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## The Belief World of the Tamils as seen in their ‘Village Gods’ : Blood Sacrifices and ‘Pollution’

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## The Belief World of the Tamils as seen in their 'Village Gods': Blood Sacrifices and 'Pollution'

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The demons' salvation in the Tamil myths does not fit the classical pattern of *dveṣabhakti*, "the devotion of hate," that is, the realization of an obsessive, intimate relationship with the god through hatred and violent antagonism; rather, the Tamil demons are saved when opposition is overcome by self-sacrifice. The old agonistic structure of Hindu myth is superseded here; the Tamil texts show concern only for the right knowledge that leads to freedom.

— Shulman 1980: 345

### INTRODUCTION

Why is it that the dictum "Nothing ventured, nothing gained" should come to mind of late and not, what is more, as a saying concerning only others? This dictum may be described as a truly practical expression of the logic of sacrifice. In a word, the doubtlessly profound significance of the act of sacrifice has become of concern to me as a human being born into this world. Keiji Iwata, for example, writes in a paper entitled "Fūkei no Kenchikugaku" (The Architectonics of Landscape) that in its profound meaning "magic must have as its premise self-renunciation" (Iwata 1989: 531).

Even human sacrifice, an act of sacrifice appalling to modern man, was found not only in Japan but amongst various peoples throughout the world, and the life of the Tamils too, constituting one sector of Hindu society which I am seeking to confront here, provides much food for thought in regard to this question of sacrifice (Thurston and Rangachari 1907: Vol. 3; Shulman 1980). It is a fact of common knowledge that the logic of sacrifice is found in the entire corpus of Hindu rites ranging, namely, from the temple rites conducted by Brahman priests to the rites of small village shrines performed by non-Brahman priests, setting aside the question of whether or not blood is involved (for example, Whitehead 1921; Biardeau 1976; Reiniche 1979; Herrenschmidt 1982; Bloch and Parry 1982; Das 1983; Heesterman 1967, 1985; Good 1985; Beck 1981).

The general term for 'sacrifice' in Tamil is '*paḷi*' (Skt. *balī*), but in the villages where I conducted my investigations I often heard the expression '*paḷi koṭuttal*'

(‘giving sacrifice’), and *pali* is used mainly in the sense of a blood sacrifice (animal sacrifice). In villages today there are gods who receive blood sacrifices and those who reject them. From the viewpoint of Brahmanical culture there is a tendency to look upon the gods who do not receive blood sacrifices as being the superior type of god, but one soon realizes that the gods for whom the majority of the villagers feel a greater affinity and upon whom they rely in their actual daily life are in fact the gods that receive blood sacrifices (Whitehead 1921: 16). I wish to set importance, namely, on the fact that through the medium of an act of bloodshed causing death, an act in which the villagers see the genesis of pollution (for example, Beck 1981: 115; on the usage of this term, see below), they seek to gain the grace and protection of the gods.

Among these gods of the Tamil village, I shall in this study focus primarily on the gods that are made the object of village festivals, that is to say, the gods of the village shrines (Skt. *grāmadevatā*). My objective in this study is to shed light on the structure of the belief world of the villagers, strongly informed as it is with the logic of sacrifice, by describing the background and qualities of these gods as well as the festivals centred on them. Although there have hitherto been many examples of detailed discussions focussing on one particular village shrine, here I have attempted to approach the nature of the belief world of the villagers from the perspective of its total structure, which may be assumed to be organically composed of all the shrines located in a single hamlet. By means of this undertaking I have sought to provide an insight into the theoretical questions of to what extent these realities of the villagers’ beliefs can be explained by the hierarchical logic of purity and impurity, strongly asserted by L. Dumont and still serving as a powerful paradigm for understanding Hindu society (Dumont 1980), and what kind of logic is newly necessary for fully comprehend their beliefs.

For some time now I have been pointing out that phenomena generally associated with pollution or impurity manifest themselves in two different ways depending upon the attitudes of those confronting them, namely, that they possess two levels of interpretation, that of ‘pollution’ and that of ‘impurity’. I have also argued that by adopting such a viewpoint it is possible to obtain an overall image of the actual meaning that pollution and impurity hold for the villagers (Sekine 1985a, 1985b, 1986, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c).

There is, for example, the pollution that is considered to come about through a person’s death. Death is hard to bear, but at the same time it is for human beings an inescapable fact that must be accepted. It is for this reason that relatives gather in the house of the deceased to provide moral support for the bereaved family and to overcome this life crisis by sharing the pollution with them through their mourning. This attitude is not one of excluding or containing death, but one that would firmly accept death for what it is, however painful it may be, and would seek to live positively by adapting to these new circumstances. If one broadens one’s horizons and takes account of the fact that childbirth and menarche also give rise to pollution, one gains the impression that pollution represents crises constituting nodes in

the course of a person's life and that it gives expression to the traditional wisdom encouraging people to overcome these crises in a recipient manner and to direct their energies towards new forms of creation (for details see Sekine 1983).

It is, however, possible to discover another way of dealing with, for example, this pollution associated with death. This may be seen in the existence of the lower castes and Harijans (outcastes formerly known as Untouchables) who become involved in the disposal of the pollution of death. They have been socially defined as persons responsible for the handling of pollution and have been looked upon as being impure. The assertion that they are impure because they engage in tasks relating to pollution is an *a posteriori* explanation, and their impurity is absolutely determined within the social ruling structure. One comes to realize, in other words, that this pollution attributed to the Harijan is the product of the response of the ruling caste, which would proclaim its own purity by avoiding personal contact with impurity and by instead eliminating it with the help of those in a socially inferior position. The exclusory attitude towards pollution evident here clearly differs from the above-mentioned recipient attitude. From a need to differentiate between the respective forms of pollution that manifest themselves through these different attitudes in interpretation (or the significance that may be read into them), I have previously referred to the reading based on a recipient interpretation as 'pollution' and the result of an exclusory interpretation as 'impurity'. If one were to restate this in accordance with a simile of a painting employed by Iwata in his essay mentioned above, one could perhaps say that 'pollution' results from an attitude such as would envelop a piece of white paper (representing the pattern) with a piece of blue paper (representing the ground), while 'impurity' on the other hand represents a manifestation of the stance that would attempt to forcibly envelop a piece of blue paper (ground) with a piece of white paper (pattern) (Iwata 1989: 542-543).

As is shown by the fact that a young girl who has been polluted, as it were, by her first menstrual period is transformed into a sacred and pure virgin, 'pollution' embodies the remarkably positive logic of sacrifice whereby an entity is caused to die only to be reborn with a revitalized life force. The acceptance of pollution means, in other words, to experience sacrifice in which death is invited, and in this respect pollution assumes an other-worldly or a sacred aspect. On a previous occasion I referred to this as 'pollution-sacred' (Sekine 1985b: 525). In this regard I find G. Bataille's view of sacrifice, in which he looks upon it as an action that manifests the "continuity of being" (Bataille 1985: Part 1, Chap. 3; 1973: Introduction), as an essentially reasonable interpretation (Sekine 1989c: 20-22). By way of contrast, 'impurity' denotes a primary negativity that is determined within the secular hierarchical social system, and there is no evidence of any of the creativity that is to be discerned in 'pollution'. In his theory of purity and impurity, Dumont may be said to have clearly paid greater attention to what I term 'impurity' and to have failed to take up what I term 'pollution'.

The reason that I have here essayed a brief review of what I have already discussed elsewhere is that I wished to describe the close relationship, constituting

the essence of pollution, that exists between pollution and sacrifice and also that I wanted to clarify the position of Dumont's purity/impurity theory in this connection. If I may now restate the objective of the present study, it may basically be said to lie in inquiring into the relationship between the nature of the 'pollution'-oriented belief world of the villagers centred on blood sacrifices and the hierarchical value system of purity and impurity as propounded by Dumont. At the same time, this also means reconsidering in the context of the realities of a Tamil village the analytical concepts of the so-called functionalists such as 'Sanskritization' (M.N. Śrinivas), 'universalization' and 'parochialization' (M. Marriott). In doing so, I shall also have occasion to touch briefly on the notions of auspiciousness and inauspiciousness that have been recently put forward anew by G. Raheja (1988) and have been provoking considerable discussion.

## AN OVERVIEW OF THE VILLAGE

The Tamil village of Kiṇṇimāṅkalam (referred to below as K Village) with which I deal with here is located in the southern part of the state of Tamil Nadu and lies approximately 15 kilometres to the west of Maturai, a city that flourished in early times as the capital of the Pāṇḍya kingdom going back to before the Christian era, while more recently it enjoyed a period of glory as the capital of the Nāyaka dynasty, a regional government under the control of the Empire of Vijayanagar. Strictly speaking, as is indicated in Table 1, K Village represents the central hamlet of the homonymous *K pañcāyat* village. (The reason that K village may be treated to a certain degree as an independent entity is explained below.) It is separated from the Vaikai River by the Nākamalai hills and is an agricultural village largely de-

**Table 1** Hamlets within Kiṇṇimāṅkalam Pañcāyat and Their Caste Composition

Hamlet Name (Electorate Ward Number)		Piḷḷai	Paṇṭāram	Kaḷḷar	Kavuntar	Kōṇār	Taccuācāri	Nāṭar	Vaṇṇāṇ	Ampattāṇ	Kuyavar	Kuravaṇ	Valaiyar	Paṇaiyar	Cakkiliyar
Kiṇṇimāṅkalam Revenue Village	Kiṇṇimāṅkalam (No.1, No.2)	3	1	202			10	10	7			1		174	
	Poṭṭuluppatti (No.3)													35	
	Pūvaracampatti (No.3)			90						6	7				
	Ālampatti (No.3)													44	
	Mīnākṣipatti (No.4)					10			3				90		
	Putumāṅkalam (No.5)			43					1	1					
	Māvēlipatti (No.5, No.6)			110	0	3			3	1					40
	Total (913)	3	1	454	9	13	10	10	14	8	7	1	90	253	40

Table 2 Caste Composition of Kiṇṇimaṅkalam Hamlet

Caste Name		Number of Households	Traditional Occupations	Traditional Positions
	(Within Hamlet)			
[Caste Hindus]	Piḷḷai	3	Farmers	Village headman, village accountant
	Kaḷḷar	202	Farmers, grazers, guards	
	Paṇṭāram	1	Temple assistants, wreath-makers	Village priest ( <i>pūcāri</i> )
	Taccuācāri	10	Carpenters, Farmers	
	Nāṭār	10	merchants, Toddy-tappers	
	Vaṇṇāṇ	7	Washermen	
	Kuṟavaṇ	1	Basket-makers	Sweeper
[Harijans]	Paṟaiyar	174	Tomtom-beaters, farm labourers	Menial workers ( <i>talaiyāri</i> , <i>tōṭṭi</i> , <i>maṭaiyaṇ</i> )
	(Outside Hamlet)			
[Caste Hindus]	Aiyār		Brahman priests	
	Kollācāri		Blacksmiths	
	Taṭṭācāri		Goldsmiths	
	Kallācāri		Stonemasons	
	Kucavaṇ*		Potters	
	Ampaṭṭaṇ*		Barbers	
	Vaḷḷuvaṇ		Astrologers, Priest for Harijans	
[Harijans]	Cakkiliyar*		Leather workers	
	Potaravaṇṇāṇ		Washermen and barbers for Harijans	

(\*An asterisk indicates that the caste resides within Kiṇṇimaṅkalam *pañcāyat* village)

pendent upon irrigation by means of tanks and wells.

The caste composition of this village is given in Table 2, and, as is immediately evident from the number of their respective households, the vertical relationship obtaining between the Kaḷḷars, who fulfill the conditions of the dominant caste (see below), and the Paṟaiyars (Harijans), who are in the position of a subordinate caste, constitutes the central axis of the village social structure. Although the number of their households is small, the Piḷḷais, who might be termed a dominant caste, represent the ruling class that has administered the village through successive generations in its capacity as revenue officers (village headman [*nāṭṭāṇmai*] and

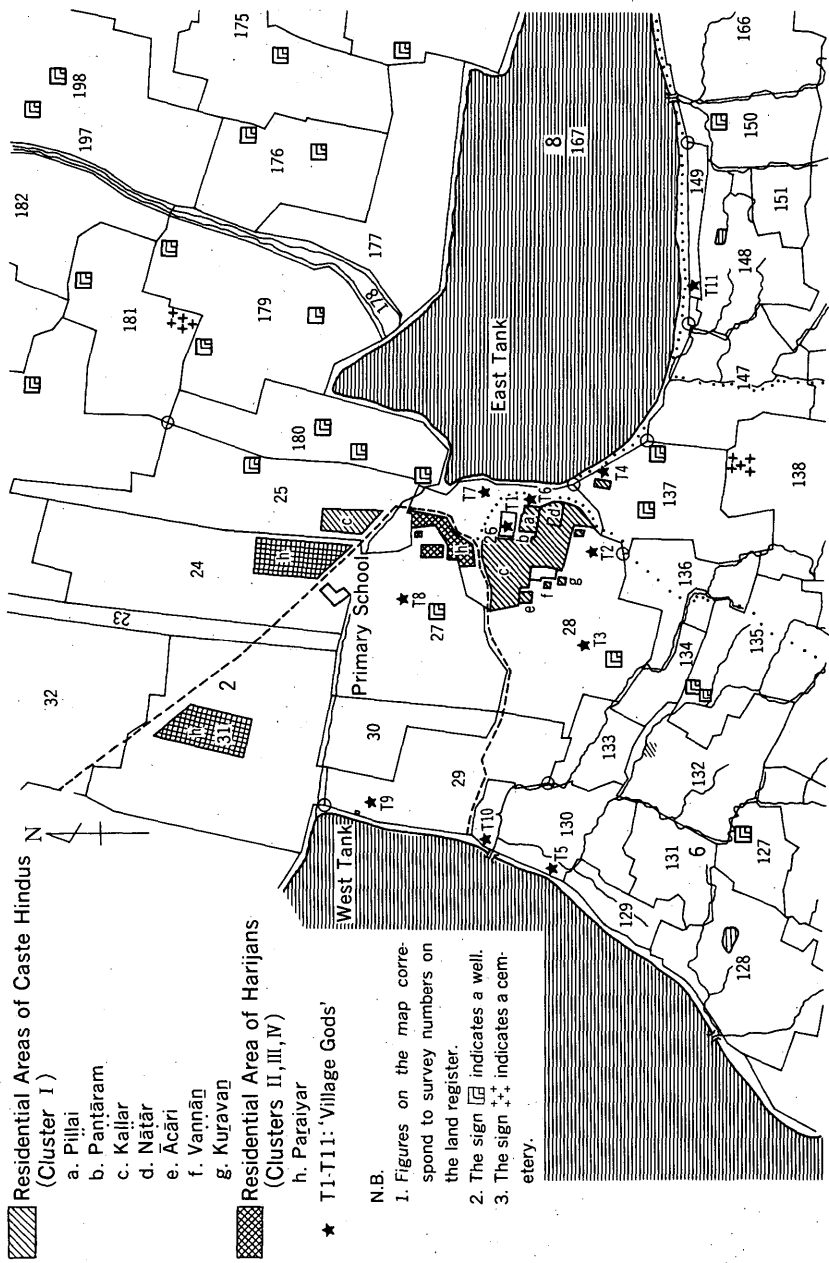


Fig. 1 Kinnimankalam Hamlet and the Location of the 'Village Gods' (Scale: 1cm = 39.6m)

village accountant [*karnam*]) at the lower end of the *raiyatwāri* (*ryotwāri*) system introduced during the period of British colonial rule (Mukherjee 1962, Kumar 1965). (I also heard that their ancestors served as village headmen under the *jamīntārs* prior to British rule.) As a result of the implementation of the purely administrative V.A.O. system in 1982 (whereby a single village official is posted to oversee several revenue villages), the Pillais are today no longer involved in tax collection, but they still hold the position of village leaders.

As may be seen in Fig. 1, K village has grown between the east and west tanks, and the residential areas of caste Hindus and Harijans are clearly differentiated. It is also evident that the village temples and shrines are positioned around the residential area of the caste Hindus. As is indicated by the caste Hindus-centred spatial disposition of these village shrines, the expenses for the festivals in honour of the village gods are borne primarily by caste Hindus (actually, the caste Hindus other than lower service castes like the washermen [Vaṇṇān] and village sweepers [Kuṛavan]). For the Paraiyars (the Harijans), village festivals represent rather opportunities for offering their services as musicians, underworkers and, in the case of one particular village shrine, priests and for receiving remuneration in exchange for their labour. But this does not mean that the Harijans do not regard the village festivals as their own festivals, and in actual fact they too participate in "our festivals" as villagers of K village. Therefore, unless a proviso is given to the contrary, the term 'villagers' as used here embraces not only caste Hindus but also Harijans.

K village is located less than 2 kilometres south of Tenkalapaṭṭi where Dumont conducted his fieldwork (on the basis of which he produced a detailed monograph on the Kaḷḷar caste [Dumont 1986]). In this respect, if one uses Dumont's monograph by taking into account the time difference of almost forty years, it provides much comparative material. This is one reason for the frequency with which I shall cite Dumont in this study. I also wish to add here a brief comment on the usage of the term 'caste'. In regard to the distinction between caste and subcaste, there has long been a conflict of views between those who consider this distinction to be merely a difference in scale and those who look upon them as groups differing in nature from one another. But as a result of Mayer's lucid analysis, it has been shown that, even allowing for the relationship whereby a number of subcastes, representing endogamous units, combine to form a caste nominally, functionally speaking 'caste' has more 'real' meaning in the inter-caste relation within the village context while 'subcaste' has more 'real' meaning in discussing the internal order of the caste group based on kinship relations within the regional context (Mayer 1960: 5-9, 159-160). In this respect the question of the distinction between caste and subcaste does not bear any direct relation on the present discussion limited to a religious life of a single village (—the definition of a 'village' will be touched on in a little more detail below), and for this reason, even if the subcaste name is known, only the caste name will be used. For example, the subcaste name of the dominant caste in K village is 'Pīramalei Kaḷḷar', but here I refer to them simply as 'Kaḷḷar'.



## A SKETCH OF THE BELIEF WORLD OF THE VILLAGERS

When considering the belief world of the villagers, it is immediately possible to discern outwardly five levels of religious behaviour corresponding to the following five different categories of gods.

- 1) 'village god': *ūr potutteyvam* or *kirāma teyvam* (god installed in a village shrine).
- 2) 'caste god': *cāti teyvam* (god worshipped by a particular caste).
- 3) 'lineage god': *kulateyvam* (god worshipped by a particular lineage).
- 4) 'family god': *vīṭṭu teyvam* (god worshipped by a particular family).
- 5) 'personal god': *iṣṭa teyvam* (god worshipped by individual preference).

Among these five categories, it is only the 'caste god' that is not found in every caste, and in K village it was only in the carpenter caste (Taccuācāri) that its existence was clearly recognizable. As their 'caste god' the carpenters worship the goddess Kāmācciamman, of the 'passionate eyes,' but this goddess is not monopolized by the carpenters alone, and is worshipped in common by the five artisan castes (consisting of blacksmiths, carpenters, stonemasons, goldsmiths and plasterers and collectively known as Ācāri or Kammālar). The other four categories of gods may basically be said to be found in all castes, although there may be some differences in the degree of veneration accorded to them depending on caste.

It should be mentioned here that just because the villagers worship a plurality of gods, the simplistic understanding of this as a world of polytheism is out of keeping with the statement often made by the villagers to the effect that "god is one." In this connection the explanation given by one villager is of particular interest. According to him, the gods denoted by the term '*teyvam*' remain close to us in forms visible to humankind, whereas the gods known as '*kaṭavuḷ*' (also signifying 'god') are far more powerful, transcendent gods who cannot be seen by us; therefore we have no alternative but to approach the power of *kaṭavuḷ* through the medium of *teyvam*. According to Hiroshi Yamashita, at the stage of Sangam literature the terms *kaṭavuḷ* and *teyvam* were interchangeable, and the usage alluded to by the above villager evolved in the age leading up to the medieval period (Yamashita 1989). Be that as it may, if we take the views of this villager into consideration with the fact that the villagers are Śaivas, it is probably more apposite to describe their belief world as one of pantheistic monotheism (Tokunaga 1985: 41). (As is noted by W.P. Harman [1989: 98], whether they are Śaivas or Vaiṣṇavas is of little importance to the villagers, and in the final analysis they should be regarded as having faith in 'sacred power' itself.) It should also be added that, as far as the villagers are concerned, the terms *teyvam* and *kaṭavuḷ* tend to be used in explanatory situations, while *cāmi* or *cuvami* are more suited to expressing their religious sentiments (Dumont 1986: 349); it is also of considerable significance that *cuvami* has the additional meaning of a god figuring in spirit possession.

### Personal Gods

Although there are some people who give their 'lineage god' as their 'personal god', the majority of villagers, disregarding any such constraints, give the name of one of the chief Śaiva gods. Among these, Murukaṇ in particular enjoys an overwhelming popularity. Ēkanātar, the chief deity of the temple representative of the village, is identified with Śiva, and there are also some people who worship him as their 'personal god'. In addition, Viṣṇu or the three great gods (Mūṇucāmi) were also mentioned, although less frequently. It thus becomes evident that gods belonging to the so-called great tradition of Hinduism, in particular the chief gods of the Śaiva school and, moreover, male gods are chosen as 'personal gods'. This is in sharp contrast to the fact that the 'village gods' and 'lineage gods' worshipped in common by the villagers are regional in content and particular importance is attached to goddesses.

For example, my valued friend Mr. Balasubramanian (son of the traditional village headman and the village's leading intellectual who regrettably died in a traffic accident in 1988) was an ardent devotee of Murukaṇ, keeping an image of Murukaṇ in the altar installed in one corner of the kitchen, and he never failed to perform the daily service. He said that 'lineage gods' were also installed in this altar, but there was no picture or image of them. Faith in a 'personal god' often finds expression in the act of pilgrimage, and he too made frequent pilgrimages together with other villagers to the Murukaṇ temple in Palani, one of the six sacred sites (*ārupatai viṭu*) of Murukaṇ situated a little over 100 kilometres northwest of K village.

Being in the vicinity of the historical city of Maṭurai, K village has several large temples within an easily approachable distance that may serve as the goals of pilgrimages, regardless of whether or not the gods enshrined there represent the 'personal god' of the pilgrims. Among the more prominent temples, one finds within the city a temple dedicated to Mīnāṭciyamman (Skt. Mīnākṣī), regarded as Śiva's wife, while in the hills to the east of the city lies the temple of Alagār (Viṣṇu) and to the southwest the Murukaṇ temple in Tirupparankuṇṇam (also one of the six sacred sites of Murukaṇ). Looking further afield, one may also mention, in addition to the other sites sacred to Murukaṇ, the Rāmanāṭacuvami (Śiva) temple in Rāmēcuvaram and the temple dedicated to Aiyappaṇ (born to Śiva and Viṣṇu, the latter in a female manifestation) in Cabarimalai in Kerala. The reasons for undertaking these pilgrimages are varied, ranging from an unsullied desire for the joy of encountering the divine to the wish for a solution to more pressing problems such as illness and strife, and there are also instances in which a dream or the judgement of a *kōṭāṅki* (type of shaman) will provide the incentive. Especially in cases where the resolution to a problem is sought, a pilgrimage of entreaty (*poruttaṇai* [Skt. *prārthanā*]) and one to express one's gratitude (*nērtikkaṭaṇ*) are necessary. Because a long pilgrimage requires a certain financial outlay and time off work, pilgrimages are undertaken more frequently by members of the upper castes, which are financially somewhat better off than the other castes. Actually, eighty percent of the

faithful in south India are said to be devotees of 'village gods', and cults centred on the great gods of Hinduism outside of the village are relatively limited in scale [Harman 1989: 98.] Although blood sacrifices are not performed on pilgrimages to these major temples, as an expression of *bhakti* the very act of pilgrimage may, as has been demonstrated by D. Shulman in his *Tamil Temple Myths* (1980), be regarded as a sacrifice (self-sacrifice) in the broad sense of the term.

### Lineage Gods

'Lineage' here corresponds to the patrilineal consanguine groups known in the village as *vakaiyarā* or *kūṭam*. Strictly speaking, it is open to question whether each *vakaiyarā* represents a lineage or a sublineage (for example, Dumont 1986: 364–365), but here I use the term 'lineage' simply as an equivalent of *vakaiyarā* as understood by the villagers. In contrast to the above 'personal gods', the cult of the 'lineage gods' is clearly collective in nature. It is, in other words, the 'lineage god' that provides the mythological mainstay of the patrilineal consanguine group. This means that the 'lineage god' is, as it were, the symbol that gives expression to the villagers' sense of belonging to a kinship group of lineage, which constitutes for them the most important corporate group. Although some would disagree, Dumont (1986: 161) has even gone so far as to declare that there exists no real social unit larger than the lineage. Table 3 lists the lineages found in K village according to caste together with their chief gods, the location of their shrines, and the months of their festivals. Even if they are unable to enumerate the names of all the gods (and in actual fact most people cannot enumerate them, or at best only inaccurately), members of all lineages maintain that there are twenty-one lineage gods. Judging from the makeup of these deities, the importance of goddesses is clearly evident. This may be inferred from the large number of lineages whose chief deity is a goddess and from the fact that even if the chief deity is a male god, he is almost invariably accompanied by a goddess. Moreover, the goddesses occupying the position of principal or secondary lineage deity is also often conceived of as a 'family god'. It is thus evident that, in comparison with the 'personal god', on the plane of consanguine groups as reflected in the 'family god' and 'lineage god' the dependency upon goddesses comes to the fore.

Although members of a certain lineage may be residing in another village, the festival guilds responsible for lineage festivals do not basically extend beyond the village borders. This does not mean that the inhabitants of other villages are totally unconnected with the festivals. The festival itself will often transcend the spatial boundaries of the village, developing into a journey visiting the roots of the lineage (just like a pilgrimage), and will involve other villages with close connections with the lineage, especially the village where the lineage may originally have lived. In some cases the lineage priest (*pūcāri*) actually resides in another village. In the case of the lineages of which there are only a few households in K village, this means that the lineage members will virtually abandon the collective lineage festivals or else they will participate in the festivals of a village (often the village where they lived

Table 3 Lineages and Lineage Gods

caste	lineage	lineage Gods	place of temple	festive month
Pillai (3)	Kiravan ( <i>kūṭṭam</i> )	Pūvāyammāl (F)		
	Kanicamar ( <i>kōttiram</i> )	Ankālaṣvari (F)	Cittālai	<i>Māci</i> (Feb.-Mar.)
Kaḷḷar (202)	*Kēcavaṇ (23)	Kōttamantai- karuppu (M) Cīlaikāri (F)	Karumāttūr	<i>Māci</i>
	*Kāmaṇaṇ (21)	Ankālaṣvari (F) Virapattiraṇ (M)	Kiṇṇi	<i>Māci</i>
	Cāttāyi (28)	Cāttāyi (F)	Kiṇṇi	<i>Māci</i>
	Paṇṇiyāṇ (65)	Virumāṇṭi (M) Pēcciyammaḷ (F)	—	<i>Māci</i>
	Kaṭṭappiṇṇai (18)	Śivaṇ (M) Piṇṇiyammaḷ (F)	Cikkanpaṭṭi	<i>Māci</i>
	Cuntaravalli- yammaṇ I (17)	Cuntaravalli- yammaṇ (F)	Cittālai	<i>Māci</i>
	Cuntaravalli- yammaṇ II (4)	Cuntaravalli- yammaṇ (F)	Cittālai	<i>Māci</i>
	Cōṇaikāmaṭci (9)	Cōṇaicāmi (M) Kāmātcīyammaṇ (F)	Tirali	<i>Māci</i>
	Kaṇṇi (3)	Kāmātcīyammaṇ (F)	—	<i>Māci</i>
	Ceṭṭikuḷam (4)	Periyakarrupu (M) Pēcciyammaṇ (F)	Karumāttūr	<i>Māci</i>
	Tarakaṇ (2)	Śivaṇ (M)	Ciṇṇavakaikulam	<i>Māci</i>
	Cataci (4)	—	—	—
	Veriyaṇ (1)	—	—	—
	? (3)	—	—	—
Pañtāram (1)	—	Ankālaṣvari (F)	Kāmpam (Curuli)	<i>Aippaci</i> (Oct.-Nov.)
Ācāri (10)	Paḷikkañci- yācāri	Irulappacāmi (M) Āyammāl (F)	Kāmātcipulam	<i>Māci</i>
Nāṭar (10)	—	Muttaiyācāmi (M) Cīlaikāri (F)	Kiṇṇi	<i>Māci</i>
Vaṇṇāṇ (7)	—	Irulappacāmi (M) Ankālaṣvari (F)	—	—
Kuṟavaṇ (1)	—	—	—	—
Paṟaiyar* (174)	Kartāṇāṇṭi (29)	Periyaṇāṭcci & Ariyaṇāṭcci (F)	Kiṇṇi	<i>Paṇkuṇi</i> (Mar.-Apr.)
	*Ciṇṇāṇāṇṭi (15)	do	do	do
	*Maṭaiyaṇ & Veṭṭaiyaṇ (41)	Mēyyaṇamūrtti (M) Maṟattiyammaṇ (F)	Kiṇṇi	<i>Vaikāci</i> (May-Jun.)
	*Ūrkālaṇ (19)	Ūrkāvalcāmi (M) Cīlaikāri (F)	Kiṇṇi	<i>Vaikāci</i>
	Taṇkāḷaṇ (44) Mānākuli (6)	Muttaiyācāmi (M)	Kiṇṇi	<i>Vaikāci</i>
	Nēcavaṇ (1)	—	—	—
	Cappaṭaiyaṇ (3)	—	—	—
	? (16)	—	—	—

(\*The lineages marked with an asterisk comprise 'the Two *Tēvārs* and Four *Pankāḷis*' constituting the nucleus of the village structure)

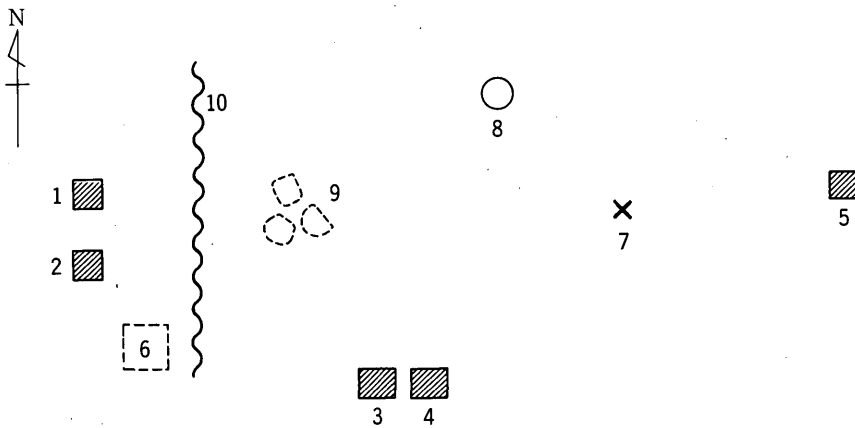
before moving to K village) where there is a certain concentration of members of that particular lineage and there is also a shrine dedicated to their lineage gods. A typical example of the former instance may be seen in the case of the Piḷḷais, regarded as, ritually speaking, the highest caste in the village. They discontinued the performance of their lineage festivals two generations ago, but this was not only because of the inconvenience resulting from the fact that lineage members had dispersed over a wide area, but was also the result of a type of Sanskritization. They had, in other words, developed an aversion towards performing lineage festivals accompanied by blood sacrifices. The Ācāri (carpenters), Vaṇṇāṇ (washermen), Kuravan (in this village, sweepers) and other minority castes adopt the latter course, but they cannot become so deeply involved in the festivals as in cases when they themselves would supervise them. It is a point worth noting that, although termed 'lineage festivals', these festivals thus basically embrace the local framework in the form of the village (in this case a hamlet, but see below). Therefore, although the primary aim of the lineage festivals is to consolidate horizontal solidarity in the form of the unity of the consanguine group and its links with affines, the vertical order of the village is also reflected in them to a certain degree. This reflection of the village power structure is especially conspicuous in the festivals of the senior lineages of the dominant Kaḷḷar caste (the Kēcavaṇ and Kāmaṇaṇ lineages), but it may also be discerned in the lineage festivals of the Paṛaiyars (Harijans).

It may be pointed out here that these lineage festivals are not performed as annual rites on a regular basis as is the case with the village festivals to be described below. Ideally they should be performed annually, but for various reasons (lack of funds, mourning, internal conflict, etc.) this becomes impossible to translate into reality, and in actual practice they are performed two or three times in ten years in the case of the Kaḷḷars and once or twice in ten years in the case of the Paṛaiyars. There is a tendency for them to be performed with greater frequency among the senior lineages of the Kaḷḷars.

Since there is no space here to describe the lineage festivals themselves in any detail (for details see Sekine 1993), I shall note only the essential points of the results of my investigations.

Although there is a tendency for the chief deities among the twenty-one gods said to comprise the 'lineage gods' to be identified with the 'great' gods of Hinduism, the fact that as a whole they are basically marked by a strong local colouring presents, as has already been noted, a striking contrast to the 'personal gods'. They include both the peaceful 'gods who do not receive blood sacrifices' (*cuttamuka teyvam*: literally 'pure-faced god') and the 'gods who do receive blood sacrifices' (*tutiyāṇa teyvam*: literally 'wild god'), who quickly take possession of people and punish them while still alive, and one may discern a basic pattern in which the chief deities represent 'gods who do not receive blood sacrifices' while their entourage of tutelary gods consists of 'gods who do receive blood sacrifices'. (Dumont [1986] distinguishes them by referring to the former as 'pure' [*cuttam*] or 'vegetarian' gods and the latter as 'impure' [*acuttam*] or 'meat-eating' gods, but as

has been pointed out by C.J. Fuller [1987: 21], when considered in the light of the villagers' own usage, these translations are inaccurate. As will be discussed below, here we already find capsulized the problematic points in Dumont's theory. A correspondence with E.B. Harper's distinction between *devaru* and *devate* [Harper 1959] is also conceivable.) In Fig. 2, I have given as an example the shrine of the Kāmanan lineage, which is located in the fields (representing a site of worship in the open without any building; Dumont [1986: 393] refers to such a holy place as a 'temple-in-the-fields' [*kāṭṭu-kōvil*], distinguishing it from the 'intramural temple' [*vīṭṭu-kōvil*] within the residential area), and it will be seen how when during a religious service a blood sacrifice is offered to the tutelary god facing north, the chief deity facing east is blindfolded by means of a curtain. In spite of the fact that measures are thus taken so that the chief deity may avoid contact with blood, one cannot overlook the important fact that this blood sacrifice constitutes the climax of the lineage festival. It is the evocation of the protective sacred force that the participants in the festival seek, and there is a strong belief that the blessings of the gods are fostered by blood sacrifice. In this sense the following interpretation is perhaps the most appropriate. Namely, as is implied by the fact that the number



1. Ankālāṣvari
2. Virapattiraṇ
3. Ciṇṇacāmi
4. Rākkāciyamman
5. Kalyāṇi Karuppu
6. Position of 'sacred box' during the festival
7. Site of animal sacrifice
8. Lamp stand made of stone
9. Hearth for cooking *poṅkal*
10. Cloth for blindfolding during blood sacrifice

**Fig. 2** The Open-Air Shrine of the Kāmanan Lineage (Kallar Caste)

twenty-one symbolizes a whole, the blood sacrifice that is considered to be offered to the wild tutelary god may in fact be regarded as effecting the vitalization of the power of all the lineage gods, including the chief deity. Instead of delimiting the meaning of individual aspects of the festival to acts directed to individual gods, this represents a perspective that would seek to determine their significance within the dynamism of the whole. When considered in this fashion, and if placed within the context of the dynamism of the whole, the presence of a chief deity who avoids blood sacrifices and emphasizes peaceful and compassionate aspects may be looked upon as having the function of stabilizing and preserving the sacred force aroused by the blood sacrifice in a manner that renders it free of danger for the participants. The stabilizing function of the chief deity is, however, realized in the direction of Sanskritization, and if it advances still further, it will end up rejecting this logic of the blood sacrifice, resulting, as in the case of the Pillais mentioned above, in the abandonment of the lineage festival itself. But at present there is no doubting the fact that the cult of the 'lineage gods', for whom the blood sacrifice is indispensable, remains firmly rooted among the Kallars and Paraiyars, who account for the majority of the villagers.

Opinions differ on how to interpret this dual attitudes in terms of blood sacrifice, evident in lineage festivals. As is widely known, on the one hand the standpoint, dating back to H. Whitehead (1921), that would regard it as a manifestation of the multistratification of Sanskrit culture and indigenous local culture has been carried over by M.N. Śrinivas (1952), M. Marriott (1955) and others as the functionalist viewpoint, while on the other hand there is the so-called structuralist standpoint that would regard this duality as the embodiment of an ideology reducible in the manner of Dumont (1986) to a single pair of complementary concepts consisting of 'purity' and 'impurity'. It is the objective of this study to present a fresh perspective on these arguments, which I shall discuss in detail towards the end of this paper, but the gist of my contention may be briefly stated in the following terms. It is, in other words, not a question that will be resolved by deciding the argument in favour of one of the above two standpoints; I believe rather that it is vital to recognize that there exists on the part of indigenous local culture (ideology) a certain integrated (or complementary) interpretation of the duality evident in festivals and that it is engaged in a dialogue with the interpretation deriving from Sanskrit ideology. This recognition is indispensable for an understanding of the realities of the belief world of the villagers. By adopting such a perspective it becomes possible to delineate a discourse within the belief world of the villagers in which two cultural tendencies (or ideologies) of originally dissimilar provenance (although they have historically already undergone considerable fusion) have exerted influence on one another while applying their respective integrated interpretations.

### **The Village and 'Village Gods'**

A realm of beliefs rooted in another type of collectivity, namely, the territorial communality of the village, displays itself in the village festivals. The 'village gods'

enshrined in the village shrines number eleven and, as has already been noted, they are generally situated around the residential area (*ūr*) of the caste Hindus. The various characteristics of these shrines and temples—the name and gender of their chief deity, whether or not they receive blood sacrifices, the caste of their priests, whether or not the priest resides outside the village, and the months of their festivals—are listed in Table 4. A detailed analytical examination of these shrines will be undertaken in the following section, but the fact that almost half of the village shrines are dedicated to goddesses and about two thirds of the deities' names are the names of local gods would suggest a world of village festivals with a strong local flavour.

When attempting to grasp the phenomenon represented by the village festival, however, one inevitably comes up against one of the aporias of Hindu social research, namely, the question of just how definite an entity the territoriality of the village is. This is because, although the execution of village festivals themselves does in a certain sense demonstrate the reality of K village, it is impossible to determine the significance of these festivals for the villagers unless the actual nature of the village is clarified. It is not my intention to undertake a full-scale inquiry into this conundrum here, but I would like to briefly review discussions of this issue and to present my own views on K village.

In regard to the understanding of the village in Hindu society, there clearly exist two main standpoints. One posits the reality of the village as a social unit, while the other rejects this reality of the village as an anthropological myth. As examples of the former standpoint one may mention Śrinivas (1987: 60–115), who, having defined the 'dominant caste', would recognize in the village an emotional cohesiveness mediated by the dominant caste, and F.G. Bailey (1959), who propounds the existence of the village in a politico-economic sense, but going

**Table 4** List of 'Village Gods'

	Name of Village God	Gender	C/T	Priest's Caste
T 1	Ēkanātarucuvami	Male	C	Paṇṭāram (intramural)
T 2	Vināyakar	Male	C	Paṇṭāram (intramural)
T 3	Perumāl	Male	C	Paṇṭāram (intramural)
T 4	Ūrkkāvalcuvami	Male	C	Kavuṇṭar (extramural)
T 5	Aiyaṇār	Male	C	Kuyavar (extramural)
T 6	Muttālammaṇ	Female	T	Kuyavar (extramural)
T 7	Kāliyammaṇ	Female	T	Kaḷḷar (extramural)
T 8	Vaṭakkuvācelliyammaṇ	Female	T	Paṇṭāram (extramural)
T 9	Pattattaraciyammaṇ	Female	C(T)	Kavuṇṭar (extramural)
T10	Maṭaikaruppacāmi	Male	T	Paṇaiyar (intramural)
T11	Nākammāl	Female	T	Kavuṇṭar (extramural)

N.B. C/T indicates whether or not the god receives blood sacrifices; C denotes 'god who does not receive blood sacrifices', while T denotes 'god who does receive blood sacrifices'.



back still further there have existed the illusion of village unity to be seen in the work of K. Marx and H.S. Maine (Good 1978: 155) and the idealized image of an autonomous village to be found in the *pañcāyat rāj* (village autonomy) movement of the independence period. Representative of the latter standpoint, on the other hand, are Dumont and D.F. Pocock, who maintain that it is caste and kinship that are important and that territoriality is of only secondary importance (Dumont 1986, 1966; Dumont and Pocock 1960).

Aspects of this question of how to understand the village are also naturally connected to the question of how to comprehend the so-called '*jajmānī* system' of caste division of labour, and in recent discussions of this question the views put forward by Fuller and Raheja have been especially interesting. Fuller (1977, 1989) maintains that the *jajmānī* system is no more than a fragmentary remnant of the overall distributive system that existed prior to British colonization, and he warns against the tendency to simplistically regard it as an autonomous system of village integration. Raheja (1988), on the other hand, holding that Fuller has been overhasty in his dismissal of the culturally meaningful totality of *jajmānī* relationships, reexplores the meaning of the social configurations of the village centred on the dominant caste by means of the analytical concepts of 'centrality' and 'mutuality'. When reconsidering these conflicting arguments, it is profitable to return to the following point made at an early stage by A.C. Mayer: "the external relations mostly exist within the village, whereas the internal order of the caste group is based to a large extent on kinship relations within the population of a number of adjacent villages" (Mayer 1960: 5-6). Although it must be taken into account that the village dealt with by Mayer is one of the north Indian type, practising village exogamy, this statement of his does impress upon us the need to carefully explore the interconnections between the village framework, caste relations and kinship relations. In this respect the work of A. Good (1978) and Raheja (1988), who have carefully analyzed the prestations not only among castes but also among kinsmen are especially valuable. On the basis thereof Good, for example, has proposed in regard to a Tamil region (Tirunelveli) the concept of a 'micro-region', resembling Mayer's 'region'. By borrowing, namely, B. Beck's definition of the dominant caste (as a subcaste controlling the greater part of the labour force in a given region [Beck 1972: 15]), while basically supporting the above-mentioned standpoint of Dumont and Pocock, Good educes prestations on the basis of the ramifications of diverse a 'micro-region' consisting of three hamlets as the minimum regional unit. Thus the issue is not one of simply deciding whether the village is essentially an entity or a non-entity, and it may be considered to be rather a question of positing the significant unit in accordance with what the analyst wishes to clarify (Mayer 1960: 4).

When considered in this light, the eduction of spatial extensions such as Mayer's 'region' or Good's 'micro-region' does not constitute an indispensable factor in any discussion of village festivals that are performed primarily on the basis of caste relations within a hamlet. Moreover, as may be ascertained in Table 1,

the centrality or predominance of K village in comparison with the surrounding hamlets is quite obvious, and it may be pointed out that its autonomy as a basic social unit is greater than in the case considered by Good. In this sense, focussing on K village (hamlet) alone will in no way detract from the validity of my arguments. Hereafter, words village and hamlet are used interchangeably. If it is necessary to refer to *pañcāyat* village or revenue village, it will be mentioned each time.

Nevertheless, even though that may be the case, let us consider in a little more detail the significance of the village boundaries of K village. The principal landowners in the village belong to the Pillai, Kaḷḷar, Ācāri, Nāṭār and Paṇṭāram castes. When these candidates for the position of dominant caste are considered in the light of Śrinivas's criteria (1987: 114), the Kaḷḷars are more or less unquestionably qualified (although there is some question about their ritual status), while the Pillais are fully qualified except for the paucity of the number of their households. By way of contrast, even though the Ācāris (who are also not very great in number) do possess a certain amount of land, it is difficult to describe them as a dominant caste because their aspect as an artisan caste (carpenter) is strong, while the Nāṭārs do not fulfill the requirements other than that of economic strength and the Paṇṭārams, comprising only one household and cultivating extensive temple lands in their capacity as temple priests, are too atypical. In conclusion, I would tentatively regard the Kaḷḷars and Pillais as the dominant castes, but if one takes into account the stratification among the Kaḷḷars and the existence of the Pillais and Paṇṭārams who, although few in number, manage large areas of land, there would seem to be some aspects to this that do not accord with reality unless, as noted by Good, one directs one's attention to the strength of individual families rather than to caste divisions (Mayer 1958: 425; Good 1978: 177). It is at any rate probably necessary to consider the strength of the boundaries of K village, socially centred on these Kaḷḷars and Pillais, on the basis of both objective phenomena such as the extent of politico-economic relations, matrimonial relations and ritual relations and the subjective feelings of village patriotism espoused by the villagers (Mayer 1960: Chap. 7).

I shall record only my conclusions here. Although the village remains the centre of the villagers' economic activities (with Paraiyar farm labourers working in fields belonging to Kaḷḷar or Pillai landowners), it is today becoming more and more difficult to regard the village boundaries as marking off units of economic relations. The so-called *jajmānt* relations centred on the dominant caste of K hamlet now function but inadequately as a result of the rapid economic decline of large landowners since the previous generation, and there is an increasing dependence among the villagers on extramural income. This influence exerted by the infiltration of the modern economy manifests itself in diverse ways and gradually breaks down village borders. Be they the borders of K village (hamlet), K *pañcāyat* village or K revenue village, does not work as the basis for their delimitation of the villagers' landownership. With the tendency to secure farm labour by means of day labourers becoming more general there is a corresponding weakening of

constraints to meet the supply and demand for farm labour within such boundaries. Looking back in time, there is no denying the fact that more fundamentally the changeover to the *raiyatwārī* revenue system (whereby tax was collected directly from individual land-holding peasants), initiated during British colonial rule towards the end of the nineteenth century, served to weaken the foundations of village collectivity.

Politically speaking, it is equally undeniable that the government-controlled 'village *pañcāyat*' introduced after India's independence has reduced the strength of the 'traditional *pañcāyat*' of hamlets. In conjunction with this trend village disputes are today often placed in the hands of the official police system or judicial system, but in cases where the problem is not so serious the 'traditional *pañcāyat*' still exhibits a certain effectiveness. In K village there exist a traditional *pañcāyat* council called the 'great assembly' (*periya maṇṭai*) composed primarily of dominant castes' elders (*kāriyakāraṇ*) and a Paraiyar (Harijan) *pañcāyat* council called the 'small assembly' (*cinna maṇṭai*), and it is said to have been formerly common for decisions on matters that could not be resolved by the 'small assembly' to be entrusted to the 'great assembly'. In addition, the last elections for headman of the 'village *pañcāyat*' were contested by candidates from the two principal hamlets of K and M and on this occasion a movement to give precedence to the unity of the hamlet was clearly discernible in both hamlets.

In regard to kinship relations in the form of patrilineal lineages and matrimonial relations (Table 5) too it is evident that the borders of K village exercise a certain regulatory influence insofar that traditionally village endogamy has been regarded as the preferable form of marriage. With the exception of the Piḷlais, who seek their marriage partners from distant places, the majority of villagers clearly take their brides from within the village or from nearby villages, and one may even

Table 5 Range of Marriage Area by Caste

	Distance										Total
	Intramural	Under 5km	5~ 10km	10~ 15km	15~ 20km	20~ 30km	30~ 40km	40~ 60km	Over 60km	Other Districts	
Piḷlai	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Kaḷḷar	66	84	13	9	2	2	0	1	0	0	177
Paṇṭāram	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Ācāri	1	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Nāṭār	3	1	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	9
Vaṇṇāṇ	0	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Kuṛavaṇ	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Paṛaiyar	25	34	30	10	6	1	4	7	1	0	118
Total	95	123	49	23	9	3	6	8	2	3	321
Percentage (%)	29.60	38.32	15.26	7.17	2.80	0.93	1.87	2.49	0.63	0.93	100.00
Cumulative Percentage (%)	29.60	67.92	83.18	90.35	93.15	94.08	95.95	98.44	99.07	100.00	

perceive a tendency to draw into the hamlet lineages from whom brides have been taken repeatedly from generation to generation. This means that, as was also seen in the case of lineage festivals, the territoriality of the village serves to restore to a certain degree kinship relations extending beyond the village. So long as one pays attention to aspects such as these, it may be assumed that the hamlet as a form of territorial society does have a certain significance as a social unit.

In this respect the village festivals with which I shall be dealing here are rooted in the existence of this rather traditional territorial communality, and at a time when there is a tendency for this communality to disperse they provide us with an opportunity to reaffirm its existence. What is more, even though the village may have dispersed as a politico-economic locus or as a basis of affinal relations, for those who have been born and raised here the truly indigenous gods enshrined in this particular locality represented by K village serve to sustain the village patriotism nurtured by the very fact that it is their home. Stated after the manner of E.V. Daniel, it may be said that there exists an interpenetration or compatibility between man, god and village (land) and that this guarantees a person's identity (Daniel 1984: Part 1, Chap. 2). The nuances of this compatibility are well conveyed by the pure Tamil term '*ūr*' used by the villagers when referring to their village, for the subjectivity of '*our* village' is invariably concealed in the word '*ūr*'. Therefore, *ūr* shows considerable flexibility in regard to the actual spatial expanse due to its subjective viewpoint. This contrasts with the term '*kirāmam*' of Sanskrit origin, which has nuances of objectivity, singularity of meaning and extrinsicality and is suited for referring to the administrative village. In this connection the report of the results of experiments made by Daniel, in which he asked villagers to draw the boundaries of the *kirāmam* (*kirāma ellai*) and the boundaries of the *ūr* (*ūr ellai*), is of special interest. He states, namely, that whereas the *kirāmam* was drawn with a linear boundary, the boundaries of the *ūr* were shown mainly by means of points, and these points marked, moreover, the shrines of important 'village gods', places where main roads and streams entered the village, and similarly 'vulnerable' locations easily penetrated by malignant entities (Daniel 1984: 72-79). In this respect too, rather than analytically referring to the 'village gods' as '*kirāmam* gods' (*kirāma teyvam*), calling them '*ūr potutteyvam*', with the sense of 'communal god of the *ūr*', is probably closer to the actual understanding of the villagers, and one comes to realize that the festivals of these gods have as their objective the protection of the villagers' subjective space, *ūr*. In particular, the close connections between goddesses and specific localities have been repeatedly pointed out ever since Whitehead, and for example in his study of Hindu goddesses D.K. Kinsley too emphasizes that especially the 'village goddess' is characterized by the fact that she is enshrined on the village boundary, where she acts to protect the people within the village (Kinsley 1988: 198-200). (Kinsley uses only the term 'village', but in this case it will naturally correspond to *ūr* as used here.)

When the significance of the borders of K hamlet is considered in this fashion, the following general statement may be made. Namely, although the hamlet is

losing to an ever greater degree its significance as an autonomous politico-economic framework, through religious and ritual situations such as manifest themselves most clearly in village festivals it may be considered to be preserving the territoriality that serves to support the villagers' identity. In other words, the hamlet continues to live on not as an objectified social system, but rather as the perception within each individual villager that is expressed by the cosmological term '*ūr*'. (For example, although the ahistorical arguments of R.L.Brubaker [1979], who delineates the organic connections between the villagers' faith in goddesses and the caste system and emphasizes the role of the village as a topocosm, are no longer credible when considered in the light of the level of current research on '*jajmānt* relations', it is interesting to note that his perspective on the village and its religious significance corresponds to *ūr* as used here.) In this sense it is only natural that my examination of village festivals should take into account ontological considerations, for it is to be surmised that the village festivals staged by the people of K village will have two aspects. On the one hand there is the secular aspect directed towards collectivity, in which the village's politico-economic order, which has been embodied in particular by the traditional *pañcāyat*, is reaffirmed, while on the other hand there is the religious aspect oriented towards the depths of individuality, in which each individual villager comes face to face with the gods of 'our village', which is connected to his or her very being. With the continuing tendency for the hamlet framework to lose its relative importance in social life, one will not be able to overlook the latter aspect as being the mainstay of village festivals. It may also be pointed out that this tendency will increase the meaninglessness of reaffirming the village hierarchy within festivals and will in fact represent a move to be welcomed by the village Harijans (see Final Remarks 2)).

On the basis of the above overview it will have become clear that, in spite of differences in emphasis, the belief world of the villagers in general is basically composed of the worship of three types of gods, namely, 'personal gods', 'lineage gods' and 'village gods', although in the case of the Ācāris (carpenters) the 'caste god' must also be taken into consideration. We may also discern here a certain contrast in that whereas in the cult of 'lineage gods' and 'village gods', associated with collectivity or communality, local deities including goddesses—namely, the *teyvam*-type gods with whom the villagers feel a certain closeness—are worshipped in a form that does not overstep to any great degree the spatial bounds of the village (*ūr*), in the cult of 'personal gods', which are literally marked quite strongly by the individual personality of the believer, one may recognize a tendency for what might be termed the *kaṭavul*-type great gods of Hinduism, especially male deities, to be chosen as the objects of these cults and, needless to say, their cults are not restricted by the spatial bounds of the village. (The contrasting scheme of Dravidian goddesses and Aryan gods pointed out by Whitehead [1921: 17–18] comes to mind, but, as is later made clear, I have no wish to simply accept any such generalizations here.) Having completed the above sketch, I shall now devote the remainder of my discussion to the village gods and the festivals dedicated to them.

## THE VILLAGE GODS AND THEIR FESTIVALS

In describing each of the eleven 'village gods', I shall endeavour to throw into relief the characteristics of each while taking note of the presence or absence of blood sacrifices. The location of each village shrine is shown on the map given earlier (Fig. 1), and reference may be made to the map by means of the corresponding numbers (T1~T11). The shrines vary in size, but they are all known as '*kōvil*' (literally 'king's residence', but here it means 'god's residence'). It should also be noted at the outset that there is no simple correspondence between the external magnificence of a shrine and the strength of devotion accorded by the villagers to the deity enshrined there (for example, McGilvray 1983: 111; Dumont 1986: 349).

### Ēkanātarucuvami (T1)

Ēkanātarucuvami is identified with Śiva, but the temple goes back to the reign of Tirumalai Nāyaka (mid-17th century), when a temple was erected and a *śivaliṅga* installed on the site where a renouncer (*caṇṇiyāci*) by the name of Arulānantacuvāmikaḷ, who was active in the region, had entered into transcendental meditation (*camātinilai*). He informed the villagers beforehand that when he entered into *camātinilai* his form would be visible in five localities simultaneously, and that is in fact what happened. This explains the origins of the god's name 'Ēkanātarucuvami', meaning 'omnipresent god'. The current name of K village is also said to derive from an event associated with this renouncer. One day Arulānantacuvāmikaḷ, who was residing in the Nākamalai hills, handed a herdsman a bottomless bowl (*kinṇi*) and asked him to milk a barren cow. The herdsman thought it a strange request, but when he actually set about milking the cow, he was surprised to find that he was able to obtain a full bowl of milk. The miracle quickly became the talk of all the surrounding villages, and the renouncer won the ardent devotion of the villagers. He was, moreover, asked by people from various villages, including K village, to move to their village and, at a loss for an answer, he made the following proposal: he would, namely, hurl his bowl and move to the village where it landed. The bowl landed on the present site of the temple in K village, and as a result the renouncer is said to have settled in K village. The village name was accordingly changed from its former name of Maṅkalapatti to Kiṇṇimaṅkalam after the word for 'bowl' (*kinṇi*).

The existence of this legend concerning the origins of the temple tells us that through the medium of a real person by the name of Arulānantacuvāmikaḷ this Ēkanātarucuvami temple has served as an apparatus enabling the villagers to apprehend the super power of Śiva as a *kaṭavul*. It is at any rate only this temple that is built in the centre of the village within a large compound, and it is immediately obvious that it is the temple representative of the village as a whole. But its external magnificence surpasses that of a temple simply representative of the village, and this struck me at first as somewhat strange, but then I learnt that it had been constructed by an architect sent by King Nāyaka, a devout follower of the renouncer. In point

of fact, among the eleven village shrines this temple alone is of a size and complexity befitting the designation 'temple' rather than small 'shrine', and it has a full-time non-Brahman priest (a Paṇṭāram *pūcāri*) permanently resident in the village. As formal characteristics of this temple, I wish to emphasize the fact that it has a gate which may closed and that its compound is surrounded by a stone wall, and its very magnificence, which is almost out of place in the village, may be understood as the superimposed extraneousness associated with the Brahmanic ideology that is evident in its origins. As is only to be expected, its chief deity Śiva does not receive blood sacrifices, while the Paṇṭāram priest observes a vegetarian diet and leads a life-style according in all respects with that of Brahmins. It is, moreover, patently obvious that this priest serves only the gods of the so-called 'great tradition' of Hinduism. Within the precincts of this temple there are also enshrined in addition to the chief deity Śiva the two gods Vināyakar (Gaṇeṣa) and Murukaṇ, and not only is the priest responsible for the religious services for these two other gods, but he is now also in charge of the shrines dedicated to Vināyakar and Perumāl (Viṣṇu) that are both situated on the southern side of the residential area of the caste Hindus.

**Table 6** Festivals of 'Village Gods' and Annual Rites

Tamil Month	Festival of Village God	Annual rites of Ēkanātar-cuvami temple
Cittirai (April-May)	Kāliyamman	<i>Vartappirappupu</i>
Vaikāci (May-June)		<i>Guru pūcai</i>
Āṇi (June-July)		
[Start of Dakṣiṇayānam]		
Āṭi (July-August)	Perumāl Vināyakar	
Āvaṇi (August-Sept.)		<i>Kokulaṣṭami (p)</i>
Puraṭṭāci (Sept.-Oct.)		<i>Vināyakar caturtti (p)</i>
		<i>Puraṭṭāci varapacaṇai (p)</i>
Aippaci (Oct.-Nov.)	Vaṭakkuvācelliyamman	
	Pattattaraciyamman	
	Aiyaṇār	
	Maṭaikaṛuppacāmi	
Kārttikai (Nov.-Dec.)	Perumāl (p)	<i>Āyuta pūcai (p)</i>
		<i>Tīpāvali paṇṭikai</i>
		<i>Cokkappan koḷuttutal</i>
		<i>Tiruppalliyeḷucci</i>
Mārkaḷi (Dec.-Jan.)		<i>Tiruvātirai</i>
[Start of Uttarayanam]		
Tai (Jan.-Feb.)		<i>Tai poṅkal</i>
Māci (Feb.-March)		<i>Māṭṭu poṅkal</i>
	Ūrkkāvalcuvami	<i>Makācivarattiri</i>
Paṅkuṇi (March-April)	Nākammāl	
	Muttālamman	

(N.B. (p) indicates that *pacaṇai* [hymn-singing] is performed.)

The annual events of the Tamil calendar are held in this Ēkanātaruvami temple that are representative of the village. The main festivals are listed in Table 6 (right-hand column), and only *Guru pūcai* (on the day of pūram the 11th *nakṣattiram* [lunar mansion] Pūram in the month of Vaikāci [corresponding to May-June]), which commemorates the time when Arulānantacuvāmika entered into transcendental meditation, is peculiar to this temple. There is no space here to describe each festival in detail, but according to the priest the festivals with special importance for Ēkanātaruvami temple are as follows: 1) *Guru pūcai*; 2) *Cokkappan koḷuttutal*, a fire festival celebrated in the month of Kārttikai (November-December) being connected with a pillar of fire representing Śiva; 3) *Tiruppalliyelucci*, celebrated with an early-morning service in the month of Mārkaḷi (December-January), which corresponds to dawn when the year is likened to a day in the life of the gods; 4) *Tiruvātirai*, a service performed at dawn on the day of the 6th *nakṣattiram* (lunar mansion) Tiruvātirai in the month of Mārkaḷi, corresponding to the day when Śiva is believed to dance; 5) *Tai poṅkal*, a harvest festival performed on the first day of the month of Tai in mid-January, when *poṅkal* (sacrificial rice) cooked with newly harvested rice is offered to the sun god, with the wind god Vāyu (in his capacity as the rain god) and the 'lineage gods' also being worshipped; and 6) *Makā-civarattiri*, an important festival for Śiva held on the night of the new moon at the end of the month of Māci in mid-March (when lineage festivals are performed by many lineages). On the occasion of these major annual festivals five consecrations (*apiṣēkam* [Skt. *abhiṣēka*]), including one of five ambrosias (*pañcamirtam*; mixture of bananas, honey, sugar, ghee and grapes), are made in honour of the *śivaliṅga* as a special form of worship. In addition to the services (*pūjā*) performed by the priest, at some festivals the singing of hymns by an independently formed *pacaṇai* (Skt. *bhajana*: singing of hymns) group takes place in front of the Vināyakar shrine in the southwest corner of the temple compound. As is indicated in Table 6, this is performed not only on the occasion of the *Puraṭṭāci varapacaṇai*, when *pacaṇai* takes place every Saturday during the month of Puraṭṭāci (September-October), but is also performed on the occasion of the *Kokulaṣṭami*, celebrating Kṛṣṇa's birth, the *Vināyakar caturtti*, celebrating Gaṇeṣa's birth, and the *Āyuta pūcai*, when offerings are made to books, farm implements, carpenter's tools, and so forth. This *pacaṇai* group is composed of seventeen devout caste Hindus (1 Piḷlai, 1 Paṇṭāram, 12 Kaḷlars, 2 Ācāris and 1 Nāṭār), and its existence symbolizes an aspect of faith that has been drawn towards the 'great tradition'.

In addition to the above annual festivals, simple services are held daily in the morning and evening, while a *pūjā* with *poṅkal* is performed every Tuesday and Friday. Normally the Monday *pūjā* is important for Śiva, but it is interesting to note that here days of the week suited for worshipping goddesses as represented by Śiva's consorts have been chosen instead. Whether this is because of the close relationship between goddesses and the Paṇṭāram priest, noted by Dumont (1986: 355), or because of a notion, similar to that reported from Tirunelveli by Good (1985: 139), that meat should not be eaten on Tuesdays and Fridays is a matter for future



investigation. Be that as it may, what I wish to stress here is the fact that, by receiving *pūjā* throughout the year from a resident priest, this Ēkanātarcuvami is activating in a stable form the power that protects the villagers on a daily basis. In passing it may also be noted that all the expenses for these annual festivals and daily services are covered through the cultivation of approximately 18 acres of temple land (*kōvil-māṇiyam*) that has been granted to the priest.

As may be readily surmised from the fact that this is a temple fully embodying Sanskrit culture, Harijans are still forbidden from entering the temple compound. This is a vivid example of a situation in which the habitual attitudes of the village's dominant caste, based on the values (ideology) of purity/impurity, continue to reject the law banning discrimination against Harijans. According to one Harijan, it is not that the priest forbids them to enter, but rather that he is fearful of sanctions that might be imposed by the dominant Kaḷḷar caste. In this sense the temple compound surrounded by a solid stone wall represents a material symbol of the ideology of purity/impurity. But the fact that the Harijans' faith in Ēkanātarcuvami is virtually unaffected by this traditional social discrimination tells us of the existence of a religious plane transcending social relations, and one does in fact see Harijans praying from outside the temple gates.

### Vināyakar (T2)

The elephant-headed god Vināyakar (Gaṇeṣa) is enshrined facing east at the centre of the southern border of the village. As was noted earlier, Vināyakar is also enshrined within the Ēkanātarcuvami temple compound, but this shrine outside the temple is said to have been built because women were unable to worship him there. Vināyakar is believed to be the son of Śiva and his consort Pārvatī, with his head symbolizing wisdom and his elephant's trunk symbolizing courage and will, and he is generally regarded as a god of wisdom and good fortune. In particular, if worshipped when starting anything new, he is believed to remove all obstacles and bring one success, and even during temple services he is always worshipped first. The villagers look upon him as a god of *porumai*, or gentleness and patience. In addition, according to one knowledgeable Kaḷḷar, Vināyakar and Perumāl enshrined along the southern border of the village also ward off malignant influences from the land of the dead where Yamatarmarāṇ (Skt. Yama) dwells. This coincides to a certain degree with Good's comment (1985: 122) that in villages Vināyakar also fulfills the role of gatekeeper. Although Vināyakar could be regarded as a god representing one facet of the 'great tradition', in this particular shrine his image is exposed to the elements, and because there is no enclosure, anyone may readily approach it. Nevertheless, during the only festival held at this shrine, the *Vināyakar caturtti* celebrating Vināyakar's birth and held in the month of Āvaṇi (August-September), it was to be observed that although the Harijan representative and village menial servants (*tōṭṭi* and *maṭaiyaṇ*) mingled with the other caste Hindus, they watched the *pūjā* from a slight distance and also received *piracātam* (Skt. *prasāda*) from the priest there. During the time of my investigations

(1987), however, a change took place at this shrine, with the god's image, which had been more or less level with the ground, being placed on a pedestal about 50 centimetres above the ground. This change may be said to represent the first step towards the eventual enclosure of the image.

This Vināyakar is under the supervision of the priest of the Ēkanātaruvami temple, but services are not held on a daily basis, and the birthday celebrations mentioned above are really the only occasion on which he is accorded a proper *pūjā*. A sweetmeat filled with bean paste (*kolukkattai*), *ponkal* and boiled beans are prepared for this festival, and the participants place in front of the image of Vināyakar small unglazed images of Vināyakar that they have purchased, whereupon the *pūjā* is performed. Afterwards these unglazed images are thrown into the east tank.

### Perumāl (Viṣṇu) (T3)

The shrine dedicated to Perumāl is situated a little to the west of the Vināyakar shrine on the southern border of the village, and it also faces east. Here too there has been a move towards spatial segregation, with a small shrine building currently being erected in order to cover the image, which has been standing in the open. Formerly the shrine is said to have been looked after by a Brahman, but because he left for Madras, it is now under the supervision of the priest of Ēkanātaruvami temple. As has already been noted, this is because Perumāl is a god of the 'great tradition'. No daily acts of worship are performed at this shrine either, and *pūjā* is performed only twice annually, once on the occasion of Kṛṣṇa's birth festivities (*Kokulaṣṭami*) and once on the occasion of the Vaiṣṇava festival called *Vaikuṇṭhaḥkāṭaci* (celebrating the day when the gates of heaven are opened wide to all believers). The Viṣṇu cult cannot be said to be very strong in the villages of this region, where Śaivas predominate.

The above three gods may be described as male deities occupying an orthodox position within Hinduism, and they are gods which the villagers invariably categorize as 'gods who reject blood sacrifices' (*cuttamuka teyvam*). Moreover, although the village officials always participate in the festivals for these gods, these festivals do not assume the form of true village festivals in which essentially all the villagers are mobilized. This is in striking contrast to the village gods that may be subsumed under 'Local Hinduism' (Śrinivas) and will be discussed below. But needless to say, insofar that they are not accorded daily services and are located on the periphery of the village, Vināyakar and Perumāl are to be distinguished from Ēkanātaruvami. Let us now consider the male deities who, although local gods, are also regarded as *cuttamuka teyvam*.

### Ūrkkāvaluvami (T4)

This god is literally a 'god who protects the village', and the villagers look upon him as foremost among the village's tutelary deities. His shrine stands on top of the embankment surrounding the east tank and faces east. In other words, he

protects the village by first protecting the tank, which represents the lifeline of the villagers' livelihood. According to the villagers, the god's image has been there for more than two hundred years, but the shrine building itself was erected about fifty years ago. This shrine is a branch shrine under the control of the Ūrkkāvalcuvami temple situated in the neighbouring village of Puliyanukulam, and therefore the priesthood is held by a priest of the Kavunṭar caste from the main temple residing in Puliyanukulam. The villagers look upon this god as a 'god who rejects blood sacrifices' and consider him to have two consorts, and he is sometimes identified with Śiva. He is also believed to patrol the village territory at night. One will notice that these characteristics closely resemble those of Aiyaṇār, described below, who is correspondingly enshrined on the bank of the west tank, and in point of fact quite a number of villagers consider Ūrkkāvalcuvami and Aiyaṇār to be one and the same god. This Ūrkkāvalcuvami may, therefore, be considered within the context of the so-called Aiyaṇār cult. In this respect this account of Ūrkkāvalcuvami and the following account of Aiyaṇār may be regarded as constituting a single, integrated discussion.

The annual festival is performed in the month of Māci (February-March), and it is characterized by the offering of earthenware figures of horses. Three figures are offered by the villagers and one each by the V.A.O. village revenue collectors (traditionally the *karṇam* and *nāṭṭāṇmai*) and representatives of the two Kaḷḷar lineages of the Kāmaṇṇ and Kēcavaṇ, making a total of five. At the same time one figure each is also offered by the villagers to Aiyaṇār and Maṭaikaṛuppuṇāmi. This tallies with the villagers' comment that these gods protect the village and patrol it at night (some villagers even specify the time of the patrol as taking place between midnight and 2.00 a.m.). The festival proceeds in the following manner. The priest from Puliyanukulam arrives at the village with a sacred box (*cāṁipeṭṭi*) containing ritual utensils, the god's vestments, etc., and a sacrificial he-goat. The villagers meet the priest at the village border and form a procession that proceeds towards the shrine. Women other than those whose menstruation has ceased are not permitted to approach this procession. Vegetarian offerings are made to the chief deity while, according to the villagers' explanation, the blood sacrifice is offered to twenty-one attendant gods, including Ciṇṇacāmi and Pēcciyammaṇ. (This figure of twenty-one is also given as the number of lineage gods, and it is to be surmised that it again signifies a whole.) To this end the sacrifice of the goat is performed behind the shrine building and is screened off with a curtain so as not to defile the chief deity. *Pūjā* (*kapālapūcai*) is performed before this goat's head (with a severed right leg placed in its mouth), and the sacrifice is thus conveyed to the gods. The priest takes the goat's head with him when he leaves the following morning, and the villagers see him off as far as the village border. On the basis of the above, the following features may be noted: (i) the territorial communality of the village, indicated by the emphasis on the village borders, (ii) a priest from outside the village, (iii) the purity of the chief deity Ūrkkāvalcuvami, and (iv) the importance of the blood sacrifice.

**Aiyaṇār (T5)**

Aiyaṇār is a local god whose cult is especially popular in central and southern Tamil Nadu. In K village he is enshrined on the bank of the west tank, situated in a southwesterly direction from the *ūr*, and faces east. He is said to have been enshrined on the bank beside the waters of the tank in accordance with the legend that he was born on a riverbank. Dumont (1986: 354; 1970: 25) has also reported an example of Aiyaṇār being enshrined together with a goddess on the bank of a tank, while G.Oppert (1893: 506, 510) points out that Aiyaṇār is associated with village borders, forests, tanks and rivers and that he is frequently enshrined on the west side of a village. Iconographically speaking, Aiyaṇār is said to borrow traits from both ascetics (*tavaci*) and heroes (*vīraṇ*) (Dumont 1986: 448), but the three carved images of Aiyaṇār in K village are considerably weathered and one can only just discern their features. According to the explanation given by the villagers, the central image represents Aiyaṇār in a yogic pose called *cukācaṇam*, the left-hand image is of Aiyaṇār's devotee Kaṇṇimā (virgin goddess), and the right-hand image is of the tutelary god Muṇṇōṭum Karuppu (literally 'Black God who leads in chanting mantras'). In Hindu cosmology, southwest is identified with the direction of the goddess Nirṛti, who symbolizes misfortune, but among the Tamils it is linked to the goddess Kanni, who embodies the dual qualities of death and rebirth (Reiniche 1981: 47–55). The position of Kaṇṇimā in K village tallies with this cosmology. When compared with Oppert's report, the presence of Muṇṇōṭum Karuppu may perhaps be identifiable with the enormous temple gatekeeper Munnadiyar (Oppert 1893: 511).

According to the villagers, Aiyaṇār rides a white horse with a green saddle and patrols the village preceded by a dog, and if a woman walking alone at night should happen to encounter this party, it is said that she will invariably die. Similarly Aiyaṇār is generally depicted in the form of a warrior out hunting, astride an elephant or horse and holding a whip (hence figures of these animals are used as offerings), and he is regarded as a village tutelary deity responsible for night patrols (*ūrkāval*) (Oppert 1978: 505; Whitehead 1921: 33), while it has also been reported that anyone who meets him will invariably die (Oppert 1978: 505). As a further role of his that benefits the community, mention may also be made of the fact that he presides over rain and watches over farming, which is dependent upon the water from the tanks (Dumont 1970: 22), and in addition personal prayers for recovery from illness and for children are also said to be addressed to him. (On Aiyaṇār's diverse miraculous powers, such as 'bestowing sons', see Oppert 1978: 506.) There are some villagers who emphasize a division of duties, with Aiyaṇār having the function of protecting the tank and guaranteeing the productive aspects of village life, while the village goddesses protect the villagers from epidemics and other illnesses.

Although among the writers on Aiyaṇār there are no major differences in the descriptions of these characteristics, there is not necessarily a consensus on how to define the typological character of this god. First there appeared the contrasting views of Oppert (1893: 509), who regarded the Aiyaṇār cult as Gauda-Dravidian,

and Whitehead (1921: 18), who conversely looked upon it as Brahmanical in nature. But views such as these were spurned by Dumont, who persistently rejected the view of a simple multistratified coexistence of Aryan culture and Dravidian culture and sought to interpret their relationship by means of the duality of the Brahman (priest) and *kṣatriya* (king), which is marked by the complementarity of purity and impurity and the relationship of encompassing and encompassed. Dumont finally reached the following conclusion: *Aiyanār* is, namely, Lord in the dual sense that he combines ostensibly Brahmanic qualities with, on a real or the original level, the qualities of a temporal chief, that is, royal qualities (Dumont 1986: 448). This conclusion was drawn on the basis of an examination of his links with goddesses (two consorts) on the one hand and his links with the god *Karuppu* on the other (Dumont 1986: 440–448; 1970: 31–32). In both cases, *Aiyanār* is considered to occupy the position of master in both a Brahmanic sense and a kingly sense, and Dumont also points out that there is a tendency to identify him with *Śiva* (Dumont 1986: 446; 1970: 25). (This identification may also be observed in *K* village.) In this respect *Aiyanār* as represented in *K* village, accompanied by *Kaṇṇimā* in the subordinate position of a devotee (but not consort) and *Karuppu*, would appear to give expression to his twofold links mentioned above in a typical manner. There is indeed evidence for his close relationship with goddesses as pointed out by Dumont (1986: 424–432; 1970: 24, 31), with *Aiyanār*'s festival (performed on a Thursday by a *Kuyavar* priest) following that of the goddesses *Vaṭakkuvācelliyammaṇ* and *Pattattaraciyammaṇ* (see below) in the month of *Puraṭṭāci* (September–October) (Table 6). In this connection Good too, for example, reports an instance of *Aiyanār* being invited by a goddess (Good 1985: 131). The master-servant relationship between *Aiyanār* and *Karuppu*, on the other hand, is made quite explicit in the scene of the sacrifice of the goat during the annual festival (the goat's head is severed by a member of the *Kallār Kēcavaṇ* lineage). This blood sacrifice is offered to twenty-one gods, including *Muṇṇōṭum Karuppu*, and while it is being performed *Aiyanār* and *Kaṇṇimā* are blindfolded. It is definitely possible to discern here a schema of *Aiyanār* being drawn towards Brahmanical culture and *Karuppu* as a non-Brahmanical subordinate god. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that on a descriptive level one thus finds many points in common with Dumont, I find myself unable to immediately subscribe to Dumont's conclusions drawn from an interpretation based on hierarchical values rooted in a dualistic opposition between 'Brahmanic qualities' and 'royal qualities' (Dumont 1986: 448).

The focal point of my criticism of Dumont is, namely, that because of his excessive attachment to a monistic explanation based on dominant values, he has been unable to deal appropriately with the indigenous cultural elements. In other words, there is a tendency in Dumont's writings for local elements to be interpreted as being inferior to the all-encompassing Brahmanical ideology, as for example when they are regarded as 'impure' in contrast to 'pure' or 'royal' in contrast to 'Brahmanic'. Thus, in his interpretation of *Aiyanār*, it is to be surmised that he has attempted to understand those aspects among *Aiyanār*'s qualities that cannot be

satisfactorily explained as 'Brahmanic qualities' by labelling them 'royal'.

In order to overcome these limitations it is necessary to turn one's attention to the basic pattern underlying these indigenous forms of belief, be they those of 'lineage gods' or 'village gods'. In this respect Oppert's perspective, which would define Aiyāṇār as the 'Lord of ghosts' (1893: 505-506), deserves to be reconsidered in that it emphasizes the ambiguity of his character, and it is all the more interesting in that Oppert does not necessarily look upon Aiyāṇār as a god who rejects blood sacrifices. As was noted when discussing the 'lineage gods', the basic pattern of the villagers' faith is to be seen in the fact that the ritual processes pertaining to a particular god constitute in their entirety a single meaning and are not the aggregate of meanings attributed to individual parts. It is true that the chief god Aiyāṇār himself is segregated from the blood sacrifice, but equally important is the fact that in the rites dedicated to the twenty-one gods headed by Aiyāṇār (— as already mentioned, the figure 'twenty-one' symbolizes the whole) the blood sacrifice is indispensable. If this is so, then it would seem to have been Whitehead who emphasized the former point and Oppert who drew attention to the latter fact, and my own viewpoint moves in the direction of a reevaluation of Oppert. This may be considered to be what is taught to us by the religious sentiments of the villagers, who are unable to desist from blood sacrifices in religious rites, even if they are performed only for subordinate gods. From this viewpoint it is more consistent with the logic of the villagers' thinking to inquire rather into the reason why they seek to isolate the chief god Aiyāṇār from the blood sacrifice. When considered from without, there would appear to be a contradiction here in the villagers' desires between the fundamental need for blood sacrifices and the need for a 'pure' god. But this is not necessarily perceived as a contradiction by those actually involved in the rites. If each aspect is considered separately and statically, there is indeed a contradiction between the two, but if they are understood as constituting a dynamic continuum, with the former representing the need for the creation of sacred power by means of sacrificial death and the latter the need for the stabilization and preservation of that power, then I believe that it becomes possible to explain the thought processes of the villagers who sense no contradiction here. This is the very dynamism that mediates between 'pollution-sacred' and 'purity-sacred'. In the case of K village, the aspect of 'purity-sacred', that is to say, the function of stabilization and preservation is symbolized by Aiyāṇār and Kaṇṇimā, and this calls to mind the chief deity and the sub-chief deity among the 'lineage gods' described earlier. Although Aiyāṇār is said to be accompanied by two consorts and to be identified with Śiva, in actual fact it is not a consort but a goddess named Kaṇṇimā that has been installed beside him. This fact would suggest that although it is true that, when compared with the village goddesses to be described below, this Aiyāṇār cult has taken a greater step in the direction of Sanskritization, this process has been by no means completed and the cult is in the state of having started to move slightly towards 'purity-sacred' while retaining at its base the 'pollution-sacred' presented by the village goddess cults as their paradigm (see below).

The differences between Dumont's views and my own should be clear by now. Dumont would appear to have explained that aspect of Aiyāṇār which I have understood as representing 'pollution-sacred' in terms of 'royal qualities', but needless to say these two viewpoints are not identical. (It may be noted that when the villagers describe a god as being 'like a king', it implies a fearful being who inflicts punishment during one's present lifetime, thus differing from Dumont's interpretation.) Whereas I interpret the Aiyāṇār cult in a broad sense as the Aiyāṇār deity-complex, namely, the total dynamism embracing blood sacrifice, Dumont tends to limit his attention to only the god Aiyāṇār who is separated from attendant goddesses and Karuppus. To put it in plainer terms, it is not possible for an Aiyāṇār cult that does not undergo 'pollution' to be consummated in the village context. The essence of my viewpoint lies in the perception that the villagers' Aiyāṇār cult should not be confined to only the god Aiyāṇār but is directed to the whole that embraces both the chief god and the subordinate gods. It is this whole that gives the Aiyāṇār cult its dynamism, which is reflected in the course of his festival.

As has already been noted, Ūrkkāvalcuvami and Aiyāṇār are gods of similar character enshrined on the banks of the east and west tanks, and I wish to point out once again that the above discussion applies also to Ūrkkāvalcuvami. To this end too it is worth recalling Dumont's comment (1986: 441) that the name Aiyāṇār does not refer to an independent and individual god but denotes a category of gods.

Let us next turn our attention to the village goddesses.

#### **Muttālamman (T6)**

The shrine of the goddess Muttālamman stands facing east near the *maṇṭai* (meeting place for caste Hindu men) more or less in the centre of the village square. It is of a simple structure, but it is evident from its largest annual festival that it is the abode of the 'village god' of the greatest importance for the villagers. The shrine has no image of the goddess, and it contains only a shoulder carrier used during festivals. The name Muttālamman may be translated literally as 'Pearl Goddess', with 'pearl' symbolizing the pustules caused by smallpox, and so she is the goddess of smallpox. On the basis of her name she may, therefore, be identified with Māriyamman, the goddess of smallpox (Dumont 1970: 24). Judging from the form of the images carved on the shrine facade and the image of the goddess which is made only at the time of the annual festival (in which she is shown holding weapons such as a trident and riding a lion), it is evident that she is endowed with the characteristics of the Goddess Durgā. But such explications of the goddess's name are of scant concern to the villagers, and M. Moffatt (1979: 249) states that goddesses such as Muttālamman, Māriyamman, Periyapalaiyattar, Sengeniyamman, Kāliyamman, Selliyamman and Dandumariyamman are all diverse manifestations of Irēṇukai (Skt. Rēṇukā), a fallen form of Pārvatī, and may be identified with one another. The explanation of one villager of K village is of particular interest in this connection. According to his exposition, goddesses such as Muttālamman, Kāliyamman, Pēcciyamman and Durgayamman are basically all the same

deity, but different manifestations are responsible for killing different demons. It is important to note that even though these 'village goddesses' may share the names and iconographical features of the great goddesses of Hinduism (*mahādevī*) and be identifiable with them, this does not necessarily mean that they are identical in character with the corresponding great goddesses (Kinsley 1988: 197).

Māriyamman is often described as having the head of a Brahman woman and the body of a Chakkiliyan woman (one of the Harijan castes; Moffatt 1979: 249), and Beck (1981: 127) has discussed this in terms of the 'split body theme'. I was unable to obtain any similar statements on Muttālamman in K village, but I did hear the following story, which closely resembles the stereotypical tale of the origins of Māriyamman which derives from the legend of Reṇukā's decapitation by her son Rāma in the *Mahābhārata* (the appellation Paraśurāma is said to appear in Purāṇas dating from the early sixth century and later [Gail 1977: 221-228]). In the villages of south India this legend assumes a form such as that found in Moffatt [1979: 248-249] and [Beck 1981: 126-127]. This story also explains why the image of the goddess is kept only during the time of her festival and is then destroyed; it represents of course only one of the many versions told by the villagers.

Once there was an ascetic who lived in the forest and meditated. His wife lived with him and looked after him. One morning the wife bathed in the river as always and was sitting on the riverbank making an earthen pot for the water used in rituals when the form of a Kantārvar (Skt. Ghandharva) passing overhead was reflected in the waters of the river. Because his figure looked so beautiful, she unwittingly looked up at the Kantārvar wheeling in the air and was captivated by him. Afterwards she found herself unable to complete the pot, and so she returned home without a pot and told her husband everything that had happened by the river. Upon hearing this, her husband the ascetic became angry and decided to punish her. He first commanded his eldest son to behead his mother, but because he refused, he then ordered his second son Paraśurāman to do so. Paraśurāman immediately did as his father had ordered, and his father, extremely pleased, promised to grant him whatever he might desire. Paraśurāman accordingly asked him to restore his mother to life. The ascetic did so by attaching his wife's head, which had been placed on a stand beside the junction (*muccanti*) to her body. But his wife, now restored to life, was angry at her husband's treatment of her and so she left him. She was in fact Muttālamman, and in order to avert her fearful anger the villagers invariably destroy the image of the goddess at the conclusion of the festival.

Needless to say, there are many textual variations to this story of Paraśurāma, and in addition a number of lacunae are to be observed in this version that I recorded at K village. Nevertheless the basic plot has been preserved, if only barely. The wife (Reṇukā), namely, who was unable to control her desire, is decapitated by her son Paraśurāma, but upon having been restored to life through Paraśurāma's wish she vents her anger on her husband. In this manner is expressed the more general motif of a woman who has been treated unjustly by males eventually expressing her outrage and being transformed into a goddess (Kinsley 1988: 201). But a marked



difference from the story reported by Moffatt is the absence of the Chakkiliyan (Untouchable) woman. It is thus not possible to discern in the Muttālamman of K village any explicit duality that is physically expressed as in the example of Māriyamman given by Moffatt (with the refined element indicated by her Brahman head and the wild element expressed by her Chakkiliyan body), but this duality may nevertheless be perceived in the very course taken by the story itself, in which an obedient and faithful wife is transformed into a wrathful and independent woman. In point of fact, the villagers conceive of Muttālamman as an entity endowed with both a compassionate and peaceful aspect and an opposite aspect suffused with a dangerous power (Beck 1981: 126–128). The former aspect of a ‘peaceful deity’ (*cantama teyvam*) may be seen in the strong tendency in the village to identify Muttālamman, still preserving at base the character of an indigenous goddess (or deity of the topocosm) (Fuller 1984: 17–20; Shulman 1976: 138–146; Shulman 1980: 138–139; Harman 1989: Chap. 4), with the goddess Mīnāṭci in Maturai, who has already been incorporated to a considerable degree into Brahmanical culture (for example, Kinsley 1988: 202–203). In the first place, a large festival celebrating the marriage of Mīnāṭci and Sundarēśvara (Śiva) is held in the month of Cittirai (April–May) at the onset of the dry season, and in the immediately foregoing month of Panguni (March–April) the annual festival of Muttālamman is held separately from the festivals of the other goddesses, which would hint at the closeness of Muttālamman to Mīnāṭci. (The festivals of the other ‘village goddesses’ are concentrated in the month of Purattāci [September–October].) Moreover, the fact that in the group of goddesses among the ‘village gods’ it is only Muttālamman whose shrine faces the same direction as the shrines of the male deities, namely, east (whereas the shrines of the other goddesses face north), would suggest that the villagers are perhaps seeking to obtain the blessings of this essentially powerful goddess in as stable a form as possible. Even more to the point is the fact that the shrine of this goddess was moved from the northern border of the village to its present site in the centre of the village, and the fact that the annual festival of Muttālamman is the largest in scale of all of the festivals of the ‘village gods’ would also indicate that this goddess occupies a central position among the ‘village gods’.

But the villagers are nevertheless fully aware that this goddess’s power is ambivalent and derives from her unstable, dangerous aspect and that it is here that her true character lies. This represents the basic character of this goddess in her capacity as a topocosmic deity. This may be clearly recognized in the course taken by her annual festival, and it is already apparent in the fact that while Muttālamman is described as a ‘peaceful deity’, she is in fact a ‘god who receives blood sacrifices’. In this connection the following points may be noted: (i) her priest belongs to a lower caste of potters living in a neighbouring village (and is therefore an outsider); (ii) her image, produced by this priest and installed in a temporary shelter (*pantal*) during the festival, faces north; (iii) on the morning of the first day of the festival representatives from the village go to the priest’s home to receive the image, whereupon they carry it back in the shoulder carrier, and the rite for adding

the eyes to the image (*kaṇṭirattal*) is performed when he enters the village (at the former site of the goddess's shrine); (iv) during the morning on the second day of the festival the sacrifice of a he-goat (traditionally a water buffalo, representing Mahiṣāsura, was sacrificed) is performed by members of the Kāmanan and Kēcavan lineages, representing the Kaḷḷars (– there are points here that are inconsistent with discussions of the significance of bringing in an outsider to behead the sacrificial animal [for example, Beck 1981: 115; Heesterman 1985: 48], and they deserve further consideration); and (v) at the conclusion of the festival the goddess's image is taken to the foot of a lactescent tree called *pālai maram* on the northeastern border of the village, where it is destroyed by the priest, for it is said that otherwise this world would be consumed by fire on account of the overabundant power of the goddess, and the *mulaippāri* (see below), said to symbolize the goddess, is also thrown into the water of the east tank. I said above that the course taken by the festival sheds light on the goddess's dangerous aspect, and conversely speaking this means that the execution of the festival represents a mechanism indispensable for the evocation of her sacred power. In addition, it is to be observed that Muttālamman too, who ostensibly exhibits a certain closeness with Mīnāṭci, activates her power by returning to her original qualities of a goddess who receives blood sacrifices as do the other village goddesses. The focal point of the festival is, in other words, the sacrifice of the he-goat and the generation of sacred power.

It is a well-known fact that animal sacrifices in goddess cults are generally understood in terms of the 'demon devotee' at least in Tamil cultural context (Shulman 1980: Chap. 5). That is to say, the blood sacrifice of the male victim transforms him into a devotee of the goddess and effects his union with her. The divine marriage found in south India represents the process by which this is realized, and it may be interpreted as a creative act of sacrifice. In his discussion of this subject Shulman (1980: 317) argues that in order to prevent the male god from coming into direct contact with pollution in the form of death, the demon devotee was introduced into Tamil myths so that he might die in place of the god. Beck too pays attention to the ritual behaviour related to the marriage of Māriyamman and the demon in Tamil villages, and in her discussion (1981: 113–115), which clearly draws on V. Turner's *communitas* theory, she concludes that the transformation of the male victim serves to appease the goddess's anger. There is, however, a distinct difference in viewpoint between Shulman, who regards it as a creative sacrifice, and Beck, who emphasizes the appeasement of the goddess's anger, and in the final analysis I side with Shulman. In the first place, one is unable to explain satisfactorily the case of Muttālamman in K village on the basis of Beck's views, for if Beck were correct, it would be logical to assume that following the animal sacrifice performed during the morning on the second day of the festival the goddess's anger would have abated and she would present no further danger. But in actual fact she continues to harbour an ambivalent power even after the sacrifice, and the danger remains until her image has been destroyed. Therefore, at least in the case of K

village, it is more natural to assume that the goddess's power pervades the village throughout the festival period as long as her image remains in the village. It is for this reason that the appearance and disappearance of the goddess at the village borders are specially marked during the course of the festival by the 'insertion of eyes' and 'destruction of the image' respectively. At this point it may be recalled that Shulman (1980: Chap. 4) has demonstrated that the goddess herself embodies the entire creative process of death and rebirth. In this sense it would seem apposite to interpret the blood sacrifice as representing the climax of the creation of sacred power, which should in turn be regarded as the focal point of the time-space continuum of the entire festival during which this sacred power is activated through the presence of the goddess.

In this connection special mention may be made of the fact that there is a high degree of participation by women in the festival of Muttālamman and that they play a conspicuous role throughout. This becomes evident if her festival is compared with the festivals of the village male gods such as Ūrkkāvalcuvami and Aiyaṇār mentioned earlier. Actual examples of participation by women may be seen in the offerings of *māvilakku* (lamp made by inserting a cotton wick in a stand of rice dough mixed with sugar, cardamom, ginger, etc.) and *poṇkal* on the first day as a preliminary stage to the animal sacrifice and the offering of *mūlaippāri* (seedlings of nine kinds of grain that have been sown in a pot and germinated in a dark room for about one week; they must be looked after by girls not yet menstruating or women who have ceased to menstruate) and performance of dancing and singing (called *kummi*) for the goddess on the afternoon of the second day after the sacrifice—in all these rites women play a central role. According to some, the *mūlaippāri* is a symbol of the goddess Muttālamman, and it may at least be regarded as an expression of her will. It is also said to indicate the fortunes of the families of the women who look after it: needless to say, healthy growth is a sign of good fortune. In addition, one may also point out as an example showing the openness to women that the rule forbidding young girls and women other than those who have ceased menstruating from approaching the procession, observed in the case of Ūrkkāvalcuvami, does not apply in the case of the procession staged for this goddess. This active participation on the part of women—their proximity to the goddess, as it were—suggests, as is symbolized especially in the offering of *mūlaippāri*, that there are close links between the productivity or reproductivity of women and the creative power of the goddess. This would indicate a correspondence between women, who reproduce by undergoing pollution associated with menstruation and childbirth, and the goddess, who receives blood sacrifices in which a demon is killed and she takes part in the pollution associated with his death. When considered in this manner, it would appear that the festival of Muttālamman should not be reduced to an understanding based on Turner's theoretical framework and that it is closer to reality to understand it as a whole, regarding it as a process for the cultivation of sacred power through the medium of pollution.

On the basis of the above considerations, it would seem possible to define

Muttālamman as an entity who, while maintaining at root her basic topocosmic character embodying 'pollution-sacred', has at the same time taken a small step towards Sanskritization in the form of her approach to the goddess Mīnāṭci. But if compared with the Aiyaṇār cult, it may be said that, partly because of their different roles, she preserves to a greater degree the basic characteristic of creation mediated by pollution. Thus here too we find the dynamism of creation and preservation, although there is a leaning towards the creative aspect. It should be confirmed that the perspective of this analysis naturally differs from that which, on the basis of an analysis of the content of the offerings, evidencing as they do a contrast between the *kapālapūcai* (worship of the head of the sacrificial animal with a severed right foot placed in its mouth) on the morning of the second day of the festival and the *talukai* (vegetarian offerings) on the afternoon of the same day, would conclude, like Fuller (1987: 24–29), that this duality represents the duality of the 'high form' and 'low form' inherent in the 'village gods' themselves, thus returning in a certain sense to Dumont.

### Kāliyamman (T7)

The shrine of this goddess is situated near the banks of the east tank to the northeast of the residential area of the caste Hindus. A trident, one of the weapons of great goddesses (originally Śiva's weapon, but according to the *Devīmahātmya* presented by Śiva on the occasion of the birth of the goddess Mahiṣāsuramardini), has been set on top of a stone pedestal to serve as her symbol and, as in the case of the other goddesses, it faces north. There are several differences between this goddess and goddesses such as Vatakkuvacelliyamman and Pattattaraciyamman described below. In the first place, she bears the name of Kālī, who, together with Durgā, is one of the two supreme goddesses of orthodox Hinduism (*Mahādevī*—such as described, for example, in the *Devīmahātmya* included in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*). The month in which her festival is held also differs from that of the other goddesses, being celebrated separately in the hottest month of Vaikāci (May–June). In addition, her shrine is said to be the newest shrine among those of the 'village gods', having been built by the Kēcavaṇ lineage, one of the senior lineages of the Kaḷḷars, and thus, although she does face north and is without a doubt a 'god who receives blood sacrifices', when compared with the so-called indigenous goddesses, her shrine would appear to have been erected by consciously drawing on the image of the great Hindu goddesses. As if to demonstrate this point, a well-informed member of the Kēcavaṇ lineage declared that the powerful goddess Kālī had been installed in order to confront the buffalo demon Mahiṣāsura, believed to dwell in the northern quarter, thus attributing to her the image of the renowned goddess Mahiṣāsuramardini, slayer of Mahiṣāsura. Of course, in addition to this, she is also described as a goddess who cures diseases such as smallpox and cholera and brings people happiness, and so there is no doubting the fact that she is a 'village goddess'.

A fact that would further corroborate this great-goddess tendency is to be

found in her annual festival. On the occasion of this festival a *karakam* (pot full of holy water containing coconut and decorated with margosa leaves [Beck 1981: 116, n. 41]), regarded as the goddess's symbol (*amman eluntaruḷutal*), is prepared, and it is not the priest of this shrine (a member of the Kaḷḷar caste residing in a neighbouring village) but the priest of the Ēkanātaruvami temple who prepares it. It is thus to be surmised that even though she is a 'god who receives blood sacrifices', she is treated not as a local goddess but in accordance with the image of her as a consort of Ēkanātaruvami (that is, Śiva) since she bears the name of a supreme goddess.

In scale the annual festival of this Kāliyamman is second only to that of Muttālamman. The highlight of the first day is the preparation of *poṅkal* and sacrifice of a goat in front of the *karakam* and the offering of two hundred bowls (*uruṇṭai*) of cooked rice mixed with the meat of the sacrificed goat. On the following morning *poṅkal* is prepared by individual villagers and cocks are sacrificed, while in the afternoon people bring together their *mūlaippāri* and the rite for offering them up to the goddess is performed. Finally both the *mūlaippāri* and *karakam* are thrown into the tank. According to the villagers, they thereby 'cool' the goddess's power (*śakti*), which has become overpowerful during the festival, and reduce it to a level suitable for everyday purposes. The fact that the animal sacrifice is here performed on the first day of a two-day festival would seem to offer further evidence against Beck's interpretation of sacrifices.

#### Vaṭakkuvācelliyamman (T8)

The spelling of this goddess's name is that given by the villagers, but she is probably identical to *vaṭakku-vācarcelvi* (Tamil Lexicon), *vaṭakku vāsal selli amman* (Dumont 1986: 426) and *Vaṭakku-vāsal Celviyamman* (Good: 1985: 119), which may all be translated as 'Goddess of the North Gate', and she is in fact enshrined in the open in a field to the north of the *ūr*, facing north. This close relationship between local gods and the northern quarter has already been noted by Shulman (1980: 48, 138) and Good (1985: 123, 127). The 'Goddess of the North Gate' in particular is associated with the north, illness and the entrance to heaven (Good 1985: 120). According to the villagers, this goddess too is said to slay the buffalo demon Maḥiṣāsura, and she protects the village from malignant forces emanating from the north; a further characteristic is her great efficacy in curing illnesses peculiar to women. In this connection, the active participation of women is to be observed during her festival. This Vaṭakkuvācelliyamman is enshrined in the form of two goddesses, representing two sisters, and nearby there is also a statue of Seven Mothers (strictly speaking, 'Seven Virgins' [Kaṇṇimārkaḷ]).

The annual festival of this goddess is performed on a Tuesday in the month of Puraṭṭāci (September-October), which is the month when farming begins in earnest and, as was noted in the section on Aiyāṇār (Table 6), four festivals take place. Her festival starts with a *pūjā* for offering *poṅkal*, officiated by a priest of the Paṇṭāram caste from the neighbouring village of Kokkulam and attended by only the village representatives. After the conclusion of this *pūjā*, the villagers

gather in the village square, drawn by the music played by a band of Paraiyar musicians as the participants in the *pūjā* return to the village, and they form another procession which sets out again for the goddess's shrine. Indispensable participants in this procession are the musicians, members of the Kāmanan lineage to carry the *talukai* prepared by the village headman and village accountant, women carrying *māvilakku* on their heads, and a person to lead the young he-goat full of *śakti* (*cat-tikkutti*) that will be sacrificed. The offerings of *talukai* and *māvilakku* and the sacrifice of the goat are thus performed at the shrine after night has fallen. There is a detailed account of the festival of the 'Goddess of the North Gate' Vaḍukka-vāsal Celviyamman by Good (1985), but her position within the 'village gods' as a whole appears to differ from that of the 'Goddess of the North Gate' in K village, and she exhibits the characteristics of a goddess of central importance closer to those of Muttālamman in K village. This may be inferred from the fact that she is blind-folded during the execution of the blood sacrifice, that her festival is performed in the month of Panguni and involves the ordeal of holding a fire bowl (*akkiniccatṭi*), and that she is called the 'Goddess of One Thousand Eyes' and is closely connected with smallpox. This would seem to point to the importance of determining the character of village goddesses by taking into account their position among the 'village gods' as a whole rather than drawing hasty conclusions on the basis of their names.

#### **Pattattaraciyaṃman (T9)**

This goddess resides in a shrine (built with a roof about fifteen years ago) situated to the northwest of the *ūr* and facing north. Pattattaraciyaṃman, whose name may be translated as 'Queen Goddess', is believed to be an extremely powerful deity, and I was told that she could be regarded as identical to Kāmāṭciyaṃman of the 'alluring eyes' (who is also the 'caste god' of carpenters and other artisan castes). For this reason she is considered to have the ability to cure not only smallpox and leprosy, but also in particular eye diseases, and she is also said to heal mental afflictions and leg pains.

It is interesting to note that the villagers also link this goddess with the land, regarding her as an agricultural deity who protects the village. In this connection, it is to be observed that Karuppacāmi, regarded as an incarnation of Viṣṇu, is enshrined as a tutelary god facing east in the immediate left foreground of her shrine. This does not mean simply that Karuppacāmi is protecting the goddess, but calls to mind a more cosmological significance, with the goddess guarding the north and Karuppacāmi guarding the other three directions (Dumont 1986: 427). The above facts are all combined in the following story that has been preserved in the village and which I heard from a Kaḷḷar elder.

Pattattaraciyaṃman was born as the daughter of Taṭcāṇ ('carpenter'), and so she was called Taṭcayīṇi. Upon growing up she married Śiva, but her father, envious of Śiva's power, plotted to steal it and to this end he performed a special *pūjā* called *yākam* (Skt. *yāga*: 'sacrifice'). Śiva was enraged when he heard of this

and ordered *Virapattiraṇ* and *Vairava* to kill *Taṭcāṇ*. But they failed in their attempt, and so *Taṭcayini* went herself and disrupted the *yākam*, after which she immediately entered a state of meditation. *Karuppacāmi*, an incarnation of *Viṣṇu*, appeared and watched over her as she meditated. (*Comment*: This story is clearly based on the tale of *Śiva*'s destruction of *Dakṣa*'s sacrifice, which appears in various forms in *Purāṇic* literature, and *Taṭcāṇ* may be identified with *Dakṣa* and *Taṭcayini* with *Satī* [Kamimura 1981: 206–207; O'Flaherty 1973: 128–129]. On the discrepancies between this story of *Dakṣa*'s sacrifice as preserved in Tamil society and the Sanskrit sources, the discussion by Shulman [1980: 337–346] is important.)

This story, which explains the relationship between *Pattattaraciyamman* and the tutelary god *Karuppacāmi* on the basis of the motif of the destruction of *Dakṣa*'s *yākam*, assumes still further implications when considered in conjunction with the participation of *Paṛaiyars* in the final stages of her festival, especially the ordeal and blood sacrifice that take place then. Firstly, by making *Taṭcayini* (that is, *Pattattaraciyamman*) *Śiva*'s wife, it is asserted in the above story that she is a deity who does not receive blood sacrifices. But the sacrifice and other actions performed the *Paṛaiyars* would suggest that this goddess possesses qualities that cannot be circumscribed by this characterization alone. Twenty or thirty *Paṛaiyars* who have made their preparations at the shrine of *Periyanātcci/Ariyanātcci*, the 'lineage gods' common to the principal *Paṛaiyar* lineages of the *Karttānāṇṭi* and *Cinṇanāṇṭi*, set out towards the goddess's shrine, performing as they go an ordeal called *kavarukuttutal* (dancing with a rope hooked to one's sides by means of claws attached to the end of the rope). In the right foreground of the shrine (for they must not come too close to the goddess) they prepare the *ponkal* and sacrifice a cock. Even if it might be argued that the sacrifice is directed not at the goddess but at *Karuppacāmi*, identical to their own communal god *Maṭaikaruppacāmi* (see below), when one considers the fact that it is the goddess's priest (from the neighbouring hamlet of *Māvelipatti* and belonging to the *Kavunṭar* caste) who decapitates the cock brought along by the *Paṛaiyars*, one cannot but surmise the existence of connections with the goddess herself, for the participation of *Paṛaiyars* in this goddess's festival calls to mind similar ambivalent situations in which Untouchables are made to participate, such as that described by Beck when, quoting F. Fawcett (1899) with reference to Andhra Pradesh, she writes, "an untouchable must lift the sacrificial head, and the lamp that burns on top of it, onto his own head. The latter practice is said to be very dangerous." (1981: 114). In the present case this means that although on the surface the *Paṛaiyars* would appear to be participating of their own accord, there ultimately emerges the schema of *Harijans* being closely involved in an ambivalent sacrifice with the permission of caste *Hindus*. It may, moreover, be considered that the decapitation of the *Paṛaiyars*' cock by the goddess's priest gives expression to the motif of the sacrifice of the goddess's male devotee alluded to in the section on *Muttālamman*. Thus, even though *Pattattaraciyamman* herself does not directly receive the blood sacrifice, the fact that she sanctions it insofar that her priest is involved in the *Paṛaiyars*'

blood sacrifice to her tutelary god Karuppacāmi would suggest that the motif of the 'demon devotee' has been preserved, even if in an indirect form in that caste Hindus themselves do not perform the sacrifice. In this respect Pattattaraciyamman may be defined as representing an amalgamation of the Sanskritization of the chief deity, discussed earlier in connection with the Aiyaṇār cult, and the goddess cult originally associated with blood sacrifices. This latter aspect is corroborated by the residual fact that on the occasion of the *Makācivarattiri* she receives non-vegetarian offerings. It is also interesting to note in this respect that there is confusion among the villagers as to whether or not Pattattaraciyamman is a 'god who receives blood sacrifices'. In addition to the preoccupied image of goddesses basically having a close involvement with blood sacrifices, the sacrifice of a cock by Paraiyars during her festival has doubtless added to this confusion.

Because the Kavunṭar priest of this goddess comes from the neighbouring village of Māvelipatti, the inhabitants of this village also participate in her festival, and this is a phenomenon not to be observed in regard to the other 'village gods'.

Let us now return to the male gods. The god to be described next occupies a unique position among the 'village gods' in that a Paraiyar (Harijan) serves as priest to his shrine.

### **Maṭaikaruppacāmi (T10)**

As is indicated by his name, this god guards and controls the watergate (*maṭai*) of the west tank. The fact that he guards the watergate (and also the embankment) means that he protects the fields (*nañcey*) irrigated by the water from this tank, and he is an extremely important agricultural god, suggestive of Aiyaṇār-like functions when one also takes into account the fact that models of horses are offered to him. But the most interesting fact about this god is that his priest is a Paraiyar and is invariably chosen from the Maṭaiyaṇ lineage (one of the four lineages constituting the core of the village Paraiyars), and an episode explaining the origins of this tradition has been preserved by the villagers. The version related to me by an elder of the Maṭaiyaṇ lineage was as follows:

One day a member of the Maṭaiyaṇ lineage happened to notice that the banks of the tank were cracked and that water had started to leak. Because it was the rainy season, the tank was full of water, and the banks seemed about to burst at any moment. The Maṭaiyaṇ did his best to stop the leaking but, finding that he could not do much, was at his wit's end when Karuppacāmi appeared and said, "Don't worry! I'll watch over the banks while you go and tell the villagers, so hurry along!" The Maṭaiyaṇ rushed back to the village and frantically explained to the villagers what had happened. But, of all things, they killed him. Because he had said that Karuppacāmi would watch over the banks of the tank until he returned, they thought that if they were to go back to the tank with him, Karuppacāmi would doubtless leave and the banks would burst, and so they felt that they had no choice but to kill him. Therefore it is believed that ever since this time Karuppacāmi has remained by the banks to watch over them, and because the Paraiyar who was



sacrificed belonged to the Maṭaiyaṇ lineage, by way of atonement the villagers have granted the Maṭaiyaṇ lineage the right to serve this god and act as his priest.

Insofar that a Paṛaiyar is his priest, this god may be identified with Pēykkāmeṇ Karuppacāmi mentioned by Dumont (1986: 355). If that should be the case, then it would mean that, as in the example described by Dumont, the Paṛaiyars settled in K village prior to the Kaḷḷars and other castes and that this god is therefore one of the oldest of the 'village gods'. In point of fact, if one were to stretch one's imagination a little, taking into account the fact that this same Maṭaikaruppacāmi is enshrined as the god of the Paṛaiyar community in the centre of their square, it might be supposed that he was originally the local god of the older Paṛaiyar inhabitants which the Kaḷḷar latecomers then adopted as one of the local gods of the village that they now ruled and that this course of events is reflected in the above story. (As is noted by Dumont [1986: 355], such instances are by no means unusual in this region.)

The annual festival of this god follows that of Aiyaṇār, being held in the same month of Purattāci. The 'Four lineages' (*Nālpaṅkāḷi*) constituting the nucleus of the village Paṛaiyars first deliberate in order to decide on the date and then obtain permission from the people of the *ūr*, that is, the caste Hindus. Members of both the Kēcavaṇ and Kāmanaṇ lineages collect contributions from the caste Hindus to cover the expenses of the festival and make the necessary arrangements, including providing for a he-goat; anything that remains afterwards is handed over to the 'four lineages'. On this occasion the *tōṭṭi* and *maṭaiyaṇ* (village menial servants chosen from among the Paṛaiyars) are granted the privilege of collecting some money and grain from the Kaḷḷars and other castes. The festival takes place on a Friday evening, and it begins by having everyone assemble in the meeting place (*cinna maṇṭai*) in the square of the oldest Paṛaiyar residential section (where Maṭaikaruppacāmi is enshrined). Maṭaikaruppacāmi's priest (*pūcārī*) from the Maṭaiyaṇ lineage asks the *cāmiyāṭis* (people who dance while possessed by a particular god) from the Karttāṇāṇṭi and Ciṇṇaṇāṇṭi lineages, who have entered into a trance, whether they may go to Maṭaikaruppacāmi's shrine by the tank. When permission has been granted by the *cāmiyāṭis*, elders from the Kēcavaṇ and Kāmanaṇ lineages place wreaths around the necks of the priest and *cāmiyāṭis* and rub holy ashes on their foreheads. The procession to the shrine proceeds with both Paṛaiyars and caste Hindus intermingling with one another. (It is interesting to note that in such circumstances caste Hindus have no scruples about coming into physical contact with Paṛaiyars.) As soon as they arrive at the shrine, they begin preparing the *poṅkal* (the water for which the priest must fetch from the west tank). When the *poṅkal* has been offered, the sacrifice of the goat takes place. A member of the Kēcavaṇ lineage beheads the goat with a sword handed to him by a member of the Kāmanaṇ lineage, and *kapālapūcai* is performed with the decapitated head. The Paṛaiyar priest distributes holy ashes among both caste Hindus and Paṛaiyars and also distributes *piracātam* as *mutaṇmai* (expression of priority) in a fixed order. The caste Hindus then return home, while the Paṛaiyars

remain and prepare a meat curry which they eat together. Since Maṭaikaṛuppacāmi is a 'god who receives blood sacrifices' (*tutiyāṇa teyvam*), it is forbidden to take the food from this meal back to one's home.

The reason that I have described this festival in some detail is that I wished to ascertain the fact that phenomena that cannot be explained by the theory of purity/impurity may be clearly observed here. If the caste Hindus looked upon the Paṛaiyars simply as 'impure' people, they would under no circumstances be able to accept a Paṛaiyar as priest. Therefore the procedure followed in the above festival tells us that, on the basis of the close connections between the Paṛaiyars and Maṭaikaṛuppacāmi, the caste Hindus set a positive value on the peculiar ability of the Paṛaiyars (especially members of the Maṭaiyaṇ lineage) to extract benefits from this Karuppacāmi. One also realizes in connection with this that, among the male gods of the village, it is only Maṭaikaṛuppacāmi who directly receives blood sacrifices in his capacity as chief deity. Although this is not explicitly stated by the villagers, it is to be inferred that, setting aside the goddesses, it is most unusual in the case of male gods for a chief deity to directly receive a blood sacrifice and that it is this uncommon feature that has led to the appointment of a Paṛaiyar priest. There is at any rate no changing the fact that the Kaḷḷars and other caste Hindus have brought about an apparently contradictory reverse phenomenon in which, employing the Paṛaiyars whom they normally define as 'impure', they extract from a 'fearful god' (*tutiyāṇa teyvam*) a positive force for the protection of the village through the medium of an act of pollution in the form of a blood sacrifice. This fact in itself would suggest that although they describe the Paṛaiyars as being simply 'impure', they in actual fact recognize their ambivalent and therefore potentially powerful aspect, which might be described as the aspect of 'pollution'. If, as is maintained by Hiroyuki Kotani (1988: 7-303), there has been a historical development from the ambiguous discrimination of the medieval period to the unambiguously determined discrimination of the modern age, then one is tempted to conjecture that the circumstances of this festival of Maṭaikaṛuppacāmi represent a remnant of medieval caste relations. It must not, however, be forgotten that this festival proceeds under the supervision of the dominant castes, for it is obvious that the above situation becomes possible only because of a subjective decision on the part of the dominant castes, such that only on the occasion of this festival do they give priority to the fact that the priest is acting in his capacity as priest rather than to the fact that he is a Paṛaiyar. This positive evaluation of the Paṛaiyars occurs, after all, not in the context of secular society, but in the confined sacred time-space represented by a religious and ritual setting restricted to a shrine on the night of a festival, where the normal hierarchical structure is temporarily fractured and a markedly egalitarian situation presents itself. I wish to ascertain here at any rate that there does in fact exist a second ideology of the dominant castes such that makes this situation possible, and that it differs from the logic of purity/impurity and may be interpreted as 'pollution-sacred'.

I have now completed my account of the principal gods associated with the *ūr*,

but there is one further shrine whose god is counted among the 'village gods'.

### **Nākammāl (T11)**

'Nākammāl' means literally 'Snake Mother [God]', and the villagers believe that this goddess protects them from snakebite. Her image stands on the inward side of the east tank approximately 300 metres to the southeast of the *ūr*. Partly because she is so far removed from the *ūr*, one cannot help feeling that this goddess occupies no more than an ancillary position in the protection of the *ūr* when compared with the ten foregoing deities. There is accordingly no special festival for her, and only a simple *pūjā* is performed once a year in the month of Māci (February-March) by members of the Kavunṭar caste from Māvelipaṭṭi. She might thus be described as a 'village god' that is in the process of being forgotten. The vicinity of her shrine is, however, the former site of a hamlet called Kōnampaṭṭi, and there is a possibility that she was the object of a more popular cult in earlier times. This impression deepens especially when one calls to mind the case of, for example, Manasā, a snake goddess of the Bengal region described by E. Dimock.

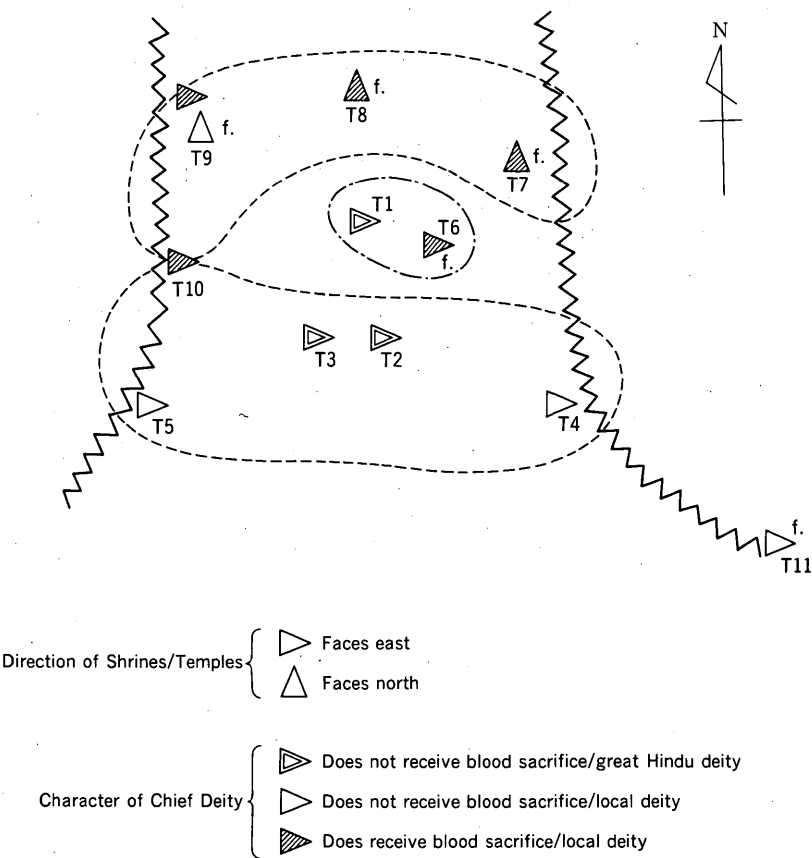
## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION: THE STRUCTURE AND INTERPRETATION OF 'VILLAGE GODS'**

### **Structure**

I have described the various characteristics of each of the 'village gods' and have offered an interpretation of them respectively. I now wish to determine their position within the overall structure and to extract their integrated meanings as conclusion. As the framework moulding the overall structure, it is immediately possible to discern two sets of oppositional relationships. These are shown in the form of a diagram in Fig. 3, one being the relationship between the central group and the peripheral group and the other being the relationship between the northern group and the southern group. These relationships are of course not simply oppositional in nature, but complement one another to form the overall structure. Although this segmentalization to some extent corresponds with actual physical spatial relationships, it is presented here in essence as a semantic space. When this is taken into account, it will be seen that because, as was seen in Fig. 1, K village is flanked to the east and west by tanks, it is characterized by a markedly symmetrical spatial structure. But I wish to point out that this special feature of its physical configuration in no way prejudices the general character of the following discussion.

### **The Central Group and Peripheral Group**

It may be assumed that the central group of the semantic space of the 'village gods' is composed of the male god Ēkanātarucvami and the goddess Muttālamman. In other words, these two deities occupy the position of representatives of the



(N.B. Female chief deities are marked 'f.')

**Fig. 3** Spatial Disposition of the 'Village Gods'

'village gods', with Ēkanārcuvami being representative of the male gods who, apart from Maṭaikaṛuppacāmi, are 'gods who reject blood sacrifices' and Muttālamman representing the goddesses who are basically 'gods who do receive blood sacrifices'. In actual practice too the shrines of both these deities are located in the central spatial sphere corresponding to the village square.

What, then, is the nature of the opposition and complementarity exhibited by Ēkanārcuvami and Muttālamman? Their main characteristics have been brought together in Table 7. As if in reflection of the extraneousness of its origins, the Ēkanārcuvami temple, which had its beginnings as the abode of a *caṇṇiyāci* and is dedicated to the ascetic Śiva, stands for the culture of 'Sanskrit Hinduism', even though its priest is a non-Brahman, and it is therefore imbued with the logic of purity/impurity that rejects blood sacrifice. There is a vegetarian priest permanently resident in the village who daily performs *pūjā* for this god and also performs

Table 7 Comparison of the Central Deities Ēkanārcuvami and Muttālamman

〈Ēkanārcuvami〉	〈Muttālamman〉
Male deity <i>kaṭavul</i>	Female deity <i>teyvam</i>
Big temple faces east	Small shrine faces east
Permanent image faces east	Image produced only at time of the festival and faces north
Temple compound surrounded by walls (Harijans excluded from compound)	No enclosure (Harijans may approach vicinity of shrine)
Paṇṭāram priest permanently resident in village	Kuyavar temporary priest from neighbouring village
Daily services (including annual rites)	Annual festival only
Participation in annual rites mainly by village officials and limited devotees	All villagers participate in annual festival
Emphasis on village centrality	Emphasis on <i>ūr</i> boundaries
Expenses covered by earnings from cultivation of temple land	Expenses collected from Caste Hindus at time of festival
Does not receive blood sacrifice	Receives blood sacrifice

annual rites at the temple for the villagers in accordance with the Tamil calendar. In order to make these services performed throughout the year financially feasible, farmland attached to the temple has been granted to the priest. By way of contrast Muttālamman, who is closely connected with the autochthonous spacial expanse of the village, attracts the most fervent faith of the villagers in her role as a god of 'local Hinduism', and her festival is accordingly characterized by the participation of all the villagers, the emphasis on village borders and the indispensability of blood sacrifice. The manner in which expression is given to her cult is, moreover, marked by a transitoriness in that it is celebrated in a festival that is held only once annually, and on this occasion only is an image of her made and a priest comes from outside of the village. Financially speaking too her cult displays a transitory nature in that funds for her festival are collected from Caste Hindus only immediately prior to the festival.

The contrast to be observed between these two deities may be explained in the following manner. For the source of the gods' power that guarantees the well-being of the village as reflected in abundant crops and sound health, the villagers return to their autochthonous nature in their annual festivals and exhibit an indispensable need for Muttālamman and her explosively potent power (*śakti*). But they also cherish the desire to redirect this ambivalent and unstable power into the daily life of the village in a more stable form, and this desire is committed to the care of the "more universal" (Śrinivas) Ēkanārcuvami with his greater degree of permanence.

As has already been noted, however, evidence of the efforts of the villagers to stabilize her power by transforming her into a 'peaceful god' such as Miṇāṭci may

be seen to a certain degree within Muttālamman herself, and it is a fact that this gradual Sanskritization of Muttālamman, although not necessarily very explicit, has served to move this goddess from the periphery to the centre. But conversely speaking this indicates that the truly 'peaceful god' Ēkanātaruvami, who does not receive blood sacrifices, is by himself incapable of sustaining the village centre in a semantic sense. It might also be mentioned that, even though Muttālamman has moved to the centre, this goddess is still fully independent and is far from having been so Sanskritized as to be placed in the position of Śiva's wife. (A lucid exposition of the two goddess images represented by the aggressive, independent goddess and the goddess who has been subjugated or tamed by a god may be found in, for example, Tapper [1979: 15–16] and Kinsley [1988: 202–203]).

### The Northern Group and Southern Group

It is possible to recognize in general terms a pattern marked by a conspicuous contrast between the northern side of the *ūr*, protected by shrines whose chief deities are goddesses who basically receive blood sacrifices, and the southern side, guarded by shrines whose chief deities are male gods who do not receive blood sacrifices. A particularly knowledgeable villager explained this in the following manner, as already noted earlier: the gods guarding the southern quarter protect the village from death, which comes from the land in the south where Yamatarmarājan lives, while the goddesses in the northern quarter are resisting the malignant forces emanating from the north (Mahiṣāsura) and attempting to gain the protection of Kupēraṅ (Skt. Kubera), god of wealth. But this type of knowledge is by no means shared by the villagers in general, and in fact the majority of villagers do not even know that the land of death where Yama lives is located in the south. Nevertheless one cannot gainsay the possibility that in former times the 'village gods' were deployed under the direction of people endowed with knowledge similar to that of the above villager. The distinguishing features of this contrast between the northern group of goddesses and the southern group of male gods that is to be observed in the village today are shown in Table 8. When considered in a little more detail, it is found that in the case of the southern group of male gods there is a group of great Hindu gods such as Vināyakar and Perumāl directly associated with Ēkanātaruvami and a group composed of Ūrkkāvaluvami and Aiyaṇār, who in their role as chief deity do not receive blood sacrifices and exhibit an identification with Śiva, but at the basis of whose cults the 'goddess paradigm' continues to live on insofar that their tutelary gods do receive blood sacrifices. The northern group of goddesses, on the other hand, is uniformly marked by the 'goddess paradigm', which realizes the motif of the 'demon devotee' by means of blood sacrifice, even though there is some evidence of a tendency to avoid blood sacrifice in the case of Pattattaraciyanman and it is performed in an indirect manner. Needless to say, there remains one god that does not fit well into either group, namely, Maṭaikarup-pacāmi. It is not only that his shrine is located to neither the north nor the south, but also the fact that, although a male chief deity, he receives blood sacrifice that

positions him in between the two groups. As regards the priests, if one leaves the great gods Vināyakar and Perumāl out of consideration, the fact that the gods of both groups have non-Brahman priests from outside the village (but invariably caste Hindus) whereas the priest of Maṭaikaṛuppacāmi is a Paṛaiyar (Harijan) from within the village increases his ambiguity. This deviancy in a certain sense from the dual structure may also be looked upon as having led to the appointment of a Paṛaiyar priest, but it is impossible to probe this matter any further. But if one attaches special importance to the offering of models of horses, it would not be all that unnatural to include him on the periphery of the southern group of male gods by regarding him as a village tutelary god analogous to Aiyaṇār.

By integrating the above discussion, that is to say, by combining Table 7 and 8,

**Table 8** Contrast of Southern Peripheral Group and Northern Peripheral Group

Southern Peripheral Group			Northern Peripheral Group	
Vināyakar Perumāl	Ūrkāvā- lcuvami Aiyaṇār	Maṭaikaṛuppu	Pattattaraciyamman	Kāliyamman  Vaṭakkuvācelliyamman
Male deities			Female deities	
Shrines face east			Shrines face north	
Intramural priests (Paṇṭaram)	Extramural priests	Intramural priest (Paṛaiyar)	Extramural priests	
No blood sacrifice for chief deity		Blood sacrifice for chiefdeity		
No blood sacrifice during festival	Blood sacrifice during festival			

**Table 9** Outline of the Structure of the 'Village Gods' (Before Interpretation)

Centre	Southern Peripheral Group	Centre	Northern Peripheral Group
Ēkanātarucuvami	Vināyakar (S)	Muttālamman	
	Perumāl (S)	Pattattaraciyamman (NW)	
	Aiyaṇār (SW)	(Karuppacāmi)	
	Ūrkāvālcuvami (SE)	Kāliyamman (NE)	
	Maṭaikaṛuppacāmi (W)	Vaṭakkuvācelliyamman (N)	
	(Nākammāl)		
Preeminence of male deities		Preeminence of female deities	
Preeminence of chief deity who does not receive blood sacrifice (Orientation towards 'purity-sacred')		Preeminence of chief deity who does receive blood sacrifice (Orientation towards 'pollution-sacred')	
Brahmanical cultural tendency . . . . .		Tamil substratal cultural tendency	

one obtains Table 9, which shows the essence of the overall structure of the 'village gods'. By this means one is able to confirm that the opposition and complementarity already seen between the two gods of the central group have reappeared in an expanded form as the structure of the 'village gods' as a whole. In other words, the nature of the villagers' faith in the 'village gods' may be understood, as is shown in Table 9, in terms of the osculation of a Brahmanical cultural tendency centred on the logic of purity/impurity and a cultural facet which, as is clearly evident in the goddess cults, requires the activation of divine power by means of blood sacrifice. This understanding of the acquisition of creative power through the practice of death and rebirth, as in the latter case, belongs to the plane of what I term 'pollution', and I wish to tentatively refer here to the faith pertaining to such a plane as the 'Tamil substratal cultural tendency'. When considered in this fashion, it will be understood that in the osculations of these two 'cultural tendencies' there will appear deities such as Aiyāṇār and Muttālamman (and even Pattattaraciyamman) with an apparently complex character. But this does not mean that they cannot be interpreted in the manner to be argued below.

When stated simply in such terms, it is obvious that I will be criticized for having analyzed the belief world of present-day Tamils as representing a stratification of the 'Brahmanical cultural tendency' and 'Tamil substratal cultural tendency' and for having reverted to the viewpoint of so-called functionalism. But my discussion is not yet over. To this end I wish in the following section to consider the type of 'interpretation' to which the above 'structure' may be subjected. The discussion is, accurately speaking, my understanding of the villagers' 'interpretation'. In preparation for this I have in Table 9 already alluded to the ideology of 'purity/impurity' and the ideology of 'pollution', and I wish it to be understood that the term 'ideology' as used here follows the definition given by G. Therborn (for details, see Sekine 1989c: 82–84; Therborn 1980: 77–78). In other words, 'ideology' refers not so much to fixed objective values, but denotes rather the attitude of 'interpretation' itself that generates meaning in a dynamic manner.

### Interpretation

The gist of my reading of the 'structure' has already been anticipated to a certain extent in the section on 'lineage gods' and in the descriptions of the individual 'village gods', and by way of conclusion it is to be surmised that the belief world of the villagers finds itself in a state of dialogue or, to put it more strongly, struggle between two 'interpretations', namely, an interpretation based on the 'Brahmanical cultural tendency' and an interpretation rooted in the viewpoint of the 'Tamil substratal cultural tendency'. One may, in other words, understand the realities of their belief world in terms of a transaction (or ideological discourse) between the 'purity/impurity' ideology of the former and the 'pollution' ideology of the latter.

Let me now explain the process that has led me to this standpoint. The first point to be made is that comprehending the belief world of the villagers, as was



done first by Whitehead and more recently by Śrinivas and the early Marriott, in terms of a stratification of Sanskrit culture and Dravidian culture represents, as pointed out by Dumont and Pocock, no more than a rather superficial understanding. The reason for this is that a stratified understanding such as this implies that, when considered from the standpoint of the village faithful, two different ways of comprehending the gods coexist, although disjunctly, in the mind of the believer, and it is difficult to imagine that this should in fact be the case. It is, in other words, difficult to believe that one and the same villager's faith in 'gods who do not receive blood sacrifice' and in 'gods who do receive blood sacrifice', as has been described in the foregoing sections, will be discrete and based on separate modes of understanding. In this respect the theories of Whitehead and others remained at the level of an external understanding of faith and did not adequately penetrate the actual circumstances of villagers' faith itself. The criticism levelled by Dumont and Pocock against this stratification theory was therefore most convincing. As is well-known, they rejected stratified dualism and attempted to comprehend the inner belief world of the villagers in an integrated manner on the basis of the oppositional monism of the logic of purity/impurity (for example, Dumont and Pocock 1959: 45). This in itself represented a major theoretical advance, but, as is discussed below, it gave rise to fresh problems. As was just noted, the ahistorical monism of Dumont and Pocock did indeed have great pertinence when considering the villagers' faith. But this does not mean that the historical existence of the great tradition of a 'Brahmanical cultural tendency' and the little tradition of a 'Tamil substratal cultural tendency' can be simply negated at a single stroke. A further point that should be noted in this connection, but which has been lost sight of owing to the criticism passed by Dumont and Pocock, is that there was an aspect to the arguments of Marriott and Śrinivas that cannot be summarily dismissed. This was the fact that they had paid attention to the dynamic relations that evolved historically between the great tradition and the little traditions (Keyes 1983: 8). Thus, although the analytic concepts such as Śrinivas's 'Sanskritization' and Marriott's 'universalization' and 'parochialization' have their shortcomings (especially in that they are substantialist and lack an ideological perspective), the notion of transactional 'dynamic relations' still deserves to be reexamined. Hence it is only natural that my own interpretative standpoint here should utilize the merits of both viewpoints. (A succinct discussion of the developments leading from functionalism through structuralism to poststructuralist ideology may be found in the introduction to R. Fardon's *Power and Knowledge* [1985].)

Returning now to the subject at hand, it behoves us first of all to determine the limitations of the Dumontian interpretation. As was just seen, Dumont's standpoint that the world of belief should be understood monistically must be maintained, but it is necessary to examine this separately from his assertion that it is possible to explain all facets of the villagers' belief world by means of the logic of purity/impurity (Dumont 1980). As has already been made sufficiently clear, simply defining the state of the villagers' faith, of which blood sacrifices are a requisite

element, in terms of 'impurity' and minimalizing its own inherent values can only be said to be far removed from the true intents of the villagers. In addition to my own data presented here (obtained from a village near that investigated by Dumont), we have on the subject of the belief world of the Tamils not only the exhaustive study by Shulman (1980) but also various other works (Beck 1981; Good 1985; Moffatt 1979; Reiniche 1979, 1987; van den Hoek 1979; Brubaker 1978; Whitehead 1921). These works also prove that Dumont's proclivity towards Brahmanical culture is an undeniable fact. It is true that the logic of purity/impurity does indeed exist, but it must be first ascertained that the value world of the villagers is by no means infused with this alone and that what I have termed the value logic of 'pollution' and have attempted to demonstrate here constitutes a fundamentally important viewpoint for the villagers.

Next, the reason that I do not present this simply in terms of values and have instead purposely employed in my discussion the term 'ideology' in, as was noted above, a poststructuralist sense (— Dumont's use of 'ideology' is little more than a rewording of 'value' and has no direct links with my usage of the term here) is that I wish in fact to adopt as an important perspective the monistic understanding of faith advocated by Dumont. In other words, I use the term 'ideology' in order to continually evoke the relativistic perspective that a given viewpoint represents an 'interpretation' from a particular standpoint and to distance myself from the naive substantialism such as would hold that meaning adheres to an object *a priori*. When reconsidered from this vantage point, it is obvious to all that Dumont's theory overlaps with the ideological viewpoint of the 'Brahmanical cultural tendency' imposed from above and that Dumont has presented, although not necessarily consciously, an integrated interpretation from this viewpoint, namely, in accordance with the ideology of purity/impurity. This means that an integrated interpretation is equally possible from the viewpoint of the ideology of 'pollution' that has evolved in Tamil local culture which, although coming under the influence of the great tradition, has preserved relatively different values.

The viewpoint of this ideology of 'pollution' may be clearly discerned in the religious rites dedicated to the goddesses who affirm blood sacrifices and symbolize the dynamism of death and the regeneration of life. In these goddess rites there was sought through the creative paradigm of the 'demon devotee', that is to say, through the sacrificial self-transformation of what appeared to be a demon—in other words, through the 'pollution' of his destructive death symbolized by the blood sacrifice—the acquisition of the powerful *śakti* (sacred force) that is nurtured in the very midst of this process. We saw, moreover, that this goddess paradigm was not only found in the case of the village goddesses, but also underlay the basis of the local male gods. (In this connection I maintained that the view of blood sacrifice as a self-transformation in which evil itself changes into good, emphasized by Shulman as the Tamil interpretation, is closer to reality than the *prima facie* more readily understandable view of Beck, who, unable to escape the Dumontian dualism of purity/impurity, regards the blood sacrifice as the surmounting of *com-*

*munitas*.) Furthermore, the view that the peace and vitality of village life cannot be achieved without the generation of this power is central to the belief world of the villagers. It is this that corresponds to the state of 'pollution-sacred' in which pollution, regarded as 'pollution', is linked in its depths with the sacred, and this must be distinguished from what I term 'purity-sacred', corresponding to the understanding of the sacred in the ideology of purity/impurity, in which a state of 'purity', resulting from the exclusion of pollution identified with 'impurity', is regarded as the appropriate state for coming in contact with the sacred.

In what manner, then, are Ēkanātaruvami and the other gods who do not receive blood sacrifices (listed on the left-hand side of Table 9) and who apparently stand for the values of purity/impurity, interpreted from this perspective of 'pollution'? In the final analysis, this group of male gods represents a religious apparatus for stabilizing the *śakti* dramatically created by the goddesses and for constantly redirecting it into village life. Needless to say, this understanding does not present a picture based on Dumont's hierarchical logic of 'pure' male deities and 'impure' female deities, but gives expression to an integrated belief world consisting of goddesses who 'create' and gods who 'preserve'. This constitutes an integrated interpretation from the perspective of the ideology of 'pollution'. Stated in somewhat simpler terms, the goddesses who 'create' represent an apparatus for drawing the villagers, who in their daily lives have only a shallow sense of reality (corresponding to Bataille's "*l'ordre réel*"), to the plane of a deeper sense of reality ("*l'ordre intime*") in which the 'continuity of existence' is revealed (Bataille 1985: 57–64), while the male gods who 'preserve' perform the function of maintaining in a stable manner the sense of the sacred born of this profound experience. A standpoint approaching this understanding of goddesses may also be found in Beck (1981: 118), who looks upon the festivals of goddesses as a temporary manifestation of the continuum existing between man and the divine, and Kinsley (1988: 211) when he cites Dimock.

But when one leaves aside specific details of context and reconsiders this interpretation of the 'village gods' from the perspective of the ideology of 'pollution', it will be found that it is neither particularly novel nor difficult to comprehend, for one realizes that it was incorporated from an early stage into the understanding of *śakti* in Hinduism, being consistent with the idea that "the power (*śakti*) characteristic of male deities is nothing other than their wives (or consorts = *śakti*)" (Tachikawa 1990: 163). In connection with this point, A. Hiltebeitel's work discussing the dynamism of female 'pollution' (menstrual flow), based on a reexamination of the *Mahābhārata* with a special focus on Draupadī, is rich in suggestions (Hiltebeitel 1981), while his discussion extending to the Draupadī cult in general is also important (Hiltebeitel 1988). Thus one gains the impression that what is perfectly comprehensible when considered from the religious perspective of Hinduism has regressed into a constricted viewpoint as a result of the current of discussion that would seek to understand faith in terms of caste social theory, as in the case of Dumont.

Let me state my view once again. An integrated understanding is necessary for any form of religious life. But this understanding cannot be uniformly fixed and inflexible. Rather, within a dynamic situation in which there exist rival interpretations based on at least the two ideologies described here the villagers each produce some form of integrated interpretation and apply it to their own religious lives. In this respect the villagers would appear to share a common base in that they construct their belief world essentially on the basis of the interpretation provided by the ideology of 'pollution'. But at the same time it is also possible to point out that, as is for example patently evident in the behaviour of the members of the Pillai caste who abandoned their lineage rites involving blood sacrifices two generations ago, a viewpoint influenced by the interpretation based on the ideology of 'purity/impurity' also exists within the villagers.

As will be evident from the above examination, Table 9 cannot in itself give expression to any theory, but is compared to an 'icon' that awaits for being interpreted. In this sense the duality exhibited by Table 9 may be likened to the icons of the supreme gods of Hinduism who are accompanied by two wives. The icon appears as a fixed form, but its interpretation is not one and differs depending on different perspectives. For example, Śiva's two wives are said to have been Umā (Pārvatī) and Kālī, Viṣṇu's two wives are said to have been Lakṣmī (Śrīdevī) and Bhūmidevī, and Murukaṇ's two wives are said to have been Indra's daughter Tēvayānai and the local maiden Vaḷḷi. If this is interpreted as an icon, it will be immediately realized that two interpretations, corresponding to the two ideologies described earlier, are possible. When considered in terms of the top-down ideology of 'purity/impurity', the former of the two wives will represent the exclusively good 'pure' wife and the latter the ambivalent and dangerous 'impure' wife, while if one plumbs the bottom-up ideology of 'pollution', it will be understood that the latter wife, living in 'pollution' itself, represents the source of the creation of *śakti* and that the former wife is responsible for stabilizing this power in a manner gently adapted to human beings.

The fact that, in spite of this, the interpretation looking down from the vantage point of the ideology of 'purity/impurity' still continues to prevail and generally pass for the accepted understanding of Hindu goddesses without there being any discussion of ideology—namely, without any awareness that it represents an ideology—must be regarded as a most regrettable state of affairs. Even in the case of Tachikawa Musashi's ambitious study *Megamitachi no Indo* (The India of Goddesses; 1990), dealing primarily with Nepal, the author treats in essence on the one hand of blood sacrifice and the creative aspect of goddesses, and yet on the other hand he clings to the stereotype of the two-sidedness of goddesses and does not in the final analysis go beyond the top-down and substantialist viewpoint of the 'pure aspect' and 'impure aspect'. It may also be pointed out that this one-sided (top-down) and substantialist viewpoint of goddesses that has been criticized in this study is in fact also refracted on Hindu women in general and has become a bottleneck in the deepening of our understanding of Hindu society. (I do not, of

course, mean to imply that there have been no attempts to overcome these limitations. For example, the understanding of Tamil women put forward by B. Pfaffenberger [1980: 209] is of some importance.)

To this end I wish to draw attention once again to the need to distinguish between 'impurity' and 'pollution' and to the awareness that this distinction occurs on an ideological level.

## FINAL REMARKS

In bringing this paper to a close and also in order to determine the position of this study, I wish to make note of two further points which, although related to the subject matter, I have been unable to incorporate into my main discussion.

1) It is a matter of common knowledge that there has been hitherto no lack of attempts to relativize Dumont's 'purity/impurity' theory. Among those that come immediately to mind in relation to Hindu society as a whole are the relativization attempted by J.C. Heesterman (1981, 1985) from a supramundane perspective, that of R. Burghart (1978) through an interpretation of Hindu society in terms of the ideology of a tripartite structure symbolized by the Brahman, renouncer and king (*kṣatriya*), and that of Raheja (1988) by means of auspiciousness/inauspiciousness theory understood in terms of the concepts of 'centrality' and 'mutuality'. (There are in addition also, for example, Das and Uberoi 1971, David 1977, Wadley 1975, Yocum 1986, Marglin 1985, Maloney 1975, and Pfaffenberger 1980, on which see Sekine 1989c.) Yet it would still appear that this issue of relativization remains unsettled, for it cannot be said that Dumont's understanding of the world of belief has been sufficiently relativized. This may be seen for instance in the study by Moffatt (1979) who, on the basis of fieldwork in Tamil regions, maintains that Dumont's theory is also applicable to the beliefs of the Harijans and adopts a standpoint vindicative of Dumont (—but as I have noted elsewhere, Moffatt's study of the Harijans is somewhat inadequate [Sekine 1989c: 47–60]) and in a recent discussion by Fuller (1988) in which he maintains that it is the 'village gods' rather than the gods of the large temples that embody the dualism of 'purity (high form)/impurity (low form)' and serve as a medium for the acceptance of hierarchical ideology (—although partly criticising Dumontian theory, his discussion can still be read as an affirmation of Dumont, and the fact that Fuller himself has not undertaken any field study of 'village gods' and bases his arguments on large temples such as Mīnākṣi temple is also cause for some misgivings).

Within the context of this general situation, the study of goddess cults, raising as they do the question of blood sacrifice, would appear to occupy an important position in breaching the limitations of the Dumontian viewpoint. For example, contentwise both Kinsley and Beck clearly touch on 'pollution' and 'pollution-sacred' in their discussions, and yet they do not go so far as to treat *systematically*

of the relationship between these concepts and Dumont's 'purity/impurity' theory. Kinsley remains from the outset within the parameters of religious studies and does not probe points of contact with social theory, while Beck has a tendency to still consider from the standpoint of 'purity/impurity' what to me may be interpreted as 'pollution' (Beck 1981: 128). The inquiry into goddesses by van den Hoek (1979), which clearly essays a critique of Dumont and emphasizes the power of the *kṣatriya*, is important but one is forced to admit that it does not go far enough, for his interpretation focussing on the *kṣatriya* corresponds to the perspective employed by Dumont in his examination of Aiyaṇār, and simply transcending the viewpoint of 'purity/impurity' would seem to be inadequate as a critique of Dumont. To my mind, focussing on the power of 'pollution' on the basis of a bottom-up viewpoint would be more to the point. This criticism of Hoek may also be levelled at the attempts to relativize Dumont's theory mentioned above. This is because even though those attempts do relativize Brahmanical values, there is no difference between them insofar that they all ultimately present the perspective of the ruling classes and may be looked upon as taking up for consideration only those values and ideologies that are readily visible. The reason that I have ventured to focus on the ideology of 'pollution', which is difficult to verbalize, is that I wished to remedy the inadequacies of this predisposition towards a top-down viewpoint and, above all, because I believe that without such a perspective one cannot be said to have correctly grasped the cult of the 'village gods'. This also means that social theory is not complete without an understanding based on cosmological or religious theory.

2) That Dumont's 'purity/impurity' theory should expose its limitations especially when dealing with aspects of belief in Hindu society is, as was pointed out in the section on Maṭaikaṛuppacāmi with his Harijan priest, because of the relative autonomy of the religious plane from secular social relations (that is, caste relations). As concrete examples, one may call to mind the fact that the Harijans, excluded from the precincts of Ēkanāṭarcuvami temple, still espouse faith in Ēkanāṭarcuvami and the spectacle of caste Hindus gratefully accepting holy ashes from a Harijan priest. These discrepancies between social relations in the form of caste hierarchy and the religious plane of faith in the gods, that is to say, the relative autonomy of both would conversely appear to have caused the energy of the repressed castes to be absorbed by religious practice, thereby depriving them of the power to directly change the contradictions of society (Shulman 1980: 21; Sekine 1989c: 60-67), and to have further resulted in the paradox of their unconsciously accepting the ruling ideology that confines them to the bottom of the social scale and even reproducing this ideology (for theoretical aspects of this issue see Bourdieu 1972, 1977 and Tanabe 1989). One might consider the following example. For participating a festival or ritual Harijans too abstain from meat, bathe and attempt to make themselves 'pure' (*cuttam*) so that they may come in contact with the sacred (*puṇitam*) while in a state of purity. But this does not mean

that they look upon their normal selves as being 'impure' (*acuttam*). They purify themselves in anticipation of a festival because this is appropriate for an encounter with the divine, and their purity does not represent one aspect of the twin concepts of purity and impurity. Yet this realization of purity in purely religious behaviour is ultimately linked to the bottleneck that not only prevents any criticism of the ideology of 'purity/impurity' defining the social hierarchy, but also actually assists in the assimilation of this ideology (Sekine 1989c: 112–114). Their encapsulation by a reproductive circuit such as this is definitely conceivable, and it is without a doubt an important subject for research. But additional consideration ought to be given to determining within a broad context the actual importance of such ritual effects among contemporary Harijans, who are not necessarily bound to the social space of the village. My interest in this issue is essentially born of a basic desire to acquaint myself as accurately as possible with the real conditions of village Harijans, and it is not necessary to point out that towards this end a comprehensive inquiry bringing together details of the realities of the social relations in which Harijans find themselves and the nature of their religious practice is necessary. I shall leave a more elaborated examination of these relations between religion and society for another occasion, but when reconsidered in this light, the present study may, I believe, be defined as a consideration of 'village gods' from the perspective of religious theory, by which the conventional social theories are reexamined.

#### [Postscript]

The spelling of Tamil terms in the above study basically follows that of the *Tamil Lexicon* (University of Madras, 1982). I was granted the opportunity to present an outline of this paper at a gathering of the joint research project "Ethnological Studies of the Hindu World View" at the National Museum of Ethnology in December 1990, and I received some instructive comments from the participants. In particular, I wish to thank Dr. Einoo Shingo (Institute for Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo) for his valuable information on the Purāṇas.

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