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Bhūta and Daiva: Changing Cosmology of Rituals and Narratives in Karnataka

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The spirit worship of Bhūta and Daiva is prevalent in the coastal area of Karnataka (Map 1). Since medieval times, this region has also been called Tulu or Tulu Nadu, home to people speaking the language Tulu, forming a unique cultural zone (Bhatt 1975). This paper analyzes the present situation of Bhūta and Daiva worship under the social change in the

Map 1 The coastal area of Karnataka
(Upadhyaya and Upadhyaya 1984)
local context. The main topic is the study of changing cosmology created by the past kingship through oral tradition. Bhūta rituals consist of socio-cultural complex and rich oral traditions (Padmanabha 1976; Upadhyaya 1984; Gowda 1990; Brückner 1995). This study examines the folk concepts of the cosmology, the phases of spirit possession, and the process of long dance sequence, by analyzing the contents of pāddana, narrative invocations recited only during the ritual process, to take up the case study of Banjval Taluk.

In general, Bhūta and Daiva rituals of Karnataka are connected to Teyyam ritual of North Kerala. They share the same elements and structure such as the type of mediators, the make-up of impersonators, the ritual sequence, the oracles by spirit possession, ornamentation, and dance, but Bhūta rituals tend to involve the fierce and strong trance. In recent years, Bhūta rituals are undergoing significant transformation into the folk performance in some areas.

This study analyzes the cosmology of Bhūta and Daiva focusing on the change of the Bhūta rituals and discusses the functions and meanings of pāddana, narrative invocations, based on the fieldwork in a particular area since 1994.

Bhūta

Bhūta rituals are conducted in small shrines or temples in villages during the dry season between November and April (until May in some areas). These rituals are called mecci, nēma, and kōla. The main spirits are generally called Bhūta or Daiva. Bhūta means “ghost” in Sanskrit. It also includes a derogatory nuance of higher castes who look down on the spirit worship by lower castes. This may be persuasive in some way as spirits of heroes who died unnatural or tragic deaths or those who have drowned. Local people believe the dead spirits are haunting in the area and they are afraid of these spirits.

On the other hand, the Basel Mission, which came to this region in the 19th century, attempted to convert the worshippers by dismissing local rituals and calling them “devil dance,” a remark that had impact on the intellectuals. Generally, Bhūta rituals are treated derogatorily by intellectuals and outsiders. However, local people worship ghosts, the dead, ancestors, heroes, animal deities, forest deities, mountain deities, earth deities, and tribal guardian deities. They are important and intimate objects of worship for the locals. In some situations, Devas, the god worshipped by higher class, are mixed or coexist with the lower rank deities called Daivas or spirits called Bhūtas. During rituals, pāddana narratives on the origin myth or historical story of the Bhūtas and Daivas, are chanted before the main rituals, most of which are filled with tragic atmosphere. Often the emotions of envy and grudge are also chanted about, depicting complicated historical background.

The following are some representative Bhūtas and Daivas chanted in pāddanas.4)

1. Bobbarya: Spirit of the one who died in sea, born between a Muslim father and Jain mother.
2. Koti Chennaya: Spirits of hero brothers who died tragic deaths
3. Kalkuda Kallurti: Spirits of a brother and a sister who were sculptors and whose one
leg and one arm were cut off by the king.

4. Pañjurli: Spirit of a boar born from the incestuous affair between brother and sister boars, which died once but revived.

5. Jumādi: Bisexual spirit accompanied by a dumb messenger called Banje (warrior attendant).

6. Malerāya: Spirit hunting with bow and arrow in the mountains.

Today, Bhūtas are often thought to be the incarnations (avatāras) or messengers (gaṇas) of Hindu gods, thus the pāddana songs also tell stories of Hindu gods and their personifications. This phenomenon is called “Hindunization.” The same situation is found all over the India.

Mediators between Humans and Spirits

The mediators between spirits and humans in the rituals consist of two types. The first type, called pātri (Plate 1), darśan, or māni, serves as a mediator to convey the power of the spirits through possession (āvēsa) by using the silver sword (kaṭṭalē) and the bell as the ritual tools. Often, middle caste members such as Billava (toddy tappers) and Mūlya (pot makers) inherit their occupations and roles to serve them. Billava is also called pūjāri, a priest in lower status. In some cases, the relatives of the owners of old houses enshrining spirits are expected to become the mediators through generations. Pātri means container, darśan means apparition, and māni means vehicle. All of these words originate from Sanskrit. The lower or middle classes usually serve these roles based upon the caste (jāti) system.

Plate 1 Pātri
The second type of mediators belong to outcastes called the harijan (scheduled caste, untouchables), such as Pambada, Parava, and Nalike. These mediators paint colors on their bodies meticulously, put on makeup, dance with gigantic and flamboyant bamboo frame of ornaments (ant) on his back, with anklets (gaggara) on his legs and gradually get into trance to tell oracles (nudikatt). In some cases, masks (muga) are used. This process is often called kōla, a word with multiple meanings such as cosmetics, ornament, transformation, and ritual. The whole ritual is often called kōla because the second type constitutes an essential part of rituals. The entire ritual process is also called ārādhāne as in the case of Teyyam in Kerala. To be exact, the second type may be characterized more as the impersonators than the mediators.

As both types of mediators are believed to have the ability to communicate directly with spirits or deities, they can be called “shamans” in the broad sense of the term. In addition, the former can be called a “medium” who can directly conveys the divine power and tell an oracle to the people while the latter can be called a “prophet” or “seer” who can have a sense of power or see the images and hear the voices of spirits indirectly. Moreover, the former can be called “calling type of shaman” as they receive the invitation from the deity through sudden possession, while the latter that can be called “the inherited type of shaman” transmit their power through the kinship tie and training from young ages. In both cases, the mediators go into “altered state of consciousness” (ASC) through the trance, with the former being deeper than the latter. I call this situation “double trance” consisted by two types of shamans. While the former is a type of “possession” whereby the physical body is treated as the vessel of the spirit or deity, the latter attempts to become closer to the spirit by physical expansion using extravagant costume and makeup for the body. The former is “internalization” whereas the latter is “externalization.” Given that the former belongs to lower or middle caste, and the latter outcaste, it can be said that hierarchy affects the basic concepts of rituals, with social order penetrating into the pantheon of Bhūta and Daiva worship.

Moreover, the former is sometimes called by Sanskrit name, indicating that it is closely related to Deva and Daiva, the Hindunized deities. In contrast, the latter is closely related to Bhūtas, the local spirits, which belong to the lower class and outcaste. Most Bhūtas are invisible spirits, and appear in impersonated forms in ritual. However, hierarchy also exists amongst spirits, and the pantheon of Bhūtas are diverse ranging from those who are offered vegetarian food to those who require animal sacrifices. The harijan mediators, Pambada and Parava, are associated with higher-ranking Bhūtas while Nalike are related to lower-ranking Bhūtas. The mediators of Bhūtas are considered the descendents of indigenous people, and without them, the Bhūta or Daiva ritual could not be performed at local small shrines. At ritual sites, the actual social hierarchy and ranks are temporarily reversed, and high-caste people sometimes pray to the harijan mediators. Offerings for the lower-ranking Bhūtas are usually non-vegetarian and they often require blood sacrifices, such as biting and eating raw chicken. By dripping blood on the ground, people believe that it is possible to enforce the life force of the human body and bring the fertility of the land. It regenerates the extraordinary powers of the forests. The pāddanas, the invocations recited in old Tulu language at the ritual site, not only invoke the appearance of Bhūta and Daiva
by telling the origins of the spirits or deities, but also work as an ideology legitimizing the rituals to reconstruct the past.9) They learn the pāddana by the oral tradition through the hereditary line from ancestors by their kinship tie, so that they can be called the indigenous narrators of the history on the native land, “proto-priests of the land.” However, the mother earth involves the female principles, and after the Hindunization movements, they are considered as Hindu goddesses given the continuity of similar elements. The power of Hindu goddesses is regarded to be śakti, and the local female deity Ullāthi is identified as Lakṣmi, Sarasvatī, Pārvatī and Durgā. The members of higher castes pray to local goddesses or female deities as the incarnation of Hindu goddesses.

This paper analyzes the ritual sequences and contents of pāddanas of Bhūta and Daiva, taking Balthila of Banīval Taluk as a case study to delineate the cosmology and its transformation under the social change.9)

Classification of Gods, Deities and Spirits

The higher-caste people in the surveyed area classify the invisible supernatural power into several categories. Generally, Brahmans and higher-ranking non-Brahmans pray to Devas as the visible Hindu gods in temples and homes, while lower and middle non-Brahmans, such as farmers and craftsmen, have strong faith in invisible spirits or powers of Daiva and Bhūta. Human body is to be possessed by the supernatural power and spirits to speak oracles, describing past, present, and future events related to an individual or an area. These people wish to resolve their misfortunes and troubles through the oracles and find out some solutions of their various problems. Rituals of Bhūtas and Daivas serve as a great opportunity for peacemaking in household disputes, and conflicts in a local community are resolved by the instructions of Daivas and Bhūtas.

Higher castes state that supernatural powers and spirits can be divided into two main types: spirits who are related only with good deeds and evil spirits who do harmful things. Based upon Atharva Veda, the Brahmans interpret the former as Deva gana and the latter as Rākṣasa gana. Gana means follower and messenger of the gods under the control of Brahman. However, supernatural forces and spirits sometimes have ambiguity, and the dualism of good and bad is not applied to them. Lower castes are keenly aware of this fluidity and give reliance upon the ambivalent awful powers. Many of them believe that only the indigenous peoples can bring out powers of the mother earth. There are different ideas about the supernatural powers and spirits depending on the social class. Although the concepts of gods, deities, and spirits are overlapping based upon the perception of powers, this invisible world can be divided into the following hierarchical categories.

Deva

Devas are personified gods and goddesses enshrined in temples and shrines. The ritual site is mainly called mādu (māda). Brahmans carry out pūjā rituals where offerings consist of purified vegetarian food. Rituals are conducted with śloka and mantra in Sanskrit. The characteristics of the Devas are that they carry out good deeds on people and that they are honest, dignified, fair, and incorrupt. Devas represent the highest level of power and
Ullāklu in this area is classified as Deva. In the Banṭval Taluk area, Ullāklu is the general name given to Ullālthi (female deity) and Ajwar Daivangalu (male deities, two brothers). They are worshipped in the same way as kings are.

**Daiva**

Daivas possess some aspects of personified gods and goddesses, but have the strong nature to be spiritual beings. The ritual site is mainly called stāna (sāna in Tulu language). In some places, Brahmans conduct pūjā rituals, but their presence is not necessarily required at all the rituals. In some parts of the rituals, the Sanskrit mantra is uttered. The tantric method is sometimes used for praying, and added with magical acts. Vegetarian food is offered. In some cases, faces of Daivas are depicted as tigers and boars, and they resemble Bhūtas. They are good-natured deities who punish sins to correct the bad deed or dishonesty.

**Bhūta**

Bhūtas include spirits of the forests, trees, animals (pig, tiger, boar, ox, snake), heroes who have died unnatural deaths, and people who have died from social injustice. Non-Brahmans worship them at the stāna (Bhūta stāna). In the case of Koti Chennaya, the ritual site is called with a special name, garadi (garodi). Offerings are non-vegetarian, and normally cocks are sacrificed. In the past, pigs and buffalos were sacrificed. In festivals, the coconut liquor (toddy) is offered, and alcohol is not considered a taboo. Bhūtas are said to become violent when they punish humans, but perform good deeds very quickly. Bhūtas are worshipped among low and middle castes.

**Preta**

Pretas are spirits of the dead who appear in front of their relatives and families whom they love the most. They do not come to individuals who had no specific relations with them. Offerings are both vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Generally, Devas, Daivas, and Bhūtas are said to be able to control the Pretas who are feared for their evil nature of harming human beings.

**Other Spirits**

These are not objects of worship.

The categories described above are those seen from the perspective of upper class people. People of lower castes and harijans have different opinions. However, it is for certain that the concept of gods, deities and spirits exists within the context of class hierarchy. The name of ritual also corresponds to the concept of the hierarchy. The ritual of Deva is called mecci, and in the Balthila area, the mecci is often used only for the female deity Ullālthi. On the other hand, the festivals of Daiva are often called nēma, and those of Bhūta are called kōla. Generally, the meaning of nēmas is originated in a series of dances. In Balthila, Ullālthi rituals are also called mecci nēmas as they combine meccis and nēmas, suggesting that Devas and Daivas are mixed together. Nēmoutsava is also often used,
connected with *utsava*, which is the usual term for annual festival of Hindu temples. After the end of a *Deva* ritual, *Daivas* and *Bhūtas* are often appeased. It shows the order of hierarchy as a ritual sequence.

As for the costumes used for *Daiva*, wild plants such as coconut palm leaves are not used, but plants need to be worn for *Bhūta*. For example, coconut leaves are wrapped around the waist for *Pañjurli*, to visually symbolize closeness to the wild. *Pañjurli* also includes the nature of the boar spirit, expressing a link with the forest. For the female deity *Ullāthi* of Balthila, the performer does not use coconut leaves because she is regarded as *Deva* and *Daiva*, and the Brahman conducts pūjā rituals. *Ullāthi* is originally a female deity worshipped by the local people, but nowadays she is identified as *Lakṣmi* (goddess of wealth and fortune), *Sarasvatī* (goddess of knowledge and education), or *Durgā Paramēśvarī* (goddess of energy, šakti), all Hindu goddesses. In October, *Navarātri* rituals are also performed for Hindu goddesses. Basically, they are worshipped by *Durgā* pūjā, conducted in Sanskrit *mantras*. The goddess is said to crush evil spirits and demons into pieces with her swords, arrow and bow, whip, and anklet. The people believe that by praying to *Durgā*, all evil forces will be eliminated, creating a good environment. Brahmans firmly identify *Ullāthi* with Hindu goddesses by tracing the origin of the goddess to *Devi Māhātmya* (8th century). However, the name *Ullāthi* is *Tulu*, and includes the elements of the earth god *Daiva* in terms of nature. She has some common character with *Bhūta*, instead of a true *Daiva*. The characters of *Daiva* and *Bhūta* sometimes penetrate into each other or are made into a complex concept. On the whole, *Ullāthi* is floating in the hierarchy between a goddess personified in the form of an idol and an invisible wild spirit.

The mixture of these different characters can also be seen in festivals. In Balthila, two major festivals are held annually to worship *Ullāthi*, in December and in March. The rituals performed in December at *Ullāthi mādu* (*Bapāramane*) culminate on a full moon day, following the śukla pakṣa (new moon-full moon), lunar calendar. In contrast, the climax day of the ritual performed in March at *Mullar mādu* and *Puncheti mādu* is determined according to the *Tulu* calendar based on the *Sankramana* (semi-solar calendar). *Sankramana* is a Dravidian calendar of South India used for *Daiva* rituals. *Ullāthi* rituals in Balthila contain both North Indian and South Indian elements based upon the mutual infiltration between *Deva* and *Daiva*.

### Rituals and Royalty

The main deity of the festival in Balthila is *Ullāthi* (Plate 2). Her brothers, *Ajwar Daivangalu* (Plate 3), accompany her. *Ullāthi* means the people of the highest rank in *Tulu* language. The masculine form is *Ullaya*; the feminine form is *Ullāthi*, and the plural form *Ullāklu* applies to both male and female. People of the highest rank include: (1) royal family; (2) upper-class Brahman; (3) people with good foundations; (4) respectable people; and (5) persons of high virtue, such as scholars. It is suggested that such persons are compared with the top-level deity. In particular, male deities are guardians of the royal family and treated in the same way as kings (*arasu*) living in palace (*aramane*). *Ullāthi* is compared to the queen, as the virgin deity, and a sister to her brother deities.
The impersonators are adorned with the beautiful ornaments called kiruvāla during nēma or kōla rituals in which deities appear. The ornaments are the symbol of the old kingship, and are stored at the mādu. In Balthila, they were deposited in the Ullālthi mādu, which is also known as Banḍāramane. Generally, a mādu maintains a high degree of sacredness and purity. In the festival in Balthila in March, the rituals are performed at Mular mādu, Ullālthi mādu, and Puncheti mādu. Of these, the Puncheti mādu is the most sacred place, for which the entry of women is prohibited for the maintenance of purity.

Ullālthi is worshiped as a high rank deity all over Tuḷunādu. The pāddana speaks of her tradition and nature as a guardian of the royal family. According to Upadhyaya and Upadhyaya (1984: 54), “she is believed to be the family deity of Banga king of this area.” Chinnappa Gowda, who has studied the distribution of the palace of Ullālthi, states that she seems to have originated in Bangavāḍi (place of origin), northeast of Mangalore and immigrated from there to the coastal area (Gowda 1990). Her journey is likely to overlap with the actual migration path of the royal family and its descendants. Banja is the name of the ruling class of royal family. The shrines of Ullālthi, mādu or stāna are located all over the Dakṣiṇa Kannada district, and they are considered the most sacred place in respective areas. For example, there are mādus worshipping Ullālthi in Puttur, south of Balthila (between Māni and Subramanya), Ananthadi, Balnādu, Kelinja (in Okketturu),
Viṣṭala, Kumbla (Manjeśvara, Kerala State), Sajipa (west of Balthila), Someśvar (near Ullāl), and Kanandur (near Ullār). Summing up the oral traditions transmitted by the local people and the Bhūta impersonators, the migration route of Ullālthī becomes clear ( Gowda 1990).

According to the oral tradition in Balthila, Ullālthī is enshrined in the area that belongs to the Mogranādū ruled by King Nandār (Nandāvara) called sīme. The royal palace, called aramane, is located on the banks of the river Nētravati. Sīme means region, and its size is expressed in the number of houses. For instance, Mogranādū was 1,000 sīme, the Viṣṭala was 2,000 sīme, the Puttur was 10,000 sīme, and the Kumbla was 2,000 sīme. Each sīme was governed by Jain kṣatriya (warrior class) before independence. Although royal power was lost, the sīme remains as the festival area reformed in rituals, reproducing memories of royal power and meaning of the symbolism of kingship through the frame of reference of “community between act and narration” of rituals.

In each sīme, Ullālthī and Daivangalū were enshrined as the guardian deities of kingship by the local people of a specific village. The famous sacred places are: (1) Balnādū in the Puttur sīme; (2) Keпу in the Viṣṭala sīme; (3) Paivalige in the Kumbla sīme; (4) Uliya in the Someśvar sīme; and (5) Balthila in the Mogranādū sīme. Though the festival day differs for each place, it starts in Keпу and ends in Uliya. On the other hand, Hindu gods are also worshipped in the same area, and there are royal Hindu temples inside the sīme. The royal temples of each area are: (1) Sri Mahālingēśvar (Śiva); (2) Sri Pañcālingēśvar (Śiva); (3) Sri Anantheśvar (Viṣṇu); (4) Sri Somanathēśvar (Viṣṇu); and (5) Sri Narasimha Swami (Viṣṇu), otherwise known as Kadesvāliya. Ullālthīs as royal guardians of Jains were treated as the highest deities of the land, coupled with Hindu gods and assigned to specific areas to create a spiritual union and establish the authority of royal power, thus forming a fluid complex of Jainism, Hinduism and folk belief there. Most Jain kings were great patrons of Hindu temples.

In the case of Mogranādū sīme (Map 2), there are four important old houses such as Guthu and Beedu presiding over rituals. They support the maintenance of shrines and the performance of rituals by economic aids as major landowners. They were Odal Guthu (near Māṇī), Punjalimar Guthu (near Netla), Balthila Beedu (Kalladka), and Kolakere Guthu (Kalladka). They were locally influential people and sub lords of the kings. In the past, all were Jains, believers of Jainism. In Balthila and Kolakere, they belonged to Ballar, Jain royal family living in Beedu house, and in Odal and Punjalimar, they belonged to Baṅga, followers of Jainism and influential lords living in Guthu house. Kolakere is thought to have become Hindu under the rule of Konkanis, migrants from the north between the 17th and 18th century (family name Prabhu). Kolakere also followed another two sub Guthus (Bolanthur Prabhu and Karingāna Kamath). Local old families are described in pāddanas, which tell the story of how deity came about and settled down in each area. The important old houses are mentioned as “families loved by deities” in each area. The authority and legitimacy have been established by reciting the pāddana. Even today, when royal power has been lost, the descendants of this influential house are required to contribute donations and participate in rituals.
There are two main Hindu temples in Mogranādu sīme: Kadeśvāliya and Netla. The main gods of each temple are Viṣṇu (Narasimha) and Śiva. Kadeśvāliya has dominance. In Kadeśvāliya one day before the annual festival (utsava), the royal ornament called kiruvāla is brought to the temple by the procession, which looks like the behavior of royal family. The pātri, mediator, accompanies them. In an early morning, the impersonators, Pambada, perform the Ullālthi nēmotsava. After this ritual, the cart festival starts in the temple. This means the Daiva dance is performed prior to the main festival of Hindu god, Deva. Normally, the Daiva is enshrined in the night after the Hindu temple festival is over, but in this case is carried out before the temple festival because Ullālthi is of the same rank as the main Hindu god of the temple, Narasimha, having been incorporated into the Hindu pantheon. Daiva returns to the storage place of ornaments before the cart festival starts on the next day. The process and sequence of rituals express the respect to the indigenous deity based upon the legacy of Ullālthi being the guardian of the Jain dynasty.
Looking at this situation, Jainism and Hinduism did not oppose each other, and though each had their own flexible character, Hindus gradually replaced Jains. However, today, the Konkani people who fled from the Portuguese invasion 300 years ago and migrated from Goa to this area are the most influential. Pāddanas recited at the ritual in Balthila mention that Kolakere is the birthplace of Ullālthī. Ullālthī has gradually changed her character from the royal deity in the local Jain dynasty to the pan-Indian Hindu goddess becoming a part of the Hindu pantheon. This transformation and syncrenization can be shown in the Kadesvāliya festival. Ullālthī has the highest power in any dynasty. The royal family dominates an influential position confirmed by the prayer for the king, who is the supervisor. In most of royal temples, Ullālthī or Daivangalu is worshipped. The Ullālthī is respected and supported by the people living in the regions of the former dynasties. However, kiruvālas return to their respective mādu, and are not kept at the Hindu temples. This signifies that the Jain royalty is deeply related to local rituals.

However, with the spread of the Hindu influence, the participation of the Jain royalty in Hindu temples became mandatory. Even today, Ullālthī recalls the memories of the dynasty through the annual festival performed by the people living in the political area called sīme. Rituals, in which all residents in the sīme participate, invoke the intimate link between the royal family and cosmology of kingship, as they serve castes roles to carry out “duty to the king.”

**Inside and Outside**

In the past, kings presided over the festivals of Hindu temples in wide areas and the annual festival of local shrines in small areas to reconstruct the social order. By doing so, the people were able to recognize the unity with the dynasty. Today, royalty has ceased to exist in this area, but the castes play the various roles in annual festival to portray “return to tradition.” In such cases, the possession called “double trance” has a significant meaning. In Balthila nēma, the local spirit (Dhūmāvati) first tells an oracle through the mediator called pātri. For the Ullālthī and Ajwar who appear next, the Pambada of harijan impersonators with the excessive ornaments and masks (muga) depict an extraordinary image. This transcendence invokes a sense of continuity with the king and a link with the divine world. Gold-silver ornaments and masks symbolize the king. As the guardians of the king, Ullālthī and Ajwar have the character of externality, and actually, the impersonator, Pambada, comes from outside the village. In contrast to this, the pātri who becomes possessed and speaks oracles are transmitted by the locals, such as Billava. They usually speak the oracles of “spirits haunting a house” such as the Dhūmāvati and Pañjurli Bhūta who reside in specific historical houses (Beedu and Guthu) in the Balthila area. Dhūmāvati is the guardian spirit of the home of Kolakere Guthu, and today, it is the bodyguard of the great deity Ullālthī while Pañjurli is the guardian of Ajwar.

Generally, the theme that local spirits (Bhūtas) are subservient to outside deities (Daivas and Devas) is repeated in the pāddana narrative invocations. Therefore, Ullālthī and Ajwar are taken to represent deities who have come from outside the land. The “double trance” by pātri and Pambada can connect inside and outside or innernality and externality.
skillfully by the spiritual expression utilizing the ambiguity of possession. Sacred power of śakti is sometimes conveyed to Pambada by the sword or the hand by pātri in kōla or nēma. Today, local spirits, Bhūtas, are regarded to be the followers or guardians of outside dieties and gods, so that the pantheon in the area is consisted of multilayer expression. Following the pāddana recited at the ritual site in Balthila, the old house deity in Kolakere becomes a guardian of Ullālthi, and Dhūmāvati takes Banṭes as his followers. This means that Bhūta is controlled by Daiva and that Daiva becomes a guardian of Deva. There exists a hierarchy with the lower classes incorporated as the followers of the upper class.

Hindu temples are far more complicated. At the Narasimha in Kadeśvāliya, prior to cart festival of the main god Narasimha (Viṣṇu), the Ullālthi nēma is performed. Then after the festival of the main god, all kinds of Bhūtas, such as Dhūmāvati and Banṭe, Kallruti and Kalkuda, Mahāmayee, and Sarabhūta (1,000 Bhūtas) are worshipped as nēmas. In this context, the rituals on the whole are composed of Daiva—Deva—Bhūta. Though possessions do not take place in the Hindu festival utsava, they are essential to the nēma. The festivals of this temple are called nēmotsava, where mutual continuity has become clear. The hierarchy and ranking of gods, deities and spirits, from Deva to Bhūta via Daiva, in this region infiltrate with the hierarchy from royalty to the public. It also becomes duplicate, and they are adapted into the social dynamics in the form of upper and lower classes, controller and controlled, master and follower through the condensation movement in rituals. The function of maintaining power by the externality of the kingship has been maintained in a different form.

The Origin of Ullālthi and the Journey to Balthila

The narratives on the mythological birth of Ullālthi and Ajwar Daivangalu are recited in the pāddana during rituals. There are two occasions of recitation: the first time is in the process of make-up by introductory part and the second time is in the stage of the possession by full version. The following story is reconstructed by the narrative invocations by Pambada impersonators with the explanation by local people. The content consists of the story on the origin place of deities, descriptions of a long journey from the mountains (Western Ghaṭs) to the coastal area, and the incidents on the route to Balthila (Map 3).

Ullālthi is the incarnation (personification) of Durgā, and the Ajwar brothers that of Śiva or his sons. Śiva assumes various forms and serves to destroy evil spirits and demons, while the Ajwar brothers are followers (gaṇas) and destroy the evil with the same powers as Śiva. Ullālthi is Kanyā Kumāri, and is seen as a virgin goddess.13) When praying to Ullālthi, worshippers chant “Oh, goddess of śakti, Kanyā Kumāri, we greet you with Śiva śakti (Ajwar Daivangalu) wearing ornaments of worship in bronze and silver.”14)

Ajwar Daivangalu brothers were born on earth to establish the dharma (darma), canon or order and destroy evil forces. Called dharma devatā, they are said to bring justice and charity and to protect righteousness and truth. Ajwar brothers like to hunt on horse with bow and arrow.15) Filled with a tender heart, they love peace and have the kind heart of a child. Upon reaching adulthood, they are said to bath in Gaṅgā Kundam (tank of the sacred
river Gangā) and become violent warriors, wearing a wreath of fire. Eventually, they become peaceful and kind with the love from Śiva.

The two deities are said to have been born in the hills of Kuduremukh (hills shaped like a horse head) in the Belthangady. Several hundred years ago, there was a sacred tank here, and was therefore called Gangā Kundam. There was also a tree liked by snakes nearby called nāga sampige. It was said that two baby boys were born from the lotus flower here. When the two boys were born, a three-storey royal palace made of bronze was built, adorned with pearls, and two thrones were prepared. Many people served two children, and ministers and guards were appointed. The two were Rājan Daiva belonging to the royal family. As they were able to emit light from their body using special magic and therefore had ujwara (brightness), they were called Ajwara Kumararu. In addition, because they were born by the order of Śiva and without parents, they clearly differed from human brings. The “brightness” also signified that they were born from the heavens. In terms of

Map 3 Routes of Ullālthi
(Gowda 1990)
Masataka Suzuki

personality, the elder brother was calm and kind, and physically strong. Although the younger brother was short-tempered, he was also physically strong and lively.

At age seven and a half, their faces and bodies had fully matured. They had moustache and beard, for which they would summon the barber to come and shave for them. When their assistant summoned their barber Binnana Gara, the barber is said to apply water to their left cheek and milk to their right and shave. The two would also instruct the barber to draw the face of an evil spirit called Brahma Rākṣasa on their back, and the sun and moon on their chest. With their mature, godly nature and looks, the brothers wore gold crowns, silver clothing, silver armor, gold jewelry and anklets, looking like warriors.

The story goes that one day, the brothers hear voices from the sky saying, “You are the children of Śiva. Leave your mountain and go towards the coastal area. There, build dharma, and become dharma devatā (god of justice and mercy). Receive as offerings Doop and Deep, smoke, and do not favor animals and birds as offerings. Ride elephants and horses. People will respect you this way. Redeem sin, and obtain reward from honest and good people. I am your mother. We will meet at the house of Kolakere of Mogranādu.” Hearing this message from god, the brothers are filled with joy. God gives them everything, and they are filled with the satisfaction of being able to set up dharma in many places. They are also delighted to be able to meet their mother. For this reason, the Ajwar Daivangalu brothers decide to leave from Gangā Kundam. The mother of this land, Gangā Matha, is worshipped as Kanyā Kumāri (virgin bride) at the sacred place, Dharmastala. Today, Ullāthi (in the form of Kanyā Kumāri) and Ajwar Daivangalu (in the form of dharma devatā) are enshrined here as dharma devatā.

In their journey to the coastal area to establish dharma, the Ajwar brothers pick roads on the eastern side, which they think are the most powerful. The god presiding over that area is Subramanya Swāmi (snake god), and he opposes the Ajwar brothers by building a formidable castle for defensive with black stones and iron pillar. Praying to their mother Gangā Matha, the elder brother rides an elephant and the younger a horse to climb the Aajer Mountain. They find the citadel and the elder brother shoots an arrow. The citadel collapses and the three Kalaśas tumble over. Upon realizing that he is the son of Śiva and is obliged to welcome him, however, Subramanya invites the brother and gives him the throne in respect. Meanwhile, the younger brother has also shot an arrow, which breaks the main pillar of the Subramanya temple into three, and it crushes to the ground. Subramanya also invites the younger brother and offers him the throne. However, the two brothers do not stay with Subramanya, take the three Kalaśas and three pillar pieces instead and move on. In the 30-day festival held at Subramanya temple each year, pūjā is carried out for Ajwar and the Bali Padu ceremony is held.

The brothers are then met and welcomed by the goddess Kali near Uppinangadi, which is the meeting point of the two rivers Kumāra Dhara and Nētravati, and travel forth together with soldiers to Kodipadi and then to Kedila with the pillars. At the Bajaru Gudde here, they bury treasures (gold coins). The elder brother stays at nearby Kailāru while the younger brother stays at Kedila where he meets Dhūmāvatī (female Bhūta) and Malerāya (male Bhūta). The ritual called valasari (moving back and forth) is held there. They then
see a beautiful Lingam shining brightly in the thick dense forest on the other side of the Nêtravati River. This was Mahatobhar Chintâmani Narasimha Svâmi, and they erect the Narasimha temple for worshipping it, put up the base of the three pillars and perform a festival. The Śivaliya temple of Kadeśvâliya enshrining Narasimha is the first Hindu temple of the Mogranâdu śîme (although it is a Viṣṇu temple, Śiva is also worshipped). Narasimha gives the elder Ajwar brother the Odal Guthu of Baṅga, the most respected family in this area and leaves. Since then, the people of the Baṅga family are required to participate in the nêma of the elder Ajwar brother.

Upon traveling even further, they come upon Balthila Beedu. At that time, this area was ruled by a famous Jain family, Ballal. The family treats the brothers as kings by setting up a maṅca (wooden bench) on the right side of the cāvaḍi (entrance hall). The brothers are said to have stayed here and established dharma through families in the area. According to the tradition of the Ballal family, the eldest son has to place an oil lamp on the maṅca and pray to the house guardian spirits even today. Maṅca is an altar hanging in air, and a place where the sacredness of ritual tools is maintained. Balthila Beedu comes to belong for the younger Ajwar brother. In the annual nêma festival, it is a custom for the two brothers to perform the valasari ritual.

Meanwhile, Paṅjurli starts from Dharmastala and travels towards the west. Dharmastala is a sacred place near Baṅgavâdi, where dharma can be established. It is also sometimes called Kudama (providing a mother). Ullâthi and Ajwar are enshrined here in the form of dharma devatâ. The Nellâyadi Beedu governs this area. The Beedu guardian deity, Anûpâ Paṅjurli, starts heading towards Balthila Beedu to serve as the guard of Ajwar. The Ajwar brothers meet Paṅjurli in Ari Majajalu. Later, the local people constructed a stâna (place of worship) for Paṅjurli here.

In an attempt to test Paṅjurli, the younger Ajwar brother asks him to hunt together. Paṅjurli decides to make a gigantic wild boar appear at Eri Male.25 Eri Male belongs to Kundaya Daiva, and this place is called Kundaya Birkola26 even today. Halfway through, the younger Ajwar brother meets with Subramanya in Shambhuru. They worshipped him. In Eri Male, Paṅjurli departs towards the east, while the Ajwar brothers, on the opposite side, call out “kajo, kajo.” This is the signal for hunting dogs to catch animals. When a wild boar appears, they chase it and move up the hill on the opposite side called Sulla Male (near Mâni). While heading towards Aare Betty, the brothers meet a different Daiva called Gudde Câmunḍi.27 Then in Sulla Male, they find the wild boar. The elder brother acts first, taking out his arrow. The younger brother also takes out an arrow and shoots it. The wild boar on receiving the two arrows falls onto the ground on his side. The two brothers start arguing whose arrow has killed the boar. Paṅjurli says if they continue arguing like this, he would return to Kudama. The elder brother then declares he would never use his arrow nor hunt in the future. In the current nêmotṣava (dance scene), the elder brother holds his arrow and bow, but does not go hunting. In the nêma of the younger brother, he goes hunting with his bow and arrow.

The Ajwar brothers depart together with Paṅjurli in the direction of Balthila in search of boar. They take a rest at Kuḍure Bettû and continue their search at daybreak. This place is called Bolpodi (place where the sun rises). They then reach Yelthimar (which means to
wake up and travel). Pañjurli is given Banḍāramane (place to deposit the ornaments such as sword and bell) and is called Kurmana. Kuru means seat, and mana means rice field.28) They continue their journey to find the dead boar under the thogate mara tree near Mularu.29) To celebrate the success of their hunt, the elder Ajwar brother establishes Mularu as the place of festival (mādu). This is the current Mular mādu. Also eager to get a favorite place and wanting to have his own festival venue, the younger brother builds his own mādu in the rocky mountains on the other side. This is called Puncheti mādu, which means the place full of anthills with many white ants. The other interpretation of the word Puncheti is the place full of flowers.30) At the foot of the mountain a paddy field is called Khamprabail, (meaning the place where meat is prepared). The soldiers bring the dead boar to Danē Maru adjoining here. The meat is cooked in the rice field next to it. That place is called Masadi Maru; the soldiers celebrate their successful hunting by eating the boar meat. As the excitement becomes noisier in the feast, the Daiva called Duggālaya (personification of the goddess Durgā) living in the adjoining Ginđe Gudde hills wakes up in anger and causes thunder, challenging Ajwara and Pañjurli. When the younger brother shoots his arrow, Duggālaya runs away to Netla. As Śiva is called Sadha Śiva (last Śiva) here and takes the form of a lingam, Duggālaya clings onto Śiva and hides behind its back. Ajwar and Pañjurli who are chasing Duggālaya encounter the Daiva Gilkinthaya (with a nose shaped like a parrot) and Maleraya31) at Goltha Majalu halfway through their chase and are received by them. Here, a ritual called nēmotśava is carried out for these gods over two days. There is a separate mādu for Ajwar and Gilkinthaya. Goltha Majalu is a large area belonging to the Kolakere family.

Upon reaching the Netla temple, Ajwar and Pañjurli discover the liṅgam (symbol of Śiva) and Duggālaya. Śiva appears before Ajwar and commands them not to hurt Duggālaya. Śiva then tells them that their mother Ullāthi (Kanyā Kumāri) is at a place nearby called Kolakere. The Ajwar brothers rejoice and install the head of the pillars they brought over from Subramanya to the Netla temple to enshrine Śiva. Punjalimar Guthu is ruled by Jains, Banga, so that Pañjurli is given a small front room, cāvādi. This house is to be the home of the younger Ajwar brother. The Ajwar brothers and Pañjurli proceed to the Kolakere house and spend the night at Serinthi Kottiya on the way. They find a brightly illuminating place, and upon reaching this place, they see a beautiful young girl who looks like a bride sitting on a maṅca (swing). This is Ullāthi. She calls them “brother” because she is a young girl called Kanyā Kumāri.32)

Since that day, they became Muver Ullāklu (three Ullāklu, two brothers and younger sister) instead of Ullāklu (twin brothers). At that time, the Jains, Ballal has ruled Kolakere house. The guardian of the home was Dhūmāvati Daiva accompanied by Banṭe (dumb).33) The Ajwar brothers ask Ullāthi to go to Balthila with them, and Dhūmāvati decides to accompany Ullāthi. When Ullāthi arrives at the house, she blesses Ballal, and tells them that she will always be at the Kolakere house in mind, and should they ever have problems and difficulties, they should call her and pray to overcome their turmoil.

At that time the Ballal family consists of eight brothers, the oldest being Sri Mahisekara Ballal. One night, the goddess Devi appears in the dreams of the Ballal family, and tells them that Ullāthi was born in this family and all her wishes should be obeyed.
Since the Ballals were Jains, they were not obligated to follow orders given in dreams. Later, the family suffers financial difficulties as well as illnesses, and an astrologer is required to ask what should be done. The astrologer Basaritthaya is invited from Someśvar near Ullāl, south of Mangalare. Upon approaching Serinthi Kotiya, he sees white anthills under a jack tree (place where there are snakes). Basaritthaya possessed by deity tells an oracle. He sticks his hand into the white anthill (normally, such courage is not seen due to fear of snakes) and finds an iron sword. Saying that this is a proof that Ullālthi was born in the Kolakere family, the astrologer tells Ballal, “When Lakṣmi appears, pray to her and your troubles will disappear.” They believe in this humbly and do as Basaritthaya says. The iron sword is called “king’s sword” and is stored at the Kolakere house as the proof of Ullālthi’s birth. Basaritthaya was a believer of Ullālthi, so when he died, Ullālthi is said to have taken his body and given him the rank of siddhi puruṣa (incorporation with god).

Today, the Kolakere family is required to participate in pūjā for Ullālthi.

The main guardian deities of the Kolakere house were Raktheśwari and Dhūmāvati (both female deities) before the appearance of Ullālthi. After the birth of Ullālthi, family members start to pray to her, and the social status of the Kolakere family increases. After arriving of Ullālthi and Ajwar, Ballal takes a dislike to Dhūmāvati and decides to chase her out of the house. Ullālthi tells them that Dhūmāvati is not a normal Daiva and Ullālthi is taking the form of a female deity to stay at the Kolakere house, so believe in Dhūmāvati. However, the Ballal is not persuaded. Dhūmāvati then transforms into the goddess Durgā and kills the evil spirit Dhūm Rākṣasa. To oppose this, Ballal calls a tantrī (person with the power to control spirits) from Nileśvara (Kasaragod, Kerala), who casts a tantric spell based upon the Atharva Veda and traps Dhūmāvati inside a small copper container. On his way back to Nileśvara, the tantrī stops at Okkethur to perform the night ritual. He ties the copper container to a branch of a tree and goes to bath. The Banṭe of the Kolakere house, knowing that his master Dhūmāvati has been taken away, goes to Okkethur in the form of a parrot and cuts the rope tying the container to the tree. Dhūmāvati is set free, and together with her guard Banṭe, cuts off the head of the tantrī. They return to the cāvāḍi (front room) of the Kolakere house, and Dhūmāvati orders Ballal not to call the tantrī of Nileśvara to the Kolakere house and not to use the copper container for prayer rituals. Then, Dhūmāvati together with Banṭe kill all Ballals. They throw away the sword used for this into the rice field called Karthale (rice field of sword).

After this incident, the Kolakere house is filled with nothing but women from the Ballal family. Today, even though the Nileśvara tantrīs have the greatest authority in this area, they are not allowed to enter the home of the Kolakere house. The Ballal family of Kolakere was now left only with women, resulting in considerable debt. This is because the eight brothers of the Ballal were killed, and their fortune, money, and notes were wrongly used for revenge. The women, thinking it difficult to maintain the traditional dharma of the Kolakere house, therefore ask the king of the Nandār, the ruler of Mogranāḍu sīme. At that time, the Prabhu family of Konkani people migrated from Goa and they engaged in large-scale business. This area was a prominent business market during this era, and the Prabhu family served the Banṭval palace as the trade minister. To rebuild their economic situation, the Ballal family borrowed a large amount of money mainly from the Prabhu, but they
could not pay back. The king settled the debts to the Prabhu in the form of 6,000 murrah (228 metric ton) of rice harvest. The king also ordered the Prabhu to stay at the Kolakere house and carry out rituals to pray to the king’s Deva or Daiva Ullāthi. At that time, the land owned by the Kolakere family ranged from the Pāne Mangalore near the bridge of Nētravati river in the west, to Suruku Mary on the road to Bangalore in the northeast, and to Veera Khambā on the road to Viṭṭala in the southeast. Though the Prabhus were Hindus, they constructed the new house and changed the Jain Beedu to Hindu style. However, they still worship old Daivas. The Kolakere house has three rooms for rituals, in which they enshrine their gods on a swing altar called mañca. The first room, called cāvad, enshrines Dhūmāvati and Bānte. The second room is for Ullāthi and is used to store gold and silver ornaments for the festivals. The third room enshrines the statue of Narasimha Swāmi. All three of them are considered the guardians of the house.37)

With passing time, the Prabhu house also encountered financial difficulties as well as health problems in the family. Upon consulting an astrologer, they told that Ullāthi asks to perform the ritual by daily pūjā conducted by a Brahman archak. The Prabhus thus go to King Nandār and ask a Brahman family to serve as archak for worshipping Ullāthi and the Munar Bhat family is selected to perform.38) They are of the same kinship group as the Brahmans living in Palanir. The land assets of Palanir are given to this family to maintain livelihood, and pūjā is carried out even today. Ullāthi rules the Kolakere house and nēma needs to be performed as the annual festival. During festivals, at this time, the Kolakere family carries out all preparations, and the members are required to participate and make contributions.

Concerning the festival site, Bhanḍāramane (storing place for the ornaments in the middle) is selected for Ullāthi on the way of journey to Balthila. This place is also called Ullāthi mādu. It is located between Mular mādu (festival site of the elder Ajwar brother) and Puncheti mādu (that of the younger brother), between the Kolakere and Balthila houses. Nowadays daily pūjā is performed here. In festival some ornaments are carried out by the Kolakere house and the people follow the orders of the Brahman priest archak. The Nēmotsava festival for the three Ullāklus as the Puduvar mecci is carried out at Bhanḍāramane every December.

Analysis of Oral Traditions

Pāḍdanas are recited only during rituals, and deities or spirits (Daiva or Bhūta) manifest themselves through narratives. The impersonator such as Pambada is gradually possessed while chanting them. They tell an oracle by the first person. The meanings of words are important, and it is believed that direct contact with Daiva or Bhūta is possible only through the old Tulu language. Today, they are recited and narrated by harijans such as Pambada, Parava, and Naḷike, but originally, these people were considered the native inhabitants. They transmit the oral tradition of rituals and pāḍdana by hereditary line from their ancestors as a profession. The following can be pointed out the various aspects of the cosmology based upon the contents of pāḍdana beginning from the stories of the birth of deities and spirits, ending on the establishment of the ritual in Kolakere house, which form
the core of rituals.

**Origin**

Both *Ullālthi* and *Ajwar* were born without parents and their stories revolve around “abnormal birth” as spirits and personification of god. Through a mythical narration that the male deities are a twin and the female deity the mother as well as the sister of the male deity, the secular orientation of gods appearing from the natural world to the human world in search of their mother is emphasized. Supernatural aspects such as the miracle birth in the palace and the rapid maturing of the two *Ajwar* brothers into adulthood are narrated, indicating strongly the idea of god’s will to appear in the human world. Although triggered by the feminine principle, the motive is said to be Śīva, demonstrating the history of Hindunization.

**Meaning of Migration**

The *Ajwar* brothers migrate from the mountains to the coastal area by the intention of god Śīva. They have bows and arrows for hunting animals indicating character of deities for hunting gatherer in the forest, and their personality has the ambiguity of being both calm and violent. They are seen to be changing from the deity of hunter-gatherers to that of warriors saved to the royal family alongside the migration. This demonstrates to be becoming the guardian deity of *kṣatriya* who is of the warrior class subject to the Jain royal throne. They also show the transformation from the guardian of hunting and slash-and-burn agriculture of tribes living in the mountains to the guardian of the paddy field agricuture of the peasants living in the flat land. By the way, the route of moving of deities and spirits is marked with historical migration of *Ballal* and *Banga* who are the leaders of the Jain kingship, which is originated at their homeland of *Baṅgavādi*. *Baṅgavādi* is the origin place of *Ullālthi* and *Ajwar* and is the sacred area of Jainism located in Western Ghats range.

**Establishment of Ethics**

New type of faith expansion can be searched on the narration about the incident in each spot and particular area to be penetrating new moral values by the concept of *dharma*, especially through justice and humanity (compassion). This also coincides with the establishment of the kingship and political space in each area, such as *sīme*. The elder *Ajwar* brother is told not to hunt (*ahimsā*, not to kill life) on the journey, and advised to become a vegetarian (not to eat animals and birds). *Ullālthi* has taken the place of the guardian deity of the old houses, *Beedu* and *Guthu*, and the guardian god or deity of the kingship, *Rājān Daiva*, has taken the place of the deity or spirit supported by kinship group, *kula devatā*. *Ullālthi* has been worshipped in an even small region, *sīme*, as well as extensively in *Tulunāḍu*. The *sīme* continued as the important festival unit based upon the memory of local dynasty. After the colonization and independence, the power of the royal family has collapsed, and the rituals are performed by the local people with the descendants of local property owners belonging to *Baṇṭ* caste.

The main cultural stream is Hindunization. There exists Dravidanization and Sanskritization, and overall, the penetration of Sanskrit culture centering around Brahman
living on flat lands is gradually growing stronger. The penetration of the custom of practicing daily puja is the manifestation of Sanskritization. In such transformations, Dharmsathala, the sacred pilgrim place may have an important role to fuse heterogeneous cultures, such as Hinduism and Jainism, Daiva and Bhuta. There are four Dharma Daiva here; Kalarkai, Kalarahu, Kanyā Kumāri, and Kumāra Śwami. An old house called Nelyadi Beedu performs rituals.

The importance placed on the concept of dharma can also be seen not only in Bhuta rituals of the coastal area of Karnataka (Dakṣina Kannada) but also in the Teyyam rituals of North Kerala (Malabar). In Teyyam the guardian deities of local areas, castes and the extended family (taravad) are enshrined. All the main deities of Teyyam are called dharma devatā enshrined together with lineage deity, kula devatā and para devatā. Considering the establishment of the ethics, we need the comparative perspectives on the political history and cultural movement in the wide area.

**Change into Hinduism and Konkanis**

The changes from Jainism to Hinduism are narrated extensively in some parts of pāddana. In this case it should be called the changing continuity of beliefs and practices instead of the conversion in modern academic meaning.

In pāddana, one of the motives of Ajwar migration conducted by lie in his mother’s words from the heavens: “Let’s meet at The Kolakere house in Mogranādu.” This symbolizes the reorganization of the narrative centering round the Kolakere family who changes from Jainism to Hinduism. Although the main theme is “journey to find mother,” pāddana call the old family of Jains as the “houses loved by the gods.” As foreign deities settled down in various places, they would finally be led to converge in the Ullālthi rituals at the Kolakere house. As for the Kolakere house, the gradual process of internal turmoil is narrated, with male members killing each other and all perishing, and finally, the process of their change from Jainism to Hinduism is suggested. The “switching of guardian deity” with the birth of Ullālthi was a decisive factor. In the background of pāddana lie multi socio-cultural changes. The narration about the last Ballar that only female remained is important, and this seems to be the handing down of the influence of the matrilineal decent adopted by Ballal. Later, Hinduism has taken the place of Jainism and the kinship system has changed into the patrilineal descent.

The motive power of this socio-cultural change was the Konkanis, the immigrants from Goa to the south engaging in trade activities. They were very proud people calling themselves Gowda Saraswath Brahman. The Konkanis bought off land from the Jain landlord with big money and their economical power has expanded into inland areas. Their historical development is narrated in pāddana. Their patrons and mentors were the Jain royal family who served as mediators between Jainism and Hinduism. Eventually, Konkanis have changed local rituals and the deity worship based on female principals into Hinduism, but they also had the duty to worship Jain guardian deities and land deities.
Conflict between Extraneous and Native Deities

In pādādana, the encounters and conflicts with extraneous deities, Ajwar brothers, with numerous native deities and spirits are narrated on their journey to various places. Encounter with deities or spirits are Dhūmāvati, Malerāya, Narasīṃha, Gudde Cāmundi, Paṇjurli, Kundāya, Duggālaya, Banṭe, etc. most of them are native and indigenous but some are Hindu deities. Eventually, extraneous deities, Ullālthi and Ajwar, are ranked higher than native deities, who become their guards, followers, and guides. In the native words, Daivas and Bhūtas are ranked lower than Devas, gods. However, these deities have a character of ambiguity of being both good and bad, as narrated by the story of the Ajwar brothers asking that the barbers draw the evil spirit Brahma Rākṣasa on their backs. Their nature is therefore fluid. The conjunction is Daiva, which is neither Deva nor Bhūta, an intermediate concept. In addition, the deity Rājan Daiva connecting with a king was also extensively used, being incorporated hierarchically. Eventually, the main deity is embedded in Hindu form of rituals, nēmotsava, and pāddana represents the legitimacy of current rituals. In the nēma of Ullālthi at Balthila, the pātris of Dhūmāvati and Paṇjurli always become possessed and tell oracles. Together with the oracles by Pambada later, it appears that here lies the hidden theme of “listening to the voices of the land” through the both native and extraneous deities.

Snake Worship

Considering the contents of the pāddana, Subramanya has a significant meaning as an opposing force on the journey to the coastal area. However, characterized as a snake god, it is said to be placate and soothing. Though conflicting, the Subramanya temple is located at the hill area connected with nāga bana, a cobra forest in which many snakes are living. Prasāda, offerings for devotees, is soil taken from anthill as favorable place for nāga, and it is believed that those praying for getting children will become pregnant by eating this soil. This idea links to the nāga sampige tree liked by snakes found in the birthplace of Ajwar. Pāddana narrates on the discovery of the iron sword of Ullālthi at an anthill, and the white anthill called Puncheti mādu is a sacred place for Ullālthi nēma in March. The name Ullālthi itself may mean “female snake” by local interpretation. Lying in the base in this area is the belief in nāga, the cobra, ruler of the land who brings forth regeneration and fertility. The fear of nāga doṣam or the cobra disorder, especially women becoming infertile is very strong. As Ullālthi is the guardian deity of royalty, her narrative does not include tragedy, but it has some aspects of the darkness of the human mind, which relates with characteristics of Bhūtas.

Rituals

The explanations of ritual process in the Balthila area are provided as follows. In the end, I will discuss the important points in detail.
Rituals centering around pūjā

1. Daily pūjā

Pūjā is a ritual carried out by chanting śloka and mantra and by making offerings to gods and deities. Ullāthi appears as a Deva, and a pūjā is carried out daily by the Brahman engaged by Balthila Beedu as the archak under the cooperation of his family. In the past, the ornament (kiruvāla) was placed inside the inner sanctuary of Ullāthi mādu (Bhaṇḍāramane), worshipped, and prayed regularly. However, to ensure the safety of precious gem stones and valuables, these were moved to the house of Balthila, and today, it is still prayed on a maṅca inside a special room. Here, the ritual is performed as Durgā pūjā using Sanskrit language. The ritual style of daily pūjā and the participation of Brahmans are clearly the effects of Sanskritization and Hundunization.

2. Sankramana thambila

Daivas and Bhūtas are enshrined only on special days of the year, but in some places regular rituals are carried out once a month. The Sankramana is a celebration day in the month. It is based on the zodiac calendar, but normally it is around the 16th, 17th, and 18th day of the month on the western calendar. The ritual is carried out in a form called thambila. Specific offerings called panivara are used. This consists of jaggery, puffed rice, coconuts, betel nuts, betel leaf, areca nuts, areca nuts flower on a banana leaf, and offerings are served to three mādus in Mogranādu sīme (Ullāthi mādu=Bhaṇḍāramane, Puncheti mādu, and Mular mādu). It is normally carried out at night. Finally, the Balthila Beedu pūjā is performed. This is mainly participated by Balthila Beedu and Kolakere families. It is of the Dravidian form of ritual.

3. Ullāthi mādu pūjā

The New Year is celebrated at Ullāthi mādu on the Viśu, New Year day (April) based on the Tulu calendar. This is a characteristic of rituals performed in this region. Other festivals are Ganeśa Chaturthī (Sona month, August), Navarātri, Durgā pūjā (10 days), Dasara (October), as in the case of normal Hindu temples under the great influence by Hindu main culture. However, even in these pūjā rituals, the mediator of Dhūmāvatī and Pañjurli (pātri, darśan pattu) participate, bringing swords and bells to the Ullāthi mādu. The mixture of Deva, Daiva and Bhūta rituals are characteristics of Ullāthi mādu.

Mecci, nēma and kōla

The main festivals are called mecci, nēma and kōla. These are rituals accompanied by dance performance two times in a year at difference places on different schedule. The first one is performed in December; the second one is performed in March. The festivals are held at three mādus, Ullāthi mādu which enshrines Ullāthi (center flat land), Mular mādu which enshrines the elder Ajwar brother (hill in the west), and Puncheti mādu which enshrines the younger Ajwar brother (hill in the east). Considering the dual symbolism, female deities are enshrined in flat lands and male deities in hills. The Puncheti mādu forbids women to climb up because of the sacred hill. Local people say that mādu is the
special name of the place used for power of high level such as Ullāklū. The three mādhus are well maintained, purified, and kept holy. In these festivals, the story of the birth of the Rājan Daiva and the process enshrined are narrated by pāddana. The sequence of the festival and contents of rituals are followed.

1. Puduvar mecci nēma

The festival in December is called Puduvar mecci nēma. Puduvar means harvest and mecci means festival. Its purpose is the offering of new rice to deities. This festival, called mecci, is considered particularly important. It is performed at the Ullālthi mādu (Bhaṇḍāramane), and financial support and donations from the Kolakere family is regarded as the duty. This is narrated by pāddanas. In some verses of śandhi, traditional song, Ullālthi is born into a Kolakere house. The Puduvar mecci nēma started when Ullālthi came to the Balthila before the arrival of Konkani Purabu family. The Balthila house is said to have contributed land to the Kolakere house to maintain the rituals. Even today, representatives from the Kolakere and Balthila houses attend the rituals, but pūjās are run based on grants from the Kolakere house.

Strictly speaking, the contents of nēma are defined as “resolving problems by listening to the prayers of devotees through dance,” and mecci means “event which entertains divinities.” The festival of December is also called nēmotsava. There are various discussions and opinions on nēma; Ullālthi is the highest form of female deities, and her nēma is also called mecci. Mecci is used only for Ullālthi, and nēma is used for Daivas. Mecci mainly works for gods, while nēma works for the public. Nēma comes from the Sanskrit word niyama, whose meanings extend to practice, rules, control, procedure, and discipline. It is said to have formality and regularity. In rituals, the roles of the people are set according to specific castes. Pāddanas and śandhis narrate about the origin of the various Daivas and Bhūtas. The nēmas concretely describe how to carry out the dialogue with impersonators (oracle men), the procedure of performances for Daivas and Bhūtas, the technique of understanding difficult context of oracles, and how to interact with devotees. In particular, the pāddanas are narrated only in the ritual site within particular time. They are passed down through generations by the oral tradition, and exercise of imagination by power of words.

Puduvar mecci nēma is performed at midnight on the day of Menghaśira Pūrṇīmā (full moon day). As Ullālthi seems to be Deva or god, it is carried out according to the lunar calendar. On the other hand, the Daiva and Bhūta rituals are normally performed according to the Tuḷu calendar based on the semi-solar system, Sankramana. The festival in March is based on the latter. December rituals are strongly influenced by Sanskrit culture, and are incorporated into the Hindu pantheon. In contrast, March rituals are conducted to Ullālthi and Ajwār and are said to have strong Dravidian cultural elements from South India. In case of the December festival after the main nēma, all local Bhūtas such as Dhīmāvati and Paṇjūrli as well as all other Daivas and Bhūtas participate to be enshrined.

Eight days before the full moon day, the banana tree near the Ullālthi mādu is symbolically cut, and from this day to the first day of the nēma, the people living in the 1,000 sīmes of Mogranādu need to observe taboos, and other festivals are prohibited in this
area. From this day, the impersonators (Pambada) stay near Ullālthi mādu and cook for themselves. They are not allowed to bring in food from elsewhere. Day and night, they have to obey several rules. To maintain sacredness, consuming alcohol and meals containing meat and fish is prohibited, and women are not allowed to come close. The observance of taboos to keep fasting before the rituals is thought to lead to the success of the festival.

At an auspicious time of an evening on full moon day, the ornament, kiruvāla, is carried from the altar of the Balthila house, placed on the palanquin. The people bring the kiruvāla and the flags, and the procession moves with bands and pipes alongside the rice fields, and they arrive at the ritual site. The kiruvāla is kept inside the shrine at Ullālthi mādu (Bandāramane). The flower pūja and pañcākajaya pūja start during midnight, and offerings such as jaggery, puffed rice, cardamom, and coconuts are made. Ullālthi ornaments and masks are covered with flowers.

People gather around 9 P. M. The pātri of the Dhūmāvati gets into trance by shivering with sword and bells to tell oracles. In addition, the pātri of Pañjurli also participates. However, the pātri of Pañjurli has died many years ago, and the position is currently vacant. After pūjā is carried out inside the sanctuary of the shrine, the people come out from the inner sacred space to outside led by the Brahman, and make the procession toward the large aśvatha katte (pipal tree with a platform) in front of the shrine, where they perform katte pūjā at the root of the tree. Kiruvāla is placed on an alter that looks like a chair under the tree and the people pray. It is believed that all gods and goddesses gather there. The vicinity of the tree and the path to wells are lit with oil lamps. Devotees with lamps in their hands receive their blessings from the pātri of Dhūmāvati (in the past, pātri of Pañjurli was also there). Along with the beating of the drum (tembare and chenda) and the sound of pipes (nāgasvaram, kombu and shank), local people go round the tree and sing devotional songs, bhajana, several times. The pātri blesses the people with lamps in their hand and return. The pātri comes back in front of the tree and presses the oil lamp against his chest to flaunt that his chest has miraculously not been burnt. After this, the ornaments are placed on the palanquin, and returned to the shrine of Ullālthi mādu. Deva and Daiva bless the people, and the kiruvāla is returned to the sacred maṅca inside the shrines. In this festival, trees, stones, wells, and springs are also enshrined, as a form of thanking and worshipping the fertility of the land.

The Pambada impersonator makes preparations to make-up his face and his body spending more than two hours. During the preparations pāddana continued to recite in some years ago, but this custom has lost recently. After this, he wears the cloth for nēma and decorations with the help of others. After completing, they start to recite the pāddanas in tune with the rhythm of the drum, and narrate the mythological history of Ullālthi and Ajwar Daivangalu in old Tuḷu language. In other regions, the story of the long journey have been narrated one by one, and after telling the arrival to the current festival site in pāddana, the impersonator has been possessed. This indicates that the pāddana is the process to the appearance of spirits and deities, confirming that the power of the words cause the trance. In recent times, however, the chants are becoming more and more abridged.
Prior to nēma, Tantra pūjā is performed by Brahman at the Ullālthi mādu. Basically, it follows the śaiva sampradaya system and is primarily performed for the main deity and gaṇas (followers of the main god). This ritual is performed for the gaṇa of Ajwar Daivangalu. It is called mahā pūjā. When the ritual ends, lights are turned on, and the Ullālthi nēma starts. Pāddana is recited as a whole. This is the important process for becoming possessed. When the dancers stand up, a small hand torch illuminates their ornaments kiruvāla such as mask, chest plate, and anklets. The performer is given five lit sticks (dīvttige). This signifies the highest form of respect for Ullāklu. Ullālthi seemed to be Deva, and the ritual carried out differs from those of Daivas. Ullāklu differs from Bhūtas and Daivangalu in that the ritual of placing flower offerings on the betel nuts leaf is carried out first. Gestures displaying the appearance of spirits are carried out and graceful dance continues.

The impersonator continues to dance as the offerings to the Ullālthi in a manner that resembles ascetics. During nēma, they are not allowed to drink or eat, indicating strong characteristics of asceticism. In nēmotsava, dancers paint their face with color (yellow or red), dress up like kings, wear jewelry, hold a sword, and speak like gods. In the dance, the impersonator tells that Ullālthi has appeared and is very close to his body. The devotees pray to and worship the impersonator as a deity. People inquire about their problems and ask him questions to get answers and good advice. They are encouraged by the deity with words of encouragement and consolation, and get a reliance of their life. It is believed that the real power of the Ullālthi lies in his ability “to talk . . . . to us by entering the dancer’s body.” After the ritual ends, the devotees are wished well, their complaints are dissolved, solutions are instructed, and finally, prasāda is distributed for the good health. The people
line up at the outer precinct of the shrines of Ullālthi mādu and go round by the procession with the impersonator several times. Ullālthi presses the torch on her chest and boasts that he is not burnt.

When the Ullālthi nēma ends, a special blessing is presented to Balthila Beedu and the Kolakere family whose house was ruled by Ballar in Mo granite sīme. Nowadays, dhrama purpa (giving courage symbolically with good will) is given to the Prabhu of the Kolakere house (Plate 4). Palanir Bhat, Brahmans, give purpa to people with high level of authority, which indicates the superior position of the Kolakere house. Būlia is given to other old houses, Odal Guthu and Punjalimar Guthu, which were ruled by Banga. Būlia is the offering of sandalwood paste and jasmine flower on banana leaf.

After Ullālthi nēma is over, Ajwar Daiyangalu nēma starts, first of elder brother and then of the younger one. In the nēma of the younger Ajwar brother, the gestures of hunting the boar with bow (biru) and arrow (pagari) are acted out. Re-enactment of mythological state narrated in pāddanas is performed, indicating the combination of the myth and ritual as a folk performance. After the nēmas of these three Ullāklus (Ullālthi and Ajwar brothers), the fourth nēma is performed. This is the nēma of astrologer Basarithaya who predicted the appearance of Ullālthi in pāddana. This is the nēma of Bhūta in which the impersonator paints the face white with sandalwood paste. It evidently indicates the characteristics of offering to the dead spirit. After this, two Bhūta nēmas are performed. In case of nēma of Pañjurli, the impersonator wears the coconut palm leaves around his waist creating the wild atmosphere. Pañjurli takes the food (āvara) during nēma. Dhūmavati nēma is performed in short time. Both of them are enshrined as Bhūtas of the earth land. All rituals end after 3 P.M.

The kiruvāla of Ullāklu is placed on the palanquin and returned to the Balthila house. A purification ritual, śudhi kalaša, is carried out inside. The pātri of Dhūmavati returns to Edla stāna near Kolakere, while that of the Pañjurli returns to Kurmana stāna in those days, because Dhūmavati is the guard of Ullālthi and Pañjurli that of Ajwar.

2. Festivals in March

In March, festivals are performed at Mular mādu and Puncheti mādu. The dates of the festival are decided by the Sankramana calendar, suggesting that the objects of worship are Daivas and Bhūtas. At the Puncheti mādu and Mular mādu, a flag-hoisting ceremony is conducted at the start of the festival before the nēmas. This flag-hoisting ceremony is mainly to show respect for the Ajwar Daiyangalu brothers and Rājan Daivas likened to kings. They have high status, and the Ullālthi is their sister. The flag-hoisting ceremony is not performed in the rituals in Pudavar mecci in December. The March festival is a combined ritual of Ajwar and Ullālthi.

In March, the annual festival of Ajwar Daiyangalu starts two days after the end of the Netla Śiva temple festival of the meena māsam. This festival schedule demonstrates the relationship between Hindu god (Deva) and local deity (Daiva). After the end of the annual festival, Kadesvālīya Narasimha (Viṣṇu) temple festival starts. Six days after the first day of meena māsam (March), banana trees are cut in Mo granite sīme, and the eighth day is the start of nēma. Prior to the annual festival, buffalo race (kambala), cockfight and ceṇḍu are
conducted. The *ceṇḍu* is a type of football game in which the people of *Mogranāḍu sīme* kick a ball made of coconut fiber and skin. It is said that this game originated from the story in which the goddess *Durgā* (also *Ullālthī*) kills an evil spirit with the help of *śakti*, and plays with its head. The ball itself resembles the head of the dead spirit. To the *Ajwar* brothers, the ball means the head of the wild animal, which they caught during their migration. There are two interpretations: the one is from the *purāṇic* mythology of Hindu god, and the other from local narrative presented by *pāddana*. *Ceṇḍu* enacts the myth and the narrative as a folk performance. The game is played in a place called *valasari Gedde* where a peculiar motion is enacted based upon the *pāddana*. It is a rice field extending out in front of the *Khamprabail* festival site, which has been, threshed the paddy after the harvest. Kickoff of the ball starts after prayer by the *Palanir Bhat*. The players are divided into two groups, and the game is played in the same way as football. The group shooting three goals first wins. When the game ends, the old person of the *Kolakere* and *Balthila* houses is going round on the rice fields with many people. *Ceṇḍu* is played for three days during the festival each year.45)

On the first night of the festival, the ornaments (*kiruvālas*) of *Ajwar Daivangalu* and *Ullālthī* are placed on a palanquin by *Balthila Beedu* and brought to the *Ullālthī mādu*. The *pātri* of *Dhūmāvati* goes along with the procession. The *pātri* of *Pañjurli* also must join with it, but nowadays the new *pātri* does not come out. The *kiruvālas* are placed inside the sanctuary of the shrine of *Ullālthī mādu*. After *pūjā* is carried out, food is served to the queues of people. At 9 P. M. the palanquin is moved towards *Mular mādu*.

The *nēmas* are started with that for *Mular mādu* that is dedicated to the festival site of the elder *Ajwar* brother. Upon reaching the *mādu*, a *Nandi* flag-hoisting ceremony is performed to express that the *Rājan Daiva* in honor of king and *Ajwar Daivangalu* embody the power of *Śiva*, because *Nandi* bull is the vehicle of *Śiva*. The *kiruvālas* of the *Ajwar* brothers are brought into inside the shrine. *Kiruvāla* of *Ullālthī* is placed in a palanquin. The wind instruments (*sṛti, nāgasvaram*) are sounded 13 times, *bhajana* is sung and the palanquin is carried around the shrine, after which *kiruvāla* of *Ullālthī* is placed inside the shrine of *Mular mādu*. The two *pātris* (now only one) start to tell oracles and their *bandāras* are placed outside. They take a rest until midnight, and then the *mecci-nēma* of the elder brother is performed, followed by that of the younger brother, and that of *Ullālthī*. It continues to the dawn and ends in the afternoon of the next day. The flag is lowered in the evening on that day. The *kiruvāla* is returned to the palanquin, and brought to the *Puncheti mādu* at the festival site of the younger *Ajwar* brother.

On the second night, the *kiruvālas* of *Ullālthī* and the younger *Ajwar* brother are taken from the palanquin, and the *Pambada* performer wears the ornaments of the younger brother, and performs *valasari* (ritual of moving back and forth). After oracles are spoken at the top of the *Puncheti mādu* hill, the performer and palanquin follow the brother’s *nēma* down the 128 steps, and go to the festival site in front of the *Khamparabail* rice field. Fireworks are lit and *valasari* is carried out where they have descended. The dance expresses the hunting loved by the younger brother as narrated in *pāddana*. The performer moves back and forth several times. They shout “*kajo, kajo*.” This is a signal to hunting dogs to catch animals. The *pātri* of *Dhūmāvati* and *Pañjurli* are positioned at both sides of
the younger brother during valasari. The five torches provided by the Kolakere family are placed near the palanquin, and after the ritual is completed, all performers climb up to the Puncheti mādu, and prasāda is distributed. The ritual ends in early morning on the third day.

On the third night, two nēmas are performed for the brothers. These are called kere nēmas (nēmas of well and reservoir). These rituals re-enact the birth of Ajwar in the Gaṅga Kundam (Gaṅga Matha lake) located at their birthplace Bangavādi. First, the kere nēma of the elder Ajwar brother is performed. The nēma starts in the middle of the night. Lamps are lit on both sides of 128 steps, and excitement peaks as they walk down the stairs. Oil lamps are also lit around aśvatha trees, and the pond at the side of the Khamparabail rice field is also decorated with electric and oil lamps. The pātris of Dhūmāvati and Pañjurli go to the end and both press the torches against their chest to show miracle power. The old men of Kolakere Guthu, Balthila Beedu, and Palanir Bhats try to appease them through words of encouragement.

Finally, they return to the Puncheti mādu on top of the hill, and distribute prasāda. The ritual is over after they listen to complaints and troubles of the devotees and provide answers. The next nēma is carried out after an interval of two hours, and kere nēma is repeated in the same way for the younger Ajwar brother. This ends in the early morning. Before each nēma, tantrī pūjā is performed for the gaṇa of Ajwar Daivangalu based on the Śaiva sampradaya system. On each night, 16 thambilas are prepared for the Mular mādu and Puncheti mādu. Half of the food prepared for each nēma is placed inside the temple as offerings (bali). Ghee is placed on top and camphor flames are burnt. Bali is a symbolic form of offerings to Daivangalu. These offerings consisting of bananas, betel nut, areca nuts flower are placed inside a bronze container.

On the fourth night, Ullālthi is only performed. In the midnight, Paṅcākajaya pūjā is performed where devotees offer many flowers, after which Ullālthi nēma starts. The kiruvāla of the Ajwar Daiyangal is placed in the palanquin. Only during Ullālthi nēma, five torches are brought near the dancer to express great respect. The silver mask (muga) is placed on top of bamboo frame fixed to the head (aṇi). It looks like a headgear. The procession proceeds to the katte to perform pūjā and carries out kere nēma at the pond. After the kere nēma is repeated several times, fireworks are lit and hymns are sung by devotees to pay homage to Ullālthi. Ullālthi returns to the Puncheti mādu on top of the mountain, and prasāda is distributed to everyone. The problems of the devotees are listened to and blessing prayers are given for good health. The old men of Kolakere and Balthila receive the offerings of dhrada purpa, ending the event.

After the Ullālthi nēma, the flag is lowered promptly. After this, the nēmas of Pañjurli, Dhūmāvati, and Basarīthaya are carried out in the same fashion as the Padvar mecci. When the night comes, the kiruvāla is placed in the palanquin, and brought to Balthila where a purification ritual called śudha thambila is performed.
Analysis of Rituals

Agricultural Rituals

The basic features of rituals can be seen in the *Puduvar mecci nēma* performed after harvest in December. This is the agriculture ritual in which new crops are offered to deities. The festival in March also falls in the second harvest time of rice, which can be reaped two times a year. Often, the sides of rice fields are used as festival site after harvest, where peasants express a feeling of gratitude and pray for good crops in the next season. They vow a wish of good health of the family, together with the power of the mother earth, especially recreation of fertility. Worship of wells and fountains is also strongly related to agriculture. The period between November and April is the dry season suitable to perform the festivals, and agricultural off-season is a time of enjoyment for peasants.

Recreation of Myths

The origin myth narrated in *pāddanas* is recreated in the mind of people through enactment of performance in ritual. Of the *nēma* performances, the younger *Ajwar* brother repeats the *valasari* as performance of the hunting. In *kere nēma*, the birth of *Ajwar* is re-enacted near the pond that is made to look like the birthplace, *Ganga Kundam*, narrated in *pāddana*. In the *cenḍu*, a football game is performed as to the eradication of evil spirit in the myth. In addition, generating power of the recitation of *pāddanas* works to become possession and give the expression for the impersonator to play by the body. The migration pathways narrated in these *pāddanas* overlap with the appearance of deities, and in some areas, it is even linked to possession. Reciting origin myths, the people pray for the rebirth and revitalization of the mother earth. The narrations also include details of way of life in those days, reawakening memories of the past and history.

Drawing out the Powers of the Mother Nature

*Katte pūjā* and *kere nēma* are rituals of trees and water. In festival time the nature such as mountains, forests, trees, big stones, ponds, rivers and rice fields are usually enshrined. The story of *Ajwar* demonstrates that mountains and hills as their origin place, where they get a great power from the water, mountains and lands sustained by the mother nature. The locations of sacred sites “*mādu*” show aspects of mountains and hills being male principle (*Ajwar*) and flat lands being female principle (*Ullālthi*). The liminality between mountains and flat lands culminates when *Daiva* goes down the 128 steps from the *Puncheti mādu* where women are forbidden to climb up the hill. The combination of mountains and flat lands serves as the basis for representing the nature and the universe.

Reorganization of Historical Experience

The core supporters of rituals consist of four old houses and their families such as *Guthu* and *Beedu*. There remain vestiges that these families functioned as the sub lords of kings in the age of Jain kingdom. The territory of rituals is called *sīme* under the political space, and inside this territory are two royal temples, one each for *Viṣṇu* and *Śiva*. The four old houses are made up of two *Ballars* and two *Bangas* who used to be linked to royal
families of the past. Today, there are no royalties, and their descendants have no special authority, but royal memory continues to live in the practice of rituals and chanting the narrative invocations, pāddanas. Reforming historical experience by linking past and present, kingship and royalty can be said to function as the basis for “community between act and narration.”

Condensation of Complex Nature of Various Values

Rituals integrate complex values such as Sanskrit and Dravidian cultures, Hinduism and Jainism, and Brahman and non-Brahman elements aesthetically. Major festivals are held based on the lunar calendar and semi-solar calendar, resulting in various mixtures of views on divinities and rituals. The relation between caste and outcaste or tribes provides even more complicated interpretations than that between the upper and lower castes of society. The meanings of expression using excessive ornaments called kōla conducted by harijans are the performance integrating the multi-layered cultures through transcendence to access to the memory of kingship. Anyway, in the rituals the daily social order of caste is reversed temporarily or hidden. This can be said to become across social functions by symbolic messages.

Transformation of Rituals

Bhūta and Daiva rituals are undergoing rapid changes in recent years. Rituals are extensively incorporating entertainment elements, whereby performances are fun to watch. The occasions to use trumpets for musical instruments are increasing and musicians are reorganized into the style of brass bands, introducing the use of trendy songs and movie sound tracks for music. Bhūta and Daiva rituals, which are increasingly influenced by urbanization, are being transformed “from possession to folk performance,” and rural rituals will probably not be able to avoid these influences. As seen in the case of Balthila, kingship as a sustainer of rituals has collapsed, and even Jains, who were great patrons of the rituals, have abandoned the principle of social structure such as matrilineal descent system, influenced by social change. Land management for rituals is now entrusted to operations of committee and trustees participated by the normal people. In particular, reformations of law systems such as the land reform act have destroyed land ownership, which had served as the financial foundations of the Guthus and Beedus, making it difficult to continue rituals. Amidst such trends can be seen movements to separate Bhūta kōla from ritual context and to show it on stage. Such movements are however quite weak compared to those for the Teyyam rituals of North Kerala (Malabar). In the case of Teyyam, there are disputes that ritual is art or not in some areas, connected with the political movements of the communist party and Indian People’s Party (BJP), and politics is playing an increasingly stronger role. In the 1990s, antagonism was born between the communist group, which were trying to convert rituals into stage performances with the support of the lower class and the BJP, which were trying to build a ritual saving society by protecting cultural value. Controversy has not progressed to such extents in the coastal area of Karnataka. Compared to Teyyam, Bhūta consists strongly to keep the possession and do not
want to change the schedule from midnight to daytime. This poses as a barrier in movements from rituals to stage performances, and the Bhūta rituals are too complicated and synthetic to be used as the cultural resources of Hindu nationalism. Historically speaking, rituals have been changing constantly. In the case of Balthila, the Kolakere family has served as a major factor of change from a broad perspective, and people related to this family hold the key to its future. Now the old man of Kolakere keeps the status of the chief official of the shrine (mukutēśvar). At the beginning, Kolakere was ruled by Jain Ballal. Today, it is controlled by Konkani Brahmans from Goa called Gowda Saraswath with the family name of Prabhu. They not only promoted Hinduization but also changed the social structure from matrilineal to patrilineal descent, bringing about massive changes such as creating the language community of Konkani in the Tulu language society. The Prabhus are working as talented business merchants under royal protection, and are said to have settled down in the inland area through rivers as far as 300 years ago. They are believers of Vaiṣṇava sampradāya (religious center is Udupi) worshipping Madhva. They started to worship Daiva after coming to Kolakere and became involved in Dravidian style rituals, which today coexist with Brahman rituals. Such subtle complexities are narrated in pāddana by various stories on the origin of deities, migration route, and incidents to encounter in local areas. Moreover, there is evidence that the pāddana of Balthila and its vicinity have been remade by the authority conducted by the Prabhus, because of the central position and a leading role of the Kolakere house to establish the Ullālthi cult. For instance, according to pāddana, Ullāklu and Daiva called the Kolakere house Jananda Beedu (birth house), because Ullālthi was born in this family. The expression of “Jananda” (birth) shows us a central role in rituals and means standing at the peak of social authority. It looks like that an appearance of Ullālthi demonstrates the evidence to make an accomplishment of this movements.

From the various aspects of rituals, several characteristics can be seen. For example, the silver anklet (gaggara) treated as sacred and used for Ullālthi nēma is deposited in Kolakere house. The Kolakere family provided an oil torch with five flames for Ullālthi, for which ultimate respect was paid. In addition, the Kolakere family provided a place to store treasures called Bhanḍāramane (Ullālthi mādu). They are also the ones who engaged with Palanir Bhat family to perform pūjā. Pāddana mentions that of the four representative families of Mogranādu śīne, Ullālthi loved the Kolakere family the most. In every generation, relatives of Kolakere are expected to become the pātri of Dhūmāvati, the guardian deity of the house, who needs to perform the nēma rituals even today. The pātri of Dhūmāvati functions as the mediator with Ullāklu and Bhūta.

One day the pātri possessed by Ullālthi said,

“Ullālthi says, I enjoyed my stay in the Birth House (Jananda Beedu) Kolakere as a bride (Kanya Kumari) in that house. I will protect the family of Kolakere House by keeping them in my protection. The Krishna Prabhu family has to do āhara and I support to any extent to uphold the dharma and Prabhu family. After the nēma, I will be back to Kolakere at all times. My subordinate Dhūmāvati is always posted there to look into the affairs of Kolakere House. We will protect the Kolakere family from any calamities with our flame power.”
By accumulating such narratives, all the story converging to the Kolakere family should be formed. As a result, the power of Prabhu progressed to grow. Ironically, no one lives in the Kolakere house now. The Prabhu family has moved to Mangalore to get higher income, their descendents work at companies, and some are said to have gone to the Gulf countries for work. Today, rituals are presided by a key person of the Kolakuru Prabhu Trust. Born in Mangalore in 1945, he became the manager of a steel company in 1981, but after the bankruptcy, he started teaching at a business school near Mangalore city. He then migrated to Bangalore in 2000 to work in the IT industry. Today, he teaches as a professor at the MBA department of The Oxford College of Engineering. In this way, rural rituals are closely linked to globalization.

As society undergoes intense changes, the Kolakere house goes to decline, but, in one of the inner rooms, Daiva and Bhūta are enshrined on the maṇḍa quietly. Dhūmāvati, the guardian deity, is also alive. It is indeed the “House of the Bhūta.”

Some descendents come to the house to put the lights everyday to perform their traditional duty. Only during nēmas festival would those related come together to display their authority by gaining the right to be the first receiver of offerings, prasāda. Elderly persons of the Kolakere house are also required to attend the Ullāthi nēmas in the December festival, Puduvār mecci, at Ullal mādu and March festival at Puncheti mādu and Mular mādu. The custom of sharing the costs together with the Balthila house continues even today. This collaboration appears to be the remnants of the fact that the two families were once from the same Ballal family, indicating that historical continuity is maintained. During the nēma period, the head of the Kolakere house is required to maintain his own authority by providing cash to farmers and workers. Rituals also serve as the place for the redistribution of wealth. Deva and Daiva rituals appear to become more and more flamboyant through the inflow of money economy as villages reinforce their ties with cities. On the other hand, the collapse of the social infrastructure is widening internal rifts. The meanings of royalty and kingship have played a role in slowing down such turmoil to a certain extent. However, the rift between economy and society is growing wider and wider, and delicate strained relations wavering between the two extremes of rural community and global society are starting to show signs of accelerating changes in rituals.

Notes
1) Bhūta is a Sanskrit term. It is normally called Buta in Tulu.
2) This area is also called Daksīṇa Kannada (South Kanara).
3) The excellent research on Bhūtas worship has been conducted by Chinnappa Gowda (1990, 2005).
5) The headgear and make-up style have influenced on the Yakṣagana dance in the coastal area of Karnataka.
6) The speech of Daiva is called nudikatt with the special nuance.
7) The masks are made of silver and sandalwood. A few years back, these were made of areca palm spate.
8) A good analysis on pāddana is presented by Brückner (1993, 1995).
9) A simple outline of this region is provided in the photo collection by Pais and Vincent (2000).
   The articles on folk customs and Bhūta worship are collected by Upadhyaya (1996) and Rao and Gowda (2003).
10) The kiruvāla (pl. kiruvalau) means ornaments used for Daiva and Bhūta rituals. The contents include the idol of deity, sword, hand mirror, mask, and chest shield. These look like the royal treasures deposited in the palace.
11) The king of the Hoysala dynasty divided South Tuḷunādu into 15 areas and entrusted governance to the king of Banā. It is said that Ullāthī was enshrined in each area (Upadhyaya and Upadhyaya 1984: 54). They considered that the worship of Ullāthī might have started in the 12th century. According to a legend, Ullāya and Ullāthī were born in golden place of Konga country. They descended down the Western Ghats and came to the Banā kingdom” (ibd: 54).
12) In medieval times, land was divided into maidan (area), which was divided into sīme (region), into hobli (a group of magne), and into magne (villages) in this order.
13) Dhumāvati is the female deity as the same as Jumādi. However, Jumādi is regarded as hermaphrodite in some area (Brückner 1987). The relation between Ullāthī and Ajwar is mother and son, sister and brother. The concept of pair of sister and son can be found in Bhūta worship. The discourse that Ullāthī is called a virgin goddess is a Hundu concept.
14) The kiruvāla has been stored at the Ullāthī mādu (Baldrāramane). Today, they are deposited at Balthila Beedu, placed on maṇca. The Brahman Palanir Bhat family prays them everyday. The bronze statue and silver bow and arrow are the kiruvāla of Ajwar Daivangalu, and silver masks and chest plate are those of Ullāthī.
15) At the end of the nēma, a younger brother of Ajwar Daivangalu goes out hunting with bow, arrow, and sword.
16) This is located near the sacred place of Jainism in Banāvādī.
17) In the ritual for Ullāthī, a well on the side of a rice field in Khamprabail resembles this pond.
18) This is Aajer-da-daivangalu based on the Aajer mountains, another name of this area, which then became Ajwar Daivangalu (Aajer changed to Ajwar, and then to Ajwar).
19) Today, this figure is depicted during nēmas. Brahma is also called Bermeru Bhūta. It differs from the Brahma, one of the three main gods of Hinduism.
20) Camphor, agar, is an offering for deities. It burns to lets out smell and smoke.
21) Dharmastala is a famous pilgrimage place. Today, palace, Jainas temples, Hindu temples and Bhūta stāna coexist here. Originally, four types of Dharma Daivas were guardian deities here. Later, Annapa Panjurli was added. Panjurli is normally a Bhūta, but is regarded as a Daiva here.
22) A snake god is enshrined here. This is identified with god Murkaṉ in Tamil Nādu today. This is still an important sacred place now.
23) This is a festival tool similar to a pot, placed at the rooftop of the temple.
24) This place is famous of 1,000 lingam temples. Śiva temple is called Śahasra Lingesvara. A sacred place is located at merging point of two rivers.
25) This is located near Nari Kaombu and Shamburu.
26) This means the place of meeting Kundaya, so that the encounter is important.
27) This is a Daiva of the hill. She is said to have a female power of land called ādi sakti.
28) The pātri of Panjurli in Ullāthī rituals normally appeared from amongst the people of Kurmana.
This practice has been lost since the old pātri died away.

29) Murlaru is the compound word made up of mula (beginning) and uru (place).

30) Nowadays, the festival in March starts on the top of a hill, which has 128 steps getting down to the flat area.

31) This is the powerful guardian deity of hunting in the mountains. There is a famous shrine in Padnur of Vittala. It is enshrined together with two silver idols of Ullālthi. The Malerāya shrine in Kepu is also famous.

32) Kaṇyā means bride, and Kumbāri means young girl.

33) Relatives of the Kolakere house are expected to become the pātri of Dhāmāvati in every generation.

34) Today, it is kept at the maṅca of the Balthila house, and a pūja is carried out everyday.

35) Even today, after the three main nēmas are over in the annual festival, the fourth nēma is performed for Basarithaya. This is a Bhūta by the impersonator with applying sandalwood paste on the face.

36) The descendants of Kannur king are living in the royal palace.

37) This is the good example to enshrine Bhūta, Daiva and Deva at the house.

38) Munar is located near Konaje-Ullāl.

39) This spirit itself is also extensively worshipped as a Bhūta in Tuḷunādu.

40) Other Rājan Daivas are Koḍamanatasaye at Uppinangadi and Todakukkinar at Kanandur.

41) Refer the report on the Balthila area in detail (Kolakuru Prabhu Trust, 1996).

42) Most of all the Ullālthi nēmas are held in the midnight, but in case of Kadeśvāliya, the nēma is performed in the early morning.

43) Today, all kiruvālas and other gold and silver jewelries are kept in the Balthila house for safety. They were originally kept at the Ullālthi mādu (Bhaṇḍāramane).

44) Even today, the maṅca of Dhāmāvati is set in Bhaṇḍāramane in Edla. Ullālthi orders Ballal to prepare a Bhaṇḍāramane for her and carry out the daily pājā.

45) The same game is carried out in a rice field, Baki Meru, before Balthila Beedu on the New Year day called Viśu.

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