each linguistic area represents an area of greater cultural homogeneity and social solidarity. But there are also cultural forms which are common to two or more linguistic areas. Malayāḷam and Tamil areas have certain cultural forms in common; and similarly Kannāḍa, Telugu, and Marāṭhi areas have some cultural forms in common. Within each linguistic area too there are differences: cultural forms present in the centre of a linguistic area might not be present in the peripheral regions or present only in an altered form. Geographical barriers also usually represent cultural barriers. For instance, cultural forms found in the Malabar littoral stripe have great difficulty in spreading into the mainland of peninsular India. A country like Coorg, which lies at the periphery of three linguistic areas, Kannāḍa, Malayāḷam, and Tulu, has certain cultural forms in common with each of them.

Throughout peninsular India village-deities are represented by unshewn stones or by crude images of stone or wood. They are either housed in shrines which are usually not very elaborate, or simply embedded in the earth without any roof above them. A shrine dedicated to a village-deity is frequently found either at the foot of a tree or in the shade of a grove. Worship may or may not be offered daily at these shrines. There is no uniform rule applicable in this matter. Practice varies from village to village, and
even from temple to temple: in some temples worship (puja) is offered every day, in others once a week, while still others come to life only annually or once every few years, when the festival of the deity is being celebrated. Such a festival usually lasts several days and culminates in the sacrifice of fowl, sheep, goats, and buffaloes. Devotees walk barefoot across fire, gash themselves with swords, and so on, on the last day of the festival.

While the priests at the Sanskritic temples are usually Brahmins, men belonging to one of the non-Brahmin castes are frequently priests at the temples dedicated to village-deities. Here again practice varies from region to region, village to village, and temple to temple. For instance, in Coorg, Brahmins from South Canara are commonly priests at temples dedicated to village-deities. In Mysore and the Tamil country, on the other hand, a member of a non-Brahmin caste is normally priest at the temple of a village-deity.

Throughout peninsular India, excluding Kerala, Māri is a common village-deity. She presides over epidemic diseases such as plague, smallpox, and cholera, which usually occur in summer. The propitiation of Māri with offerings and festival takes place in summer, and also whenever plague or cholera or smallpox breaks out.

Village-deities in peninsular India are frequently females. This is specially true of the area east of the Western Ghats. Ellamma (literally 'boundary-mother') is a familiar deity in Telugu and Tamil villages. Kāli is another familiar goddess.

All village-deities are not, however, goddesses: there are also gods. Ayyanār, for instance, is a very popular god in Tamil villages and he keeps watch on the village when the villagers are asleep. Bārīdevāru is a popular god in Kannada villages.

All over peninsular India, with the exception of the Malayālam-speaking areas, bull buffaloes are favourite animals for sacrifice to village-deities. In the Malayālam-speaking areas, however, the favourite animals for sacrifice are the pig, goat, sheep, and fowl. The south-western part of Coorg shares numerous cultural forms with Malabar, and there the bull buffalo is not sacrificed to village-deities. In the eastern and northern parts, however, buffaloes are sacrificed to village-deities, especially Mari. But

I say 'usually' and not 'invariably' because sometimes there are non-Brahmin priests at the shrines of Sanskritic deities. For instance, in many temples dedicated to Śiva in one or other of his numerous forms there are Lingaśāj priests.
several years ago, in some villages near Mercara, Coorgs successfully opposed the sacrifice of bull buffaloes to Marí on the ground that buffaloes were the same as cows and the slaughter of cows (and oxen) should not be allowed under any circumstances. It is interesting to note that elsewhere in south India a similar reverence for cattle did not prevent the sacrifice of bull buffaloes to village-deities. Very recently, however, the local leaders of the Indian National Congress have been everywhere more or less successfully opposing the propitiation of village-deities with blood-offerings.

The most common village-deities in Coorg are Bhagavati (Povedi) and Ayyappa (or Sliasta). The former is female and the latter male. Several other deities such as Chaundi or Chāmundi (f.), Kāli (f.), and Kētrappa (or Kshērāpāla m.) are also occasionally found as village-deities.

All the above deities are also commonly found in Malabar and South Canara. The traditional songs which are sung in Coorg at the festivals of village-deities make the latter out to be immigrants from Malabar or South Canara. In these folksongs an important deity coming from Malabar or South Canara into Coorg usually brings with him a few minor deities who meet him on the way and beg of him to find them shelter in Coorg. Sometimes deities who come from Malabar go round to the established temples in Coorg such as the source of the river Kāvēri, and Sārtābū (Ayyappa) temple in Makkī, the Subramanya temple at Pāḍi, &c., and beg one of these latter deities for shelter.

The song sung at the festival of Kētrappa tells the story of the coming of Kētrappa into Bēngūr from Malabar: a party of Bēngūr youths led by Kallumāda Ayyānā go in a caravan to Mādāyi in Malabar, and the leader is possessed by the deity Kētrappa while returning to Coorg after selling the rice carried by the caravan. The song tells us that a number of deities, viz. Pattu Kōṭi Pāṭāla, Povedi (or Bhagavati), Chaundi, and Pūda request Kētrappa (represented by his oracle Kallumāda Ayyānā) to grant them shelter. Kētrappa promises them shelter and settles them in Bēngūr and surrounding places such as Ivattu-okkalu, Heravanāḍ, and the Kopaṭṭi Hills.

It is obvious that these folksongs cannot be treated as accurate

\[1\] Frequently the songs tell us that a group of deities set out from the mythical Milk Sea. It is interesting to note that in such cases they reach some town on the Malabar Coast first and then proceed to Coorg.
historical records. Contradictions occur quite frequently in them. And it is also clear that they are Coorg attempts at 'explaining' the fact of the existence of a number of deities in the villages with which they deal. These various deities and their festivals are brought into relation with each other, and one of the deities made out to be the leader of the rest. In another song this leadership might be claimed for a different deity in a different village.

It is clear from these songs that not only do Coorg, Malabar, and South Canara share certain common cultural and ritual forms, but that some of these have come from Malabar and South Canara into Coorg. The fact that Tulu-speaking Brahmins from South Canara are priests at very many temples in Coorg, and that Coorgs had (and have) considerable respect for them, helped the spread of Tulu and Sanskrit cultural and ritual forms in Coorg. Similarly, the Kaniya (astrologer) and Baṅga and Paṅka were responsible for the spread of Malayāḷam and Sanskrit cultural and ritual forms in Coorg. This does not mean that Malayāḷam and Tulu areas do not have some cultural forms in common. Nor does it mean that the cultural and ritual forms found among Coorgs should always, or even in the majority of cases, be attributed to diffusion from without.

Formerly, Coorgs used to go to Malabar to learn medicine and magic, and such Coorgs, on their return, seem to have exercised considerable influence and power over their countrymen. The ancestor of the Ajjikuṭṭra okka, Kaliyāṭanda Ponnappa (alias Ajjappa), and Chendappanda Kungu are all reputed to have learnt magic and medicine in Malabar, and after their death they became culture-heroes. It should be remembered in this connexion that formerly a few Coorgs from every village in south-west Coorg went annually in caravans to Malabar to sell their rice in exchange for goods which they wanted. These trade expeditions also resulted in the spread of cultural forms from one area to another.

A deity is commonly known by reference to the village in which he has a shrine. For instance, Pannangalatamme is the 'Mother of the village Pannangala', Pāḷārappa is the 'Father of the village Pāḷīr', Tumbēmalēḍēra is the 'Lord of the Tumbē hill', and so on. Even where a deity is referred to by his or her name, a prefix is usually added stating to which village the particular deity belongs: for instance, Povvedi of Ballatnāḍ Povvedi, Bhadrakāḷi of Kunda is referred to as Kundat Bhadrakāḷi,
Sārtāru of Makki is referred to as Makki Sārtāru, and so on. Frequently, the name by which a deity is popularly known gives no clue as to his Sanskritic affiliations: the deity Pāḷurāppa is said to be ‘really’ Viṣṇu, but he is ordinarily referred to by the former name. Kuṭatamme means the ‘Mother of Kuṭa’ (a village in south Coorg), and this is the name by which the deity is popularly known. The deity’s ‘real’ name is Karin Kājī (Black Kājī), who is identified with one of the manifestations or forms of Parvati, wife of Śiva.

But it is not always that the popular name hides the Sanskritic affiliations of a deity: Bhadrakājī, Chāṁundī, Povvedi (Bhagavati), Mādēva (Mahādēva), &c., have obvious Sanskritic affiliations, though such affiliations may not be known to all or even most of the devotees.

Nowhere in India are the village-deities regarded as gentle. This applies to Coorg too. The deity Māderappa settles down in the village Māde, and immediately flowers wither, sown seeds fail to sprout, and babies die in cradles. Another village-deity says that she will reward those who propitiate her and shoot an arrow at those who refuse to. In return for propitiation the deities keep away from the village and aid epidemics such as plague, cholera, and smallpox, and grant children, good crops, and longevity. They also offer protection from ghosts and minor spirits who possess and harm human beings. The oracle of the deity acts as exorcist at the festival of the deity.

Sanskritic Hinduism, which is also All-India Hinduism, makes out village gods to be manifestations of Śiva, and village goddesses to be manifestations of Śiva’s wife, Pārvatī. The implications of such a systematization will be considered later.

III

The domestic and temple architecture of Coorgs seems to have been modelled on that of Malabar. This is only natural as most of the artisan castes in Coorg Proper are immigrants from Malabar.

While Coorg houses are extremely substantial structures, temples dedicated to village-deities are usually small and unimpressive buildings. But the well-known temples dedicated to Brahminical or Sanskritic deities are substantial, as formerly rich devotees liked building solid and massive temples for their patron-deities.
Lucky indeed were the deities who could count the Rājas of Coorg as their devotees. The Bhagandēśhwara temple in Bhāgamanḍla, Omkāreshwara temple in Mērcara, the Kundat Bhadrakāli temple in Kuklūr, and many others have benefited from the munificence of the Rājas.

The construction of a temple is accompanied by elaborate ritual, and the Tantri Brahmins of South Canara are masters of this ritual. The folksongs frequently refer to a Tantri Brahmin being sent for to supervise the performance of the ritual surrounding the construction of a temple. The Tantri himself knows how to set images more firmly in their bases, revivify deities who have lost power, and so on.

It is usually a Brahmin from either South Canara or Malabar who is priest at temples dedicated to Bhagavati (Povvedi). Worship is offered to the deity at least once every day in temples where Brahmins are priests. There are, however, temples in which a member of one of the non-Brahmin castes is priest. For instance, a Kannada-speaking Okkaliga is priest at the temple of Kuttaṭamme in Kutta; and similarly, the deity Kēṭrappa has a Coorg priest. Quite apart from this, in almost every village the very low castes (Mēda and Poleya) have their own deities who are not usually worshipped by the higher castes. The latter refer to such a deity as, for instance, ‘Mēda Ayyappa’ (Mēdas’ Ayyappa), ‘Poleyara dēvaru’ (Poleyas’ deities), and so on.

The position may be summed up thus: (1) there are first of all temples dedicated to Sanskritic deities, with Brahmin priests, at which only vegetarian offerings are made, and these deities are worshipped by all the high castes. Until recently, Untouchables were not being admitted to such temples. Now, legally, they are entitled to enter them. (2) There are temples where Brahmins are normally priests, the offerings normally vegetarian, and the mode of worship Sanskritic, but on certain occasions such as the festival of the deity the Brahmin withdraws and animals are decapitated before the deity by a non-Brahmin. The Brahmin priest re-enters the temple only after purifying it. (3) Temples where non-Brahmins are priests. Brahmins usually do not have anything to do in such a temple, but lay Brahmins may propitiate such a deity during an

1 This ignores, however, the distinction into Shāivist and Vaishnavīst, and the fact that the orthodox followers of the one do not generally go to the temples of the other.
epidemic or other disaster. Brahmins make only offerings of fruits and flowers even when propitiating such a deity.\(^1\) (4) Deities propitiated by one or other of the lowest castes who are rarely propitiated by the upper castes. Such a deity is identified with the caste habitually propitiating him (or her).

Every temple has a headman called \textit{dēva takka}, belonging to one of the high castes, who generally looks after the temple and its property. The \textit{okkas} belonging to the high castes annually pay him a contribution in paddy and cash towards the maintenance of the temple. He, together with the village headman, organizes the elaborate festival of the deity. He has also certain ritual duties at the festival, which vary from village to village. His relation with the village headman too varies from village to village.

Formerly every important temple in a village seems to have had three permanent officials, Mukkāṭi, Neravanāṭa, and Chengōla. Of these three the last two are defunct today, and only the first-mentioned Mukkāṭi still continues to exist. These offices were hereditary in certain \textit{okkas} and these \textit{okkas} generally belonged to a high caste like Coorg, Gauḍa smith, and cowherd. The Chengōla looked after the accounts, and the Mukkāṭi swept the temple and lit the lamps, but we do not know what the duties of the Neravanāṭa were. Mukkāṭi and Neravanāṭa occur occasionally as surnames of certain Coorg \textit{okkas}.

Every temple has pipers and drummers. These may belong to a high caste like Mārāyas, or a low caste like Mēdas or Poleyas.

In addition to the above, every temple of a village-deity has a number of \textit{kāvukāras} or festival-priests who are active only during the periodical festival. All the high-caste \textit{okkas} in a village are usually festival-priests at the festival of their village-deity. This priesthood, like other offices, is attached to the \textit{okka} and not to the individual members thereof. Both the men and the women of the priestly \textit{okkas} have duties and roles at the festival. The men have such tasks as carrying the idol of the deity, bathing it, and holding swords before it while it is being carried in state, while the

\(^1\) It is possible, however, that in exceptional circumstances a Brahmin might make an offering of a fowl through a non-Brahmin friend. He might also take a wife, sister, or daughter, possessed by a ghost, to a non-Sanskritic temple for cure.

\(^2\) As far as I know the Brahmin is nowhere festival-priest. He is either priest at the temple or performs only purificatory rites during the festival. In the latter case, there is another temple dedicated to a Sanskritic deity, where he performs all the priestly duties every day.
women carry the sacred dish-lamp and the pōlīya box.\(^1\) Again, each festival-priest may be required to provide a certain votive offering like kudurē ('horse'), chālē ('prostitute'), ettu pōraṇa (bullock loaded with rice), and so on. The oracles (tiruvāla) also run traditionally in certain okkas.

The entire work of the festival is distributed among the various high-caste okkas in the village. (The Médas and Foleyas, though they may have important roles, are nowhere festival-priests.) The work is divided meticulously: for instance, at the Kētrappa festival, a man belonging to one okka carries Kētrappa's image up to the temple compound and then hands it over to another belonging to a different okka who carries it for about 12 feet and places it on a bench. Division of festival labour is thorough and minute, and formerly a duty was looked upon as a privilege.

According to the song sung at the festival of Kētrappa, the okkas which are festival-priests today all formed part of the original caravan which went to Malabar and brought the deity to Bēngūr. Incidents which form part of the festival are 'explained' by reference to this caravan: for instance, the Kētrappa image is brought from its normal resting-place which is the Taṭṭanda house on the seventeenth day of the festival and deposited in the Arēyanda house for three days, after which it is taken back to the Taṭṭanda house. This is explained in the song by reference to the fact that the deity stayed in the Arēyanda house while a temple was built for him when he first came to Bēngūr. The important fact for us is that the song refers to this incident. The song provides a charter and an explanation of the incidents taking place in the festival.

### IV

The festival of Kundat Bhadrakāli of Kuklūr, near Virarājpet in south Coorg, now briefly described, may be regarded as typical of the festivals of village-deities. These festivals last for several days, involve very elaborate and complicated ritual, and imply the co-operation of several castes, and frequently of two or three villages.

\(^1\) The pōlīya box is a box of plaited cane, containing an odd number of measures of rice, odd number of coconuts, plantains, jaggery cubes, and betel leaves and areca-nut. It is carried by a married woman on auspicious occasions such as marriage.
4. Plan of the temple of Bhadrakāli of Kunda

Rough sketch of the Temple of Kundat Bhadrakāli of Kuklur, near Viharājpet
Every village in Coorg, and occasionally two or three villages together, celebrate either annually or once every few years the festival of a village-deity. These festivals have the same structure all over Coorg Proper, and a description of any one of these festivals gives one an idea of the religious life of the people. But this should not lead one to conclude that there are not any important differences between the festivals of different village-deities.

The ritual life of a Coorg is regulated with reference to the very accurate solar calendar which prevails in the Tulu-Malayalam and Tamil-speaking areas. The festival of a village-deity starts on a certain day in a particular solar month, and goes on for seven or nine or eleven or fifteen or twenty-one days according to local custom. Local custom again decides the length of the interval between two festivals: it may be a year or two years or more.

The festival of a village-deity usually begins with the tappadaka ceremony at which all the assembled villagers take a vow to observe certain dietetic and other restrictions till the evening of the namem or ‘festival day’ which occurs towards the end. At the Kundat Bhadra-kalli festival, the tenth day is the ‘festival day’ and the dietetic restrictions are broken on the tenth night. The eighth day of the festival is the pati or ‘fast day’, and on this day villagers have to subsist on pancakes and the sweet liquid dish, paddyam.

There is a lull in the ritual after the administering of the vows till the ‘fast day’. It does not, however, mean total absence of ritual: some routine ritual acts such as the beating of drums and dancing before the temple of the deity are performed. Also preparations are made for the later important days: the roads and the approaches to the temple are cleared of weeds.

The eighth and tenth days are important days, as mentioned earlier. On the twelfth day there is a dinner for all the men in the village (excluding the Brahmin priests), and the ‘village goat’ (bade) and the two village fowls (aru kelli), sacrificed to Bhadra-kalli on the tenth night, are cooked and eaten at this dinner.

1 The people in Kannada and Telegu countries regulate their ritual life mainly with reference to the lunar calendar. But the upper castes need to refer to the solar calendar also for some of their festivals and ritual.

2 Poleyas are usually excluded from participation in these ceremonies. They are either totally excluded from the festival or, where they are allowed to participate, they do so at a different level from the rest. The Medas are never excluded from the festival, but are allowed to participate at a different level from the high-caste people on the one hand and the poleyas on the other. Custom, in this respect, varies from village to village.
On the first of kādiyar (Taurus), at about 8 a.m., the members of Kuklūr village gather together before the temple of Kandāt Bhadrakāli. The Brahmin priest of the temple worships the deity, and then the Bhadrakāli oracle, Shri Tātānqra Karṇappa, becomes possessed by the deity and, while possessed, he issues instructions as to how to conduct the festival. He allotted the work of the festival among the various Coorg okkas in the village and decides the dates of the fast and festival days. These days as well as the work which each okka has to do have already been decided by custom, and one might say that the oracle only decides according to custom. Sometimes, however, he makes minor alterations to suit special circumstances.

An elder of the Moṇṇandra okka then administers the festival vows to the assembled villagers. The headmanship of the Bhadrakāli temple runs in the Moṇṇandra okka, and to him as dēva takka belongs the right of administering oaths. A member of the Kuṭtānda okka then dances the 'peacock dance' before the temple, carrying a bundle of peacock feathers. The dancer dances to the beat of the Poleya's drum.

No ritual is performed on the second day. On the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh days, the representatives of the Kuṭtānda okka dances the peacock dance a hundred and one times round the stone post before the temple. Four Coorgs sing the Bhadrakali song to the beat of a big drum (dūṭu).

On the eighth day a partial fast is observed till dusk when a horn is blown which puts an end to the fast. At night, after dinner, there is a fancy-dress (bōḍu) show in which Coorg men take part. They dress themselves as sanyāsīs, Māppilla traders from Malabar, Mēḍa drummers, and so on. The ways and customs of different castes and people from different parts are satirized in the fancy-dress show. In 1941 (when I witnessed the festival) the marriage of a Coorg girl with a Tamil Mudaliar man was satirized. Coorgs do not approve of marriage with non-Coorgs and this disapproval expresses itself in a variety of ways. Such marriages are still unusual.

After the fancy-dress show at the threshing-yard (kāla) of the

1 I remember an attempt to pass a formal resolution of censure against a high-placed Coorg gentleman who had married a non-Coorg. This was during the harvest festival when the various branches of the okka are expected to assemble at the ancestral house. The attempt failed conspicuously as a very important branch of the okka living outside Coorg failed to turn up.
Nandiyanca okka, those taking part in the fancy-dress as well as the spectators go to the temple along with the Poleya oracles. The latter dance outside the temple, before the platform where representations of their deities are kept. After this dance the fancy-dress men proceed to every high-caste house in Kuklur, beginning with the house of the nāḍ-headman and ending with the house of the Brahmin priest of the Bhadrakali temple. The order in which they should proceed to the various houses has been fixed by custom. At each house the fancy-dress men are treated to coffee, coconut, plantains, and cooked rice dough (putṭ).

The duties, contributions in cash or kind, and offerings which each Coorg okka in Kuklur has to make are clearly laid down. These duties run in the okkas concerned, and they may not be altered except with their consent. When an okka dies out or migrates to a different part of Coorg and a new okka from outside buys its property, the latter steps into the rights and duties of the former.¹

The performance of the festival of Kundat Bhadrakali requires the co-operation of several castes. In the case of all the cooperating castes except Coorgs the contribution to the work of the festival is on the basis of caste. In the case of Coorgs, however, it is on the basis of okka. Every Coorg okka in Kuklur is a priestly okka at the festival of Kundat Bhadrakali.

The Mālettira, Moguṇandra, and Nandiyanca okkas are each required to make offerings of an ettu pūrāta (rice loaded on a pair of bullocks), chālande (‘prostitute’), and kudure (‘horse’). These offerings are made on different days towards the end of the festival. A young boy from each of the three okkas is dressed as a girl and he is called a ‘prostitute’. On the eleventh afternoon the three ‘prostitutes’ run a race and this is followed by a race of the three ‘horses’.

A hollow ‘horse’, minus legs and tail, is made with plaited split bamboo, and in the middle of its back the ‘horse’ has an opening large enough to allow a man’s head and shoulders to pass through. One man sits on the shoulders of another and the head and shoulders of the top man are made to pass through the opening in the bamboo ‘horse’. The lower man’s head is hidden by the bamboo frame. The frame is decorated with garlands of flowers.

¹ At the Ketrappa festival the immigrant Pattamamā okka now perform all the duties which once belonged to the Ayyanokka. The latter died out and the Pattamamā bought their lands and settled down in Bengal.
On the ninth afternoon the villagers go in state to the Bhadrakāli temple, accompanied by the three 'horses'. The latter run round the inner shrine thrice. After this is over, Coorg men dance the 'torch dance' (bojakāli)—actually they hold in their hands swords (kadalates) or chauris (yak-tail whisks). Four Coorg drummers stand in the centre of the circle formed by the dancers, beating their small drums. As they beat the drums they sing the Bhadrakāli song. The outer circle of dancers do not, however, sing this song, but a different one which consists mostly of the names of deities interspersed with short interjections such as 'ho!', 'ha!', and 'he!': people dancing the torch dance always sing such a song.

After the dance is over, the Brahmin priests treat the Coorg devotees to coffee, and a dish made of parched rice mixed with jaggery and grated coconut. Coorgs sit on the steps all round the shrine and the Brahmins serve them, taking care, however, not to touch them. Only the priests may enter the kitchen or the inner shrine.

The Poleyas who stand outside the temple compound then light reed torches in honour of one of their deities. They frequently shake the torches and this sends forth a shower of sparks. This is called tud namné (torch festival). They then let fly twenty-five chickens which perch on the roof of the temple compound. The upper-caste people who are inside the temple now climb up the roofs and catch the chickens, which belong to those who catch them.

The Poleya is normally the servant of the Coorg. He works for his master in the latter's field and house, and in return for this he is paid in paddy and straw annually. Usually the Poleya, like the Brahmin, is the receiver of goods from the Coorg.

At the Kundat Bhadrakāli festival the live chickens offered by Poleyas ultimately reach their Coorg masters. It is like a gift by Poleyas as a caste to Coorgs as a caste, and such a gift emphasizes inter-caste solidarity. Caste has a natural tendency to stress...
horizontal ties and this has to be balanced by stressing vertical ties periodically.

In the case of the Brahmin the dishes prepared for offering to the deity also become gifts to people who normally contribute to the upkeep of the temple and its priest. The Brahmin and Poleya, though they stand at either extreme of the social scale, are similar in this, that they are normally receivers of goods at the hands of Coorgs and others. During the festival they make token returns which, while negligible economically, are enough to stress the goodwill prevalent between the various sections of a village community.¹

The tenth day, the festival day, is the most important day of the festival. Visitors come from surrounding villages to witness the ritual that is performed on this day at the temple. A ritual fast is observed till about 10 p.m., and adult villagers subsist till then on pancakes and payasa.

The morning is devoted to making preparations for the rites in the evening, and for cooking. Sometime in the afternoon the villagers go in procession to the Bhadrakāli temple. The procession is led by Poleya oracles who walk with their faces to the Bhadrakāli oracle and the crowd. Pack-bullocks carrying votive offerings of rice (ettu pārata) form part of the procession.

The Poleya oracles stop outside the temple, before the wooden platform on which an image and representations of their deities are placed. The villagers go into the temple driving their pack-bullocks before them and walk round the Bhadrakāli shrine thrice. They then dance the torch dance in the temple yard, holding yak-tail whisks or swords in their hands.

Drummers belonging to the Mārāya caste beat big drums called chandēs while the Brahmin priests worship Bhadrakāli inside the shrine using Sanskrit mantras. Devotees, Coorgs as well as others, who pay the requisite fees, can have worship performed by the priest to the deity in their names.

Meanwhile, the Bhadrakāli oracle stands behind the shrine and people put questions to him on matters concerning their welfare: one wants to know whether his wife will recover from an illness, another why he has suffered from a series of misfortunes in the last

¹ They are alike in that both are excluded from the activities of the middle castes. Extreme purity excludes the Brahmin while extreme impurity excludes the Untouchable.
few years, a third man whether he should go ahead with a business or other venture he has been contemplating for some time, and so on. (He answers questions again that night.)

Outside the temple compound Poleya oracles are possessed by their deities. They run about possessed, and their possession comes to an end when the possession of the Bhadrakāli oracle comes to an end. While possessed, the Poleya oracles may be called upon to exorcise evil spirits from people.

After the possession stops, devotees make offerings of money (kānike) to the deity. Miniature silver representations of a human being, of any part of the body, and of a cradle are made by those who had vowed to make such offerings on recovery from an illness, or recovery of the normal use of an organ, or the birth of a child, respectively.

The afternoon concludes with the Brahmin priests’ offering to the devotees parched rice sweetened with jaggery and coffee. The villagers then disperse.

At about 9 p.m. the people of Kuklur and sightseers from other villages gather together at the threshing-yard of the Nandiyanḍa akka. Mēdas and Poleyas play on their drums and pipes, and Coorg men and boys dance to their music. Four villagers beat the big drum (dōlu), singing the drum song which is about Bhadrakāli. Votive animals, to be offered to Bhadrakāli, are all assembled here before being driven to the temple. In 1941 there were twenty-three sheep, three goats, and fifty fowls. This was exclusive of one ‘village goat’ (ārāṇa) and two ‘village fowls’ (ārū kōli) which are subscribed for by the entire village.

With a brass mask of Bhadrakāli as nucleus, a Pāṇika builds a circular tērē—a framework of bamboo covered with thin sheets of the pith of the pāmbałē plant. This tērē is leaned against two pegs and then the Pāṇika worships it. He kills a chicken and cooks it in

1 Collections are also made on the ninth and eleventh days. The expenses of the festival are met out of the money raised at the collections. Rs 110 was collected on the tenth day.
2 It is known that formerly between 300-400 animals were annually sacrificed to Bhadrakāli. The number has fallen off very greatly now. A very small section of Coorg opinion would like to do away with animal sacrifice altogether.
the immense fire that is burning several yards from the Bhadrakāli tērē. The chicken and a little toddy are offered to the tērē representing Bhadrakāli.

The Paṇiṅka dancer gets ready for his performance which begins an hour later. He wears tiny bells (gaggaras) round his ankles, paints his face red and yellow, wears a turban, and ties an elaborate red skirt round his waist. He stands there waiting for the Bhadra-

kāli oracle to arrive and give him permission to place the circular tērē on his head. The tērē is kept flat on the head and held by one hand while the Paṇiṅka dances and sings a song in praise of Bhadra-

kāli.

Three Poleyas, oracles of deities worshipped only by Poleyas, also wait for the Bhadrakāli oracle to arrive. The latter rushes into the Nandiyaṅḍa threshing-yard, stamps on the roaring fire with bare feet, and then touches the Bhadrakāli tērē, signifying that the Paṇiṅka may now place it on his head. He then rushes to the temple, where he starts dancing a very vigorous dance before the shrine of Bhadra-

kāli.

A change is noticeable in the Poleya oracles as soon as the Bhadrakāli oracle rushes in. The deities of the Poleyas are regarded as subservient to, and dependent upon, Bhadrakāli, who is the deity of the higher castes. And the oracles, who are Poleyas of the deities of the Poleyas, are also regarded as inferior to, dependent upon, the oracle of Bhadrakāli, who is a Coorg. Thus the struc-

tural distance between Coorgs and Poleyas expresses itself in every sphere.

Two Poleya oracles run to and fro, with swords in their hands, while the third, the oracle of the deity Pūḍa, writhes on the ground and groans, while the Bhadrakāli oracle is stamping on the fire with bare feet. He stops groaning and writhing as soon as the Bhadra-

kāli oracle leaves the threshing-yard.

The villagers place the tērē on the Paṇiṅka’s head. The latter starts singing a song in Maylaḷaḷaḷam in honour of Bhadrakāli. The entire body of villagers, headed by the Poleya oracles marching with their faces to the crowd, then run to the temple. The Poleyas stop outside the temple while the others go in. The votive sheep also may not go in, and they remain outside the temple. They are later sacrificed outside the temple.

The villagers go into the temple and walk round the shrine thrice. The village goat heads the procession inside the temple.
Once the third round is completed, the Pañika dances before the shrine. The villagers let off fireworks, the Marayas beat drums, and there is general tumult and shouting.

The Bhadrakālī oracle executes a vigorous dance for about forty-five minutes before the shrine. After the dance is over he selects two swords out of a number offered by the Brahmin priest and then proceeds to the roofed platform at the entrance to the temple, where he declares how many of the votive animals may be sacrificed to the Poleya deities. Then he proceeds to place one sword on his head and hit it with the other. Soon his head is covered entirely with blood. The Poleya oracles gash themselves following the Bhadrakālī oracle. The latter then proceeds to the veranda of the shrine, where he gashes himself more. This gashing is called narāhiṇī (human sacrifice). After the oracle has stopped gashing himself he answers questions. He orders the Pañika to cease dancing and remove the tēré. The Brahmin priest then offers him consecrated water which he drinks. The priest begs the oracle, identified with Bhadrakālī, to pardon the lapses which might have occurred through ignorance and to leave the village without inflicting any harm. The oracle orders those present to conduct the festival properly, and then the possession ceases.

The oracle is completely identified with the deity supposed to be possessing him. Even the Brahmin priest believed that the oracle of Bhadrakālī was really the deity herself. It was temporarily forgotten that he was a Coorg by caste. There was a look of fear on the priest's face when he was requesting the deity (the oracle) to leave the village without harming anyone. But though the oracle is identified with Bhadrakālī, he does not enter the innermost room where Bhadrakālī's image is kept. That is to say, the implications of the identification of the oracle with Bhadrakālī are not fully worked out. Only the priest may go into the innermost room, and this rule is not relaxed in favour of the oracle who is temporarily identified with Bhadrakālī.

After the Bhadrakālī oracle returns to his normal condition, the priest shuts the door of the shrine and goes home. Women, children, and a good many spectators also leave. Only the festival-priests and other functionaries remain, along with those who have brought the votive animals, to witness the decapitation that follows. The Pañika, whose duty it is to sacrifice the animals brought by devotees, makes a small incision in the little finger of his left hand
before decapitating the animals. As soon as a few drops of blood drip from his finger, he sacrifices the 'village fowls'. Then he decapitates the 'village goat' before the shrine. The decapitation of the other animals takes place only after the decapitation of the 'village fowls' and 'village goat'. The Panjika receives as his perquisite the heads of the 'village goat' and of all the fowls.

After all the animals have been cut, the assembled villagers turn their backs on the scene of carnage and remain silent for a few minutes. This is to enable the deity to consume the essence of the sacrificed animals in peace. They then turn round and sing the *ānanda pāṭ* (the song of joy), after which the villagers depart for their homes with the headless carcasses. The headless 'village goat' is tied to a high branch of the *dēva kaṇigale* (oleander) tree near the temple. It remains suspended there till noon of the twelfth day, when it is taken down and cooked for the communal dinner. It is said that vultures and kites do not touch the carcass of the 'village goat'; nor does the flesh go bad as it normally would in the heat of summer. This is attributed to the power of Bhadrakāli.

On the eleventh morning a representative of the Karṇānda okka cleans the temple yard of bloodstains and he is paid three *papas* (about nine annas) for performing this duty. The Brahmin priest then ritually purifies the temple and temple yard by sprinkling consecrated water everywhere and uttering the appropriate Sanskrit *mantras*.

Races are held on the eleventh afternoon for 'prostitutes' (*chālē*) and for 'horses' (*kudorē*). The Maleṭṭira, Moṣṇanda, and Nandiyanđa okkas are each required to send one 'prostitute' and one 'horse' for the races. 'Prostitutes' and 'horses' are regarded as votive offerings. For instance, when a boy is ill, his parents might make a vow to the effect that they will dress him up as a 'prostitute' at the coming festival.

Getting the 'prostitute' and 'horse' ready in time is not very easy, and clear, if elaborate, rules are laid down requiring certain *okkas* to help each of the three *okkas* charged with the responsibility of making the offerings. For instance, the Tatanṭira okka is required to help the Maleṭṭira okka, the Kuṭṭanda okka (now split into two) to help the Moṣṇanda okka, and the Maleṭṭira okka to help...
The Nandiyan ākka to get the 'prostitute' ready. Elaborate rules are again laid down as to which ākkas should help each of the three ākkas concerned to get the 'horse' ready. The punctilious regard for detail is characteristic of the festivals of village-deities. The Molānqra 'prostitute' and 'horse' are conducted by the Poleya oracles to the Molānqra rice-fields, and after leaving them there, the Poleya oracles accompany the Bhadrakālī oracle to the Māleṭṭira house. Together they escort the Māleṭṭira 'prostitute' and 'horse' to the Molānqra rice-fields. Finally, the entire body proceed to the threshing-yard of the Nandiyan ākka, where they meet the latter's 'prostitute' and 'horse'. At first, the three 'horses' run a race and then the 'prostitutes' follow suit.

The villagers, oracles, 'horses', and 'prostitutes' then proceed to the temple, where they walk round the shrine thrice. The 'prostitutes' and 'horses' perform a dance and this is followed by the villagers dancing the 'torch dance'.

Tenge pōrē or 'coconut scramble' takes place afterwards. The nāḍ-lor temple-headman holds a coconut aloft in his right hand, and this is a signal for youths to gather round him. He then lowers his right hand and stretches it horizontally before him. This is a sign for the youths to try and snatch it from him. After snatching the coconut, the man in possession of it has to run a few yards to a stone where he should break it, but before he does this, anyone may pounce on him and snatch the coconut from him. He who breaks it on the stone is the winner. He is given a prize.

The Brahmin priest then worships the goddess, using Sanskrit mantras, and this brings the proceedings to an end on the eleventh day.

On the twelfth morning there is an elaborate purification rite which the priest performs before the assembled villagers. The accounts of the money-offerings made on the ninth, tenth, and eleventh days are checked. Out of this sum fees are paid to the priest, oracles, cooks, Mārāya drummers, Paṇika, and Mēda, and Poleya musicians. The Bhadrakālī oracle then decides how much money should be spent on the evening's dinner.

The 'village goat' is brought down from the tree, cut up, and cooked into curry along with the 'village fowls'. There is a huge dinner at which all the villagers take part. Toddy is also served at this dinner, as at other village dinners.
The Bhadrakāli oracle plays a most important and, to the outsider, rather puzzling role in the festival. He directs the festival at every stage and these directions are given while he is believed to be possessed by the deity whose oracle he is.

It should be remembered here that the tasks which each okka has to perform in the festival and the contributions it is required to make are all determined by custom. The oracle rarely sets aside or countermands these tasks and contributions, and he does so only when there are good reasons: for instance, if the sole adult male representative of one of the concerned okkas is seriously ill during the festival the oracle will ask another okka to take over the duties of the sick man.

Sometimes the oracle is given the discretionary power to act with some latitude. For instance, he is required to allot some of the votive animals brought by the upper-caste devotees to the deities of the Poleyas. In 1941, when I witnessed the festival, he did not allot any goat to the Poleya deities as only three goats had been brought as offerings. The Poleya deities had to rest content with a few sheep and fowls.

The oracle also decides which day of the festival should be the fast-day or pañci. He usually chooses the eighth day, but if it is unsuitable for some reason or other, he chooses an earlier or later day.

The point to note is that all these instructions are issued while the oracle is believed to be possessed by the deity. The oracle's words are regarded as the deity's words. Coorgs commonly talk about 'the deity said this', and 'the deity did that', and it is only after a while that the outsider understands that they are referring to the oracle's acts and words. The oracle no doubt issues instructions while possessed, but these instructions only restate, confirm, and support what has already been decided by custom. The oracle exercises his discretionary power only in certain known and definite contexts.

The villagers know every step of the Bhadrakāli oracle beforehand. They tell you that 'he will be running in a minute', or that 'he will be gashing his head', and so on. It is like a play which they have seen before and you have not.

Shri Tattendra Karyappa is the oracle of Bhadrakāli and unlike...
other Coorgs he is a vegetarian and teetotaller. People respect him greatly for his piety. He is frequently contrasted with other oracles, who, in their day-to-day lives, are neither conspicuously pious nor virtuous.

Poleyas may not enter the temple of Bhadrakali. Images and representations of their deities are placed on an improvised platform outside the temple compound. The Poleya oracles dance before this platform.

Some of the duties performed by the Poleyas, however, require them to exercise power over people belonging to the higher castes, and this has the effect of compensating them for the low position they normally occupy in the caste structure. The Poleya oracles who dance before their deities have the power to spot any stranger trying to enter the temple. They also exorcise evil spirits from possessed persons who may frequently belong to a high caste.

Votive animals are brought on the tenth day to Bhadrakali mostly by the members of the high castes. A few of these are allotted to the Poleya deities by the oracle of Bhadrakali. While half of each decapitated animal before Bhadrakali is shared by okkas belonging to the high castes in Kuklur, the animals decapitated before Poleya deities are not so shared. The Poleyas share among themselves the animals decapitated before their deities. The allotment of some of the animals brought by members of the high castes to the Poleya deities constitutes a gift by the high castes to Poleyas. This might be regarded as a return gift for the twenty-five chickens which were ‘given’ on the ninth day by the Poleyas to the high-caste people.

The position of the Poleyas varies from festival to festival. In some festivals the exclusion aspect seems to be stressed to the neglect of other aspects, whereas in certain others, along with the exclusion-aspect, the solidarity-aspect and the compensation-aspect are all stressed, but with the first mentioned predominating over the others.

VIII

The village is a social unit of considerable strength, and this is in spite of the fact that caste-ties are always tending to stretch beyond the village (and even nāḍ). A village is a multi-caste association and the unity of the village always demands that caste-ties
are checked sufficiently to prevent their overflowing the village; and that unity with other castes occupying different positions in the hierarchy is stressed. This was easier in the past because the hierarchy was tacitly accepted by the people, and low castes like Mēdas and Poleyas did not object to participating with the other castes in the village at a lower level, or even being completely excluded on certain ritual occasions. Again the widespread prevalence of feuds between villages and between nānds tended to emphasize the unity of the village and check the segmentary action of caste.

At the tappādaka ritual, the members of the village or nāḍ celebrating the festival of the local village-deity undertake to observe certain dietetic and other restrictions while the festival lasts. The villagers may not kill an animal or break an egg or coconut for the table; and toddy may not be tapped within the village. Villagers who want to consume these articles have to import them from outside. The festival-priests, who are more important than ordinary villagers, may not consume even imported meat and toddy. They have to observe strict vegetarianism and teetotalism. They are also required to observe strict continence and avoid touching laymen.

In the Kētrappa festival, women in their periods are required to leave the village and return to it only after the festival is over. Such a woman is in a condition of pollution; and her presence in the village is regarded as inconsistent with the ritual status of the village. People in a condition of birth-or death-pollution are also not allowed to participate in the festival.

No marriage may be performed during the festival. If a person dies in the village he has to be buried quietly, without the customary firing of guns and band.

These restrictions serve to show that the village (or nāḍ) is the concerned entity in the festival. The restrictions increase as concern increases—the festival-priests have to observe more restrictions than the laymen. The village (or nāḍ) observing the festival is marked off from other villages by these restrictions. Every villager knows that failure by any one of them to observe the restrictions might result in some misfortune to the entire village. The unity of the village is projected to the 'mystical' plane and is supported by ritual sanctions.

A brief account of a part of the ritual of enumeration of restric-
tions at the harvest festival is necessary here. The headman of the most important temple in the village begins by asking whether everyone (every adult male, that is to say) is present.

The village-headman replies, 'Yes, according to old usage.'

Village-headman: 'Has the okka which has committed the wrong, the one who stays outside (Poleyas), the one who heats and beats (Airis or smiths), the one who lifts and beats (Maqivalas or washermen), without a single absentee, is everyone assembled here?'

Temple-headman: 'Yes, according to old usage.'

Temple-headman: 'He who knew how to sing, but refused to sing or dance at the festival, or when the villagers went singing and dancing to his house, he did not open the closed door, or he did not remove the bell-metal dining-dish leaned against the wall, or he did not light the sacred wall-lamp, or he did not mix with another, or he abused another villager during the festival, or he beat another villager all over the body, such a man shall pay a fine of forty-eight panas for violating the injunctions of god.' Saying this the temple-headman extends his palm towards the village-headman who strikes it as witness to the statement.

The above rite makes it clear that the members of every caste in the village, including the Poleyas, attended the meeting of the village-assembly, and that everyone in the village had to observe certain rules and restrictions during the festival. The villagers had to keep their houses clean, with the doors open to receive a party of singers and dancers, with the sacred wall-lamp lit, they had to join in the singing and dancing, and finally they had to refrain from quarrelling, whatever the provocation. Failure to observe these rules was punished with a heavy fine.

At the festival of a village-deity tappadaka ritual is performed in the beginning and the restrictions enumerated to the members of the village (or ndf), whereas in the harvest festival tappadaka is an occasion for meting out punishment to those guilty of misdemeanour during the festival. Again, the latter may be regarded

\[1\] I have given above a translation of the formulas as they occur in Pujjo- Pulam, pp. 239-40.

In Kadiyetniid the temple-headmen, or a temple official, opens the proceedings, whereas near Mercara the village-headmen does it. The person who has to reply again varies from region to region: it may be the village or temple-headman, or some elder.

The date of the ritual of the enumeration of restrictions also varies from region to region.
as more secular than the former: at the festivals of the village-deities the members of the village take a vow in the name of god to keep the rules and restrictions, whereas at the harvest festival no such vow is taken.

At the end of the harvest festival there is a village dance (ār kōḷa) in which all the adult males in the village have to take part; and on the following day, or two days later, there is a dance for the entire nāḍ to which every village belonging to the particular nāḍ sends its representatives. Each village makes a special point of sending its best dancers to the nāḍ dance.

The village dance is followed by a collective hunt by the villagers. (A collective hunt may also be organized by a nāḍ.) Every adult male in the village is required to be present at the hunt, and a successful hunt implies a co-ordination of the activities of numerous individuals. Lack of proper co-ordination has to be paid for with life or limb.

The festivals of village-deities, the harvest festival, and the festival of arms all terminate with a dinner for the entire village (or nāḍ). The boar that is killed in the collective hunt is cooked on this occasion. If the game is not enough to go round, then one or two domesticated pigs or goats are slaughtered in addition. Each house brings its own cooked rice-flour to the dinner. The headman selects five men to serve food to the men.

The men bring halves of coconut shells or leaf-cups for liquor: a young man is given only one cup of liquor while an elder is entitled to more. The singers get an extra share of meat and liquor. The Poleyas do not sit with the rest, but are given a quantity of meat and liquor which they consume by themselves.

Both the village dance and the village hunt stress the unity of the village. In the case of the village hunt, there is the additional element of the threat of danger from the boar or tiger or other wild animal. The village dinner is rightly called ūnormé or 'village harmony', as it maintains and increases the harmony of the village.

IX

Like the village and okka, the nāḍ is a real social unit and not a mere administrative division imposed from above by the Rājas. In fact, before the political integration of Coorg by the Rājas, the maximum political unit seems to have been a union of two or three
Under a chief called Nāyaka, who was usually at feud with other similar chiefs. For some time even after the country had been effectively brought under the control of the Lingāyats Rājas, feuds between nāḍis continued to occur.

The play of Kungu which is enacted in the south-western parts of Coorg during the harvest festival gives us a picture of Coorg in the days when inter-nāḍ feuds were common. Maradalī (feud) was prevalent between Beppunāḍ and Kadriyettāḍ, and it was so bitter that there was no intermarriage between them. They conducted raids on each other constantly. In one of these raids an arrow from a Beppunāḍ man lodged itself in the body of a Kadriyettāḍ man. The injured fighter was carried by his friends to Chendappanḍa Kungu, a famous doctor in Ėdanaḷkīnāḍ. Kungu agreed to treat the injured man because Ėdanaḷkīnāḍ and Kadriyettāḍ were friendly to each other. But Kungu’s mother was born in Beppunāḍ and she persuaded her son to neglect the injured man, who belonged to a nāḍi which was the traditional enemy of her natal nāḍi. The injured man died as a result of Kungu’s neglect.

It was common for deities to be identified with their nāḍis. Temples were always chosen for attack. The story of Chengettira Appaya stealing the wooden pins belonging to the see-saw of the Bengur Povvedi temple has already been narrated. The most successful way of rousing the wrath of a nāḍi or village was by attacking one of its temples.

A patriot was also a devotee. The story of Kaiyandira Appaya brings out this point clearly. Appaya, a mere boy, whose ear-boring mangala had not yet been performed, was cut to the quick when he learnt that the well-known fighter, Kullачenda Chōndu, had tried to prevent the offer of worship at the temple of Chōli Povvedi in Arapat village in Kadriyettāḍ. Appaya persuaded the elders of Kadriyettāḍ to permit him to fight Chōndu, whom he killed by resorting to unfair means. Appaya’s action, instead of meeting with disapproval, earned him great rewards. Mangala ceremony was performed for him, and a number of privileges were conferred on him by a grateful nāḍ. These privileges later became hereditary in the Kaiyandira okka.

When a hero was born in a hostile nāḍ, all the people in the nāḍ suffered from headache. The tower of its most important temple was damaged, guns hanging from the roof fired of their own accord, babies sleeping in cradles suddenly woke up, frightened, and so on.
When the fortunes of a nād were at a low ebb, the elders of that nād went on a pilgrimage to the patron-deity of the nād and prayed to him for the birth of a hero in their midst.

Legends grew up about a hero. Chegettira Appanḍa is supposed to have accomplished everything he did before he was sixteen days old. The hero had power to curse. After he died, he became a powerful spirit, abira.

The boundary of a nād obtains importance on some ritual occasions. A groom passing in state through a nād to the bride’s village is given the ‘plantain honour’ at the boundary of the nād.

Richter describes a custom which brings out the ritual importance of the nād-boundary:

In cases of sore ailictions befalling a whole village or nād such as small-pox, cholera, cattle-disease, the ryots [peasants] combine to appease the wrath of Māriamma [the goddess Māri who presides over these epidemics] by collecting contributions of pigs, rice, coconuts, bread and plantains, from the different houses and depositing them at the manda [green]; whence they are carried in a procession with tom-toms. In one basket there is some rice, and the members of each house on coming out bring a little rice in the hand, waving it round the head, throw it into the basket, with the belief that the dreaded evil will depart with the rice. At last the offerings are put down on the nād-boundary, the animals are killed, their blood is offered on a stone, the rice and basket are left, and the rest of the provisions consumed by those composing the procession. The people of adjoining villages and nāds repeat the ceremony, and thus the epidemic is supposed to be banished from the country. In still greater calamities, a flock of sheep is driven from nād to nād and, at last, expelled from the country.1

There is no social unit among Coorgs which is without a head. Every okka has a headman and the headman’s wife is the head of the women in the okka. A temple has a headman with a number of officials under him. A village has a village-headman, and above the village is the nād, and every nād has at least one nāḍ-headman, and frequently more than one. The highest category of headmen are, however, the headmen of sīmē or bēṣha, of whom there are eight in all.

Coorgs have a keen sense of discipline, which is associated in their minds with leadership and precedence. In their folksongs, not only a group of men, but also a herd of cattle and a bunch of

flowers have their leaders. And there the usual epithet by which a headman is referred to is muppayenda, which means 'having precedence'. The sense of precedence is ubiquitous: formerly, when caravans from every nad went to Malabar every summer, the senior headman's pack-bullocks marched ahead of the pack-bullocks of the others. Ideas about precedence are expressed on ritual occasions. For instance, most festivals of Coorgs include the sport of shooting at a target (kuri): a coconut and, on either side of it, a plantain spathe are tied to the high branch of a tree, and the competitors have to shoot at the coconut from a distance. The headman of the village has the right to shoot first at the target. Again, at the village dance held during the harvest festival, the village-headman, or an expert dancer selected by him, leads the dance. The temple-headman comes next after the village-headman.

At the nad dance, which is held a day or two after the village dance, precedence is very important. The dancers of each village forming part of the nad gather together at their headman's house, whence they proceed to the nad green with band. When the senior nad-headman arrives with his men everyone present has to stand up. A mat is spread for him, and others may sit down only after him. If nad-headmen from other nads come to the dance, they sit to the left of the host nad-headman, observing a strict order of seniority between them. Every dancer is provided with a pair of sticks. The host nad-headman leads the dance, with the guest nad-headmen occupying positions immediately next to him. The temple-headman comes after the guest nad-headmen, and the various village-headmen who are gathered there take up positions after the temple-headman.

The guests are received with band when they arrive, and after the dancing and sports are over, they are given refreshments which nowadays consist of coffee, soft drinks, fruits, and betel leaves and areca-nut. Each guest nad-headman pays a pana to the hosts before leaving. The hosts accompany each guest a little distance, the host's band proceeding ahead of the party. When all the guests have left, the villagers conduct their own nad-headman in state to his house. They dine in his house, after which they disperse.

During the harvest festival a party of villagers go from house to house, and at each house they visit they sing the 'house song',
which gives an account of the ancestors of that house. After the
song is sung, the singers are treated to refreshments and given
gifts of money.

The singers are required to visit the village-headman's house
first. Similarly, the people who put on fancy dress during the
harvest festival have to visit the village-headman's house first.

For a week before the beginning of the harvest festival all the
adult males in the village gather together at the village-headman's
house every evening before proceeding to the green to practise the
dances and play some games. The guests are treated to a light
repast, after which the headman asks someone to take up a duddi
(small drum) and sing. The person who is asked to sing may not
refuse, and refusal is punishable by fine. Even the temple-headman
is not exempt from this rule.

At the Kundat Bhadrakali festival, the villagers frequently move
about in processions during the last few days of the festival. At the
head of these processions walks the ndi headman's wife carrying
a dish-lamp. A dish-lamp has ritual value, and it is essential on
every ritual occasion, and it is the privilege of the ndi headman's
wife to carry it at the festival of Kundat Bhadrakali.

The political and economic forces set in motion in the last 120
years have been responsible for certain structural inconsistencies
coming to the surface during festivals. It was not always the
headman's okka which benefited from the new economic and
educational opportunities. The okka which benefited from the
latter could ignore with impunity the headman's position and
authority. Frequently the headman accepted the changed situation,
and this not only failed to solve the conflict for supremacy between
him and the newly rich okkas but instead accentuated it. The
latter, having secured wealth and official positions, tried to secure
headmanship too. Disputes became frequent.

The breakdown of the traditional economy meant that fre­
quently the headman could not fulfill the duties of hospitality
periodically required of him; and when the headman was unable
to perform his duties, he found it difficult to insist on others
performing their duties towards him. People began to gravitate to
the new centres of power, the officials and rich men.

Formerly, people used to take their disputes to their headman
on the occasion of the festival of the local village-deity. Such a
festival ensured the presence of a large number of elders, a fact
which added to the weight and authority of any decision given by
the headman. Even more important was the fact that people were
generally afraid to perjure themselves before a deity, and this was
specially so in the case of some deities like Appangiriyappa of
Kāṭakērī, well known for the severe punishment which he inflicted
on perjurers.

The success with which a headman was able to settle disputes
also depended on his wealth, the spread of his kinship ties, and his
reputation for impartiality. The impoverishment of some headmen
in recent years and the breakdown of the traditional way of life
have been responsible for undermining the authority of the head­
men.

Formerly, two or three neighbouring nāḷs came together occa­
sionally to discuss matters of common concern. A folksong
contains an appeal (ēyō kod) to an assembly of the elders of two
nāḷs from an assembly of the elders of a single nāḷ. Another folk­
song refers to the elders of three nāḷs meeting together.

The performance of certain calendar festivals such as the harvest
festival requires the co-operation of several nāḷs. The ritual cutting
of paddy sheaves constitutes the most important rite of the festival,
and this has to be performed during a particular period on a parti­
cular day. Both the date and time of performance of the rite are
decided only a fortnight before the festival by the astrologer of the
Pāḍi Subramanya temple in Pāḍi village, who informs the assem­
bled headmen of Pāḍināḷkūḍ of his decision. This is later con­
voyed to every nāḷ, village, and okka.

Coorgs everywhere in Coorg, with the exception of Kadiyettāṇḍ
people who performed the rite on a different day, accepted the
decision of the astrologer of the Subramanya temple in Pāḍi. The
acceptance produced uniformity in very many nāḷs. Such ritual
uniformity provides common values and makes possible the inte­
gration of several nāḷs into a single community.

But it is chiefly Sanskritic Hinduism which provides Coorgs and
other Hindus in Coorg with common values which transcend the
barriers between nāḷ and nāḷ, and between caste and caste.
Sanskritic Hinduism also integrates Hindus in Coorg with Hindus
in other parts of India. Coorgs and other Hindus in every part of
Coorg worship Sanskritic deities like the Kāvēri. Hindus outside Coorg also go on pilgrimage to the source of the Kāvēri on the first of Libra. This makes clear to Coorgs that they are part of a wider community which worships the Kāvēri. Similarly the pilgrimages of Coorgs to certain famous centres of pilgrimage outside Coorg brings them into contact with Hindus speaking different languages and observing different customs, but who all worship certain common deities.

Sanskritic Hinduism gives, then, certain common values to all Hindus, and the possession of common values knits people together into a community. The spread of Sanskritization of non-Sanskritic rites, and the increasing Sanskritization of non-Sanskritic rites, tend to weld the hundreds of sub-castes, and tribes all over India into a single community. The lower castes have a tendency to take over the customs and rites of the higher castes, and this ensures the spread of Sanskritic cultural and ritual forms at the expense of others.

The majority of village-deities in Coorg have Sanskritic names: Bhagavati (Povvedi), Chāmuṇḍi, Chaunḍi, Kāli, Shasta or Ayyappa, and Kṣetrapāla (corrupted into Ketrappa) are all Sanskritic. It is possible that these deities were originally non-Sanskritic and known by different names.

There is a passage in the ancient folksong, desha kett pat, which may be translated as 'there is a Madeva for every nāḍ, a Povvedi for every village, an Ayyappa for every kēri (section of a village), a Nāṭa (cobra-deity) for every ētī (lane leading to a Coorg house), and a Pūda for every okka'. The arrangement mentioned is too neat to be true, but it is not without a germ of truth. Usually, a cobra-deity is found in an okka while Povvedi and Madeva are deities worshipped by a caste, or village, or nāḍ. The important point, however, is that every intelligent and educated Coorg interprets the above passage as meaning that the various village-deities are forms of Śiva or his wife Pārvatī. This rule enables the chaos of the actual pantheon to be reduced to some kind of order. A similar rule prevails everywhere in India, and this has enabled Sanskritic Hinduism to absorb non-Sanskritic deities.

It is wrong, however, to imagine that it is always Sanskritic Hinduism which bridges the gap between nāḍs. The harvest festival, for instance, is in the main non-Sanskritic even though it touches Sanskritic ritual idiom at several points. There is also the classic instance of Kaliyatiṇḍa Ponnappa (alias Ajjappa), the
The story of Kaliyātanḍa Ponnappa is not entirely fictitious, but has a basis of fact. He was a descendant of the Kaliyāṭ ṭokka in Kunjala village in Nālknāḍ, and very early in his life he seems to have gone to Malabar to study medicine and magic. After his return to Kunjala he became famous for his magical powers: he was said to have under his control the ‘ten spirits of the underworld’ (puttu kāṭ pāṭāla) which did what he wanted them to do. He was also a fighter, and he actually died while fighting the soldiers of Karapembaḥu, the chief of Bhāgaṃaṇḍanaḍ at that time. His friend and companion Boltu committed suicide after Ponnappa’s death.

The spirit of Ponnappa caused headache in everyone. A famous magician was sent for and he had the spirits of Ponnappa and Boltu and the ‘ten spirits of the underworld’ imprisoned in a conch-shell. The conch-shell was buried under a stone in Malabar. But some time later an accident released the spirits from the conch-shell, and subsequently the spirits of Ponnappa and Boltu, and their common friend Kuṭṭapāḷa Māyila, all found shelter in the well-known temple of Sārtāvū (Ayyappa) of Makki.

Ponnappa and his companions have found shelter in several temples in south-west Coorg. There are Ponnappa’s oracles everywhere in Coorg Proper, but none may practise as an oracle unless he has been authorized by the chief oracle of Ponnappa in Makki.

People in every part of Coorg vow to make offerings to Ponnappa when they are suffering from bodily aches. It is believed that Sārtāvū (Ayyappa) has conferred on Ponnappa the power to cure aches. There is an annual festival in honour of Ponnappa at the Sārtāvū temple in Makki.

Educated Coorgs point out that Ponnappa is not a deity, but only the very powerful spirit of a great magician and doctor who, in addition, died while fighting. The spirit of Ponnappa was, to begin with, guilty of anti-social conduct, giving headaches to everyone. That was the reason for its imprisonment in a conch-shell. After its release, it sought and obtained the protection of Sārtāvū of Makki. It then no more caused headaches, but cured them instead. It was subordinated to a well-known deity before being worshipped. It is important to remember that Sārtāvū is Ayyappa, the son of Śiva and Viṣṇu in the form of Mōhini. The lawless spirit
of a magician-cum-fighter is tamed by making it subordinate to a deity who has been completely Sanskritized.

XII

The hierarchical idea inherent in caste expresses itself in a variety of ways at the festival of a village-deity. For instance, at the Kētrappa festival in Bēngūr, the fowls brought as offerings to the deity by members of the higher castes are decapitated by a Coorg, and the pigs brought by them, by a Panika. But neither the Coorg nor the Panika decapitates the animals brought by the lower castes like the Mēda and Poleya. The animals brought by the latter are decapitated by a Mēda.

Usually, the man who sacrifices the animal gets its head as his perquisite. The animal is then divided into two halves, one half going to the owner and the other to the village. Each okka in the village gets a share in the half which goes to the village. But the animals offered by Mēdas and Poleyas are not divided in this manner, nor do they get a share in the animals brought by the higher castes. That is to say, in this context, the village does not include the Mēda and Poleya. Nor does it include the Brahmin who does not sacrifice animals to deities.

The deities Kakkōt Achchayya, and Akkavva, according to the folksong, leave Malabar to seek shelter in Coorg. After crossing into Coorg they meet a Poleya deity, Kāryappa, whom they take as their servant. The three deities then go to Kakkōt village where they see some children playing. Kikkōt Achchayya and Akkavva possess Coorg children, whereas Kāryappa possesses a Poleya boy. In this instance, the caste-idiom is completely projected into mythology and religion.

The deities Kētrappa (m.) and Koḍi Povvedi (f.) are both recipients of offerings of non-vegetarian dishes and liquor. Coorgs explain this by saying that both the deities lost their caste on coming into Coorg. In fact there is an incident in the Kētrappa song giving an account of the change in the dietetic habits of the deity: while returning to Bēngūr from Malabar, Kallumāḍa Ayāṇṇa, who was possessed by Kētrappa, put everyone to sleep while he climbed a bainē (caryota urens) tree and drank toddy from the pot at the top. His followers woke up before he had climbed down and demanded an explanation from him. Kētrappa (i.e.
Ayyanna replied that until then he was only receiving sandalwood paste and flowers, but from then on he would receive instead 'blue-bubble toddy and crowing cocks'.

Deities have a tendency to adopt the customs of their devotees. It is natural then for the deity from Malabar to switch over to the Coorg's diet on reaching Béngůr. But this diet is not the diet of the Brahmins. Coorgs explain the dietetic preference of their deities by saying that they 'lost their caste': a certain ambivalence can be detected in this attitude, an attitude which presumably prevails towards their own diet. They like non-vegetarian food and liquor, but at the same time consider vegetarianism as more ethical.

1 Brahmin priests in Coorg, Malabar, and South Canara use sandalwood paste and flowers, among other things, for the worship of deities.
CHAPTER SEVEN

HINDUISM

Attempts to define an enormously complex and amorphous phenomenon like Hinduism have usually ended in failure. No definition will be attempted here, but instead some important characteristics will be mentioned.

Hinduism has a long history, in the course of which it has spread over the whole of India. Buddhism, in origin a Hindu schism, is now the religion of a great part of Asia.

The structural basis of Hinduism is the caste system which occasionally even survives conversion to Christianity or Islam. The hierarchical system, with the Brahmin and Untouchable at either end, represents a fusion of Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic systems of ritual and beliefs. Each caste has both Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic ritual and beliefs, but the proportions in which the two are found together vary from caste to caste, and also from region to region. It is now possible to understand how Hinduism is able to include within itself the worship of trees, rivers, and mountains, and cults of ancestors and village-deities, as well as the profound philosophy of the Upanishads and Vedanta, and the mysticism of the Bhakti Schools. Reformist sects like the Jains and Lingayats ended by becoming castes which resulted in walls being built round them, while, at the same time, they remained within the fold of Hinduism. The caste system has enabled a vast number of tiny groups with distinct cultures, occupations, and systems of belief to live side by side, the autonomy of each being respected while at the same time co-operation was ensured between them. But in the history of India the idea of hierarchy has occasionally been questioned, and unsuccessful attempts have been made to overthrow the caste system. More frequent, however, has been the effort of lowly placed groups to raise their status as a group by Sanskritizing their ritual and belief.

Rites and beliefs have been constantly undergoing a process of Sanskritization. This is going on both inside and outside Hinduism.
The rites and beliefs of the castes occupying the lower rungs of the caste-ladder as well as the rites and beliefs of outlying communities hidden away in the forest-clothed mountains of India have been subjected to Sanskritization. The presence of completely Sanskritized worship of rivers, trees, and mountains in Hinduism, and their incorporation in the vast mythology of Hinduism, make easier the assimilation of the ritual and beliefs of the lower castes and of communities remaining outside Hinduism.

Hinduism is not static. Like every living religion it has continually reacted to the political and social forces of the time, both influencing them and being influenced by them. In the last hundred years it has produced reformist movements like the Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, and the Ramakrishna Mission. Mahatma Gandhi himself in his fight against Untouchability and in the many other reforms he advocated provides us with an instance of the dynamic nature of Hinduism.

While the intellectual has all along concentrated on the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and the Philosophical Systems, to the ordinary Hindu the innumerable feasts, fasts, vratas (rites and austerities performed to achieve certain ends), pilgrimages, and occasional visits to nearby temples constitute the stuff of religious life. The purāṇas (stories illustrating the works and powers of the gods), itihāsas (consisting of the two epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata), and stories about local saints and the songs sung by them, all have a conspicuous place in day-to-day living.

The concept of 'spread' has been used throughout this book: Hinduism has been split up, for purposes of analysis, into 'All-India Hinduism', 'Peninsular Hinduism', 'Regional Hinduism', and finally purely 'Local Hinduism'. All-India Hinduism is Hinduism with an All-India spread, and this is chiefly Sanskritic in character. Peninsular Hinduism spreads over the entire peninsular part of India, while Regional Hinduism has a more restricted spread. A 'Region' has to be defined in every case, and in this book Malabar, South Canara, and Coorg Proper may be said to constitute a Region. Local Hinduism is Hinduism with its spread confined to Coorg Proper, or even a smaller area within it. In a very broad sense it is true that as the area of spread decreases,
the number of ritual and cultural forms shared in common increases. Conversely, as the area increases, the common forms decrease.

'Spread' might vary for different castes in the same village or town: Brahmins everywhere have much Sanskrit ritual in common, and this we call 'horizontal spread'. A linguistic area is a culturally homogeneous area, relatively speaking, and the Brahmins in any linguistic area share some cultural and ritual forms with all the castes, including the lowest, in that area. This type of spread, common to all the castes in an area, has been termed 'vertical spread'.

It is essential to distinguish here between the possession of common ritual and cultural forms, and of common deities and other objects of worship. The latter is more directly productive of solidarity than the former. The possession of common cultural and ritual forms is also a factor making for solidarity, but not as directly as the possession of common deities. It is possible to imagine situations in which the strength of the latter bond might result in a denial of the former. Members of two different religions living in the same area sharing the same language and other cultural and ritual forms might be involved in a mutually destructive conflict.

All-India Hinduism, as mentioned earlier, is chiefly Sanskritic and it spreads in two ways: by the extension of Sanskritic deities and ritual forms to an outlying group, as well as by the greater Sanskritization of the ritual and beliefs of groups inside Hinduism. Both these processes are at work, and the first results in Sanskritic deities assuming different forms in their travels all over India, while the second results in local deities assuming Sanskritic labels and forms. The Vedic deity Kshetrapala becomes Ketrappa in Coorg, while the local cobra-deity becomes identified with Subramanya, the warrior-son of Shiva.

All-India Hinduism possesses certain features which make easy the absorption of local elements. The worship of the river Ganges which is one of the features of Sanskritic Hinduism makes easy the absorption of river-worship in every part of India, including the worship of the River Kaveri which rises in, and flows through, Coorg. The Kaveri is sacred to Hindus all along its course from the source to the estuary. Temples are built along its course, and especially where other rivers join it, and on islands formed by the
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river. Bathing in rivers is productive of spiritual merit (puṇya) and destructive of sin (pāpa). Bathing in the Kāvēri on certain days such as the first of Libra and Shivarātri is specially productive of puṇya.

The Kāvēri is called ‘dakṣīṇa ganga’ or ‘southern Ganges’, and the Kāvēri myth (see Appendix) tells us that waters of the Ganges and other sacred rivers and seas are present in the source of the river on the first of Libra at the moment of the river’s birth. The faithful believe that there is an underground passage connecting the source of the river with the Ganges at Benares. Pilgrims to the Tāla Kāvēri, like pilgrims to Benares, return with the water of the sacred river in sealed copper pots. This water is used for ritual purification and drinking on certain days. Coorg pilgrims sprinkle the holy water on members of their okka, and on the house, granary, and cattle.

Offerings of balls of rice-flour are made to dead relatives on the banks of the Kāvēri; and the ends of the garments of the husband and wife are tied together while bathing in the river and in the larger of the two springs of Tāla Kāvēri. Both these concepts are common to Hindus all over India.

The Kāvēri Myth, whose authorship appears to be Brahminical, has the Ganges Myth for its model. As is well known, the Ganges meets the Jumna at Allahabad, and to this, Hindu mythology adds a third river, the Saraswati, which is said to flow underground and join unseen the first two rivers. The confluence of the Ganges, Jumna, and the mythical Saraswati is called ‘trivelī sangama’ or ‘union of three rivers’.

At Bhāgamanḍala, about three miles from the source of the Kāvēri, it meets the Kanakē. But to this the Kāvēri Myth adds a third river, the Sujyoti, which is said to flow underground and join the first two. There is a myth about practically every river in India. And in every one of these myths some Sanskritic deities, and sages and characters from the epics and the purāṇas, take part. Each myth in time becomes a part of the vast corpus of Hindu mythology. Each myth makes sacred certain features of local geography by associating deities, and characters from the epics and purāṇas, with them. The myths abound in inconsistencies which, however, do not bother the bulk of the Hindus.

On certain occasions Coorg women are required to worship the
domestic well, and this is referred to as ‘ganga pūja’. A similar custom exists everywhere in south India among Hindus. Water is identified with the holy Ganges, and such an identification teaches a Hindu to regard the Ganges as a deity. It opens a window on Sanskritic Hinduism.

On the way to Tāla Kāvēri from Bhāgamandla there is an immense boulder called ‘Bhima’s pebble’. It is said that Bhima, one of the Pāṇḍava brothers, found a tiny ‘pebble’ in his dinner which he picked up and threw away. What was a tiny pebble to Bhima is an immense boulder to ordinary human beings. Bhima’s strength was prodigious, and his strength, enormous appetite, and chivalry have made him the most lovable of the five Pāṇḍava brothers, the heroes of the epic, Mahābhārata. ‘Bhima’s pebble’ makes the epic more immediate to Coorgs and other Hindus in Coorg.

The mountain in which the Kāvēri rises is called Brahmagiri, and it is said that the god Brahma has settled down on top of the mountain. Brahma was in two minds as to whether he should settle down on top of the Brahmagiri mountain or a neighbouring one, and he finally decided on the former as it was higher than the latter by a rice grain.

While ideally the Kāvēri is sacred to every Hindu, actually it is mostly Hindus from various parts of south India, especially Mysore, Malabar, and the Tamil country who go on pilgrimage to the river-source on the first of Libra. Similarly the shrine of Sābramanya is sacred to every Hindu, though actually only Hindus from the Kannada-and Tulu-speaking areas visit it. But there are centres of pilgrimage such as the Temple of Venkāṭāchala at Tirupati in the Telugu country visited by Hindus from practically every part of south India. The temples of Minakshi at Madura and Rāmēśwara at Rāmēśwaram in south-east India are visited by Hindu pilgrims from every part of India. In continental India, too, there are several places of pilgrimage for Hindus from every part of India.

Deities too have varying ‘spreads’ even though ideally they are sacred to all Hindus. In fact, over a period of time ‘spread’ shows a dynamic quality: a deity who commanded the devotion of a king enlarged his ‘spread’ to include the territory ruled by the king.

Peninsular India is an area of enormous cultural diversity, but it forms a loose unity viewed in relation to continental India, just as
India itself exhibits some unity when viewed in relation to the rest of the world. Certain ritual and cultural forms are found widespread over peninsular India: the *tali* or marriage budge tied by the groom to the bride is found everywhere except among Coorgs. A married woman wears a vermilion mark on her forehead, and only she is entitled to a necklace of tiny black beads and black bangles and to wear flowers in her hair. The cult of the village-deities too is broadly similar.

Coorg Proper forms a ‘Region’ along with Malabar and South Canara. The three areas mentioned have many similar rites, beliefs, customs, and habits. But within this ‘Region’, Coorg Proper seems to have more in common with Malabar than with South Canara. The ritual forms which Coorg shares with Malabar and South Canara, and the deities worshipped by them, usually come under Regional Hinduism, while the ritual forms and deities shared in common with Kannadigas and Tamilians usually come under Peninsular Hinduism.

Local Hinduism has a more restricted ‘spread’ than Regional Hinduism. The people of a village or *nada* share a great many ritual and cultural forms in common, though membership of a caste frequently cuts across these alinements in the case of the top and immigrant castes. Castes like the Banna, Panika, and Kaniya share certain ritual and cultural forms with not only their counterparts in Malabar but with all Malayalis. Similarly with castes like the Poleyas and Medas who are immigrants from the Kannada country. The length of the period of residence of an immigrant caste, and its position in the caste system, are factors which influence the extent to which it has preserved its traditional culture.

The River Kaveri is a manifestation of Parvati, the wife of Shiva, and the devout refer to it as Mother Kaveri in certain contexts. Coorgs regard the Kaveri as their patron goddess: the Kaveri Myth associates the river specially with Coorgs. Coorg women pleat their saris at the back instead of in the front as in the rest of India, and this feature of their dress is attributed in the Myth to the force of the floods which pushed the pleats of the assembled Coorg women to the back. This happened when Parvati first assumed the form of a river, and Coorgs, men and women, were waiting for their patron goddess to appear at Balmuri, a few miles from the source.

Regional Hinduism often contains some Sanskritic elements, in
which case it directly stresses Regional ties and, indirectly, All-India ties. The identification of Subramanya with cobras in Coorg, and in the Tulu, Telugu, and Kannada countries is a case in point. Subramanya or Skanda, the warrior-son of Shiva, is a Sanskritic deity having an All-India spread. Cobras are revered throughout India by Hindus and their worship takes different forms in different parts of the country. But the identification of cobras with Subramanya is confined to certain areas in peninsular India, and such an identification marks them off from other areas. At the same time such an identification draws the Regional phenomenon into the All-India complex.

A linguistic area is a culturally homogeneous area, relatively speaking. All the castes in such an area possess in common certain cultural and ritual forms. This type of ‘spread’ has been called ‘vertical spread’.

The upper castes in every part of India have a certain amount of Sanskritic ritual in common, and this has been called ‘horizontal spread’. Thus a Brahmin in Coorg will have a certain amount of Sanskritic ritual in common with a Brahmin in Kashmir.

Every caste in practically every linguistic area in India shares in both horizontal and vertical spreads. Generally speaking, the higher castes have more of the former than the lower, and the lower castes share more of the latter than the upper castes.

The systematic reconstruction of Indian history which has taken place in the last seventy years, the all-round improvement in communications, newspapers, radio, films, and books have all contributed to greater and greater Sanskritization of Hinduism. The various reformist movements in Hinduism, while conducting propaganda for the removal of what they considered to be ‘defects’ in Hinduism, tended to stress the value of Sanskritic Hinduism. The greatness of Sanskrit literature and the vitality of Indian philosophical thought in Sanskrit have also contributed to the increasing importance of Sanskritic Hinduism.

III

The complete absorption of any group of people into the Hindu fold is indicated by their becoming a caste. The exact position which such a group occupies in the hierarchy might be a matter of dispute, but that is not important. Once the popular idea of caste
as a rigid, five-fold hierarchy is given up and it is thought of as consisting of innumerable groups, each of which has a certain amount of cultural and ritual autonomy, then it is realized that any attempt to fit them into a hierarchy results in disputes as to relative status. When it is further remembered that the caste system includes acts which began originally by rejecting the idea of hierarchy, but which subsequently became castes, it is seen that disputes as to relative status are inevitable.

In south India disputes as to relative status are a feature specially of castes of the middle region. The Brahmans and Untouchables are known to belong to either extreme, though even here the presence of some subdivisions of Brahmans who are said to be inferior to practically every other caste complicates matters. The group claiming to be Kshatriya might be a local peasant or artisan caste which has acquired political power. Sometimes it might even be an outlying group or tribe. This gives rise to disputes. There are always people who point out that a particular ruling family which has been governing a certain part of India for several centuries are not Kshatriyas but belong to a low caste. Similarly the claims of local trading castes to be called Vaishyas are frequently questioned by others.

The fivefold system does not do justice to the complexity of the caste system as it exists, but it makes intelligible the castes of various parts of India by reference to an All-India framework. Coorgs are a handsome, well-to-do, and powerful people with a martial tradition behind them, and it is quite natural for them to claim to be Kshatriyas. It may be recalled here that members of rich and influential Coorg okkas occasionally married relatives of the Lingayat Rajas. The Lingayats of the Kannad a country occupy a high position in the caste hierarchy, and they are also very strict vegetarians and teetotallers. The fact that relatives of the Rajas married Coorgs over 130 years ago is testimony to the high position of Coorgs in the caste hierarchy and to their physical and mental qualities.

The Kaveri Myth makes out Coorgs to be Ugras, the offspring of a Kshatriya prince and his Shudra wife. Certain sins committed by the prince in a previous existence prevented him from having children by a wife of his own caste, and he had to take a Shudra wife for children to continue his line.

Why does the Kaveri Myth make out Coorgs to be Ugras and
It is probably due to the fact that the Brahminical authors of the Myth saw an inconsistency between Coorg dietary, plus their failure to resort to Vedic ritual on certain occasions of life, and their high economic position and the profession of arms. The last two factors favoured their being considered Kshatriyas, while the first two factors did not. The situation was resolved ingeniously by their being considered the descendants of an inter-caste marriage.

Educated Coorgs are, however, certain that they are Kshatriyas. In 1902, Shri K. Appayya, a Coorg doctor in the employment of the Mysore Palace, wrote a book on Coorg customs in Kannada, entitled Kudagura Kaluchuradi Tatvajivini, and in this book he tried to derive every Coorg custom from the customs of the Vedic Kshatriyas. This tendency is a common one: educated Coorgs regard themselves as Indo-Aryans, descendants of the original Indo-Aryan immigrants into India.

IV

Sanskritic Hinduism has a vast mythology. There are the itihāsas which consist of the epics, Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. There are also the purāṇas which 'celebrate the powers and works of positive gods and represent a later and more extravagant form of Hinduism, of which they are in fact the Scriptures. The purāṇas are 18 in number, and in addition to these there are 18 upa-purāṇas or subordinate works.... None of them is devoted exclusively to one god, but Vishnu and his incarnations fill the largest space.1

The purāṇas are religious stories in which figure deities, and many semi-divine characters, and the public reading of the purāṇas and epics is even now popular. The purāṇas have played a great part in the spread of Hinduism as ordinary people became familiar with deities and ideas of Sanskritic Hinduism through them. Even more important is the fact that the purāṇas facilitated the absorption of local myths and legends. (The Kāvērī Myth is part of the Skānda Purāṇa.) The purāṇas have been continually expanding, absorbing local myths and legends, and also weaving myths round great historical figures and events. Another importance of the purāṇas is that they bring purely local myths into the main stream and thus charge them with All-India significance. Thus,

through the purāṇas, a local community becomes acquainted with the mythology of All-India Hinduism, and also its myths and legends are Sanskritized and made the property of Hindus all over India. Thus the Kāvērī Purāṇa becomes a part of the mythology of All-India Hinduism.

The epics, Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, too, play an important part in the spread of Hinduism. The existence of 'Bhima's pebble' near the source of Kāvērī has been mentioned earlier. The Lakshmanatirtha river which rises in the plateau of Brahmagiri in the extreme south of the province is named after Lakshmana, brother of the hero of the elder epic, Rāmāyaṇa. It is said that Rāma and Lakshmana passed through Coorg in the course of their wanderings. Lakshmāpa, the younger brother, whose obedience to Rāma is proverbial, and who is held up as a model for all younger brothers, disobeyed Rāma as soon as he (Lakshmāna) left Coorg and entered Malabar. He realized the enormity of his sin when he returned to Coorg and tried to atone for it by jumping into a fire which he made by shooting an arrow against the foot of the Irpu rocks. Rāma at once created a river to save his brother. This river he called Lakshmanatirtha and it joins the Kāvērī in Mysore State. Rāma established a linga (symbol of Shiva or Ishwara) at the spot where Lakshmana tried to commit suicide. The temple built there is called the Rāmēśhwara temple (Ishwara established by Rāma), and it is probable that this temple is an imitation of the famous temple of Rāmēśhwara, in the extreme south-eastern corner of India. Coorgs and others go on pilgrimage to the temple at Irpu during Shi韦ratri, an All-India festival in honour of Shiva.

Mountains, rivers, lakes, and trees become associated with characters and incidents in the epics and purāṇas. Such local myths are found in every part of India; Rāma built a temple here, Sīta bathed in this river near that rock, Shiva and Pārvati live in Kailāsa in the Himalayas, Agastya the sage meditated on top of that mountain, and so on. One's country becomes the home of one's gods. Patriotism acquires a religious quality.

Certain restrictions observed by Coorgs in common with other Hindus serve to mark them off from members of other religions. Occasionally these restrictions refer to certain incidents and characters in popular Hindu mythology. For instance, Coorg children are told to wash their feet and hands thoroughly before coming into the house from the street. The story of King Nala is
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It told them as a warning: Nala one day left an unwashed spot on his ankle and this enabled Saturn to possess him. Subsequently Nala lost his throne, was separated from his beloved wife, became deformed owing to serpent-bite, and finally ended up as cook to a king.

It is said in Coorg that Saturn jumped on Nala while the latter was standing under a tandi tree. Coorgs usually utter Nala's name when they have to pass under a tandi tree, and this is said to have the effect of warding off Saturn.

The above restrictions make the story of Nala, which is known to all Hindus, more immediate to Coorgs. The observance of common restrictions frequently marks off one community from another. Such observance can become a symbol of the community's solidarity and identity.

Coorgs, like other Hindus, regard the cow as sacred, and are opposed to killing it. They also abstain from eating beef. The cow has recently figured prominently in Hindu-Muslim relations and has come to be a symbol for Hindu solidarity and identity. Orthodox Hindu opinion regards the killing of cattle with abhorrence, even though the refusal to kill the vast number of useless cattle which exist in India today is detrimental to the economy of the nation.

Reverence for the cow unites Coorgs with other Hindus. It marks both off from other communities living in India.

Certain Sanskritic theological ideas have profoundly affected the lives of Coorgs. Ideas about karma and dharma are widespread among Coorgs, not only amongst the educated but also amongst the uneducated peasantry. The Coorg funeral song abounds in Sanskritic theological ideas: a man dies 'when the ration of rice kept for him by God Narayana is finished'. After death, a bad man goes to hell (naraka) and a good man to heaven (swarga). A man is continually reborn till he attains salvation (moksha). The surviving relatives pray that the dead man may not be reborn either as man or beast, because being implies suffering. They pray that he may go to heaven and not return to earth any more.

V

Sanskritic Hinduism has a plasticity which enables it to absorb local religious phenomena. Sanskritic deities frequently undergo changes in the process of being localized. An example will make
clear what is meant. The deity Kêtrappa of Bêngûr is identified by knowledgeable Coorgs and others with the Vêdic deity Kshêtrapâla (protector of the field). Whether there are any justifiable grounds for identifying Kêtrappa and Kshêtrapâla is a minor matter. What is of importance is that the two deities are so identified. Such an identification of a local deity with an All-India, Sanskritic deity, is very common.

In the Vêdas, Kshêtrapâla is a deity presiding over every field, and he is invoked to grant cattle and horses, and to fill heaven and earth and plants and waters with sweetness. People pray to him for prosperity and wish to have him as a neighbour. An ox is sacrificed to him.

In the course of 2,500 years Kshêtrapâla has travelled to every part of India, and he has different attributes in different parts of the country. In Bengal he even changes his sex; he becomes Kshêtronâ, or the 'goddess presiding over fields', and is regarded as a manifestation of Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu. As the goddess presiding over fields she ensures a good harvest.

It is not necessary to give here an account of the transformations undergone by Kshêtrapâla in the various parts of India. It is sufficient to note that in Coorg he loses all touch with the land. He is referred to as Kêtrappa; 'appa', which means 'father', being a common suffix to the names of gods all over south India, just as 'amma' or 'mother' is a common suffix for goddesses. In Coorg, Kêtrappa takes to a diet of 'blue-bubble toddy and crowing cocks'. People explain this by saying that he 'lost his caste' while travelling from Malabar to Coorg. The Brahmin priest of the Kadûpalappa temple does not act as a priest to a deity who has 'lost his caste'.

Ayyappa is a Sanskritic deity who is very popular with Coorgs and it is clear that his character has changed in the process of becoming acceptable to his worshippers. In Sanskritic mythology he is Shasta, the son of Shiva and Môhini (feminine form temporarily assumed by Vishnu). Shasta is also referred to as Harîrâputra, or the son of Shiva and Vishnu, and he is a very popular deity all along the Malabar coast.


In Coorg, Shasta is referred to as Ayyappa, or Sārātāvū, and he inhabits the jungles in which he wanders at night with his favourite pack of dogs. At night, in the jungle, he can be heard whistling to his pack. Votive offerings of representations of dogs and bows and arrows are made to his shrines. Some jungles are reserved for Ayyappa exclusively, and nobody may hunt or cut down trees there. Coorgs do not hunt on Wednesdays and Saturdays because Ayyappa hunts on those days. Formerly, liquor and fowl were offered to him by Coorgs after a successful hunt. At some Ayyappa shrines non-vegetarian offerings are made, whereas at others only vegetarian offerings are made. Brahmins are usually priests at the latter shrines.

Coorgs are fond of hunting, and every ancestral house has a pack of dogs which accompany their master during hunting. Ayyappa is extremely popular with Coorgs as the deity presiding over hunting, and very many Coorgs are named after him. His Sanskrit ancestry is not, however, recalled frequently.

Another Sanskrit deity who has undergone modification in the process of becoming acceptable to his devotees is Subramanya, who is, in Sanskrit mythology, Skanda, the warrior-son of Shiva. But, as we have earlier mentioned, in Coorg and in the Tulu, Kannada, and Telugu countries, Subramanya is identified with the cobra which is regarded by orthodox Hindus as a deity. Ant-hills inhabited by cobras are worshipped at Subramanya’s festival.

The absorption of local cults, rites, and beliefs colours everywhere Sanskritic Hinduism, which varies, in certain particulars, from one local area to another. The initial synthesis usually makes easier the later complete absorption of the local phenomenon in Sanskritic Hinduism.

In this connexion it is instructive to consider the attitude of the Brahmin, the representative of Sanskritic Hinduism, to the village-deities. His attitude is not something fixed and unalterable. It varies from region to region, village to village, and, frequently enough, from deity to deity in the same village, but when we consider a number of instances his varying attitudes fall into a pattern.

It was remarked earlier that the Brahmin priest of the Kaḍūpālappa (Krishna as churning buttermilk) temple does not have any duties at the Kēṭrappa temple. But such complete non-co-operation
with a village-deity (we are not thinking of deities of the Poleyas here) is comparatively rare.

At the Kundat Bhadrakāli shrine a Brahmin normally acts as priest, and offerings of fruit and flowers are the rule except on one day in the year when animals are sacrificed outside the Bhadrakāli shrine, when the Brahmin priest has left, locking the door of the shrine after him. The Brahmin re-enters the temple next morning only after the front of the shrine has been thoroughly cleaned. He subsequently performs two purificatory rites in order to restore the temple to its normal ritual status.

The Brahmin priest is more co-operative at the festival of the Bhagavati temple at Armeri. In addition to performing certain ritual at the festival, he acts as oracle, a role usually reserved in Coorg for a member of a non-Brahmin caste.

The Rāmānathswara temple at Irpu and the Tala Kāvēri shrine are instances of almost complete Sanskritization. They are among the strongholds of Sanskrit Hinduism in Coorg and act as centres for its spread.

It is not always the Brahmin priest who is the agent of Sanskrit Hinduism. In every part of the Kannada country, and in Coorg, the Lingāyat sect, consisting exclusively of non-Brahmins, have exercised in the past a Sanskritizing influence. Lingāyat ritual is Sanskritic (though not Vēdic), and the Lingāyat Rājas of Coorg have been responsible for the Sanskritization of the customs, manners, and rites of Coorgs. Customs like marking the forehead every morning with three stripes of sacred ashes (vibhāti), celebrating the festival of Shivaratri, and erecting tombstones, surmounted by the figure of the Nandi Bull, over the graves of important persons reveal Lingāyat influence. Lingāyatism had its origin in the Kannada country, and it was—and is—a predominantly Kannada sect, and the Lingāyata transmitted to Coorgs some purely Kannada customs like Ugadi (lunar New Year).

As mentioned earlier, Lingāyatism made headway amongst Coorgs more easily because it was the religion of the rulers. Coorgs holding important posts in the service of the Rājas took over some of the customs and rites of their masters, and this had a chain reaction, which is natural in a highly stratified society.

The Brahmin too has been influenced by non-Sanskritic modes of worship, and impressed with the power of the village-deities. In south India it is common to find Brahmins making votive
offerings of flowers and fruit and, very rarely, through a non-
Brahmin friend, of an animal to the village-deities like Māri
during an epidemic of smallpox or plague or cholera. It is wrong to
assume, as some do, that in the contact between Brahmins and non-
Brahmins, Brahmins have always influenced non-Brahmins, while
they themselves have remained uninfluenced.

VI

The presence, within Sanskritic Hinduism, of a vast and ever-
growing mythology, the worship of trees, rivers, and mountains,
and the association of deities and epic heroes with local spots
everywhere in India, makes easy the absorption of non-Sanskritic
cults and deities. The caste hierarchy plays no small part in the
spread of Sanskritization: not only do outlying communities
signalize their entry into the Hindu fold by becoming a caste, but
the existence of a sharply structured hierarchy which also permits
groups to move up the social ladder acts as a powerful inducement
for the lower castes to borrow the customs and habits of the top-
most castes. The adoption of vegetarianism, teetotalism, and
Sanskritization enables a low caste to rise in status in course of time.

The pantheistic bias in Hinduism also contributes to the
Sanskritization of the deities and beliefs of low castes and outlying
communities. The doctrine that everything in the universe is
animated by God, and that all the various deities are only forms
assumed by the same Brahma, makes the process of absorption
easier. The village-deity who wants the sacrifice of animals and
toddy is also one of the myriad manifestations of the formless
Brahma whom the philosopher contemplates. The gods of the lower
castes are not denied, but affirmed, and affirmed in such a way
that their subsequent Sanskritization is rendered easier.

Another point that needs to be remembered is that the presence
of Sanskritized local cults and village-deities in Hinduism makes
easier the further absorption of local phenomena. Sanskritic
Hinduism may be thought of as consisting of several layers, and
the similarity of the lower layers to local cults and village-deities
everywhere enables the latter to be absorbed. Once inside Sanskritic
Hinduism the local rites and beliefs undergo Sanskritization rapidly
and in a thoroughgoing manner.

The spread of Sanskritization being a matter of spontaneous
growth produces certain inconsistencies. For instance, the main body of Coorgs propitiate their dead ancestors by offering meat and liquor with the Baṣṣa acting as oracle, as well as by offering balls of rice-flour under the guidance of a Brahmin priest. Amma Coorgs, a Sanskritized division of Coorgs, make the inconsistency in the customs of the main body of Coorgs all the more glaring by observing annual shrddhas (propitiation of ancestors with balls of rice using Sanskrit mantras) after the manner of Brahmins, and by completely eschewing the other mode of propitiation.

Many village deities who are made out to be forms of Mahādeva (or Shiva), and goddesses who are made out to be Povvedi (i.e. Bhagavati, wife of Shiva), are offered meat and toddy. Side by side with these deities, Coorgs offer worship at the temples of Tala Kāvēri, Rāmēśhwara in Irpu, and Omkārēśhwara in Mercara, where the priests are Brahmins and Sanskrit mantras are used, and where only offerings of fruit and flowers are permitted.

Inconsistencies are also seen on the plane of belief. It has been mentioned earlier that the Coorg funeral song says that the man died because the ration of rice kept for him by God Nārāyana was finished; and the survivors pray God not to cause the dead man to be reborn as living is synonymous with suffering. These ideas are entirely consistent with Sanskritic theology. But at another place in the funeral song the mourner says, ‘Nārāyana’s thieving horde (kallpa paṭḍ) came to kill you. Had I known it, I would have hacked the horde to pieces.’ This is entirely consistent with the martial idiom of Coorgs, but inconsistent with the ideas of Sanskritic theology mentioned earlier.

As a rule, educated Coorgs turn more and more to Sanskritic deities, rites, and beliefs. The Rāmakrishṇa Mission is active in Coorg, and in recent years it has been responsible for carrying the message of philosophical Hinduism to Coorgs. In the last thirty years four Coorgs have become sanyasis, dedicating their lives to prayer and meditation and the active service of their fellow men. One of these sanyasis has a hermitage (āśrama) appropriately called Kāvēri Āśrama.
Coorg is primarily an agricultural country, and the bulk of the Coorg community is directly dependent on the land. Even those who are employed in the government have one or more branches of their okkas living in the ancestral house and attending to the cultivation of their ancestral lands.

There was no coffee in Coorg over a hundred years ago, and rice was then the most important crop in every way. A Coorg okka, and the family (or families) of Poleyas who were its slaves, cultivated the ancestral rice-fields. The Poleyas did much of the actual manual work on the estate under the close supervision of their Coorg masters; and every member of the Coorg okka directly or indirectly contributed to the work on the estate.

A Coorg was completely preoccupied with the cultivation of rice from May to January, beginning with the first ploughing of the fields in May and ending with the harvesting of the crop in January. The surplus rice was sold in Malabar every summer, and this necessitated the organization of an annual caravan in which every okka in the village (or nad) participated. The festivals of the village-deities and weddings were performed in the summer months, after the men had returned from Malabar. Thus the social activities of a Coorg revolved round and adjusted themselves to the cultivation of rice and the sale of the surplus in Malabar.

The ancestral estate on which rice is grown, the ploughing, sowing, transplanting, and harvesting of the crop, the granary in which paddy is stored, and the measures used for measuring paddy and rice all receive ritual attention.

The ancestral estate, the most valuable part of which is the rice-field, is regarded as sacred. A Coorg is not allowed to walk in it wearing his sandals, just as he is not allowed to enter the inner parts of the ancestral house, or a temple, with his sandals on. He is also not allowed to whistle, or hold an umbrella over his head, while walking in the ancestral estate: both these acts are not consistent with the ritual respect which the estate has to be accorded.
The entire rice-field (varga) is cut up into a number of small rectangular plots ridged up on all the four sides. Each plot (tên) is referred to by a distinct name, and one of these plots is regarded as the main plot and it has the same name as the entire rice-field. The traditional association between an okka and its ancestral estate is symbolized in the custom of burying the umbilical cord of the eldest son of the head of the okka in the main plot of the ancestral estate. The eldest son is the one who is going to become the head of the okka in course of time, and as head of the okka he will have to look after the ancestral rice-field. The main plot stands for the entire rice-field, and it is entirely proper that the umbilical cord of the future head of the okka should be buried in the main plot. It may be recalled, in this connexion, that during the periodical ancestor-propitiation, the Banna oracle, possessed by an ancestor, may demand to be shown round the rice-field in order to see for himself whether it is looked after properly. Thus a Coorg continues to take an interest in the affairs of his okka even after his death, which means that he continues to care for the rice-field on which the prosperity and happiness of the okka and thus, indirectly, of the total society depends.

Every stage of the cultivation of the rice crop is marked by ritual. The main plot of the ancestral rice-field is ritually ploughed on the first of Aries, the beginning of the new year according to the solar calendar. Either the head of the okka, or a younger member who is considered to be specially suitable by the astrologer, ritually ploughs the main plot during an auspicious period of time. Regular ploughing of the rice-fields commences only after the ritual ploughing on New Year's Day.

Paddy is sown in the nurseries at an auspicious period of time. When the plants are 10-12 inches high, they are transferred to the various plots in the rice-fields. The plucking of the young plants and their transplantation are both begun during auspicious periods. The transplantation of the young plants is a highly complicated task requiring the co-ordination of the work of a number of people. It is especially so if the estate is a big one.

The Kâvâri festival includes a rite called bottu (lit., fear) and this is intended to protect the growing crop, the woods on the estate, and the domestic well.

One of the most important calendar festivals of Coorgs is the puri (lit., new rice) when the paddy sheaves are ritually cut.
This latter rite is the crucial point of the festival which lasts nine to ten days, the seven days previous to the sheaf-cutting being spent in singing, dancing, and playing games. On the day following the cutting of sheaves there is a domestic feast, a dance, and sports for all the villagers. This is followed by a dance for the entire nàd, and a collective hunt and dinner for the entire village (or nàdā).

The rite of cutting the sheaves takes place on the full-moon day in the month of Scorpio under either of the constellations, krūtikē or rōhīni. Formerly the hereditary astrologer of the Subramanya temple in Pādi in Nālknād used to decide the day and time for the ritual cutting of sheaves for the whole of Coorg Proper excluding Kīggatnād. The local astrologer then decided for each high caste okka in his village the member who was most suitable for performing the rite of cutting the sheaves. The member selected for this honour had to wear the white gown.

On the festival day, very early in the morning, various leaves and creepers are gathered for the rite of nērē kaffuvudu. The trees and creepers most common locally are chosen for this purpose, and they frequently vary from nād to nād. They seem to symbolize the principle of fertility in vegetable nature. A wish for growth is also indicated in another rite, and such a wish is commonly indicated in harvest festivals in south India.

A part of the kitchen floor is cleaned with a solution of cow dung and a new mat is spread on it. A tripod-stool is made to stand on the mat, and a dish-lamp is placed on the stool. A harvest-basket containing the leaves, and short lengths of creepers, is kept near the dish-lamp. Later, at an auspicious time, a leaf of each variety is taken, arranged one upon the other, a short length of inyoči creeper crowning the pile of leaves. The leaves are then rolled round the creeper and the roll is secured with a length of achchi fibre. A number of such rolls are made.

A harvest-basket is filled with paddy and this is placed on the mat near the dish-lamp. Two measures and a small pot, filled with paddy, rice, and rice-flour respectively, are arranged one upon the other on the paddy in the basket. The new bamboo vessel (kutti) which the Mēda brought in the morning is stood near the basket on the mat. A little milk, honey, and ghi are poured into the vessel. Bits of coconut, fresh ginger, and green rattan cane, and a small quantity of gingelly grains are also put into it. Finally, the new sickle which the blacksmith brought is left in it.
The members of the *akka* then eat a dish of cooked harvest yam (*paturyeyasu*, which ripens at the time of the harvest festival) mixed with honey and *ghi*.

At the auspicious time fixed by the astrologer, the sheaf-cutter leaves the house carrying the bamboo vessel in his hand. Before him goes a girl carrying a dish-lamp. A band marches farther ahead.

As soon as he reaches the rice-field, the sheaf-cutter salutes the sacred eastern direction and the field. He ties a leaf-roll to the bottom of a rice plant and pours a little of the contents of the bamboo vessel on it. Everyone shouts 'poli, poli, deva' (increase, increase, O god), and a shot is fired from a gun. The sheaf-cutter cuts a number of plants, taking care to see that each time he cuts an odd number.

After the party reaches home, the sheaf-cutter's feet are washed, and he is given milk to drink. He deposits the bamboo vessel in the kitchen.

He then prepares *yēlakki putt* (seven rice-pudding), kneading together a quantity of rice-flour, a few plantains, some milk and honey, and seven of each of the following: new rice grains from the sheaves, gingelly grains, tiny stones, and bits of coconut, ginger, and green rattan cane. Small balls are made of this mixture and offered to the lamps in the south-western room and ancestor-shrine. Later everyone eats a little of the mixture.

Leaf-rolls (*nērēl*) and sheaves are tied to every part of the house. The sweet, liquid dish, *pīyasa*, is prepared and into this are put seven new rice grains.

The rites performed at the harvest festival stress, directly or indirectly, the great value of rice to Coorgs. The astrologer decides not only when the sheaves should be cut but who should be chosen for this important task. New articles are used for this ritual. Elaborate taboos surround the person of the sheaf-cutter, and solidarity rites, in which valuable articles like milk and honey are used, are performed towards the sheaves before cutting them.

Some of the rites performed, like tying plants and creepers locally prolific to every part of the house, and uttering a prayer for increase before cutting the sheaves, express a desire for plenty. The ritual eating of the new rice, and the eating of the yams and vegetables which ripen at this time, are another aspect of the harvest rites.
On New Year’s Day a clod of ploughed earth is brought home and deposited in the granary. When a man sees paddy in the ear for the first time, he goes home, stands before the granary, and says, 'I saw paddy in the ear, I saw paddy in the ear, do not be startled, do not be astonished, O granary.' He tells the granary that there is going to be a bumper harvest, a harvest that will burst the granary. At the Kāverī festival, pilgrims carry home a handful of rice from the granary (called ‘akhāya pātra’, the mythical vessel of increase) in the Bhagandēshwara temple. This rice is put into the domestic granary to ensure a bumper harvest.

Rice is essential to the Coorg’s survival, and formerly it was also the chief source of wealth. Its cultivation is the most important activity in which the okka, the nuclear unit of Coorg society, is engaged, and the axis round which revolve other activities. A long drought as well as excess of rain is likely to ruin the crop. Rain is a friend only if it comes when wanted and keeps away when not wanted. Proper rains in sufficient quantities mean a good crop, and abundance of rice means food, wealth, and the ability to make sacrifices to ancestors and festivals in honour of deities. It gives one the means with which one can get one’s sons and daughters married, to keep one’s servants, to give the feasts which have to be given, and to perform other obligations.

It is because of its enormous social importance that rice, and everything associated with it in any way, receives ritual attention.

II

In Coorg folklore, Malabar is referred to as the ‘land of ignorance’ (ajñāna bhūmi), and this is presumably due to certain matrilineal castes living there. All the patrilineal peoples of south India seem to have regarded matriliney as a very odd custom. The people of the Kannada and Tamil countries occasionally refer to Malabar as ‘stṛi mālayāla’, which means ‘Malabar which is dominated by women’. There are myths which try to account for the oddness of Malabar: according to a myth which is widespread over the whole of south India, the entire Malabar coast was created by Parashurāma, the great Brahmīn enemy of Kshatriyas till he was finally defeated by the Kshatriya prince, Rāma, the hero of Rāmāyana, and an avatar of Viṣṇu. The folktale on p. 221, which gives an account of a solitary act of disobedience on the part of Laksh-
mala towards his eldest brother Rama, testifies to the utter strangeness of Malabar. It is so strange that people setting foot in it behave in an unpredictable way. This is doubly proved by Lakshmana’s great act of contrition immediately on returning to Coorg.

In the folksongs, deities are frequently reported as having migrated from Malabar or South Canara into Coorg. It is true that the deities are created ‘beyond the Seven Seas, on the shore of the Milk Sea’, but they subsequently migrate to a town on the west coast, whence they proceed inland, towards Coorg, to seek shelter. In the story of the two deities, Achehaih (m.) and Akkavva (f.), brother and sister, at first wander all over Malabar seeking shelter. They are directed to Coorg by some deities whom they went to in their search for shelter, and as soon as they cross into Coorg, Akkavva tells Achehaih, ‘O elder brother, when people see us wandering about together they will think that we are husband and wife, and not brother and sister. Let us take an escort with us’. Achehaih accepts his sister’s advice and takes a Poleya servant. This incident raises the question, ‘why did not Akkavva think of taking an escort before crossing over into Coorg’? It assumes that a person need not be particular about what he does in Malabar.

Educated Coorgs assert that Achchayya is a popular name for Vishnu, and Akkavva for Lakshmi. This makes out Achehaih and Akkavva to be husband and wife, and not brother and sister—the precaution taken by Akkavva in the story was in vain! It is only one instance of Sanskritization producing an inconsistency. According to the general rule mentioned in the ‘desha kett paid’, there is a ‘Madhya (Mahadewa or Shiva) for every nud and Povvedi (Bhagavati) for every village’. This rule is interpreted in such a way by Coorgs that every male village-deity who is not said to be a form of Vishnu is said to be a form of Madhya, and every female village-deity who is not said to be a form of Lakshmi is said to be a form of Bhagavati, wife of Madhya. After giving the popular name of a village-deity, Coorgs frequently take care to add that ‘he is really Vishnu (or Shiva)’.

The story of the seven deities is relevant here. Seven deities, six brothers and a sister, wandered all over Malabar in search of shelter. The first three deities, Kanyaratappa, Tirchembarappa, and Bendrukolappa, found shelter in Malabar villages alone, while the remaining four went to Coorg in search of shelter. They crossed
the mountains separating Coorg from Malabar by following the Pāditora Pass. The pass brought them to a mountain to the southwest of Nilkanṭa, and standing on top of the mountain they saw the whole of Coorg stretching before them. One of the four suggested that they should all shoot arrows from the mountain-top and find out which of them shot furthest. The arrows shot by the brothers fell in Ammangārī village while the sister’s arrow fell in Pannangāla. The sister had beaten the brothers decisively.

The sister then asked the brothers, ‘Will you eat without salt if I cook food without fire?’ Calculating that it was impossible to cook food without fire, the brothers readily agreed to the sister’s suggestion. The sister put some rice into a bamboo vessel containing milk and buried the vessel in sand which was very hot from the midday sun. By the time the brothers and sister had bathed and changed into ritually pure robes, the rice had been cooked in the boiling milk.

The sister served the insipid rice to the brothers who sat before the disagreeable food looking up and down. The brothers then took the rice in their hands and threw it up into the air saying, ‘O younger sister, this is how hailstones fall during the monsoon.’ The sister hit the brothers on their jaws with her ladle saying, ‘O elder brothers, this is how lightning crashes in the monsoon.’ The infuriated brothers got up from their meal at once, and washed their hands and mouths.

The brothers, beaten in the two contests with their sister, seem to have decided to take revenge by underhand means. I deliberately say ‘seem to have’, as in the version of the folksong I have secured there is no reference to any premeditated plan on their part. But their subsequent actions make such an inference necessary. There was another contest between the brothers and sister after the unsuccessful meal at the end of which the sister was tricked into putting back into her mouth betel stuff which she had taken out to show everyone. (For details see p. 104). The brothers then told the sister that she had lost her caste because she had put back into her mouth something she had spat out. The sister was beside herself with grief: she beat her head, rolled on the floor, and wept bitterly. The eldest of the brothers then told her, ‘Listen, younger sister, we did not deceive you, you are yourself responsible for your present plight. We are unable to help you. I advise you to settle down in Pannangāla village and become the deity of Poleyas, who will have
a festival in your honour every year on the first of Aries. They will perform a dance, and offer you fowls. You possess them, and grant children to the childless.’ The sister was inconsolable, and said that she could not bear the smell of Poleyas. But the eldest brother was adamant, and the reluctant sister closed both her eyes and assuming the form of a crane flew away to Pannangila. In the latter village she possessed the Poleya servant of the Kartanda okka who tried to catch the crane. This deity is now known as Pannangalatamme (ammé means ‘mother’).

The eldest of the three brothers settled down on a mountain near the Pāditora Pass, and he is known as Iggutappa. It is said that on the first of Aries, when the festival of Pannangalatamme is being observed, Iggutappa’s hill is covered with clouds, and it rains a little on the hill. Iggutappa, it is said, is very sorry for his poor sister who was forced to become a deity of the Poleyas, and he sheds tears for her fate. (Iggutappa is identified by educated Coorgs with Subramaṇya.)

The elder of the two remaining brothers settled down in Paliir and is known as Paliirappa. He is identified with Viśnu. The last of the brothers settled down in the southern frontier of Coorg in Tirnelli and he is known as Tirnelli Pemmayya. He guards the frontier from Māri, the goddess presiding over epidemic diseases, and from thieves. He, too, is identified with Viśnu.

Certain features of this myth may be noted. (1) The deities setting out from Malabar are related as brothers and sister. (2) They have a sense of seniority, common to both Malabar and Coorg. (3) As soon as the brothers and sister cross over into Coorg, conflict arises between them. The sister proves supreme, but the brothers manage to defeat her in the end by adopting unfair means. (4) The sister’s defeat expresses itself in the caste idiom—a familiar idiom in Coorg folklore. (5) The transition from matri-lineal Malabar to patrilineal Coorg results in the overthrow of the sister by the brothers. The brothers adopt unfair means to overthrow the sister, but having overthrown her, are not happy about her degradation. Iggutappa’s mountain is covered with clouds which dissolve into rain on the first of Aries; the tears he sheds are not crocodile’s tears, as the situation is essentially ambivalent. (6) Finally, the brothers all undergo Sanskritization. The eldest of them is identified with Subramaṇya, while the two younger brothers
are identified with Vishnū. This is no doubt inconsistent, but Sanskritization frequently produces inconsistencies.

Pannangilatamme is only one of several instances of deities losing their caste. Kērappa (m.) and Povvedi (f.) of Bēnḡūr lost their caste too. The case of Povvedi of Bēnḡūr is interesting as her namesake in Balmāvīṭi, a village three miles away, retains her caste, has a Brahmin priest, and accepts only offerings of fruit and flowers. The ubiquity of the caste idiom deserves notice: the deities of the lowest castes like Poleyas and Mēdas are not worshipped by the higher castes, and these deities bear the same relation to the deities of the higher castes which the lower castes themselves bear to the higher. The habits of some deities are occasionally explained by reference to the caste idiom. A deity who accepts animal-sacrifice and liquor has lost his original high caste; and sometimes such an explanation enables a Sanskritic deity to become the deity of castes which consume meat and liquor.

III

Marriage is a preferred condition among Coorgs, and a married man has a higher ritual and social status than a bachelor. A bachelor’s social personality is not regarded as fully developed.

In the case of women, however, the contrast is not so much between spinsters and married women as between the latter and widows. A widow wears only white clothes, and these clothes may not have a coloured border. The clothes and ornaments worn by a married woman may not be worn by a widow. Certain ornaments which are associated with a married woman, like black glass bangles, necklace of black glass beads, and rolls of palm leaves worn as ear-ornaments, have become symbols of the married state. As such they receive ritual respect.

It is usual for young Coorg widows to remarry, and a remarried widow has a higher social and ritual status than a widow who does not remarry, though she does not have the same status as a woman whose first and only husband is alive.

Coorgs do not differentiate between a married woman and widow as thoroughly as, for instance, the Brahmins. Amongst the latter marriage and patriliney are bound up with certain theological ideas: a woman’s husband is her god, and a son not only continues the lineage but releases his ancestors from a particular kind of hell.
to which people without sons go. Widowhood is the result of sins committed in a previous incarnation. Formerly, a widow's head was shaved, and she was not allowed to remarry. A married woman is regarded as an auspicious person, and articles associated with her, like flowers, vermillion, turmeric powder, glass bangles, and the marriage badge (tāl), are regarded as sacred and worshipped on certain occasions. A widow is more or less completely excluded from ritual.

It is necessary to note that the Coorg attitude to the widow is similar to the Brahmin's though the differentiation between married woman and widow is not as thoroughgoing as among the Brahmin. But the similarity does make possible greater Sanskritization subsequently.

A married woman is a preferred type of person among Coorgs. Motherhood is a preferred condition and formerly the mother of ten children was entitled to have mangala performed in her honour.

Other types of preferred persons are the strong man who is also skilled in athletic sports, dancing, and fighting, and the magician who is usually also a doctor. Frequently several preferred traits were combined in the same man, making him doubly or trebly preferred. The preference expresses itself in custom and ritual.

It might be said that the general orientation of Coorg culture is martial. Frequently, customs and rites which appear to be taken over from neighbouring cultures are given a martial twist in Coorg. Competitive games like shooting at a coconut, and fighting for the possession of a coconut, and a collective hunt are introduced into every festival.

The harvest festival and the 'festival of arms' are both very significant in this connexion. It has been pointed out that the most important rites of the harvest festival are the cutting of sheaves, the eating of new rice grains, and the expression of a wish for plenty, but around these central rites are organized dancing and singing, competitive games, and a collective hunt. The incidental elements of the festival take up ten or eleven days while the main elements do not take up more than a day.

The completion of transplantation marks the end of a very arduous period in the cultivation of rice. Thereafter both the men and the oxen are relatively free till the beginning of harvesting. The 'festival of arms' comes at the end of the field season, and at this festival a Coorg resumes his contact with his weapons which
he had put away at the beginning of the rainy season. The break in the continuity of the relationship between a man and, say, his gun, creates some 'awkwardness' and so the weapons are worshipped before being used. Later, a collective hunt is held.

The Kaniya astrologer decides what periods of time are auspicious for worshipping the weapons and for cutting branches of the poyyakand tree. He also decides when the village or nag should have the collective hunt, in which direction the hunting party should go if they want the hunt to be successful, and, finally, the man who should lead the hunt.

The branches of the poyyakand tree are used for making barriers which are erected in the rice-fields a few weeks after the end of transplantation, in order to catch the small fish which abound in the waterlogged fields during this part of the year. These fish are regarded as a great delicacy, and catching them is a favourite sport. An improvident man is described in a proverb as one who lives on fish caught in the fields and on rice borrowed from neighbours at a ruinous rate of interest.

The weapons are cleaned and kept either in the sacred central hall or in the south-western room. They are marked with sandalwood paste. (Some Coorgs, like Brahmins on the western coast, mark their foreheads with sandalwood paste before worshipping a deity.) The weapons are worshipped with flowers, and a favourite flower used for worship on this occasion is the t6ku which derives its name from the fact that it looks like a gun. Curried meat and cooked rice-flour are offered on plantain leaves to the weapons.

After dinner, the men put on their gowns, and assemble in the south-western room, or central hall. The head of the okka hands over to each his weapons and the latter salutes the former after receiving his weapons. The headman says, as he stands over the weapons, 'Fight a tiger and boar by stepping aside the charging beast [i.e. avoid standing in the direct line of the charge], do not underrate your enemy, fight him face to face, stand by your friend, be obedient to the king, and do not forget God.'

The headman of the okka feeds the domestic dogs with cooked rice-flour. Then, just before the men of the okka leave the house for the village green he says, 'Let the horned deer and tusked boar cross my path.' Finally, he fires a shot in the direction of the jungle.

A boy who is old enough to hunt receives his first gun on this occasion.
Several competitions are held on the village green. The men are asked to shoot at a target (kuri). A variant of this is shooting at a target while running (du Boyd) Three stout plantain stems are planted very close to each other and men are invited to cut through them with one stroke of the Coorg sword. Coorg youths struggle for the possession of a coconut (tengē pūē). There is a high-jump competition, and then there is a form of putting-the-shot: the competitors are required to throw a round stone backwards over their heads. He who throws it farthest wins.

All the adult males in every okka in the village or nad have to co-operate in the collective hunt that is held after the 'festival of arms.' Each okka takes its dogs to the hunt. Every dog gets a portion of the meat of the animal killed. Every man taking part in the hunt gets a share, and those who hit the game first and second get an extra share each. He who first hit the game is also entitled to the animal's head, while the one who was the first to touch the killed animal's tail is given one of the front legs in addition to his ordinary share.

A man who shoots at an animal must not only hit it, but must draw blood as well. Blood, in this context, is referred to as nambige, which means evidence. Failure to draw blood is punished: thorns are drawn across the bare buttocks of the unfortunate hunter before the assembled members of the hunt.

It was mentioned earlier that a man who killed a panther was entitled to have nari mangala performed on the village green whereas he who killed a tiger was entitled to have it done on the nad green.

It was pointed out earlier that Ayyappa, the son of Vishnu and Shiva, becomes the hunting god par excellence in Coorg, roaming the forests at night, whistling to his pack of dogs. Vows are made to him before a hunt, and offerings of clay images of dogs and horses are made before his shrines in the jungle.

The general preference for the martial way of life expresses itself in belief, ritual, and myth. For instance, the Sanskritic belief that an eclipse is caused when the serpent Rāhu tries to devour the sun or moon provides the basis for a characteristically Coorg story. A one-eyed cobra lived in an anthill and near by was a creeper which had put forth an enormous gourd in which lived a hare. A strong wind blew the gourd off the creeper, and it broke when it hit the ground, setting the hare free. The cobra went after the running hare,
trying to catch it. It chased the hare round the world. The moon was watching the chase from above and he dropped a rope to help the poor hare. The latter promptly climbed up the rope and settled down in the moon's lap. The cobra tries to catch its prey periodically, and whenever it does so, an eclipse occurs. When an eclipse is in progress Coorgs shout, 'O one-eyed Siddappa (cobra), set free, set free.' They shoot at the sky to make the cobra disgorge the hare.

The martial orientation of Coorg culture is not a recent phenomenon, nor does it seem to be in danger of dying out: in the last war over 1,300 Coorgs enlisted as soldiers, and the first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army, General K. M. Cariappa, is a Coorg.

The sanyasi, the man who has renounced the world to pursue a life of prayer and contemplation, commands very great respect among Coorgs. He leads a celibate life, and in his case bachelorhood does not constitute a drawback. The rules which apply to ordinary men do not apply to him. Preference for the sanyasi is found everywhere in India among Hindus.
APPENDIX

THE KĀVERI MYTH

The myth woven round the River Kāverī forms part of the Skīnda Purāṇa.1 In 1864 the Kāverī Myth, called Kāveri Māhāmya or 'the greatness of Kāverī', was translated into Kannada from the original Sanskrit by one Śrīnivāsa Iyengar at the instance of an influential Coorg official, Nanjappa, of the Biddanda akha. The Myth has also been translated into Kōsaṅgi, presumably from the Kannada translation of the Sanskrit original.

The Kāverī Māhāmya as it is found in the Skīnda Purāṇa is an extremely complicated story, containing many stories within it after the manner of purāṇic tales. It is inconsistent in many places, but then a purāṇa is intended for the faithful laity who have no disbelief to suspend. Richter, exasperated by the inconsistencies of the Kāverī Māhāmya, has written,

"the extraordinary anachronism of Pārvatī’s blessing given to Chandravarma, the founder of the Coorg people, who is thereby rendered victorious over the Mliechtas or Turks [Muslim invaders of India], who made their first appearance about 500 years ago, transcends even the thoughtless audacity of a purāṇa; for the purāṇa belongs according to its own account to the age of the Rishis (or the sages) who were long extinct when the Turks appeared. The numerous passages, inculcating the duty of the valiant Coorgs, to offer to the Brahmins the honours and gifts due to them, have met with singularly bad success. The Coorgs, it would appear, never troubled themselves much about the contents and admonitions of the Kāverī book, and though the translation of it was designed to make it accessible to them, it is so highly spiced with Sanskrit and Old Kannada expressions, that few do understand it."

Richter’s understandable irritations and prejudices prevented him from comprehending the true function of the purāṇa, which is to account for certain inconsistencies in the culture of Coorgs, and to ‘place’ them in the caste system. Also the weaving of a purāṇa round a local river or mountain represents only an initial step in the Sanskritization of the beliefs, customs, and rites of a people. It prepares the way for subsequent complete Sanskritization. Certain theological and moral ideas come initially with the purāṇas.

11 "‘The Skīnda Purāṇa is that in which the six-faced deity (Skanda) has related the events of the Tatpurūṣha Kalpa, enlarged with many tales... It is said to contain 81,800 stanzas...’ ‘It is uniformly agreed,’ says Wilson, ‘that the Skīnda Purāṇa, in a collective form, has no existence; and the fragments, in the shape of Śhūnītas, Khaṇḍas, and Māhāmyas, which are affirmed in various parts of India to be portions of the Purāṇa, present a much more formidable mass of stanzas than even the immense number of which it is said to consist.’ J. Dowson, Hindu Classical Dictionary, pp. 300-01.

Richter is right in saying that few Coorgs could have understood a purci(la written in a mixture of Sanskrit and literary Kannada. He could not have foreseen that it would become a folksong several decades later.

The Kaveri Mahatmya describes the story of the divine origin of the river, enumerates the sacred bathing places along its course from source to estuary, and some of the temples on its banks. It deals with Coorg, the country in which the river has its origin, and Coorgs, who are its most distinctive, numerous, and important inhabitants. It gives the story of the origin of Coorgs.

Long ago, Kavéra Muni, a sage, retired to Brahmagiri (the present source of the River Kaveri) mountain in order to meditate on Brahma, the Creator. Kavéra’s devotion was so great that in the end four-headed Brahma appeared before him and asked him what he wanted. Kavéra told Brahma that he wanted children. Brahma replied that Kavéra could not have any children of his own because of sins committed in a previous life, but as Kavéra had shown exceptional devotion, Brahma presented him with Lopamudre, Brahma’s adopted daughter, and a manifestation of Parvati. The sage was pleased with the boon. Lopamudre informed Kavéra that she regarded herself as his daughter, and that she wanted to become a holy river, a bathe in which would rid people of their sins.

The girl lived with her foster-parents, Kavéra and his wife, till they both died. Some time after their death she met a great sage Agastya, who had gone to the Brahmagiri mountain in order to meditate on Shiva. Agastya fell in love with Kaveri, as the foster-daughter of Kavéra was called, and asked her to marry him. She agreed on condition that she would leave him for good if she was ever left alone even for a little while.

One morning Agastya wanted to bathe in Kanake, a river which rises in the Brahmagiri mountain, a mile from the source of the Kaveri. He put his wife into a vessel and handed the vessel to his young Brahmin disciples for safe keeping during his absence. Kaveri, annoyed at being left alone, made the boy carrying the vessel stumble and fall. The vessel rolled on the ground and Kaveri escaped from it and flowed away as a river. The disciples then stopped the river which promptly went underground. (The Kaveri flows underground from the source till Bhagamandla, where the Kanake joins it.)

Agastya returned from his bathe and learnt of what had happened in his absence. He ran after his wife who was swiftly flowing away as a river. He caught up with her and expressed his regret at having left her alone and begged her forgiveness. As a result of his entreaties, Kaveri decided to split herself into two halves, one half flowing away as the River Kaveri, and the other half becoming Lopamudre, the wife of Agastya. Agastya then told the river-half the course it should take to the sea, and enumerated the centres of pilgrimage along the course.

1 Agastya is a famous rishi, the son of the Vedic gods Mitra and Varuna by Urvashi. He is said to have been born in a water-jar, and was very short of stature. He once drank up the oceans, and compelled the Vindhya mountains to prostrate themselves before him. Tradition accords him a great place in Tamil literature, and also credits him with the introduction of Sanskrit Hinduism and Sanskrit literature into the South. He is also associated with mountains.
Long ago a Brahmin sage named Suyajña settled down on the Brahmagiri mountain and meditated upon Vishnu with great devotion. His devotion was so great that Vishnu appeared in person before him and asked him what he wanted. Suyajña replied that he wanted children, and Vishnu gave his own daughter Sujyoti to the sage. The deity asked the sage to take the girl to Kanaké, servant of Indra, living on top of the Agni Mountain, near the source of the Kaveri. Suyajña did as Vishnu had instructed him, and took Sujyoti to Kanaké. The two girls decided to meditate together. They did so for several centuries, giving up food and water. At last Indra appeared before them, and he at once fell in love with Sujyoti. He married her.

Some time after marriage Sujyoti informed her friend Kanaké that she was dissatisfied with the life she was leading, and that she wanted to do good to mankind. She suggested to Kanaké that both of them should become rivers and join the Kaveri. Kanaké fell in with Sujyoti’s suggestion and the two flowed away as rivers. Indra became indignant when he saw that his wife had left him to become a river. He cursed her, ‘You have become a river without my permission. May your waters dry up.’ Sujyoti was so distraught with grief when she heard the curse that Indra felt sorry for her and modified his curse, ‘You will flow without water till you join the Kaveri at Bhágamandalá, and then in the company of Kaveri and Kanaké join the sea.’

The rivers Kaveri and Kanaké meet at Bhágamandalá, and to these two which actually meet there the Kaveri Mahatmya adds a third, Sujyoti, which is said to meet the two unseen. Apropos of this Richter writes, ‘The story of the invisible river Sujyoti, joining the Kanaké and Kaveri is a lame imitation of the northern tale, that Saraswati, a stream of great renown among the Brahmins, is not lost, as it seems, in the desert sands, but joins the Jumna and Ganges at Prayág (Allahabad).’ The Kaveri Mahatmya is an attempt to produce a southern parallel to the northern model. Here again is an instance of the way in which the Sanskrit idiom extends over the whole of India.

Another, and a very important, part of the Kaveri Mahatmya brings the river Kaveri, the country of its origin, and the most distinctive inhabitants of the country, Coorgs, all into relation with each other. A special and intimate bond is created between the three.

Siddhártha, the King of Mástyádátha, had four sons, the youngest and most gifted of whom was Chandravarma. Some time after he had come of age Chandravarma left his father and went on a pilgrimage to various holy places in south India. In the course of his pilgrimage he went to the Brahmagiri mountain where he meditated on Párvati, the wife of Shiva. When the goddess presented herself before Chandravarma and asked him what he wanted, he replied that he wanted a kingdom, a wife of Kshatriya caste who would bear him children, and a place in heaven after death. Párvati told him that owing to sins committed in a previous life, he could not have children from a wife belonging to his own caste, but would have to be content with children from a Súdrá wife.
The goddess herself presented him with a Shudra bride, and told him that his wife would bear him eleven sons, who would be called ugras. They would be courageous and righteous, and respectful to Brahmins. They would be equal to Kshatriyas in every respect except one, viz., they would not be entitled to the performance of Vedic rituals. They would be devoted to the worship of Shiva and Parvati. The goddess assured Chandravarma that she would be born in course of time as the River Kaveri, and confer prosperity and other blessings on the children (Coorgs) of Chandravarma. She asked him to go forth and clear the land of Mlechchas (Muslims). She gave him a victorious sword, a white horse quick as the wind, and an army to drive the Mlechchas out of the country.

Chandravarma overcame the Mlechchas and married a woman of his own caste according to Vedic rites. The coronation ceremony was performed by Brahmins to whom he gave houses and lands. He invited other castes to settle down in Coorg, called Matsyadesha after the country ruled by his father. He had eleven sons from his Shudra wife, and Vedic rites were performed for each of them on occasions like the conferment of name, performance of tonsure, and investment with the sacred thread. In this respect they were treated like Kshatriyas and other twice-born castes.

When they came of age, the eleven sons married the hundred daughters of the King of Vidharbhadha, the eldest son Devakanta marrying twenty girls, the second son, sixteen, the third, twelve, and so on.

Chandravarma retired with his two wives to the Himalayas to meditate on Shiva and Parvati. Before his departure he told his children that Parvati would be born in Coorg as the River Kaveri and that they would be happy as long as they continued to worship Shiva and Parvati, and the Brahmins.

Each of the sons of Chandravarma had more than a hundred sons. They were all very strong men, with nails as sharp and powerful as the tusks of boars. With their nails they levelled the ground and tore up the forests, and generally reclaimed land.

Then they settled themselves anew in the country, the face of which they had changed by the strength of their own arms. Around them they planted houses and families of Brahmins and other castes. Because this re-establishment of the country resembled the renowned deeds of the Varahavatvra (the boar-incarnation of Vishnu), the country of Chandravarma’s sons was henceforth called Krodadesha, and its inhabitants ‘Kr6da people’. The word Kr6da is said to have been changed and corrupted by degrees into Kodagu, which is the present, and probably was the original name of the country.

Two days before the first of Libra, when the Kaveri festival is celebrated annually, Parvati appeared in a dream to Devakanta, the King of Coorgs, and ordered him to assemble his people in a place called Balmuri, where she would

2 The Skinda Pural, of which the Kaveri Mahanmya is only a part, has a Shaivite orientation. The River Kaveri is identified with Lopamudra, a manifestation of Parvati.
meet them. Accordingly, all Coorgs assembled there to greet Pārvati in the
form of a river. The river came rushing down the valley, and the violence of the
flood pushed the frontal knots of the women’s saris to their backs, and even
now Coorg women push the frontal knot to the back in memory of their first
bath in the Kāveri. Pārvati appeared in person before the assembled Coorgs,
and told them to ask a boon of her. Coorgs asked for children, wealth, a king-
dom for themselves, and a priest, and Kāveri granted them everything they
asked for.

It is clear from the brief summary of the Kāveri Māhāmya given above that
it is Brahminical in origin. Brahmins are praised in it, conferred wealth and
other privileges, and Coorg kings are told that they should ‘establish holy
Brahmins’ in their land.

The Kāveri Māhāmya brings the River Kāveri and its worship into the main
stream of the purāṇas which have an All-India spread. It also makes Sanskrit
deities and ideas familiar to the inhabitants of Coorg. A special and intimate
relation is established between Coorg, Coorgs, and the river as a result of it.
A distinctive feature of the dress of Coorg women is associated with the Kāveri.
Coorgs regard the Kāveri as their patron goddess. At least one in ten girls is
named Kāveri.

The account of the origin of Coorgs in the Kāveri Māhāmya is an attempt
to reconcile certain facts which are not easy to reconcile. While it is true that
Coorgs are a wealthy and powerful group with a martial outlook, they do not
perform certain Vedic rituals which are performed by Kshatriyas elsewhere
in India, and their dietary includes domestic pork and liquor. The myth finds
a way out of the difficulties by suggesting that they are Ugras, the descendants
of a Kshatriya father and Shūdra mother.

A demon named Hiranyakṣa dragged the earth to the bottom of the sea.
Vishnu assumed the form of a boar (varāha) and rescued the earth after slaying
the demon at the end of a contest lasting a thousand years.

GLOSSARY

**Afmara.** One of several sacred benches in the outer veranda or central hall of a Coorg house.

**Aruva.** Family friend. Traditional relationship of friendship, frequently mutual, between two okkas.

**Baine palm.** Caryota urens. Palm from the spathe of which toddy is drawn by a Kudiya, or low-caste man, for the consumption of himself and others, including Coorgs.

**Bhārava.** Offering of cooked meat, liquor, puffed rice, &c., to village-deity or ancestor-spirit.

**Bhūti.** Measure equal to eighty seers. A rice-field was taxed according to the number of bhūti it yielded annually.

**Bis.** Spirit of a man dying a violent death.

**Dīkṣē utma.** Ritual, usually performed a few weeks after the death of a person, which completely frees the first-grade mourners from mourning.

**Ganga puja.** Worship of the sacred river Ganges. Water in any river, pond, or well is identified with the Ganges on certain ritual occasions.

**Jaggery.** Crude brown sugar made from the juice of sugar-cane, or the saps of various palms, either in the form of square blocks or small round cakes.

**Jagir.** An assignment of the king's or government's share of the produce of a village or several villages to an individual for services rendered.

**Jamma.** Concession tenure under which Coorgs and certain others held land. A jamma landholder was formerly liable to be called up for military and other service by the state whenever necessary.

**Jangama.** Lingayat priest who wears ochre robes. Occasionally, a mendicant.

**Jail.** Subcaste. One of the innumerable, tiny, endogamous, and occupational groups which constitute the effective units of the caste system. A jail has only a regional application while varṇa has an All-India application.

**Kailpūdu.** Festival of arms.

**Kaimatja.** Ancestor-shrine near the ancestral house of a Coorg.

**Kāranavā.** The apotheosized spirit of the dead ancestor of a Coorg okka.

**Kāranaranda amarā.** Literally it means 'ancestors' bench'. One of the benches in the outer veranda, or a portion of it, so called. It is regarded as more sacred than other benches in the veranda.

**Kāranava kula or Kāranava tērē.** The elaborate propitiation of the ancestors of a Coorg okka. Translated in the book as 'ancestor-propitiation'.

**Kāranava tāre.** Raised platform round the trunk of a milk-yielding tree, in which stones representing ancestors are embedded. Translated in the book as 'ancestor-platform'.

**Kālanjula.** One of several high-caste okkas having well-defined rights and duties at the festival of the local village-deity. Translated as 'festival-priest' in the book.

**Kālanjula.** Portion of the ancestral estate where the dead members of the okka are buried. When it is decided to cremate a dead person, an adjoining portion of the estate, called rātanjula, is used.
Koladi. Bell-metal vessel with a long spout at the side.
Koopa. Hostility between two villages or okkas.
Kupya. A gown, like a dressing-gown, worn by Coorgs on ritual occasions.
Kudiyatu or Tintu molé. Pollution caused by menses.
Kurjapati. Non-Brahmin sectarian caste devoted exclusively to the worship of Shiva and Parvati in their various manifestations.
Kuda. Ritual performed on twelfth or sixteenth day of death which frees all except first-grade mourners from ritual mourning.
Kudi. Ritual purity.
Kutkut parijé. Custom by which a man raises up seed for his wife's natal okka, in addition to his own.
Kulīlaj. Normal ritual status which is really a mild form of impurity.
Kund. Cleared, open space in village or nāḷ for dancing, or holding meetings &c.
Kula. Auspicious ceremony performed on certain occasions in the life of an individual.
Kumar. Hymn, sacred text, mystical verse, incantation or spell.
Kūvā. The most important part of the ritual of kula.
Kalī. Territorial unit consisting of several villages.
Kusala bolik. Lamp burning in a niche in the western wall of the sacred central hall. Translated as 'wall-lamp' in the book.
Kāla. Patrilineal, and patrilocal joint family, the basic kin-group among Coorgs. It is also a co-residential, commensal and property-owning group.
Kāla parijé. Custom by which a man lives with his wife and raises up seed exclusively for her natal okka.
Pāna. Unit of money equal to two annas and eight pies. There are six pānas in a rupee.
Pandal. Decorated shed or booth erected in front of the house at marriage or other occasion.
Pātri. Day of fast during the festival of a village-deity.
Pettu bolik or Penta bolik. Pollution caused by birth.
Phūng. Balls of rice or rice-flour, mixed with gingelly grains and other things offered to the spirit of a dead person or ancestor.
Pōlē. Ritual impurity of any sort.
Pokka. Untouchable caste.
Pījā. Worship.
Piratna. One of eighteen mythological works treating chiefly of cosmogony and divine genealogy.
Pirat polu. Harvest-festival.
Paumand. Ritual conferring or withdrawing membership of an okka.
Seer. A grain measure of capacity or weight, varying in different parts of India. In the Kannada country it is equal to the weight of twenty-four rupees or 0.6067 lb.
Tāla bolik. Lamp kept on a sheet of rice spread in a bell-metal dining-dish (tali).
Takke. Headman.
Tapadōli. Ritual enumeration of the restrictions to be observed during a
village-deity's festival.

**Tōre.** Elaborate equipment, made principally of split bamboo, and coloured cloth of pith, worn by low-caste oracle at an ancestor-propitiation in a Coorg house, and at the festival of a village-deity.

**Tōr.** Extreme form of pollution from which mourners and the house in which they live suffer until the celebration of *Mada* ceremony.

**Tōūdo polī.** Pollution caused by a low-caste man coming too near.

**Tiruvakāra (m.), Tiruvakārī (f.).** Oracle.

**Ugra.** A mixed caste, result of the marriage of a Kshatriya father and Shūdra mother.

**Varna.** Traditional scheme of classification of castes. According to this scheme there are four castes, three of which are 'twice-born', and the Untouchables are outside the pale of the caste system.
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