

Routledge New Horizons in South Asian Studies

MODERNITY AND SPIRIT WORSHIP IN INDIA

AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE UMWELT

Miho Ishii



Modernity and Spirit Worship in India

This book investigates the entangled relations between people's daily worship practices and their *umwelt* in South India. Focusing on the practices of spirit (*būta*) worship in the coastal area of Karnataka, it examines the relationship between people and deities.

Based on extensive fieldwork, this book links important anthropological theories on personhood, perspectives, transactions, and gift-exchanges together with the Gestaltkreis theory of Viktor von Weizsäcker. First, it examines the relations between *būta* worship and land tenure, matriliney, and hierarchy in the society. It then explores the reflexive relationship between modern law and current practices based on conventional law, before examining new developments in *būta* worship with the rise of mega-industries and environmental movements. Furthermore, this book sheds light on the struggles and endeavours of the people who create and recreate their relations with the realm of sacred wildness, as well as the formations and transformations of the *umwelt* in perpetual social-political transition.

Modernity and Spirit Worship in India will be of interest to academics in the field of anthropology, religious studies and the dynamics of religion, and South Asian Culture and Society.

Miho Ishii is an associate professor at Kyoto University, Japan. Her current research focus is on the relationship between spirit worship and environmental movements in South India.

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Preface

In a sense, this book follows an established line of anthropological predecessors focusing on the dynamism of religious practices and/in modernity. It is, after all, primarily a book about *būta* (or spirit) worship in South Kanara, a coastal area in Karnataka, India. Būtas are generally considered to be deities or spirits that dwell in forests and embody the realm of sacred wildness. In this book, I investigate the endeavours and struggles of people in village communities, who create and recreate their relations with the realm of sacred wildness through transactions with būtas, amidst social-political transitions such as colonisation, changes in land tenure systems, and development of mega-industries.

However, I also attempt to introduce a novel twist to this anthropological genre. The theoretical core of this book is the notion of the *umwelt* presented by Viktor von Weizsäcker, who uniquely developed Jakob von Uexküll's ideas on the existence of entangled and inseparable relations between an organism and its environment. By linking anthropological theories on personhood, perspective, transactions, and gift-exchanges to the theory of the *umwelt*, I attempt to consider the relations among villagers, land, nature, and būtas as part of the dynamic and creative interactions between humans and their life-worlds, including nonhumans.

If this book successfully presents a perspective that exceeds, even a little, the limits of a monograph sticking to its discipline and geographical field, I owe it to the members of a research project titled '*Kansekai no Jibun-gaku* (The Studies of *Umwelten*)', undertaken at the Institute for Research in the Humanities, Kyoto University, since 2015. Discussions and conversations with colleagues from various academic backgrounds in the course of this project provided great inspiration in the writing of this book.

These discussions also inspired an earlier version of this volume published in Japanese under the title, '*Kansekai no Jinruigaku: Minami Indo ni okeru Yasei, Kindai, Shinreisaishi* (An Anthropology of the *Umwelt: Wildness, Modernity, and Spirit Worship in South India*)', by Kyoto University Press in 2017. Though the core of the argument has remained consistent, through the long process of rewriting, this volume has become not a mere translation, but a fresh creation. I deeply thank Dr Masakazu Tanaka, my colleague

and former supervisor, for his precious comments on the earlier version of this book.

Drs Crispin Bates, Akio Tanabe, and Minoru Mio, the series editors of Routledge New Horizons in South Asian Studies, gave me great support from the earliest to the final stages of publication of this book. Without their support and encouragement, it would not have been possible for me to complete this work. Nick Kasperek and Dr Yumiko Tokita-Tanabe made great efforts to improve the quality of this book. Their sensitive and deep knowledge of English greatly helped me construct the whole argument in English. I am also very grateful to the editors at Routledge, Dorothea Schaefer and Alexandra de Brauw, for their support in the publication of this volume.

After completing my doctoral and postdoctoral research on spirit worship in Ghana, I first visited South India in 2008, in search of a new field site. It was Dr Chinnappa Gowda at Mangaluru University who first introduced me to the fertile world of *būta* worship in South Kanara. Since the start of my fieldwork, Akshaya Shetty, her mother Baarati, and her father Harisha always provided me with warm and generous support. Vidya Dinker not only gave me wise advice, but also instilled the courage I needed to pursue difficult tasks in the field. Without their support and friendship, I could not have accomplished my research.

Finally, I would like to thank Kenta Funahashi and our two daughters, Hina and Sui. They accompanied me on my fieldtrips and shared my joy and wonder through the entire process. They provided me with great inspiration and encounters that would not have been possible if I were alone in the field. Therefore, I would like to dedicate this book, a fruit of our collaborative field life, to them.

Some of the chapters in this book are based on previously published papers. All have been extensively revised for the present volume. An early version of Chapter 6 was published as a paper entitled 'Wild sacredness and the poesis of transactional networks: Relational divinity and spirit possession in the *būta* ritual of South India' in *Asian Ethnology* in 2015. Chapter 7 is based on a paper entitled 'Playing with perspectives: Spirit possession, mimesis, and permeability in the *buuta* ritual in South India' published in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* in 2013. Chapter 10 partly overlaps with a paper entitled 'Traces of reflexive imagination: Matriliney, modern law, and spirit worship in South India' published in *Asian Anthropology* in 2014. Chapter 12 is based on conference papers presented at the ninth and tenth International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS) in 2015 and 2017. Chapter 13 has evolved from the papers below: 'The chiasm of machines and spirits: *Būta* worship, megaindustry, and embodied environment in South India' published in 2014 in a volume entitled *Ecologies of Care: Innovations through Technologies, Collectives and the Senses*, edited by Gergely Mohácsi; 'The ecology of transaction: Dividual persons, spirits, and machinery in a special economic zone in South India' published in *NatureCulture* in 2015; and 'Caring for divine infrastructures: Nature and spirits in a special economic zone in India', which appeared in *Ethnos* in 2017.

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1 Introduction

Towards an anthropology of the umwelt

In the month of *māyi* during the hottest and driest season, *būta* rituals are held in many villages in South Kanara, a coastal area in Karnataka.¹ Accompanied by drums and wind instruments played by Puruṣa musicians, spirit mediums of the Pambada or Nalike castes dance around the precincts of local shrines, issue oracles, and interact with people.

As apotheosised local heroes or heroines or as the spirits of wild animals dwelling in forests, *būtas* are generally regarded as deities. While *būtas* may travel across regions, they are generally believed to be closely linked to the land and nature of localities. Though normally invisible, their power, or *śakti*,² fills the deep forests, hangs over the bush and ponds, and circulates through the woods, agricultural fields, and villages. Consequently, *būtas* are considered to originate from—and embody—a realm of *sacred wildness*.

Fieldwork for this monograph was mainly carried out in the two adjoining villages of Mudu Perar and Padu Perar in Mangaluru taluk, Dakshina Kannada district.³ Until administratively separated in 1904, these villages used to be a single entity called ‘Perar’, and are still collectively called ‘Perar’ by the villagers.⁴

In Perar, *būta* rituals are conducted in the geographical area that consists of houses surrounded by paddy fields, palm and areca nut farms, and deep forests and hills. As will be elaborated upon later, *būta* rituals are closely related to the ranks and duties of families, matriliney, and land tenure. In village society, *būta* worship is a sophisticated system that links people to land and nature. Embodying the realm of the wild,⁵ *būtas* mediate the relationships villagers have with fields and forests, and *būta* rituals facilitate the smooth succession of both lands and offices within families. Moreover, through the transaction of offerings and blessings (*prasāda*)⁶ in rituals, the *būtas* authorise the hierarchies and relations among village families.

Direct encounters and interactions between people and deities is an essential element of *būta* worship. Villagers directly present offerings at altars and small shrines in their houses, and they receive oracles and blessings from possessed mediums at village shrines. While *būta śakti* is generally perceived as an invisible, fertile, and dangerous power that influences

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the lives and destinies of villagers, through spirit possession it can also transiently manifest in dreadful, androgynous forms.

Drawing on the results of my observations of everyday practices in villages and considering villager relations with what they characterise as ‘the wild’, a realm actualised through interactions with *būtas*, this book explores how all these various relations create and recreate the social, religious, and ecological milieu, or in effect the *umwelt*, of village residents.

Before examining the notion of the *umwelt* in detail, it should be noted that rather than being static, the village communities studied in this book have been constantly adapting to changes since time immemorable. As described later, since the nineteenth century, rural society in South Kanara has been transformed through the development and penetration of modern legal and administrative systems. Since the mid-1990s, massive development projects in Mangaluru have also caused disruptive changes in rural areas, including the destruction of farmland and the eviction of villagers from the land they had farmed or otherwise had access to. Faced with these changes which can generally be called ‘modernisation’, people have tried to maintain or recreate their way of life by reorganising their relationships with others and by negotiating with strangers. Entangled as they are with various intentions and social relations, these endeavours are beset with conflict and difficulty. Moreover, for the villagers, relationships with *būtas* have always been central to their practices and decision-making. These relationships help them confront the challenge of incessant social change, both to keep what they have and to leverage the transitions as opportunities.

When we investigate the mutual formation and transformation of people’s everyday practices and their *umwelt* in their reflexive interactions with modern laws and systems as well as in transactions with the realm the wild and deities, three mutually entangled subjects of study become clear: humans, the wild, and modernity. In the following section, I will examine previous studies that have focused on modernity and the occult, as well as on ontology.

Theories of modernity and the occult

Magical-religious phenomena such as witchcraft, magic, and spirit possession have long been important subjects in anthropology, and since the 1980s, many writers have considered how the occult in non-Western societies relates to modernity (e.g. Comaroff 1985; Geschiere 1997; Comaroff & Comaroff 1999).⁷

In his early work, Taussig analysed Bolivian miners’ worship of Tio, the spirit owner of the tin mines, as a cultural response of neophyte proletarians towards the capitalist mode of production. According to Taussig, peasants working in the mines understood wage labour and the new socio-economic system as evil and unnatural, and the devil figure of Tio strikingly articulated this interpretation. Devil worship thus represented both the predicament of the peasants and their critical consciousness and struggle against

the exploitative modern capitalist economy (Taussig 1980, pp. 17–22, 144–145, 232–233).

Geschiere, by posing the idea of ‘the modernity of witchcraft’, has also presented a fresh viewpoint for analysing the relationship between modernity and the occult. According to Geschiere, in postcolonial Cameroon and other African societies, discourses about witchcraft have burgeoned in modern sectors such as politics, sports, institutions of formal education, and so forth. Such rumours and discourses expose concern about the proliferation of novel forms of witchcraft, but they also reveal the popular interest in various hidden opportunities to acquire and accumulate new forms of wealth. In Africa, rumours and practices related to witchcraft are evidence of people’s efforts to interpret changes brought by modernity and to gain control over them. Thus, Geschiere argues that we should focus on the ‘modernity’ of witchcraft, rather than considering witchcraft in contraposition to modernity (Geschiere 1997, pp. 1–9; Ciekawy & Geschiere 1998).

Likewise, using the concept of ‘occult economies’, Comaroff and Comaroff (1999) analysed the relation between the rise of occult phenomena and social economic conditions in postcolonial South Africa, where there has been a dramatic rise in fear and suspicion of occult phenomena such as witchcraft, Satanism, zombies, and ritual murder. According to the Comaroffs, these occult phenomena express the discontent and despair of people distressed by the mysterious mechanisms of the global market economy, but they are also symptoms of an occult economy waxing behind the civil surfaces of the ‘new’ South Africa. The practice of witchcraft and other mystical arts in postcolonial Africa was ‘a mode of producing *new* forms of consciousness; of expressing discontent with modernity and dealing with its deformities’ (Comaroff & Comaroff 1999, p. 284, emphasis in original).

Focusing on modernity and the occult in non-Western societies, many observers argue along the same lines. When discussing transformations of traditional societies under the pressure of modernisation, people’s occult practices are held to be significant in modern situations. They are often interpreted as distinctive responses to, or critiques of, changing social conditions.

Such an analytical frame may be embedded in the conventional methods and practices of anthropology, wherein anthropologists from Western societies have long felt impelled to study ‘pre-modern’ occult practices in non-Western societies and to publish the results to their own reading public. In this context, magical-religious phenomena such as witchcraft, magic, and spirit possession in non-Western societies have often been collectively regarded as a reference point not only to antithetically define ‘the modern West’, but also to disclose what ails the West through difference or metaphorical connection. Regarding this, Sanders wrote,

Anthropologists have thus foregrounded resistance and critique in many forms, from large-scale revolts and revolutions to their everyday and more spectral manifestations. Anthropological explanations here

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suggest that occult forces and discourses can be seen as offering a sustained critique of the genesis or intensification of capitalism, modernity, neoliberalism and globalization, specifically, of the novel inequalities and exploitations these things engender. Through the occult, the argument goes, Others in faraway places expose unsettling truths about our contemporary world and its woeful workings.

(Sanders 2008, p. 111)

Perhaps it was inevitable that anthropologists—tasked with studying the lives of non-Westerners and representing values and logics different from those in the West—would tend to analyse magical-religious practices in non-Western societies as critiques of or alternatives to a value system based on rationality, individualism, material possession, market economy, exchange value, and concepts understood to constitute modernity. Similar interpretations of the occult, however, predate anthropology and were already in evidence in mid-seventeenth-century Europe:

Discourses and legal actions naming and constraining “spirit possession” over the past four centuries helped to create the dual notions of the rational individual and the civil subject of modern states. The silhouette of the propertied citizen and free individual took form between the idea of the automaton—a machine-body without will—and the threat of the primitive or animal, bodies overwhelmed by instincts and passions.

(Johnson 2011, p. 396)

Johnson observed that according to the early modern philosophy of Europe, a person in the modern West who was overwhelmed by spirit possession was seen as the inverse of the rational, autonomous individual. This tendency to compare and contrast images of the *self* in Western and non-Western societies has persisted in recent studies of spirit possession and personhood. For instance, Smith (2006, pp. 19, 74–75) argues that spirit possession, as the exposure of the fluid and permeable nature of personal identity, coincides with features of South Asian personhood, which are fluid, divisible, and permeable. Here the possessed, or indeed the South Asian person, is construed in contrast with the ideal, autonomous, Western person.

More recently, however, interpretations of occult practices have gone beyond the simple inversion of idealised images of society and personhood in the modern West; rather, occult practices are now seen as exposing ‘unsettling truths about our contemporary world and its woeful workings’ (Sanders 2008, p. 111) or as critiques of modern Western values which presume the importance of individualism and material possessions (see Johnson 2011, p. 417).

Since the 1990s, when new notions such as the ‘modernity of witchcraft’ and ‘occult economies’ were introduced by some anthropologists, it has become common to interpret informant discourse on the occult as evidence of ambivalent attitudes towards modernity. For example, analysing occult

narratives of the Mawri about roads in postcolonial Niger in terms of the materialisation of people's experience of modernity, Masquelier argues that roads are part of a complex economy of violence, power, and blood—objects of both fascination and terror. Thus, their tales linking roads with the occult should be understood as 'creative efforts to articulate local understandings of mobility, morality, and marketing in all their literal and metaphorical meanings', which brings to light people's troubled encounters with modernity (Masquelier 2002, pp. 829, 831–834).⁸

These recent studies have examined new dimensions and meanings of the occult in non-Western societies by considering it in relation to comprehensive modern phenomena, such as globalisation and neoliberalism. Even so, taking the occult in non-Western societies as a reference point that both enables a definition of what is modern and Western and provides an opportunity to critique problems with the West, most writers are still tied to the general viewpoint of previous studies. In other words, magical-religious practices in non-Western societies continue to be analysed in terms of their relation with, and response to, powers and social economic changes originating in the West. Such an analytical framework has led some anthropologists to refer to the occult too generally, without a deep analysis of the particular history, specificity, and locality of each phenomenon.⁹

Moreover, as is obvious in discussions of occult economies (Comaroff & Comaroff 1999), studies of the occult in a non-Western context tend to assume that the modern values and systems that cause radical change in local society are *beyond* the understanding of local people, and consequently, occult practices are an imaginative expression of people metaphorically interpreting these changes. Framing magical-religious practices as imaginative interpretations or metaphorical critiques of modernity seems to obscure an understanding of how these practices are entangled with modern values and systems in concrete situations.

Before considering this aspect in more detail, in the next section I will examine a recent trend in anthropology which also focuses on magical-religious phenomena in non-Western societies, but provides different ideas and methods for their analysis.

Ontological questions and 'the reality of *the other*'

Since the end of the 1990s, a host of new anthropological studies conducted through the lens of ontology have been published. Researchers have turned to ontology in order to criticise the anthropocentrism of modern social science and to complicate and invert the nature–culture dichotomy and its assumptions of the universality of nature and particularity of culture. To transcend these issues, multinaturalism, radical essentialism, the ontological self-determination of the other, and other alternative frames have been proposed. Leaving aside the varied anthropological studies approaching ontology through philosophy, phenomenology, and science and technology studies,¹⁰

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in this section I will mainly examine the arguments concerning what has been called the ‘ontological turn’ in anthropology (Henare, Holbraad & Wastell 2007). It should be noted that the theoretical trend examined here, hereafter called the OT, does not cover all anthropological works that are ‘ontologically attuned’ (Kohn 2015, p. 323), that is say, that deal with ontological questions as an underlying theme; rather, this section is more narrowly concerned with recent discussions of the ontological turn.¹¹

In addition to criticising the modern dichotomy of nature and culture, advocates of the OT also see it as means of freeing anthropology from the shackles of epistemology. Since the goal is ‘taking things encountered in the field as they present themselves’ (Henare, Holbraad & Wastell 2007, p. 2), proponents of the OT take issue with focusing epistemologically merely on people’s worldviews and with the reductionism entailed in describing fieldwork observations through modern rationality. Accordingly, following the OT, rather than elaborating on worldviews, anthropologists should engage with the ontology of the people in the field. Consequently, peoples who are assumed to have different ontologies, such as Euro-Americans and Amerindians, are understood as not just perceiving the same world in different ways, but as living in different worlds (Henare, Holbraad & Wastell 2007, pp. 10–12; Holbraad 2009). In the OT, the concept of ‘ontology’ thus suggests a multiplicity of worlds and is inseparable from *difference* and *alterity* (see Gad, Jensen & Winthereik 2015, p. 70). Here, these concepts do not refer to epistemological differences between worldviews, but are reserved for denoting ontological differences between lived worlds. A central tenet is *radical alterity* (Henare, Holbraad & Wastell 2007, p. 8), which cannot be reduced to modern rationality. Proponents of the OT often use magical-religious discourses and practices in the field as their main evidence of this radical alterity, focusing on myths, divination, animism, shamanism, and other things which have been looked upon as ‘apparently irrational beliefs’ (Sperber 1982).¹²

While the way the OT focuses on magical-religious practices in non-Western societies may seem similar to conventional approaches in the anthropology of religion, there are some critical differences between them. As seen in discussions of rationality,¹³ most previous studies have tried in various ways to portray beliefs and practices in non-Western societies both as some variety of distinctive logic or function incompatible with modern rationality and as rationally apprehensible by Westerners despite their uniqueness. By contrast, proponents of the OT are critical of such attempts to transform the phenomena of a different ontological world into something else by interpretation and rationalisation.

The starting point of the OT—to take things in the field as they are—is motivated by an advocacy of ‘the ontological self-determination of the world’s peoples’ (Viveiros de Castro 2003, 2011a, 2014a). In other words, the OT does not attempt to interpret or represent its objects of study; rather, it wants to leave room for the people themselves. Specifically, Viveiros de

Castro has stated that, since the ontological turn, anthropology is obliged to ‘make room for the other’, that is, to create the conditions for the ontological self-determination of the other. For him, the role of anthropology ‘is not that of *explaining the world of the other*, but rather of *multiplying our world*’, and as such, anthropologists should avoid ‘explain[ing] too much’ or ‘try[ing] to actualise the possibilities immanent to others’ thought’, but instead, ‘endeavour to sustain [these possibilities] as possible indefinitely’ (Viveiros de Castro 2014a; see also Holbraad, Pedersen & Viveiros de Castro 2014).

Critiques of the OT

The fresh, radical ideas of the OT have greatly influenced academia. This stimulation has also given rise to criticism. While most commentators appreciate the endeavour to reconsider the modernist view of humans and the nature–culture dichotomy, they question notions such as radical essentialism and ontological alterity, and also wonder about the methodology of taking things in the field as they are.

For instance, expanding on his argument supporting the motion tabled at a debate on anthropological theory that ‘ontology is just another word for culture’ (Venkatesan 2010), Candea pointed out that ‘many accounts of ontology specify as their subjects human populations, broadly geographically conceived’ (177), and that the outline of disparate ontologies tends to map onto what would previously have been called cultural groups. Thus, the idea of ontological alterity is not free from the ‘difficult conundrums which dogged the anthropological study of cultural difference’ (Venkatesan 2010, p. 179; see also Laidlaw 2012).

Vigh and Sausdal (2014) have also criticised the OT notion of ‘radical alterity’ owing to the methodological problems of translation and communication it brings, and because it diminishes the possibility of mutual understanding across ontologies. They also wonder how it could be possible to take things in the field *as they are*. By promoting the idea of accepting, without interpretation, what people tell us about their world, they say that the OT ‘becomes an argument for pure indexicality with an almost one-to-one relationship between *signifiés* and *signifiants*’ (Vigh & Sausdal 2014, p. 61). Consequently, this kind of ‘ontic’ argument that ‘things are what they are’ can be fundamentally undermined ‘by people’s frequently expressed doubt and ambivalence about the nature of the real they inhabit’ (Vigh & Sausdal 2014, pp. 56–57, 61; see also Graeber 2015).

Gad, Jensen, and Winthereik (2015, pp. 73–75) have similarly pointed out that while proponents of the OT insist on the importance of ‘things’ to understand the ontological world of the other, they largely rely on discourses recorded during fieldwork or culled from other sources. The precept of ‘taking things in the field as they are’ may help researchers avoid conjectures and interpretations, but this approach also encourages researchers to take the discourses of their informants at face value and to regard their

accounts as indicators of a unique ontology (Graeber 2015, p. 20).¹⁴ It is also suggested that these problems are rooted in the premises of the OT, which assumes that people in a particular locality partake of a unique ontology and asserts the importance of ontological self-determination and the value of indefinitely sustaining the world of the other (see Venkatesan 2010, pp. 172–179; Graeber 2015).

How can we understand the ontological reality of the other?

As mentioned above, one of the critical points raised by arguments about the OT is how anthropologists should deal with the ontological reality of the other. This issue poses a long-standing fundamental question in a fresh way: what kinds of anthropological enquiry and description are possible when one is faced with realities that seem incompatible with modern rationality? To understand the directions that the OT might take anthropological theory regarding this question, it is necessary first to examine *alterity* and *difference* in more detail.

When proponents of the OT use ‘radical alterity’ and ‘different ontology’, *alterity* means *alterity to modern rationality* and *difference* refers to *difference from modern Western ontology*. This is evident when Viveiros de Castro writes that ontology came to the fore at a moment when ‘the ontological foundations of our civilisation—and the unquestioned cultural supremacy of the peoples who founded it—are seen as starting to crumble’ (Viveiros de Castro 2014a). In other words, at a time of crisis, the ontological gaze fell on those seen as generating realities other than those of the modern Western world. Similarly, Vigh and Sausdal (2014) point out that proponents of the OT define *alterity* and *difference* in relation to the notion of ‘the Euro-American’:

The notion of ‘the Euro-American’ appears to be essential for the ontological turn as it frames the ontographer’s *object* of study by providing the background against which ontology and alterity can be defined.

(Vigh & Sausdal 2014, p. 66, emphasis original)

As discussed in the previous section, in anthropological studies of religion, the occult in non-Western societies has often been analysed contrastively or metaphorically as a point of reference for defining ‘the modern West’. At the same time, by interpreting the occult in non-Western societies in terms of modernity, these studies tend to reproduce an analytical framework that highlights the influence of power and systems from the West and presents the occult as an alternative to them.

In contrast, while the ontology of ‘the other’ in the OT, exemplified by occult practices in the field, is similarly demarcated by reference to, and defined through difference from, notions such as ‘the Euro-American’, it is never interpreted in relation to modernity or the Euro-American, but rather

is conserved as it is. In other words, proponents of the OT try to avoid transforming the ontology they find in the field—the reality of *the other*—into something else, and thereby reducing it to modern rationality. Presenting the occult as a defining feature of local life, they also refrain from analysing the occult as a mere response to modernity.

In this light, Pedersen (2011) criticises the ‘modernity of witchcraft’ (Geschiere 1997), ‘occult economies’ (Comaroff & Comaroff 1999), and other symbolic-functionalistic characterisations in previous studies, and attempts to describe shamanism in Mongolia in a different way:

Darhad shamanism, and particularly in its variations “without shamans,” is not an occult economy “of” postsocialist transition; it “is” a distinct ontological condition in its own right.

(Pedersen 2011, p. 40)

Here, it is worth noting that proponents of the OT do not try to describe the ontology of the people in the field as a static cosmos separate from the outside world. Pedersen (2011), for instance, focuses on the relationship between shamanism and drastic social and political changes in northern Mongolia. Yet for Pedersen, Darhad shamanism is not something that only symbolises the local response or resistance to social change; rather, it is a fluid and multiple ‘ontology of transition’, just as post-socialist Mongolian society is (2011, pp. 35, 79).

Such arguments seem to succeed in proposing an alternative to the symbolic-functionalist views of previous studies. Even so, by representing shamanistic practices as the ontology of *the other*, a reality too fluid and indefinite to be captured by modern rationality, it repeats the conventional interpretations of the occult in non-Western societies as that which has escaped the influence of colonial and postcolonial states, and that which resists the categories of Western social science (e.g. Comaroff 1985, p. 263; Rosenthal 1998).¹⁵

To reiterate, while attending to social change, proponents of the OT attempt to describe the phenomena in the field as ontologically discrete, as things to be taken on their own terms without being reduced to responses to, or resistance against, modern social changes. This effort by proponents of the OT to take things in the field seriously, to restrain investigators from explaining phenomena using their own theoretical frames, and to make one’s own world multiple by exploring the world of the other has been of great import in recent anthropology.

Proponents of the OT seem to take a position similar to that of the ‘relativists’ in the rationality debate (see Tambiah 1990), who asserted that notions in modern rationality could be revised and expanded by understanding the thought of non-Western peoples.¹⁶ The OT is more radical, however, in that proponents attempt to take alterity, which is regarded as incompatible with modern rationality, *as it is* without trying to render it into what is

understandable for people in the West (Henare, Holbraad & Wastell 2007, pp. 11–12; cf. Viveiros de Castro 2004a).

Meanwhile, the endeavours in the OT to emphasise the importance of the ‘ontological self-determination of the world’s peoples’ and strive for a ‘permanent decolonization of thought’ (Viveiros de Castro 2011a; Holbraad, Pedersen & Viveiros de Castro 2014), along with criticisms of excessive interference in the ontological world of the other, seem to indicate a sort of strategic essentialism (Gad, Jensen & Winthereik 2015, p. 78; see also Venkatesan 2010, pp. 172–179; Candea 2011). Few would deny the ethical merits of this stance, especially when we reflect on how anthropological research represents the lives of local people in places where pervasive power, values, and systems serve to strengthen the hegemony of the West. The appeal of this ethical impulse is all the more reason to carefully examine the issues arising in the attempt to find radical alterity in the magical-religious practices of the people that anthropologists study and to describe them as indicators of a radically different ontology. In the next section, focusing on the notion of *existence*, or *being*, I will consider in more detail relations between modernity and magical-religious phenomena.

Rethinking *beingexistence*

As suggested in the previous section, proponents of the OT have often focused on magical-religious practices in their fieldwork, and then characterised them as ontologically unique and incompatible with Western ontology. Critics have pointed out that this approach may lead to an emphasis on those parts of discourse and practice that suggest alterity, a simplification of people’s realities due to an insufficient grasp of complicated relationships involving various differences and divisions in their lives, and a blindness to ambiguities in the realities in life as it is lived (Venkatesan 2010, pp. 172–179; Candea 2011; Vigh & Sausdal 2014; Graeber 2015).

Furthermore, by presuming that the people under study live in a radically different ontological world, the OT severely limits analysis of how people engage with ‘modern’ systems and orders. The previous section of this chapter cited recent anthropological studies of religion in which the occult was characterised as a means of imaginative interpretation of modern situations beyond the common knowledge of its practitioners (e.g. Comaroff & Comaroff 1999; Masquelier 2002). Taking issue with this, proponents of the OT consider the occult as evidence of worlds based on unique, radically different ontologies. In privileging alterity, however, proponents of the OT pay insufficient attention not only to how people engage with systems, logics, and ways of life that embody ideas and values predominant in the West, but especially to how magical-religious practices and ‘modern rationality’ are entangled with each other.¹⁷

Rather than essentially unknowable, ontologically different worlds, what most anthropologists encounter during their fieldwork today seem more

likely to be situations in which familiar modern Western logics, values, styles, and systems have permeated and now significantly constitute people's everyday lives. This is not to say that a coherent 'modern rationality' unilaterally blankets their lives or that in their engagement with change, everyone or anyone completely 'gets with the program'. Rather, local people adapt to changing circumstances with logics, values, and ideas that mesh with modern rationality and that have the power to create and recreate the realities of people. We see evidence of this in objects, concrete systems, plans, vocabularies, styles, and social relations. Meanwhile, logics, values, and ideas that differ from modern rationality are also locally embodied in objects, concrete systems, vocabularies, social relations, and behaviours, and these continue to have a role in creating and recreating local reality.

In such circumstances, people may hold and situationally switch between multiple logics, values, and modes of being, and also coordinate and reconstitute relations with others to maintain and recreate their lives. Magical-religious practices and narratives, which have been regarded in the OT as at the core of different ontologies, are not outside the processes of reconstitution and transformation; rather, they are key focal points of these processes.

And if people do create and recreate their lives in processes that are entangled in various logics, values, and modes of being that together comprise the lived 'reality' of people, anthropologists should then carefully observe and ethnographically describe those processes. Important elements such as these evade ontography, the attempt to record worlds that are based solely on radically different ontological premises. At the same time, no careful ethnographer would simply assume that logics, values, and modes of being familiar in the modern West are totally harmonious or commensurable with those encountered during fieldwork. The aim of ethnography is instead to present processes in which multiple logics, values, and modes of being—each with its own different history and impetus—are embodied and expressed in different systems and social relations, and to describe how they encounter each other, conflict, and interrelate, while they nonetheless continue to diverge from each other and retain discrepancies. The ethnographer also aims to describe the diverse actions and relationships of the people who are involved in various conflicts and entanglements, and to understand the thoughts and emotions arising from these actions, relationships, conflicts, and entanglements.

From this perspective, the lives of the local people studied by anthropologists can be seen as involving both constraints and contingency, as they constantly shift between several modes of being with different logics, values, and histories. This perspective urges us to analyse the processes that form and transform the lives of local people in their encounters and interactions with various others. The ends of this analysis thus differ from those of the OT, which assumes that the people in the field always confront indefinite contingency, or live in a unique ontological world that enables them to form and transform themselves through a unique relationship with others (e.g. Viveiros de Castro 2004b).

Furthermore, to deeply comprehend the relational and variable dimensions of people's lives—another goal mentioned by proponents of the OT, that is, *the relation to the other* and *alterity from oneself* (Viveiros de Castro 2011b; Holbraad, Pedersen & Viveiros de Castro 2014)—it is necessary to reconsider the central notion of *being*, or *existence*, which has moved into the limelight through an accumulation and circulation of arguments in the OT. In the following section, I will therefore consider this concept from a different angle.

The constraints and contingency of life: rethinking beingexistence

Intending to take seriously the things they find in the field, proponents of the OT set out to describe—as they are, without reductive interpretation—the ontological worlds in which magical-religious phenomena such as spirits, deities, and witchcraft can exist. Then, through the repetition and circulation of arguments arising from this intent, they performatively centralise the notion of *being*, or *existence*, in their ontographic anthropology. The relationship between *reality* and *virtuality* in the OT illustrates this point.

Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell (2007) have declared that one of the significant methodological propositions of the OT is to 'take things in the field as they are'. Here, *things* are not merely tangible objects, but also *concepts*. For instance, when a Cuban diviner says that the powder used in a *séance* is power, rather than interpret the statement as a peculiar cultural belief, it is important to view the powder as actual power. When adopting this radical constructivist approach, no ontological distinction is made between discourse and reality or concepts and things:

We argue that in order for difference to be taken seriously (as 'alterity'), the assumption that concepts are ontologically distinct from the things to which they are ordinarily said to 'refer' must be discarded. From this it follows that alterity can quite properly be thought of as a property of things—things, that is, which *are concepts* as much as they appear to us as 'material' or 'physical' entities.

(Henare, Holbraad & Wastell 2007, p. 13, emphasis in original)

In the OT, the world in which powder *is* power is not a new fantastical region of 'our own' world (Henare, Holbraad & Wastell 2007, p. 12); it is simply a different world. Moreover, proponents argue that to form a conception of a different powder (or a different world) is to actually *conceive it*, to think it into *being*. When the distinction between things and concepts collapses, 'thought here just *is* being', and 'conception is a mode of disclosure that creates its own objects' (Henare, Holbraad & Wastell 2007, pp. 14–15). Therefore, when we conceive of a different powder, we create thing-concepts such as 'powerful powder', as does the Cuban diviner who creates new objects by enunciating new concepts (Henare, Holbraad & Wastell 2007, pp. 3–6, 12–15; see also Holbraad 2007, 2012, pp. 157–161; Holbraad & Pedersen 2017).

Such assertions in the OT clearly challenge previous rationalistic approaches to ‘apparently irrational belief’ taken as simply unrealistic fantasy. By reiterating such assertions, however, proponents of the OT seek to take each thing and each notion encountered in the field into the sphere of *being*. While remaining virtual and indefinite for ‘us’, these things are considered to be extant forces or entities to the extent that they are considered by the ontographer to really exist *for the people* (see Viveiros de Castro 2011a, 2013, 2014a).

On this point, through comparison with the traditional use of the term *ontology*, Graeber (2015) has drawn attention to the distinctive use of the notion in the OT. He explains that, in ancient Greek, the word meant ‘a discourse (*logos*) about the nature of being’, and that this has remained the core meaning; for ontographers, however, it is used as a synonym for ‘way of being’ or ‘manner of being’ (Graeber 2015, p. 15). Similarly, Vigh and Sausdal have pointed out that the meanings of *ontic* and *ontological* are conflated in the arguments of the OT; even while emphasising the notion of *virtuality* based on Deleuze, proponents of the OT are mostly indifferent to the perils of essentialising objects by defining what ‘is’ (Vigh & Sausdal 2014, pp. 51, 63).

As discussed earlier, proponents of the OT assert that anthropologists should, indefinitely and as far as possible, maintain the ontological world of *the other* as the potential for how things could be otherwise (Viveiros de Castro 2011a, 2014a; Holbraad, Pedersen & Viveiros de Castro 2014). As Vigh and Sausdal (2014) observe, this intention seems to conflict with taking things in the field *as they are* and describing them in the ontic state of what *is*, as opposed to what might be.

In the OT, however, these two intentions do not necessarily pull in different directions. By way of illustration, in Viveiros de Castro’s discussion of Amerindian perspectivism, he observes that the statement ‘animals are people’ often occurs in Amazonian ethnographies. In the world of the indigenous people described in these ethnographies, a jaguar might regard itself as a human and see humans as animals (i.e. as prey). At the same time, an ordinary human regards itself as a human, and sees animals as animals (Viveiros de Castro 1998, 2014b, pp. 56–57). From the ordinary human perspective, the world seen by a jaguar is potentially an alternative world, a world in which a human cannot directly live.

In Viveiros de Castro’s work, corresponding to the relationship between humans and animals in Amerindian ontology, the relationship between ‘we’ in the modern West and ‘they’ as *the other* for the Western self is presented in terms of ontological differences with each other: ‘their’ ontological world signifies *a possible world* which is different from ‘our’ world, one that should not be actualised by ‘us’, but should be realised as virtual:

To maintain the values of the other as implicit does not mean celebrating some numinous mystery that they enclose. It means refraining from actualizing the possible expressions of alien thought and deciding to

sustain them as possibilities ... The anthropological experience depends on the formal interiorization of the “artificial and special conditions” to which Deleuze refers. The moment at which the world of the other does not exist outside its expression is transformed into an “eternal” condition—that is, a condition *internal* to the anthropological relation, which realizes this possibility *as virtual*.

(Viveiros de Castro 2011a, p. 137, emphasis in original; see also Viveiros de Castro 2014b, p. 196)

The meaning here may be clearer if we consider Deleuzian distinctions between *reality*, *possibility*, *actuality*, and *virtuality*:

The only danger in all this is that the virtual could be confused with the possible. The possible is opposed to the real; the process undergone by the possible is therefore a ‘realisation’. By contrast, the virtual is not opposed to the real; it possesses a full reality by itself. The process it undergoes is that of actualisation.

(Deleuze 1994, p. 211)

According to Kimura (1997), in the philosophy of Bergson and Deleuze, *object*, or the *objective*, denotes that which has no virtuality, and thus it is considered either as possible or as real. On the other hand, the *subjective* is virtual, that is, in the process of being actualised; at the same time, it possesses a reality of its own (Kimura 1997, pp. 95–96; see also Deleuze 1991, pp. 41–43, 96–97).¹⁸

With these things in mind, Viveiros de Castro’s statement could be paraphrased: the world of *the other* signifies a ‘possible world’, precisely because it seems to have no existence beyond its expression. *We* should maintain it as indeterminate and virtual, and at the same time, *we* should deal with it as *real*, without trying to explicate or actualise it.

When such a claim is made with the ideals of the ‘ontological self-determination of the other’ (Viveiros de Castro 2014a) and the radical essentialism of taking thing-concepts in the field as they are, there is an unexpected effect: a phenomenon which has no existence outside of being expressed by people—what is *subjective*, or *virtual for us*—is realised as *objective for them*. This effect emerges when the notion of the Deleuzian *Other* is projected upon the people in the field. For instance, Viveiros de Castro writes,

The Other thus appears as a condition of the field of perception: the existential possibility of those parts of the world that lie beyond actual perception is guaranteed by the virtual presence of an Other that perceives them: what is invisible to me subsists as real *by being visible to an other*.

(Viveiros de Castro 2013, p. 478, emphasis added)

It is noteworthy that, according to the terminology of Bergson/Deleuze on which these assertions are based, the object/objective does *not* have virtuality (Deleuze 1991, p. 41). Here, the realm of the *virtual* for the people under study, which is suggested by the mention of such things as a jaguar's perspective that cannot be perceived by ordinary humans or virtual personhood in animals (Viveiros de Castro 2014b, pp. 57–58; see also Holbraad 2007, 2012, pp. 163–172), is subsumed to the objective reality of the people. Moreover, it is subsumed to the realm of the ontic *being/existence* as an index of the radical alterity of the ontological world of *the other*.¹⁹

The centrality of being/existence in the OT, however, must be reconsidered when we turn to the contingency, inscrutability, and limitation of the state of *being*. It leads us to rethink the relationship between humans and the realm of the virtual that has yet to appear, or has already disappeared, as *something*.

This does not mean that things such as spirits, witchcraft, and jaguar–humans simply exist in one ontological world, but remain virtual in another. Rather, it points to the fundamental contingency, transience, inscrutability, and uncontrollability of the state of *being* in a particular time and space, not only for 'us', but also for the people in the field. In a sense, ontological self-determination is a promise that can never be fulfilled for anyone.

If we take seriously the fundamental contingency, incomprehensibility, and fragility of *being*, then to understand the magical-religious practices of the people we study, it is necessary to find a new analytical dimension that differs from the one that examines relations of various beings on the presumption that they all *exist*. One such dimension is that which does *not* exist in the same sphere as ontic being, and yet enables things to appear contingently in a unique way and to interact with each other. To introduce new dimensions that allow consideration of a 'reality' in which various beings relate and interact with each other, it is necessary to create a new theoretical frame.

To investigate the mutual interactions and transformations of entities and forces beyond the sphere of ontic *beings*, in the next section I will examine the ideas proposed by Viktor von Weizsäcker, who developed the concept of *umwelt*, which enables us to explore the lives of humans and other organisms in processes of mutual formation within milieus, and moreover, to consider their formations and transformations in phase and timescale beyond the ontic being/existence.

Exploring umwelt studies

As originally proposed by von Uexküll, *umwelt* is a means of examining the uniqueness of the world lived by each creature, which is inseparable from its way of being, including its perceptions, bodily form, and patterns of behaviour. This insight, that is, that each creature exists in a unique world totally appropriate to its form of life, contrasted with the Darwinist presumption

that each creature was, more or less, adapted to the world as a totality, including all creatures (von Uexküll 1921). Putting the organism at the centre enabled the conceptualisation of plural worlds (*Welten*) and the relativisation of the anthropocentrism of Darwinist accounts. Next, I will examine the work of von Weizsäcker, especially the *Gestaltkreis* theory he elaborated, to explain the relations between an organism and its *umwelt*.

***Gestaltkreis* theory**

While von Weizsäcker incorporated von Uexküll's basic conception of *umwelt*, unlike von Uexküll, who tended to characterise the relation between an organism and its *umwelt* as harmonious and self-sufficient, von Weizsäcker focused on instability and crisis, that is, the dynamic relations between an organism and its *umwelt*. Viewing the organism as a *subject* that creates and recreates itself in relation to the *umwelt*, he paid particular attention to interactions and coherence in encounters between organism and *umwelt*.²⁰ Below, based on his main work entitled '*Der Gestaltkreis: Theorie der Einheit von Wahrnehmen und Bewegen* [The *Gestaltkreis*: Theory of the unity of perception and movement]' (1997[1950]), I will present a broad outline of his theory.²¹

Literally translated, the term *Gestaltkreis* means 'circle of form'. According to von Weizsäcker, it refers to the emergence of a movement-form of an organism through mutual, circulative interaction with its *umwelt*:

The emergence of the form [of an organism] must be a closed circle insofar as there is no given order of first and next in its coming together ... Thus, we will call the emergence of the movement-forms of organisms *Gestaltkreis*.

(von Weizsäcker 1997, p. 254, emphasis in original)

Thus, in *Gestaltkreis*, perception, body-form, patterns of movement, and other things that constitute the mode of being of an organism are created through encounters and interactions with the *umwelt*. Meanwhile, as an organism encounters its *umwelt*, an order coherent to the mode of being emerges *between* the organism and the *umwelt*. I shall refer to these general concepts of von Weizsäcker (1997), such as the circulative interactions of an organism and its *umwelt* and their coherent relations and co-existence, as *Gestaltkreis* theory.

'Subject' and crisis

In *Gestaltkreis* theory, an organism's life-form, or mode of being, is regarded as undergoing incessant creation and recreation through encounters and interactions with its *umwelt* (von Weizsäcker 1997, pp. 235–236, 304–305). While an organism is predisposed to maintain a stable life-form, it can undergo

transformations in response to encounters with its surroundings. At the same time, these encounters and interactions also transform the emerging order between the organism and the *umwelt*. Gestaltkreis theory thus offers insight into how a coherent relationship between an organism and its *umwelt* is created performatively through their interactions and, at the same time, how the life-form of an organism may be easily transformed through accidental encounters and fluctuations in coherence.

In the course of its lifetime, an organism may experience tension between ongoing stability and the need for self-transformation in relation to its *umwelt*. Namely, when a coherent relationship between an organism and its *umwelt* endures, it is experienced by the organism as the stable condition of itself. The balance, however, is easily upset by new encounters and changes to the organism and to its surroundings. In such a situation, the organism strives to preserve the coherent relation with its *umwelt* by partly transforming its mode of being.²²

If we focus on an individual organism, this process could be interpreted as a sublation (*Aufheben*) of its life-form. If we expand our view to encompass the continuity of life beyond individual organisms, the entire process would then be considered the continuation of *life itself* through life-form renewal by each organism. von Weizsäcker considered life, which succeeds through the repetition of organisms' birth and death, as a recurring cycle. He referred to this continuity as the circle of life (*Lebenskreis*) (von Weizsäcker 1997, p. 321).

von Weizsäcker developed his thought on this issue through two concepts: subject and crisis. In this frame, rather than connoting psychological functions or states, *subject* refers to the unity of an organism, which persists or is endangered in relation to its *umwelt* (1997, pp. 300–301). For an organism that has maintained a unique relation with its *umwelt*, a *crisis* is a critical event in which identity and continuity are no longer viable. In a crisis, when the coherent relation with the *umwelt* is broken, an organism is brought to a critical juncture: either it transforms its life-form and survives or it does not meet the challenge of vicissitude and disappears (von Weizsäcker 1997, p. 298). von Weizsäcker did not assume, however, that something like a united subject existed autonomously and stably before the crisis. Rather, the life-form of an organism as a subject is constituted and reconstituted through incessant encounters with vicissitudes and crises.

We recognise the subject correctly when it is threatened with its disappearance in a crisis ... The subject is not a fixed possession; rather one must be constantly procuring it in order to possess it. The unity of the subject forms the counterpart to the unity of the object. Just as the unity of various objects and events in our *umwelt* can be constituted in perception and action only through a functional change, so too is the unity of the subject constituted in the recovery repeated incessantly throughout the discontinuities and crises.

(von Weizsäcker 1997, pp. 300–301)

This insight sheds light on the contingency and discontinuity of the life-form of an organism as a subject, which temporarily appears in its relation to the *umwelt*. Here, the paired concepts of *Pathisches* and *Ontisches* also come into play.

Pathisches and Ontisches

For von Weizsäcker, the crisis that an organism undergoes in relation to its *umwelt* shows *Pathisches* of life. *Pathisches*, which can be glossed as *pathos*, is discussed in more detail below.

While each organism behaves actively in relation to its *umwelt*, it is also passive in the sense that whether it receives life or suffers the burden of life, it just happens to exist (1997, pp. 312–313). In particular, fluctuations in and ruptures of coherence with the *umwelt* caused by out-of-the-ordinary changes force an organism, at the risk of its life, to transform its life-form. von Weizsäcker characterised this state as *Pathisches*, which contrasts with and sublates the state of *Ontisches*, or the *ontic* (1997, p. 314). Here, *Pathisches* refers to the visceral drives that enable an organism to relate to its *umwelt*. It also denotes the passive state of being of an organism that not only lives its life actively, but also *is lived* by impersonal *life itself* in its body (see Kimura 2010, pp. 555–556).

According to von Weizsäcker, the fundamental basis of organisms' existence can never be grasped through biological experience. Kimura explained this basic relationship (*Grundverhältnis*) (von Weizsäcker 1997, p. 336) as the relationship between each organism and *life itself*. Namely, an organism is individualised as a limited being by its body, while its life dissolves into the fathomless depth of *life itself* (Kimura 2005, pp. 8–9).

Ontisches is thus a state of *being* as an organism comes to be individualised, an unstable and transitory form of life based on its unique relationship with its *umwelt*. Meanwhile, *Pathisches* denotes the passive and visceral relations of *Ontisches*, or a life-form which fleetingly appears, with *life itself* forming the basis for the emergence, transformation, and disappearance of an organism (see von Weizsäcker 1997, p. 337).

In *Anonyma*, von Weizsäcker (1946, pp. 10–12) posits *Pathisches* as a basic attribute of organisms: animate beings are *pathisch* (the adjectival form of *Pathisches*) and inanimate beings are *ontisch* (the adjectival form of *Ontisches*). In this schema, *ontisch* merely denotes pure being or bare existence (*das nackte Sein*), or in other words, that someone or something just *is* (see Nausner 2008, p. 196). Meanwhile, *pathisch* connotes existence that is *received* (*erlitten*) rather than assumed. For von Weizsäcker, *Pathisches* also has personal or subject-bound attributes.

Although von Weizsäcker conceived of only organisms as *pathisch*, this concept can be developed in new directions when we consider animism, a frame that allows for the life of inanimate beings and for the personhood of nonhuman beings. Things that are invested with life or personhood, even

while they remain inanimate or nonhuman beings, can be characterised as *pathisch* rather than *ontisch* in that their existence is *received rather than assumed*. In other words, these beings are thought to appear and to stay (*iru*, in Japanese) transiently in particular time and space, rather than just to exist (*aru*)²³ in the ontic state of things.

While thinking through the OT seems to bring everything observed in the field into the sphere of ontic being/existence, von Weizsäcker's concepts enable a better-defined characterisation of *being*; as a *pathisch* form of life, *being* can emerge transiently like a light flickering momentarily from the sea of *life itself*.

The temporality of being and its potential for transformation

Although each organism is contingent and transformable, each is nonetheless influenced and limited by the orders that have formed naturally in relation to its *umwelt*. The life-form of any organism is thus formed through temporality, which includes the accumulation of the organism's encounters and interactions with its *umwelt*. At the same time, the *pathisch* attribute of an organism leads to the potential for its form of being, which arose in a particular emergent order, to be dynamically sublated into something else.

In effect, any encounter of an organism with its *umwelt* may lead to transformation, and yet, the encounter is oriented by the life-form as it has already been lived by the organism. While an organism's perceptions and movements enable the emergence of an *umwelt* coherent with itself, its life-form has been prescribed by the order in which life beyond the individual organism has continued. Regarding the temporality of the life-form of an organism, von Weizsäcker wrote,

We should establish the process of the movements [of an organism] ... as a proleptic one. How this happens will be fundamentally defined through its relationship to time. Namely, what happens now must be described as what is *coming* from a past that has already happened and thus cannot be changed, and is also *going* into a future that has not yet happened ... and thus has not yet been determined.

(von Weizsäcker 1997, p. 264, emphasis in original)

This describes the fundamental thrownness (*Geworfenheit*) of an organism as a united subject that was originally thrown into the continuity of life and therefore oriented by the order of the *umwelt*, which was coherent with its life-form.²⁴ At the same time, it allows that each subject, living within its coherent order of life and *umwelt*, can transform and renew both its life-form and the *umwelt* through new encounters and interactions.

Even though the basic model for this theory was derived from the relations between the organism and its *umwelt*, Gestaltkreis theory can also

help elucidate *how a person encounters others* (see von Weizsäcker 1997, p. 273). Here, issues arising in the encounters and interactions between an organism and its *umwelt* can be reformulated both as issues arising in the encounters and relations of individual persons with other persons and as relations between historical social orders and the life-forms of people.

Although von Weizsäcker only suggested the possibility of investigating the social dimensions of Gestaltkreis (1997, pp. 316–317),²⁵ I find the application of his concepts in this way useful because they provide important ideas for grounding the inquiry of how a person encounters others. In the next section, by examining encounters and interactions between people and deities in South Kanara, I will attempt to suggest the usefulness of Gestaltkreis theory for anthropology.

Inquiring into how a person encounters other beings

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this is an investigation into the relationships among humans, deities, and the realm of the wild, which are embodied both in *būta* worship and in the mundane social relations and practices of the people in rural South Kanara. Focusing on concrete events, I will examine these entangled relations, their historicity, and their transformations, starting with the fundamental question of how a person creates and recreates a world and his/her life-form through encounters and interactions with others, including nonhuman beings.

Ideas and concepts presented in Gestaltkreis theory—the mutual formation and transformations of an organism and its *umwelt*, *Pathisches* contrasted with *Ontisches*, and the unknowable *life itself* forming the basis an organism's life—are useful tools for considering this question. Referring to these ideas, I will illustrate the relationships among people, deities, and the realm of the wild in South Kanara.

For people living in rural South Kanara, the dense forests and hills that provide ample headsprings and are filled with the signs and sounds of various creatures are both the source of life and the realm of the unknown. The *śakti* (divine power) of deities exemplifies this multifarious quality, as overflowing from the depths of the forest and flowing into the realm of humans, this *śakti* is thought to bring fertility into agricultural fields and thus enable people to sustain their life, while simultaneously endangering them either through its excess or through its exhaustion.

The relationship between people and the realm of the wild corresponds to the relationship of an organism with its *umwelt*, and to the *pathisch* relationship of a subject with *life itself*. In a sense, in their relationship to the realm of the wild through *būta* worship, people are passive and contingent beings who entrust their forms of life to their relations with the wild and deities. At the same time, through intimate relations with land and nature in their daily life, and by interacting with deities in rituals, they form affective relationships with the realm of the wild and act towards it.

The realm of jōga and māya

In Tuḷu, the native language in South Kanara, the realm of ‘reality’ inhabited by humans and other beings is called *jōga*, while the realm of the unknown filled with śakti is called *māya*.²⁶ If we consider these two realms in reference to the pathisch relationship of people with the realm of the wild, they can be seen as follows: the realm of *jōga* is regarded as the phase of the tangible or actual, where humans and nonhuman beings appear, encounter each other, and interact; whereas the realm of *māya* filled with śakti is regarded as the phase of the virtual, where the individuality of each being merges into impersonal *life itself* in the depths of the wild. Beyond human control or consciousness, śakti as wild divinity in the realm of *māya* flows into the realm of *jōga*, manifesting itself, for example, in spirit possession and through oracles. The time and space in which śakti appears before people can be considered as a fluid threshold between the tangible and intangible, or the actual and virtual.²⁷ Through temporary appearances of śakti in the form of *būtas*, people are able to interact with the realm of *māya*.

The umwelt for the people: exploring the fringe

As I hope to show in this book, social relations in rural South Kanara have been formed and oriented based on the pathisch relationship of the people with the realm of the wild, which is embodied in encounters and interactions with *būtas*. This is evident in the way that most of the customary laws and the social organisation in the village society—including ranks, ritual duties, land holding by manors, the matrilineal succession of the houses, and the rituals themselves—are based on the worship of *būtas* that embody the sacred wildness. At the same time, the laws and social organisation have evolved to support the pathisch relationship of the people with the realm of the wild.

The transaction of offerings and blessings between people and deities shapes customary laws and social relations. Linking the village, paddy fields, *būta* shrines, and forests and hills, gift-exchange between deities and people who belong to various castes and houses embodies the circulation of śakti from the realm of the wild to that of humans, and vice versa.

For these people, who live in villages surrounded by vast agricultural fields ensconced in deep forest, their experiential *umwelt* is a realm of various beings whom they encounter and interact with in their daily lives. They create and recreate their forms of life through encounters and interactions with various others. These others are both human and nonhuman, extending from creatures in the forest to *būtas*, who temporarily manifest themselves in rituals. At the same time, similar to an organism that embeds itself into the pathisch relation with *life itself*, one’s life has its roots in the depths of the realm of the wild, a phase different from that of the ontic being/existence.

Consequently, the *umwelt* that most people directly perceive as their milieu can be imagined as having a fluid, vague border, gradually extending from the realm of *jōga*, with its various tangible beings, to the dim and unknown realm of *māya* filled with *śakti*.

However, even in the realm of *jōga*, or the experiential *umwelt*, villagers are not fully free of uncertainty, because they cannot foresee when and what sort of changes and crises will happen to them, and hence cannot completely control their lives. In terms of the Gestaltkreis theory, this contingency and uncontrollability reveals the *pathisch* attribute of their lives.

At the same time, as will be described later in this book, when encountering events and vicissitudes in the realm of *jōga*, people often become aware of the possibilities that these vicissitudes emerge from their relationship with the realm of *māya*. Therefore, people try to undertake and deal with the power of *māya* by ritually appeasing the wild *śakti*, consulting astrologers, and interacting directly with *būtas* in rituals. Through these performances, people sense that the dim edge of the realm of *jōga* is not the end of the world, but is connected to the realm of the unknown; and at the same time, they endeavour to look into the depths beyond the fringe.

Sensitivity to the realm of *māya*, fear of and care for the wild divinity that forms and orients their lives, and actions towards *śakti* that appear at the border of tangible and intangible—all entangled with daily social relations—are part of the formative relationships between people and the *umwelt*.

As will be described, jostled by things such as the introduction of modern legal systems, land reforms, and massive development projects, village communities in South Kanara have been undergoing changes. In the process of historically recent change, which is usually glossed as ‘modernisation’, the villagers encounter and interact with various new actors who have appeared in their daily lives. This process has also led to changes both in the customary ways of doing things and in the daily social relations among villagers, creating new systems and organisations which embody unfamiliar logics and values.

In the long historical process, these jostling events are regarded as the crises that transform relations among various beings in the realm of *jōga*, and that transform the *umwelt* and the lives of villagers. The villagers have created and recreated their forms of life within historical circumstances. Using what they know, they have reconstructed and adapted familiar forms of life while encountering and interacting with other forms of life based on new logics, systems, and ways of doing things. All the while, however, their relationship with the realm of *māya*, even though it has also noticeably changed, has remained significant in their daily lives. In the ethnography that follows, focusing on the practices of people who in the wake of crises have maintained, temporarily lost, or newly created relationships with the wild and with deities, I investigate the mutual formation and transformation of people’s lives and their *umwelt*.

The organisation of this book

This book comprises two parts. Before summarising each chapter, I will provide an overview of these two parts.

Part One: the relationships between būtas and villagers

In the first half of Part One (Chapters 2–5), I describe the daily life of villagers, their customary laws and social organisation, and the features of būta worship in Perar. Būta worship in South Kanara has developed as a sophisticated system closely linked to hierarchy, matriliney, land tenure, and the distribution of farm products in village society. It is based on oral mythological epics (*pāḍḍana*) and customary law (*kaṭṭu*). At the same time, the core of būta worship, which creates its actuality, is composed of the direct encounters and interactions between people and deities.

Following this consideration of the villagers' *umwelt*, focusing on the villagers' relationship with deities through spirit possession, the second half of Part One (Chapters 6 and 7) refers to several anthropological studies of human–nonhuman relations to examine the relationship between būtas and people in this village society. My primary focus is the transaction of offerings and blessings between humans and deities. Gift-exchange between humans and deities, which forms the basis of the relations between the people and their *umwelt*, also points to the intersection of the Gestaltkreis theory and anthropology.

As described earlier, one of the important themes of the Gestaltkreis theory is how encounters and interactions occur between an organism and its *umwelt*, and likewise in social contexts, how a person encounters others. These encounters have been a central concern of anthropology too, although in anthropology, the 'others' in these encounters and interactions are not necessarily human. Indeed, ethnography abounds with informants who mention nonhuman beings such as rivers and mountains, plants and animals, and deities and spirits as the 'others' with whom these informants have significant interactions.

The relationship between human and nonhuman beings has been investigated in anthropological studies on magical-religious practices such as animism, shamanism, and spirit possession. Studies of gift-exchange and personhood have also elaborated important arguments about the unfolding of encounters and interactions between people and others, including nonhuman beings.²⁸ Moreover, as seen in the OT, anthropological studies of unique relations between humans and nature, and of gift-exchange and personhood, have been invigorated through connections to studies on human–nonhuman relations in related fields.²⁹

This book begins its theoretical investigation with reference to the works of Marriott (1976) and Appadurai and Breckenridge (1976), who examined the characteristics of transactions in South Asian societies and proposed

a number of influential concepts such as substance-code, dividual person, and transactional network. Applying these concepts to the analysis of būta worship in South Kanara, I discuss their limited usefulness. Casting a wider net, I also closely examine several studies beyond South Asian societies for clues to investigating human–nonhuman relations in order to consider the formation and transformation of one’s *self* through interactions with būtas. My discussion includes the work of Strathern (1996), who examined the formation and limitation of networks created by the transaction and circulation of substances, as well as the work of Viveiros de Castro (1998, 2004b) and Willerslev (2004, 2007), who investigated the exchange of perspectives between humans and nonhuman others.

Part Two: people and deities undergoing social change

In Part Two, the focus shifts to the relationships among people, land and nature, and deities, through an examination of the multiple practices of people who have been dealing with events that have brought about enormous change in village societies. Through close investigations of various villager practices, and of conflicts and turmoil leading to crises that engender the reorganisation, transformation, and dismantling of daily social relations, I seek to explain continuities and transformations in the relationships between villagers and their *umwelt*.

As alluded to above, būta worship in South Kanara is a sophisticated system linked to family ranks and associated duties, matriliney called *āli-yasantāna kaṭṭu*,³⁰ and land tenure. Since the nineteenth century, it has been influenced by the state administration of religious institutions and, especially affecting land holding and matriliney, by the transition to modern law. Regional management of religious institutions in South India, for example, following the Madras Hindu Religious Endowments Act of 1927, critically brought new actors—administrators of the laws of the state—into the province of būta worship, where the deities themselves had heretofore been regarded as the supreme actors.

Land reform after independence, with its redefinition of matriliney in modern law and its surveys and registration of land held by matrilineal joint families, also transformed būta worship, which was rooted in land holding and matriliney. More recently and dramatically, since the mid-2000s, owing to the construction of petrochemical plants in a designated special economic zone, village communities in Mangaluru taluk have been faced with relocation and destruction.

Most previous studies have looked at events such as the enforcement of modern law, modification of indigenous systems of land tenure and inheritance, and exploitation of land as major elements in the process of social change caused by modernisation. Studies of institutional changes in Hindu temples have specifically described the collapse of transactional networks among kings, priests, and deities with the advent of colonial power, which

brought the ruination of traditional kingship and involved temples in state administration (Appadurai 1981; Fuller 1984; Dirks 1987). Other studies examining the influence of various systems of land tenure introduced in colonial India have described how these wrought fundamental changes to traditional social systems based on a ‘system of entitlements’³¹ (e.g. Tanabe 2006). Regarding the *būta* rituals in South Kanara, some writers have observed how following the land reforms in the 1970s, a decline in the power of local landlords who had traditionally played a central role in organising *būta* rituals led to a qualitative transformation in how *būta* worship is performed (Rajan 1986, p. 54; Gowda 1991, p. 18).

Crises also ensue with the closer integration of local societies with national and global markets: most studies of development projects have described local communities being damaged by top-down development projects and environmental destruction. Within this literature a number of studies have, in the context of grassroots democracy, analysed popular movements against exploitation.³²

As will be described, people in South Kanara who engage in *būta* rituals have experienced historical and institutional changes similar to those described in previous studies. As mentioned, the state administration of religious institutions in the colonial period brought new actors into the province of *būta* rituals, which had been based on oral epics and direct interaction with *būtas*. The appearance of new actors armed with the authority of modern law sparked numerous disputes over the management of *būta* shrines. When matriliney and land tenure were redefined and codified by modern law, and when the land reforms that followed independence were enacted, systems of land tenure and matriliney which had supported *būta* rituals were reorganised. Now, as large-scale development has given rise to antidevelopment activism, the current crisis for *būta* rituals in village societies may mark another major turning point.

With these historical, institutional, and socio-economic changes, the relations that villagers form with various others have also been reorganised and partially transformed. As I argue, however, the transformation and dynamism within village society and *būta* worship cannot be interpreted as simply a unilateral process, as the dissolution of a traditional society or the decline of ‘the religious world’ through modernisation. Neither can we assume that the systems, notions, and modes of being, which embody modern values and logic, simply subsume or cancel out their traditional counterparts based on spiritual beings and transform them into a modern political ‘reality’ within its ensuing narrow ontological limits (cf. de la Cadena 2015, pp. 273–283).

My ethnography explores both the conflicts and frictions between customary and modern systems and ways of life and the interactions and reflexive relations between them. I also investigate the process of the formation and transformation of transactional networks between people and deities in crises that ensue when systems and modes of being embodying different logics, values, and histories encounter each other and thereby precipitate conflicts and negotiations.

The chapters of this book

Chapters 2 through 5 closely examine the relations among people, land and nature, and deities in their milieu to begin to elucidate the *umwelt* of the villagers living in rural South Kanara.

Covering aspects such as social composition, production, regular vocations, and villager relations with land and nature, Chapter 2 outlines daily life in the villages in Perar. Chapter 3 focuses on the village *būta* shrine, the largest religious institution in Perar. Describing the religious duties of the 16 manor houses, and of the priests and dancer/spirit mediums at the shrine, I will clarify the relevant details of the customary laws and systems that form the basis for *būta* worship in the village. Chapter 4 then provides pertinent information about the *pāddana*, or oral epics, which describe the origins of the deities and are drawn upon to ascribe the ranks and ritual duties of Perar families. In Chapter 5, details of the yearly ritual at the village shrine will be clarified through a discussion of the interaction between people and *būtas* in the rituals. It will become apparent that while the mutual rights and duties of the villagers and deities are updated through the transactions of offerings and blessings, the ranks and rights of the people can be somewhat destabilised by the *būtas*, who are the supreme actors.

Chapters 6 and 7 include theoretical explorations of the relationship between villagers and deities. Chapter 6 deals with an agricultural ritual called *kambuḷa* and the annual *nēma* ritual in Perar. Applied in the analysis of these rituals are the notions of substance-code, dividual persons, and transactional networks proposed by Marriot (1976) and Appadurai and Breckenridge (1976). Referring to Strathern (1996), the formation of transactional networks between people and deities, the circulation of substance-codes, and the limitations of the network will also be described. After this, by focusing on the experiences of spirit mediums who transform themselves into deities during rituals, Chapter 7 investigates the direct interactions between people and *būtas*. Drawing on Gestaltkreis theory and notions of perspectivism (Viveiros de Castro 1998, 2004b; Willerslev 2004, 2007), I will consider these interactions as *playing* with multiple perspectives.

Chapter 8 provides a bridge from Part One, which explains the characteristics of *būta* worship and its role in people's lives in a village society, to Part Two, which examines the dynamism both of village society and of *būta* rituals in the face of social change. This examination requires an investigation of 1930s legal disputes over the trusteeship of the *būta* shrine in Perar. I will then examine a series of disputes that occurred in the 2000s between an influential family in Perar and a newly established management committee for the village shrine. Through this investigation, I will explore how people have attempted to reorganise social relations around *būta* rituals, betwixt and between legal rulings from law courts and divine orders from deities. Chapter 9, as a preparatory step for a close analysis of the relations among people, land and nature, and *būta* worship in subsequent chapters,

will discuss historical changes in land tenure in South Kanara. Following an overview of land tenure system in pre-colonial South Kanara, I will clarify the characteristics of the ryotwari (*raīyatwārī*) system enforced under the Raj in South Kanara and analyse the assessment of land and registration of landholders in Perar based on an official document published in the early twentieth century. Lastly, I will provide a brief overview of the influence of land reforms in post-independence South Kanara.

Matriliny, especially how it has been defined under modern law and how villagers have adapted to its changes, comes under scrutiny in Chapters 10. As already mentioned, *būta* worship is closely related to the matrilineal system called ‘*āliyasantāna kaṭṭu*’. The Baṅṭa landlords in the area are the main organisers of the *būta* rituals at village shrines, as each generation inherits ritual duties and worships family *būtas* within the *kuṭuma*. While *kuṭuma* (*kuṭumba*, in Kannaḍa) can be glossed as ‘matrilineal joint family’, it is more than this; it is a complex entity encompassing a core, head family that has a family *būta* shrine and several other households, land, and members who are taken to be matrilineal descendants of common female ancestors. That is to say, *kuṭuma* is both a historical notion that reaches back to the origin and lineage of a matrilineal joint family and a spatial notion which includes houses and land bound by *būta* rituals (cf. Moore 1985).

As Chapter 10 will show, in South Kanara since the nineteenth-century legal redefinition of *āliyasantāna kaṭṭu*, *kuṭuma* has been reinterpreted in modern law as an indivisible ‘community of property’. After independence, rules of inheritance for family property and the rights of individual successors were regulated by new laws. Baṅṭa landlords, who traditionally held most of the land, have been greatly affected by this legislation. Focusing on the Muṇḍabeṭṭu *guttu*, an influential family in Perar, I will describe how village-dwelling Baṅṭa landlords dealt with the changes brought by the Madras Aliyasantana Act of 1949 and other laws enacted since then. The 1949 Act required members of a *kuṭuma*, who had maintained a loose unity based on the practice of *būta* rituals and their common ownership of land, to stipulate the land rights of each member. I will describe the careful thought given to the ways a Baṅṭa family strove to maintain the *kuṭuma* as the comprehensive and integral basis of their life and, at the same time, to reorganise it to conform with modern law.

In Chapter 11, I will investigate the effects of the 1970s land reforms, focusing on the responses and experiences of villagers in Perar and on how the changes have affected *būta* worship. It is necessary to consider the relationships between ordinary farmers and landlords, whose land rights have been authorised through their position as the organisers of *būta* rituals pertaining to particular lands. We also have to investigate how the *būtas*, regarded as the fundamental ‘owners of land’, have influenced villager practices and decision-making following the land reforms. Land reforms enforced by the government were more than just an intervention into the conventional land tenure system in village society; the new laws also affected how people

related to their families, neighbours, lands, and deities, and they compelled a reorganisation of existing systems and relations. The reorganisation of their social relations linked with land makes clear the villagers' efforts to maintain and renew their relationship with particular lands and deities while coping with the demands of modern law.

Chapters 12 and 13 will discuss the influence of the development projects around Perar. Since the mid-1980s, a series of such projects have greatly affected the lives of villagers through their large-scale land acquisition and destruction of fields and villages. Here, we see how villagers have coped with deforestation and the fragmentation of village communities. How do *būta* rituals figure into villager responses, both positive and negative, to development projects? How are the outsiders who implement development projects related to the land, inhabitants, and deities in the area? Regarding these questions, the following three topics will be discussed: *būta* worship in anti-development activism, conflicts arising from the development projects and the effects of the *būtas*' agency, and the occurrence of *būta* worship inside an industrial plant. In Chapter 12, I will consider the ambivalent influence of the *būtas*, who both strongly support anti-development activism by ordering a 'desperate defence of land and shrine' and, at the same time, bind people to their land. Chapter 13 examines new manifestations of *būta* worship within industrial plants in the special economic zone. It will be shown that interactions between the deities and industry managers have come into being, and that new transactional networks between workers and *būtas* have also been created in industrial plants. These generally form when the industrial zone experiences a calamity of some kind, an event that is interpreted as a manifestation of the *būta* power that dwells in the land. Finally, Chapter 14 provides a conclusion to the entire book.

Fieldwork particulars

The fieldwork for this study was undertaken for a total of about 17 months and was conducted during periods between May 2008 and March 2015. In 2007, when I made my first short visit to Mangaluru, I learned of the *būta* deities. Visiting Mangalore University, I happened to meet a sociology student. Hearing of my interest in indigenous religion and spirit possession, he showed me a book published at the beginning of the twentieth century. I was fascinated by a monochrome portrait on one of the pages. It was a photograph of a *būta* ritual dancer, dressed in a costume made from palm leaves, looking out from the page with a hard look.³³

Although I was unable to observe any *būta* rituals during this first trip, my interest was further piqued when I visited Mangaluru again in June 2008. For the first two months, try as I might, I could not settle on a suitable place to study. It was the rainy season, which is not a popular time for *būta* rituals. The situation changed for the better when I met Professor Chinappa Gowda, a folklorist at Mangalore University. He introduced me to

Ms Akshaya Shetty, who had just completed a master's course in folklore studies under his guidance. She told me that she was from a village famous for a unique and historic būta ritual, and that her father's family was in charge of it. Soon thereafter, she took me to her village, a place with wide sweeps of green rice fields surrounded by deep forest filled with birdsong.

I then decided on Perar as the base for my fieldwork. During this fieldwork period in 2008, I commuted an hour each way between the city centre and the village every day. I was unsure about taking up residence in the village because I was accompanied by my four-year-old daughter. In 2009, surer about how to live in the village, I stayed in Perar with my daughter and husband. We were privileged to be allowed to stay in a guest house owned by the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu family, the matrilineal joint family on Akshaya's father's side, which was located in the same compound as Akshaya's house. Since then, I have continued my fieldwork in Perar and neighbouring villages greatly aided by Akshaya, her mother Baarati, and her father Harisha.

Notes

- 1 South Kanara (*Dakṣiṇa Kannaḍa*) is a region located between the Western Gāts and Arabian Sea, which extends across Udupi and Dakshina Kannada districts in Karnataka state and Kasaragod district in Kerala state (see Bhat 1998, pp. 4–6). Though the official language of Karnataka state is Kannada, the native language of most inhabitants in South Kanara is Tuḷu, and this region has been called Tuḷunāḍu. The month of māyi in the Tuḷu calendar corresponds to between 15 February and 15 March in the solar calendar.
- 2 Śakti generally denotes the divine power of deities. Specifically, it refers to the power, potency, or activating energy incarnated in goddesses (Tanaka 1997, p. 148; Fuller 2004, p. 44). Also, *prakṛti* in Tuḷu refers to nature, the natural state of anything, the root, cause and origin (Upadhyaya 1988–1997, p. 2161). This word originates from the Sanskrit word *prakṛiti*, which refers to a goddess as well as to nature, and hence it is synonymous with śakti (Monier-Williams 2008[1899], p. 654). Both śakti and prakṛiti indicate the inseparability of nature and divinity and the ambiguous power of goddesses.
- 3 Mangaluru has been called Maṅgaḷūru in Tuḷu and Mangalore in English. On 1 November 2014, the state government of Karnataka changed the rendering of the official name of the taluk from Mangalore to Mangaluru. Though I generally use 'Mangaluru' in this book, I also use 'Mangalore' when quoting previous studies and official records or to conform with the name of an institute. In this book, I have changed the names of some places, informants, and families, and have used abbreviated designations for companies such as 'SK' and 'CS' to protect their identities.
- 4 In this book, 'Perar' denotes Mudu Perar and Padu Perar as a whole. As becomes apparent in Part One, in many ways, these two villages are regarded as a complementary pair.
- 5 The notion of 'the realm of the wild' here overlaps with prakṛti which denotes the power of goddesses. As described later, it is an unknowable realm filled with the śakti of deities.
- 6 The Sanskrit word prasāda indicates serenity, benevolence, and grace; offerings from the deity's altar is also called prasāda (Monier-Williams 2008[1899], pp. 696–697). In Tuḷu, prasāda indicates blessings from deities; generally,

- offerings such as flowers, food, and sandalwood paste which are presented to deities and then given to devotees are called *prasāda* (Upadhyaya 1988–1997, p. 2170).
- 7 For important studies on the relation between modernity and the occult, see also Comaroff and Comaroff (1992, 1993, 2001, 2002), Behrend and Luig (1999), Moore and Sanders (2001), Masquelier (2002), and Pels (2003). Boddy (1994) also reviewed anthropological studies on spirit possession, focusing on the dimension of ‘resistance’ against oppressive social changes such as modernisation and colonisation. See also Ishii (2007), as a critique of the theoretical framework of these previous studies.
 - 8 See also Geschiere (1999) and Meyer (1999). Needless to say, even before the 1990s, there were some studies which considered the occult in non-Western societies as the expression of people’s ambivalent consciousness towards modernity. See, for instance, Fabian (1978).
 - 9 For critiques of this tendency, see Englund and Leach (2000), Ishii (2005), and Ranger (2007).
 - 10 For various theoretical trends in anthropology concerning ontology, see Vigh and Sausdal (2014), Gad, Jensen, and Winthereik (2015), Kohn (2015), and Jensen et al. (2017).
 - 11 Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell (2007) cite Bruno Latour, Alfred Gell, Marilyn Strathern, Viveiros de Castro, and Roy Wagner as anthropologists who have indirectly led the ontological turn. In this book, I concentrate on Viveiros de Castro, who often refers to and leads arguments on the ontological turn, as a primary proponent of the OT.
 - 12 Naturally, proponents of the OT criticise any consideration of these magical-religious practices and discourses as mere ‘beliefs’ (see Viveiros de Castro 2011a, p. 136).
 - 13 The rationality debate involves a series of arguments concerning the criteria for rationality as well as the differences and compatibility between systems of modern thought and ‘primitive thought’. See Wilson (1974), Tambiah (1990), Horton (1993), and Stambach (2000).
 - 14 Viveiros de Castro has offered a refutation of this critique (2011a, pp. 135–137).
 - 15 In contrast to studies that assume the modernity of colonial and postcolonial states, Pedersen (2011, p. 67) sees the post-socialist Mongolian state as magical, shamanistic, and non-modern.
 - 16 See, for instance, Asad (1986), who, in discussing the translation of culture, criticised the objectivist view of Gellner (1970). While appreciating the view of Asad, Viveiros de Castro proposes the idea of ‘controlled equivocation’ as a better understanding of translation (Viveiros de Castro 2004a, p. 5).
 - 17 As an exception, Henare (2007), one of the editors of *Thinking through Things* (Henare, Holbraad & Wastell 2007), uses the idea of ‘commensurability’ when considering the life of Maori people, who shift between modern and traditional registers of value and property.
 - 18 Deleuze writes,

Bergson means that the objective is *that which has no virtuality*—whether realized or not, whether possible or real, everything is actual in the objective ... Matter has neither virtuality nor hidden power, and that is why we can assimilate it to “the image”.

(1991, p. 41, emphasis in original)
 - 19 Regarding this, Holbraad writes, ‘My central argument turns on the idea that alterity proper must be construed in ontological rather than epistemological terms. The questions that alterity poses to us anthropologists pertain to *what*

- exists* rather than what can be known' (2009, p. 81, emphasis added). Also, Holbraad (2007, pp. 208–217) considers Cuban divination in which deities move from transcendent to immanent to communicate with humans, using the notion of potentiality. This view is similar to my discussion in later chapters of *būtas*, which appear at times between the virtual and the actual. Holbraad, however, focuses on how a diviner makes the transcendent deities manifest as immanent beings. Likewise, critiques (e.g. Viveiros de Castro 2014a) of the view of those anthropologists who approach witchcraft, spirits, and other magical-religious phenomena as if they do 'not really exist' are, in effect, making an ethical request that anthropologists treat these as phenomena that have real being/existence for the people in the field.
- 20 'Coherence' (Kohärenz) is one of the key concepts in von Weizsäcker's thought (1997[1950]). The term indicates the chiasmic relation between an actor and its *umwelt*, as well as its transformations; the characteristics of the *umwelt* are specified and transformed by a certain mode of action, and at the same time, the mode of the act is specified by the characteristics of the *umwelt* that emerges in the action (see Kawamoto 2006, pp. 82–83; Ishii 2012).
 - 21 All following English quotations in this chapter from German sources are my own translation.
 - 22 Or, as discussed in Chapter 7, an organism may maintain its stability by disregarding or 'overlooking' some of the changes of the *umwelt* (von Weizsäcker 1997, pp. 108–109).
 - 23 Kimura discusses the distinction between the verbs *aru* (exist) and *iru* (stay) in Japanese. According to Kimura, *aru* corresponds to 'be', *sein*, and *être*, which are verbs as well as copulas, and it primarily denotes the existence of things and abstractions not including animate beings. Meanwhile, *iru* is a verb which denotes the 'staying' or 'dwelling' of humans, animals, and other personified beings. In this sense, *aru-mono* (existing thing/being) is considered to be either real or possible, while *iru-mono* (dwelling thing/being) is considered to be either actual or virtual (Kimura 2000, pp. 70–73). From this perspective, a *būta* which appears temporarily between the realms of the wild and the human is considered not as an *aru-mono*, but as an *iru-mono*.
 - 24 Therefore, the process of the development of an organism seems to anticipate the order of its *umwelt*. This corresponds to the view of Merleau-Ponty that the actions of an organism are endowed with a 'reference to the future'. See Hirose (1997).
 - 25 For the social dimension of the Gestaltkreis theory, see also von Weizsäcker (2005).
 - 26 In general, *jōga* refers to the physical world, the human form, existence, and reality, while *māya* means 'mystery' and 'disappearance'. Also, *māyaka* denotes vanishing, fleeting, passing away, and disappearing. It is thought that while *būtas* belong to the invisible realm of *māya*, they temporarily manifest themselves (*jōga āpini*) through spirit possession. Additionally, *būtas* have the power to make others vanish (*māya malpuni*). See Upadhyaya (1988–1997, pp. 1339, 2566, 2567), Claus (1978, pp. 9–10), and Brückner (2009, pp. 44, 77, 133).
 - 27 In this sense, *būta śakti* in the realm of *māya* is considered to be virtuality, while what appears in between the realms of *māya* and *jōga* is actuality. Kimura (1997, pp. 98–101) had this to say about the relation between actuality and virtuality: virtuality is the state in which actuality has not yet been actualised. It denotes the state in which virtuality has not yet unfolded its virtue. Actuality arises only *between* itself and virtuality, or as its difference from virtuality. See also Ishii (2012).
 - 28 For anthropological studies on personhood, see Carrithers, Collins, and Lukes (1985), Jackson and Karp (1990), and Lambek and Strathern (1998).

- On personhood in South Asian societies, see Dumont (1965, 1980), Daniel (1984), Mines (1988, 1994), Busby (1997), Freeman (1999), and Sax (2002). For studies on gift-exchange in South Asian societies, see Parry (1986, 1989, 1994), Raheja (1988), Osella and Osella (1996), Laidlaw (2000), and Copeman (2005, 2009, 2011).
- 29 In addition to the works of the ontological anthropologists discussed in the previous sections, see Bird-David (1999), Ingold (2000), Willerslev (2004, 2007), Kohn (2007, 2013), and Candea (2010).
- 30 *Aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu*, also known as *aḷiyakaṭṭu*, indicates the matrilineal system of inheritance. In Tulu, *aḷiya* indicates ‘nephew’ or ‘son-in-law’, and *santāna* indicates ‘line’ or ‘family’. See Upadhyaya (1988–1997, pp. 212, 2865).
- 31 Regarding this, Tanabe writes,

In the pre-colonial “system of entitlements”, members in a local community were granted various rights to shares of the local products and the royal and/or community honours and privileges in lieu of performing different duties and functions for the reproduction of the state and community.

(Tanabe 2006, p. 767)

- 32 See, for instance, Shiva (1988), Gadgil and Guha (1992), Arnold and Guha (eds.) (1995), Swain (1997), and Guha (2000).
- 33 This was one of the pictures of *būta* dancers in Thurston (1975[1909c], pp. 141–148), with the caption ‘Nalike devil-dancer’.

Part One

**Humans and the wild *śakti*
of deities**



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2 The land of paddy fields, forests, and deities

One must travel about 30 kilometres inland from Mangaluru, the capital city of Mangaluru taluk, to reach the adjoining villages of Mudu Perar and Padu Perar. On a rainy day in early July 2008, I made my first visit to Mudu Perar guided by Akshaya. We took an express bus from the central bus station in Mangaluru. The bus ascended and descended along winding roads through hilly forests, crossed the Gurupura River, passed several villages and extensive paddy fields, and within an hour arrived at a small town called Kaikamba. We transferred to a local bus at the town station, navigating around crowds of people, auto-rickshaws, and small shops and stalls. We squeezed onto a local bus packed with passengers that headed slowly towards Bajpe. After ten minutes, we got off this bus at a place called Ishvarakatte, which is the entrance to Mudu Perar. Since it is on the top of a hill, from one side of the road, I could look out over the deep forest below. On the other side of the road, there was a narrow street that led to the inner village. Several small shops, including a general store, grocery, tea-house, tailor, and barber, lined both sides of this narrow street, and a yellow auto-rickshaw was parked on one side.

We called the driver over and got into the back seat of the rickshaw. It took us down the street, which was soon lined by houses surrounded by hedges. A steep downhill road brought us to end of this row of houses, where my field of vision suddenly expanded. Stretched before us as far as the eye can see were vast green paddy fields. There were a few houses under palm groves over the fields, and in the distance, I could just make out the deep forests and hills surrounding these lowlands. Startled snowy herons took off from one paddy field as we careened down the hill at full speed. At the bottom of the hill, we extracted ourselves from the rickshaw. We had reached the geographical centre of Mudu Perar.

In this chapter, I will provide an outline of my main research field, Perar. First, I will elucidate the relations between Mudu Perar and Padu Perar. Second, I will provide a general overview of the social composition of both villages. Finally, I will describe how the land is used and the relationships that exist among land, nature, and bŭta worship in this area.

Mudu Perar and Padu Perar

Mudu Perar and Padu Perar are adjacent to each other and each has roughly the same area.¹ These villages are connected by a main road and countless footpaths used daily by the villagers. As already mentioned, these villages once comprised a single village, and though they were administratively separated in 1904, they are still collectively called ‘Perar’ by the villagers. ‘Mudu Perar’ and ‘Padu Perar’ literally mean ‘East Perar’ and ‘West Perar’, and they are alternatively called the ‘lowland (*tirtakare*)’ and ‘highland (*mit-takare*)’, respectively. These names show that the villages are still conceived of by the villagers as an inseparable pair.²

According to the oral epic (*pāddana*), the origin of Perar can be traced all the way back to a mythical period, and every part of the land is suffused with the relationships between the people and the deities. For instance, the territory of Perar spans from Aggidaimata to Dambepāpu, and it is said that the area between these two places was the space covered by Balavāṇḍi, the main deity of the village shrine, when he stood with his feet set apart. The border of Perar was thus determined by Balavāṇḍi, and likewise, most places there were also demarcated and named in relation to deities.

As we will closely examine in Chapter 4, it is said that about 800 years ago, Balavāṇḍi disguised himself as a human being and appeared in Perra (the old name of Perar). He visited several houses in the village and made the then head of each house promise to construct a village *būta* shrine. Gangādara Rai, who is the present head of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu *guttu*,³ the highest-ranked local manor house in Perar, narrated this mythical event as follows:

The *daiva* [an honorific for a *būta*] first appeared at the house of a Brahman family called Pejattāya. Then, the *daiva* came to this house. Firstly, three visitors wearing turbans came and asked for a drink of water. A Jain woman called Koratāi Balardi, who was then the head of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu *guttu*, gave them milk to relieve their thirst. As soon as they had finished drinking it, they vanished. That night, the *daiva* appeared in her dream and told her, ‘We are the ones who asked for water this morning. We are deities. We came here because we have a request for you.’ She then asked them, ‘What help do you need?’ The *daiva* replied, ‘We came here to protect this village and make it prosperous. You must establish sixteen *guttus* in Perra, and the Muṇḍabeṭṭu must be the first one. You must also found two villages, East Perra and West Perra, with eight *guttus* each. These families must organize an annual festival (*nēma*) for us. The Muṇḍabeṭṭu *guttu* will be central, as this is the land of my origin (*mūla stāna*). For the people of Perra, you must construct a shrine at the centre of the village.’ For this reason, the village shrine was constructed for the people. In this way, it has continued till today.

(Gangādara Rai, 2 July 2008)

As seen in this narrative, the division of Mudu Perar and Padu Perar, and of the 16 manor houses or *guttus* presiding over the land, was said to be

determined by Balavāṇḍi. For the villagers worshipping būtas, the religious centre of Perar is the shrine of the village deities (*grāmada daiva*) located near the border of Mudu Perar and Padu Perar. The members of the guttu families are responsible for guiding the other villagers to organise rituals at the village būta shrine. As seen above, from the mythical time of the oral epics through today, Mudu Perar and Padu Perar have been inseparable from each other regarding būta worship.

The social composition of Perar

According to a document at the village panchayat in Padu Perar, as of 2001, the population of Mudu Perar is 4,951 (2,307 males and 2,644 females), and that of Padu Perar is 3,520 (1,719 males and 1,801 females).⁴ Table 2.1 shows the number of households based on religious affiliation in Mudu Perar and Padu Perar, respectively.⁵ In Mudu Perar, the number of Hindu households accounts for over the half of the total, and they are followed by Muslim and then Christian households. In Padu Perar, the number of Hindu households is over 70% of the total households, and they are followed by Christian and then Muslim households. Though Hindu households are the majority in both villages, it is notable that in Mudu Perar, Muslim households account for over 30% of the total. Most of the Muslims reside in a community called Guru Kambuḷa, located on the southern end of Mudu Perar. The Christians, all of whom are Catholics, do not reside in a particular place but are scattered throughout the village.⁶

Table 2.2 shows the *jāti*, or caste group, structures in Mudu Perar and Padu Perar. This table shows that the communities with the highest proportion of the population in both villages are the Kuḍubi, Pūjāri, and Baṅṭa. Among the communities represented in this table, except for the Brahman, the Pambada and other Scheduled Castes, and the Koraga as the Scheduled Tribe, all groups are designated as Other Backward Classes (OBC) in the state of Karnataka.⁷ Below I will outline the communities important to būta worship in Perar.

Table 2.1 The number of households based on religion in Mudu Perar and Padu Perar

	Religion	Number of households	%
Mudu Perar	Hindu	689	53.2
	Muslim	439	33.9
	Christian	166	12.8
	Total	1,294	100
Padu Perar	Hindu	619	70.5
	Muslim	94	10.7
	Christian	165	18.8
	Total	878	100

Table 2.2 The number of households based on caste group in Mudu Perar and Padu Perar

	<i>Caste</i>	<i>Number of households</i>
Mudu Perar	Kuḍubi	260
	Pūjāri	167
	Baṅṭa	128
	Moyli	34
	Ācāri	31
	Other Scheduled Castes*	26
	Konkani	11
	Brahman	10
	Puruṣa	6
	Belcaḍe	6
	Mūlya	5
	Pambada	1
	Others**	4
	Total	689
Padu Perar	Baṅṭa	148
	Pūjāri	147
	Kuḍubi	144
	Brahman	32
	Ācāri	23
	Konkani	20
	Moyli	18
	Other Scheduled Castes*	18
	Pambada	13
	Puruṣa	11
	Maddyele	11
	Belcaḍe	9
	Mūlya	8
	Koraga	6
	Others**	11
	Total	619

* Households belonging to SC aside from Pambada.

** Caste groups which consist of less than three households (excluding SC).

Baṅṭa

In Tuḷu, Baṅṭa are also called Baṅṭeru or Okkelakuḷu.⁸ In South Kanara, influential families of Baṅṭa have been the landlords of the local manors called guttu. They have also played an important role in village society as patrons of the būta rituals. Baṅṭa follow the matrilineal system called aliyasantāna kaṭṭu, and they have matrilineal exogamous groups called *bari*. The kuṭuma, or matrilineal joint family, usually maintains strong internal ties. Inheritance, succession, and primary life rituals are conducted essentially within the kuṭuma. In each kuṭuma, the head house has a būta altar (*mañcāvu*) in its main hall (*cāvaḍi*), and it is of central importance. While most Baṅṭas living

in rural areas make their living in agriculture, it has also become prevalent among Baṅṭas since the 1970s to migrate to mega-cities such as Mumbai or Bangalore to engage in various businesses.

Kuḍubi

Kuḍubi are also called Kuḍubi-Gauḍa. They follow the patrilineal system called *makkaḷa kaṭṭu*, and their ancestors are said to have come from Goa. In Mudu Perar, there is a Hindu shrine worshipped by Kuḍubis called Śāstāvu Bramma. Also, they worship several būta shrines at the head house of the main patrilineal family. One Kuḍubi family living in Śāstāvu is the 13th ranked of the 16 guttus in Perar, and they have a duty to provide new clay pots for the annual festival at the village būta shrine. Before the land reform legislation was implemented in the 1970s, most Kuḍubis were not landed farmers but tenants (*gēṇi okkelu*) and domestic labourers (*kāli okkelu*).⁹

Pūjāri

Pūjāri are also called Billava or Bayidya. Like Baṅṭa, Pūjāri follow a matrilineal system. In South Kanara, they have traditionally made their living as toddy tappers, and they have played an important role in būta worship as priests called *pātri* or *māni*. In Perar, Pātri priests are engaged in būta rituals as mediums of a lower rank than the Baṅṭa priest called the *mukkāldi*. Among the 16 guttus in Perar, Pūjāri families have the 14th through the 16th ranks. Before the land reform legislation was implemented in the 1970s, most Pūjāris were involved in farming as tenants and domestic labourers, in addition to their toddy tapping.¹⁰

Ācāri

Ācāri follow a patrilineal system and have traditionally made their living as carpenters. In Perar, they are now both goldsmiths and silversmiths, and they also use their vocational skills to make and repair sacred objects for būta rituals. One duty of the head house of the Ācāri family in Mudu Perar is to make a wooden gate for the yearly ritual at the village būta shrine. They also offer four wooden spoons made from a piece of palm tree to the goddess Māri. Most Ācāris in Perar have been engaged in farming as tenants.¹¹

Moyli

Moyli are also called Sapalya, Sērigāre, and Dēvaḍige. They follow a matrilineal system and have matrilineal exogamous groups. In Perar, the male members of one particular Moyli family have played important roles in būta worship as ritual servants (*cākiridakulu*) of the village būta shrine. They are

the carriers of sacred objects in the annual festival, and one Moyli man who carries one būta's mask (*muga*) is possessed by the deity in the ritual.

BaṭṭṛuḷBrahman¹²

Brahman follow a patrilineal system and are said to have come to Perar from Ahi-Kshētra¹³ to the west coast of South India around 750 CE. In Perar, Brahman have ranked alongside Baṅṭa as the major landholders. While Brahman priests conduct religious rites mainly in Hindu temples, they also work for būta shrines. In one būta shrine called *brammere guṇḍa* (Bramma's sanctuary, hereafter Bramma guṇḍa) located on the precincts of the village būta shrine, a Brahman priest called an *asrāṇṇa* conducts daily services. Also, a Brahman family called the Pejattāya occupies a higher position than the 16 guttus, which consist of Baṅṭa, Pūjāri, and Kuḍubi.

Puruṣa

Puruṣa are also called Jōgi. In Perar, one particular Jōgi family has been engaged in playing music and has played an important role in būta worship. They follow a patrilineal system and their occupation and training as musicians is succeeded from father to son. They play traditional drums and a wind instrument called a *kombu*. They have also recently taken up Western instruments such as the saxophone and trumpet. In addition to their occupation as musicians, they have been engaged in farming as tenants.

Pambada

In South Kanara, Pambada have played significant roles as dancers as well as spirit mediums in būta rituals. Though they follow a matrilineal system and have matrilineal exogamous groups, their occupation and training as dancers is generally passed down from father to son. Among the three communities of būta dancers, i.e. Pambada, Parava, and Nalike, Pambada is ranked highest. In Perar, they perform the dance of, and also are possessed by, royal būtas called *rājanu daiva*.¹⁴

Maḍḍyele

Maḍḍyele are also called Maḍivāla. They follow a matrilineal system and have matrilineal exogamous groups. Traditionally, they have been engaged in washing. In Perar, their duty for the būtas is to clean the sacred objects kept in the treasure house (*baṅḍārada koṭya*). Also, in the annual festival, they guard the sacred objects on the altar (*koḍiyāḍi*) of the village būta shrine, and they assist with the performances of the Pambada dancers and Baṅṭa priest by holding torches.¹⁵

Next, I will provide a sketch of the land use in Perar and then examine the characteristics of *būta* worship, which is inseparably linked to the land and forests in this area.

Land, forests, and deities

Perar consists of lowlands and highlands, and there are significant differences in the nature of the soil, humidity, and vegetation of each type of land. The landscape of Perar varies greatly, from the lowlands, where one can see ears of rice waving in paddy fields and palm groves providing shade, to terraced paddy fields on hillsides, hilly deep forests, and dry highlands covered with shrubs and rocks.

The lowlands suitable for cultivating wet rice paddy are divided into *bailu*, *majalu*, and *boṭṭu*. Among them, *bailu* is the lowest land. It is humid throughout the year and suitable for triple cropping. *Boṭṭu* is higher than *bailu* and dry except for during the rainy season, and thus it is suitable for single cropping. *Majalu* is located between *bailu* and *boṭṭu*, and is suitable for double cropping. Additionally, on the highest and driest land called *kumeru*, several kinds of vegetables suitable for arid land are cultivated (see Table 2.3). The cycle of triple cropping in *bailu* is as follows: first, in the month of *beśa* (from mid-May to mid-June),¹⁶ farmers plant rice seeds and wait for their growth. After 22 days, the seedlings are transplanted into rice paddies. After the rainy season, the first crop is harvested in the month of *nirnāla*. The seeds of the second crop are planted in the month of *bōntelu*, the seedlings are transplanted into rice paddies in the month of *jāruḍe*, and the crop is harvested from the month of *perārde* to *puyintelu*; while the seeds of the third crop are planted in the month of *puyintelu*, the seedlings are transplanted into rice paddies in the month of *māyi*, and the crop is harvested from the end of *suggi* to *paggu* (see Table 2.4). The crops planted in each season are called *enelu*, *suggi*, and *kolake*, respectively. Other food crops such as coconut palms, jackfruits, and mangos are cultivated around the houses. Since the 1980s, it has become prevalent among the villagers to cultivate areca palm as a commercial crop, and parts of the rice paddies have been converted to areca plantations.

Table 2.3 Land use in Perar

Land name	Soil	Crop	Crop name
<i>bailu</i>	Most humid, lowland	Triple-cropping paddy	<i>enelu</i> , <i>suggi</i> , <i>kolake</i>
<i>majalu</i>	Humid	Double-cropping paddy	<i>enelu</i> , <i>suggi</i>
<i>boṭṭu</i>	Dry except during the rainy season	Single-cropping paddy	<i>enelu</i>
<i>kumeru</i>	Driest, highland	Vegetables	–

Table 2.4 The crop calendar and yearly rituals in Perar

	<i>Tuḷu calendar (solar calendar)</i>	<i>Farming activity</i>	<i>Ritual in Hindu temples</i>	<i>Ritual in būta shrines</i>
	<i>paggu</i> (4/15–5/14)	Harvesting kolakē		The ritual to take down a pole (<i>koḍimara</i>) at the village būta shrine
Start of the rainy season	<i>beśa</i> (5/15–6/14)	Planting eneḷu seeds		
	<i>kārtelū</i> (6/15–7/14)	Replanting eneḷu in rice paddies		
	<i>āti</i> (7/15–8/14)		During the month of āti, one should not conduct any auspicious rituals	The ritual for Nāga (<i>nāgarapaṅcami</i>)
	<i>sōṇa</i> (8/15–9/14)		<i>sōṇa saṅkrānti</i> The anniversary of Krishna's birth The anniversary of Ganesha's birth	Making offerings to būta shrines (<i>cāvaḍi karipuni</i>)
Start of the winter season	<i>nirnāla</i> (9/15–10/14)	Harvesting eneḷu	Inauspicious day (<i>mahālaya amāse</i>)* Rituals for nine goddesses (<i>navarātri</i>)	
	<i>bōṅtelū</i> (10/15–11/14)	Planting suggi seeds	Kaveri <i>saṅkrānti</i> Lighting sacred lights at temples	Lighting sacred lights at būta shrines kambuḷa parva
	<i>jāruḍe</i> (11/15–12/14)	Replanting suggi in rice paddies		
	<i>perārde</i> (12/15–1/14)	(Harvesting suggi)		
Start of the dry season	<i>puyiṅtelū</i> (1/15–2/14)	Harvesting suggi Planting kolakē seeds		
	<i>māyi</i> (2/15–3/14)	Replanting kolakē in rice paddies	The anniversary of Ishvara's birth	The annual festival (<i>nēma</i>) at the village būta shrine Other būta rituals
	<i>suggi</i> (3/15–4/14)	Harvesting kolakē		

* In general, mahālaya means the offerings and obsequies made to ancestors during the second fortnight of the sixth lunar month. Also, mahālaya amāse indicates the new moon day of the mahālaya fortnight (Upadhyaya 1988–1997: 2549).

In addition to the paddy and other cultivated fields, the forests and hills called *guḍḍe* are an important resource for the villagers' lives. People often go into the *guḍḍe* to hunt game or gather useful plants. Since most *guḍḍe* land is under the control of local manor houses, a villager who hunts game there shares part of his bag with the relevant manor house. The *guḍḍe* is

believed to be the dwelling not only of wild animals but also of bŭtas and other spirits. In Perar, several Nāga (a serpent deity) shrines are located inside the groves, and a shrine to Pilicāmuṇḍi (a tiger bŭta) is located on top of a hill near the village bŭta shrine. Because it is believed that various bŭtas of wild animals as well as other dangerous spirits are wandering about in the guḍḍe, it is regarded by most villagers as a fertile but hazardous place filled with śakti. As we will see next, in a ritual called the kambuḷa, a priest goes into the guḍḍe alone and calls a bŭta down from the summit of a mountain.

The kambuḷa ritual and wild śakti

In Perar, the main guttu houses devote some of their fields to the bŭtas. For instance, the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu has paddy fields called *bākimāru* and kambuḷa.¹⁷ These fields are regarded as the belongings of the deities, and most of their products are allocated to covering expenditures for the bŭta rituals. Among these rituals, one important ritual is held in the kambuḷa field in the month of jāruḍe, just before the second crop is transplanted. The purpose of this ritual is to invite bŭta śakti from the forests into the agricultural field.

Here, I examine the *baṭṭalu kāṇike kambuḷa* (henceforth kambuḷa) ritual, which is dedicated to the bŭtas and organised by the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu. Below is a summary of the ritual based on the accounts of Subba of the Maṇṣa caste,¹⁸ who was born in the early 1940s and has played an important role as a priest (*kallāla*) in this ritual. His role as a priest is limited to a few days during the kambuḷa ritual, so he has been otherwise engaged in day labour, or just getting drunk and hanging around the village.

The day before the kambuḷa, I [Subba] go to the kambuḷa field [of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu] in the morning. First, I put white mud on each of the coconut trees surrounding the field. This turns the kambuḷa field into a bride (*madumālu*). Then I also put white mud on a stake (*pūkare*)¹⁹ in the middle of the field. After that, I go back to the guttu house, where they give me two pieces of clothing. When it starts to get dark, I take a bath at home and then put on these clothes and go to a Pūjāri's house. There, I sleep until around midnight on a coconut leaf prepared by the head of the house. They used to prepare palm wine for me too, but nowadays it is only the leaf. When I wake up, I go to a place called Bolinji Mountain (Bolinji Guḍḍe). When I reach its summit, I climb onto a giant rock and call out to all the bŭtas, including the buffalo,²⁰ to come to the kambuḷa. I call out three times: 'kāṇikedā kambuḷa, buffalo, oh buffalo! (*kāṇikedā kambuḷa, eru vo eru*)'.

Then I come down to a place called *manjotti*, just beside the kambuḷa field, where my [male] family members are playing double-faced drums (*dōlu*) while awaiting my arrival.²¹ We dance together and when we finish the dance I throw a stick (*kōlu*) on the ground, which I have carried to the mountain with me. Then we come back to the guttu house where they serve us rice and vegetable curry.

On the day of the kambuḷa, a pair of buffalo is taken into a buffalo house. After reciting a prayer, I tie a yoke (*nuga*) onto the necks of the buffalo, hold it, and run onto the kambuḷa field along with the beasts. After that, we [Subba and his family members] go back to the guttu house and dance again in front of the guttu people. The next morning, I plant a handful of young rice plants (*nēji*) in the kambuḷa field, on the east side of the stake.

(Subba, 19 July 2008)

As seen in this narrative, in advance of the kambuḷa ritual, the priest goes up the mountain and calls the buffalo būta. In the ritual, a living buffalo led by the priest kicks up mud and runs into the paddy field as a ‘bride’. As the one who temporarily acquires wild śakti by coming and going between the guḍḍe and the human world, the priest is the first person to plant the young rice plants and the first to harvest the ears of rice in the kambuḷa field. The kambuḷa ritual can thus be characterised as an agricultural rite, which links the agricultural fields to the guḍḍe, as well as the humans to the būtas, in that it involves invoking and encountering the fertile wild śakti from the forest.²² This is considered an example of the transactional network (Appadurai & Breckenridge 1976), which links the realm of humans to that of the wild through priests and mediums. We will consider this issue in more detail in Chapter 6.

Būta worship and the granting of land

In addition to the farmlands such as the kambuḷa fields held by the guttu houses for būta rituals, there are particular plots of land called bākimāru, which were originally the property of the village būta shrine. In the past, all ritual expenses and shrine worker rewards were paid in the form of paddy produced on this land, and villagers had a duty to take part in the agricultural work there.²³ Although the bākimāru had been managed by each successive head of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu, most of the plots were acquired by tenants after the implementation of the land reform legislation in the 1970s.²⁴

The families of the ritual servants (*cākiridakulu*) of the village būta shrine also had some plots of land. According to the oral epic, about 800 years ago, each *cākiridakulu* family was granted a portion of tax-free land called *umbalī*²⁵ from Koratāi Balardi, who was then the head of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu. Some settled on this land, and portions came to be named after their owners, for example, Pambadere Kōdi (Pambada’s Hilltop) or Jōgile Bailu (Jōgi’s Plain). Also, these *cākiridakulu* families enjoyed rights to shares of the paddy produced on the bākimāru. Apart from the *cākiridakulu* families, in reward for their services and offerings to the būta shrine, other families of various castes such as Pūjāri, Ācāri, and Kuḍubi also enjoyed rights to shares of the farm products in the form of the prasāda (blessed offerings from the altar) distributed during the yearly ritual in the village shrine.

In Perar, būta worship has thus formed the core of social and economic relations in the village through the (re)distribution of land, local products, and prasāda. Perar land and its products are primarily regarded by the villagers as the embodiment of the būta's power, and each family is granted rights to shares of plots of land, local products, and privileges in exchange for performing different services at the village būta shrine.

The Nāga as the earth goddess and the būta as the owner of the land

Land in Perar is not only used for būta rituals, but also directly linked with the deities. In Perar, there are numerous small shrines in compounds or at the ends of agricultural fields. Some of these shrines are for the būtas called *jāgeda daiva* (land būta), which are thought to dwell in the land.²⁶ Since each *jāgeda daiva* is inseparably related to a particular plot of land, its power is thought to stay there even if ownership of the land changes. Therefore, new residents of the land must undertake the role of worshipping the *jāgeda daiva*. Otherwise, it is said that they will suffer the curse of the deity.

As seen in this chapter, land in Perar is inseparable from the būtas, which are regarded as manifestations of the wild śakti filling the forests and fields. According to the oral epic, the boundary of Perar was determined by Balavāṇḍi, the royal būta. Management rights and duties for particular plots of land in the village were also granted by the deities to the higher-ranked guttu families in exchange for worship. Therefore, the rights of the guttu houses to their land should be confirmed and performatively executed in the būta rituals. Since the ultimate 'owners' of the land are thought to be the deities, the people are merely permitted use of the land and enjoyment of its products.

In this sense, it is not appropriate to call these guttu families 'landowners' with exclusive rights on particular plots of land. Rather, they have a duty to arrange and control the process of the collection and redistribution of farm products in the village, and also to return part of these products to the deities through rituals. Similar to Balavāṇḍi allowing the guttu families to use the land, Koratāi Balardi is said to have bestowed the land to the cākīridakulu families, allowing them to use the land in exchange for their services at the village būta shrine; she thus acted as a substitute for the royal būta. However, as we will see in Part Two, the land tenure system in Perar has gone through a complex process of continuance and transformation following the changes in the land tenure systems in South Kanara, such as the introduction of land-tax assessment and land reforms.

To conclude this chapter, I will now briefly outline the worship of Nāga as the 'earth goddess'. Nāgas are said to be the deities of the cobra, and there are numerous small shrines dedicated to them called *nāgabana* in the forests near rivers and ponds. A Brahman priest living in the village performs a ritual every month for the Nāgas, and a special ritual called *nāgarapañcami* is performed in the month of *āti*. Unlike ordinary būta rituals, the ritual for

the Nāgas adheres to the manners of a Brahmanistic ritual. In the nāgara-*pañcami*, the Brahman priest chants a mantra, pours five kinds of liquids (i.e. milk, curd, gee, coconut juice, and honey) called *pañcāmṛta abhiṣēka* onto the stone statue of Nāga, and offers a votive light.

Living cobras are also worshipped as incarnations of Nāgas. If a cobra appears in a particular place such as a *būta* shrine or the main hall of a guttu house, this appearance is interpreted as spiritual message or warning to the people related to that place. In that case, people often attempt to find the reason behind the arrival of the animal by means of astrology (*aṣṭamaṅgala praśne*). Also, if a person finds the dead body of a cobra, the person and his/her family must go into mourning for 16 days. As with the *jāgeda daiva*, Nāga as the earth goddess raises the question of who is the real ‘owner’ of the land in Perar. We will consider this issue in more detail in Part Two.

In the next chapter, I will introduce the main deities or royal *būtas* enshrined in the village shrine and outline the roles of the guttu houses and ritual servants.

Notes

- 1 According to a document in the village panchayat in Padu Perar, the size of Mudu Perar is 896.24 hectares and that of Padu Perar is 829.3 hectares. Though there is a panchayat office in both Mudu Perar and Padu Perar, only the one in Padu Perar functions as an administrative office.
- 2 Though Mudu Perar and Padu Perar were administratively separated, they still function as subdivisions of the larger erstwhile village of Perar, which is considered the basic unit for the villagers. Therefore, I will also refer to Perar as a ‘village’ in this book.
- 3 In general, guttu refers to the manor houses, or the families responsible for organising the rituals in a village (Upadhyaya 1988–1997, p. 1109). As we will see later, there are 16 houses in Perar called the ‘sixteen guttus’, and they play important roles in the *būta* worship at the village level. Also, as we will see in Part Two, in the Vijayanagara period, a guttu was one of the units of administration and land-tax collection in South Kanara.
- 4 According to the same document, as of 2001, in Mudu Perar, 66 people (34 males and 32 females) belong to the Scheduled Castes (SC) and 15 people (8 males and 7 females) belong to the Scheduled Tribes (ST). In Padu Perar, 142 people (74 males and 68 females) are SC and 46 people (22 males and 24 females) are ST.
- 5 Tables 2.1 and 2.2 were made by the author based on the house-tax record (Padu Perar Panchayat Office 2008) kept in the village panchayat office in Padu Perar.
- 6 In Guru Kambuḷa, there is a mosque and the mausoleum of a saint, and this area’s land was the property of the mosque before the implementation of the land reform legislation in 1974. On the hilly area in the northeast of Mudu Perar, there is a St Francisco Xavier church.
- 7 Though most *Baṅṭas* are landlords in South Kanara, they are categorised as OBC because most of them living in the rural area are engaged in agriculture.
- 8 They are also called Bunts in English. *Baṅṭeru* means the warrior or servant of a king, and *Okkelakuḷu* means agriculturist. See also Thurston (1975[1909a], pp. 147–172).
- 9 For additional general information on Kuḍubi, see Thurston (1975[1909b], pp. 99–106).

- 10 For additional general information on Pūjāri (Billava), see Thurston (1975[1909a], pp. 243–252).
- 11 For additional general information on Ācāri, see Thurston (1975[1909a], p. 61).
- 12 In this book, I use ‘Brahman’ instead of ‘Baṭṭṛu’ in line with the relative popularity and distinctiveness of each term.
- 13 According to Thurston (1975[1909a], p. 375), ‘Ahi-Kshētra’ is probably a Sanskritisation of ‘Haiga’, or ‘the land of snakes’.
- 14 For more general information on Pambada, see Singh (2002[1993], pp. 1028–1031) and Thurston (1975[1909d], p. 206).
- 15 For more general information on Maḍḍyēle, see Thurston (1975[1909a], p. 16–18).
- 16 On the correspondence between the Tuḷu calendar and the solar calendar, see Table 2.4.
- 17 In general, bākimāru indicates a field in front of a house. Also, kambuḷa refers to a buffalo race held in a paddy field or river canal, to a field in which this buffalo race takes place, and to a ritual performed in a rice field for fertility (Upadhyaya 1988–1997, pp. 592, 2273). In addition to the kambuḷa, a ritual called the *parva* is held in the main hall of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu’s house. In general, *parva* denotes the auspicious day on which festivals and rituals are held. See Upadhyaya (1988–1997, p. 1958).
- 18 Subba himself insists that he is an ‘*Ādi Draviḍa* (original Dravidian)’.
- 19 Pūkarē is an ornamental post decorated with flowers set in some selected paddy fields before specific rituals and buffalo races to ward off evil spirits. See Upadhyaya (1988–1997, p. 2087).
- 20 According to local legend, in antiquity a person and two buffalo disappeared on the mountain. The buffalo called by Subba here are supposed to be the būtas of those missing buffalo.
- 21 In the past, on the next day of the kambuḷa, Subba and his family used to visit each house of the village dancing and playing instruments. Nowadays they dance and sing only at the guttu house.
- 22 According to the villagers, a ritual called *panikuḷu kulluni* was also performed during the kambuḷa ritual. In this ritual, while waiting for the kallāla, the male relatives of the kallāla drank palm wine, had sexual intercourse with each other, and danced together. This suggests that male sexual vitality was important in the kambuḷa ritual, which aimed to enhance the fertility and productivity of the agricultural field as a ‘bride’. For a general explanation of *panikuḷu kulluni*, see Upadhyaya (1988–1997, p. 1923).
- 23 Nowadays, shrine worker rewards are paid in cash.
- 24 Most plots of the land in the name of the village shrine were purchased in the past by the heads of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu. In Part Two, I will investigate the impact of the land reforms in more detail.
- 25 In general, umbali refers to rent-free land for the performance of certain services in temples or other public services (Upadhyaya 1988–1997, p. 342).
- 26 In addition to these jāgeda daiva, būtas worshipped by the members of a house called ‘*mane daiva* (house būta)’, and būtas worshipped by the members of a joint family called *kuṭumada daiva* (family būta) are enshrined in these small shrines.

3 The *būta* shrine and deities in Perar

Driving from Mudu Perar to Padu Perar, one finds on the right side of the main road a big gate with an inscription in Kannada: ‘Sri Brammadēvaru Iṣṭadēvate Balavāṇḍi Pilicāmuṇḍi Daivastāna Kinnimajālu Perar’.¹ Three figures sit atop the gate. The left figure is carrying a sword and riding a tiger; the middle figure is holding a long sword and riding an elephant; and the right figure has a moustache and is holding a bow and arrow and riding a horse. This gate is the entrance to the road to the village *būta* shrine, and the three figures are modelled on the main deities: Pilicāmuṇḍi, Arasu, and Balavāṇḍi.

Going through the gate and down the winding road, one sees a red-tile-roofed building surrounded by coconut trees and paddy fields. In the middle of the site, there is a small shrine decorated with flowers. This holy place, called Baṅṭakamba, is where Balavāṇḍi, the main deity in Perar, is believed to have appeared.² During the yearly ritual (*nēma*), priests and devotees carry sacred objects from the treasure house (*baṅḍārada koṭya*) to Baṅṭakamba. The *mukkāldi*, the priest-medium of Balavāṇḍi, is then possessed by the deity in front of the small shrine and gives an oracle to the heads of the *guttus*. As we will see in Chapter 5, on the last day of the *nēma*, the ritual of the *būta*’s judgement (*vāku piripuni*) is held in this place.

Walking south from Baṅṭakamba on the footpath between the paddy fields, one comes to a large gate painted vermilion and cobalt blue. Beyond the gate, there is a courtyard with several buildings roofed with mossy red tiles, and it is surrounded by a cloister. This is the village *būta* shrine (*daivastāna*), the base of *būta* worship in Perar. Enshrined here are Balavāṇḍi, Arasu, Pilicāmuṇḍi, and the highest-ranked deity, called Brama. In this chapter, I will outline the *būta* worship in this village shrine. First, I will sketch the structure of the shrine and Baṅṭakamba. Next, I will briefly describe the characteristics of the main deities in the shrine. Finally, I will discuss the people and families who undertake religious roles.

The village shrine in Perar

Most of the important buildings concerning *būta* worship are located in the easternmost part of Padu Perar, near the border of Mudu Perar. The most important places are the village *būta* shrine, Baṅṭakamba, and the treasure

house. The shrine is the centre of būta worship in Perar; Baṅṭakamba is the birthplace of Balavāṇḍi; and the treasure house is the place in which the sacred objects for the būta ritual are kept. The three places form a roughly equilateral triangle, as they are each approximately 100 meters apart. During the nēma in the village shrine, the priests, heads of the guttus, musicians, and other ritual workers march the sacred objects from the treasure house to Baṅṭakamba. After offering a votive light to the small shrine, they march to the village shrine to conduct the main rituals. The land circumscribed by these three places is a double-cropping paddy field called majalu. During the nēma, which is held after the cultivation of the second crop in the month of māyi, one finds a row of many stools on this field. Behind Baṅṭakamba and the treasure house, there is a verdant coconut grove, and behind the village shrine, there is a hill, on top of which Pilicāmuṇḍi is enshrined.

Daivastāna consists of several buildings on a spacious ground surrounded by a cloister.³ Passing through the main entrance from the east and entering the precincts, one can see in the foreground a two-storey shrine for Bramma called Bramma guṇḍa. A rule in the oral epic prohibits two-storey structures in Perar except for this Bramma shrine and the house of the Pejattāya. Unlike the rather simple structure of the būta shrines popular in this area, the Bramma shrine is ornately structured. It has stone steps and a stone lantern, is equipped with an offertory box and a bulletin board, and is always decorated with flowers and votive lights. The exterior of the Bramma shrine is just like that of a Hindu temple. Looking into the shrine from its opening, one can see through the dark a statue of the *brammaliṅga* on a stone pedestal lit by votive lights. The statue is surrounded by a golden halo called a *prabāvali*.

A Brahman priest called an asrāṇṇa is stationed at the Bramma shrine and conducts the daily ritual. He purifies the brammaliṅga and other statues with water, makes an offering of jasmine flowers and betel leaves (*baccire: Piper betle*), and then offers a votive light while chanting a mantra. South of the Bramma shrine, there is a tower with a mossy peaked roof. This building is called a *māḍa*, a shrine for Arasu. A steep staircase links the ground to the opening on top of the building. The asrāṇṇa climbs these stairs to offer a votive light and descends them facing the opening in order not to turn his back on Arasu. To the east of the māḍa, there is an altar called a *koḍiyaḍi*. Though usually there is no object on the altar, during the nēma, it is beautifully decorated with lights and flowers, and the sacred objects brought from the treasure house are placed on it. South of the māḍa and *koḍiyaḍi*, there is a building with windows and an entrance facing the north. This is called the *mūverullākule cāvaḍi* (hall for the three kings), and there are wooden altars (*mañcāvu: bed*) for Balavāṇḍi, Arasu, and Pilicāmuṇḍi inside the building.⁴

Passing through the west gate and walking out, one finds a pond of green water and a Nāga shrine under a big tree. This enshrines the stone statue of the snake goddess—her lower half is a snake and nine snakes raise their heads from her head like a halo. South of the village būta shrine, there is

a relatively high hill. At the foot of the hill, there is an entrance for the long approach to the Pilicāmuṇḍi shrine. During the nēma, the priests, the heads of the guttus, and the musicians ascend the narrow stone steps to the summit, offer votive lights at the Pilicāmuṇḍi shrine, and then return to the precincts of the main shrine. Since most rituals are performed at night, one can see from the shrine precincts the flickering light carried by the asrāṅṅa moving in the woods, accompanied by the faint sound of wind instruments.

The three būtas and the ambiguous deity Brama

As already mentioned, Balavāṇḍi, Arasu, Pilicāmuṇḍi, and Brama are the main deities enshrined in the village būta shrine in Perar. The first three are regarded as the royal būtas (rājanu daiva) and are together called the three lords (*uḷḷākḷu*⁵). Meanwhile, Brama or Bermeru, who is often identified with the Hindu god Brahma and is related to the earth goddess Nāga, occupies an ambiguous position in būta worship. I will briefly overview the characteristics of each deity below.

Balavāṇḍi, the deity that appeared in the land of Perar

Balavāṇḍi occupies the central position in būta worship in Perar. As we will see in detail in the next chapter, Balavāṇḍi was believed to have appeared from Baṅtakamba, and also to have taken Arasu and Brama to this land. While other būtas such as Arasu and Pilicāmuṇḍi are enshrined throughout South Kanara, Balavāṇḍi has only the shrine in Perar. Balavāṇḍi is therefore regarded as the unique and principal deity in the village shrine. Although Balavāṇḍi is often described as a brave fighter with a moustache and bow and arrow, the deity is regarded as androgynous. As we will see in Chapter 5, Balavāṇḍi—incarnated in a Pambada dancer-medium—first dances wearing a luxurious skirt, and then changes garments, dons a moustache, takes up a bow and arrow, and challenges Brama to a fight.

The king of būtas, Arasu

The būta called Arasu is also called uḷḷākḷu. In the oral epic, Arasu is described as the king of būtas and is served by many followers. Arasu is of a higher rank than Balavāṇḍi and Pilicāmuṇḍi, and thus when these three deities are depicted in art, he is placed at the centre. In the nēma also, the ritual for Arasu is conducted first, before the rituals for the other two deities. The high position of Arasu, however, does not necessarily entail the centrality of the deity in the village būta shrine. Though Arasu holds a higher position than Balavāṇḍi, it is Balavāṇḍi who occupies the central role in both the oral epic and the nēma in Perar. Most devotees regard the village būta shrine as the ‘Balavāṇḍi shrine’.

The būta of the wild tiger, Pilicāmuṇḍi

In paintings and statues, Pilicāmuṇḍi is always described as a figure riding on a tiger, as this deity is regarded as the būta of the wild tiger. This gives rise to some unique features in the worship of Pilicāmuṇḍi in the village būta shrine. For instance, while other deities are enshrined in the main shrine, Pilicāmuṇḍi is enshrined in a small hilltop shrine. In addition, unlike Balavāṇḍi and Arasu, who are believed to be vegetarians, Pilicāmuṇḍi is believed to be meat-eating. During the nēma, only vegetables such as paddy, bananas, and coconuts are offered to Balavāṇḍi and Arasu inside the precincts of the main shrine; meanwhile, live fowl are offered to Pilicāmuṇḍi outside the precinct. Pilicāmuṇḍi, however, is not always in a marginal position. As we will see in Chapter 5, on the last day of the nēma, there is a prolonged ritual especially for Pilicāmuṇḍi. In addition, the ritual called vāku piripuni, in which devotees consult the deities about their problems and receive oracles, is held at Baṅṭakamba. In this ritual, it is Pilicāmuṇḍi incarnated in a Pambada dancer-medium and Balavāṇḍi incarnated in the mukkāldi who give judgements on the various problems of the people. Thus, while Pilicāmuṇḍi is in a rather marginal position in the village būta shrine, the deity plays the important role of giving oracles and blessings to the devotees in the last ritual of the nēma.

As seen above, Balavāṇḍi, who originated in the area, occupies the central position in the village būta shrine. In terms of the rank of the deities, however, Arasu is dominant in the shrine as the 'king'. Meanwhile, Pilicāmuṇḍi takes on the important role of judge in the nēma. As we will see next, over these three deities, it is actually Brama who occupies the highest position and plays another important role in the village būta shrine.

The ambiguous deity Brama

Brama, also called Bermeru, occupies a special position in the village būta shrine. Brama is regarded as the highest-ranked būta who governs the other būtas; at the same time, the deity is often identified with the Hindu god Brahma.⁶ As already seen, in the village būta shrine, only Brama is enshrined in a temple-like guṇḍa. In addition, a Brahman priest called an asrāṇṇa is stationed at the shrine to conduct a daily ritual. Unlike other būtas, who manifest themselves through spirit possession, Brama never manifests himself except in the figure of the brammaliṅga. Nevertheless, in both the daily rituals and the nēma, the Brama shrine is very important; it is carefully attended to by the asrāṇṇa, and devotees always first visit the Brama shrine and receive prasāda from the hands of the asrāṇṇa before they visit the other places in the precincts. In the nēma, the Brama shrine becomes the central stage of the rituals. As we will see in Chapter 5, the main actors such as the priests, heads of the guttus, and other ritual workers march around the Brama shrine and koḍiyaḍi many times. In addition, the Pambada dancer-medium possessed by Balavāṇḍi dances in front of the guṇḍa to challenge Brama to a fight.

As shown in the role of the asrāṅṅa, since Brama has the ambiguous characteristics of both a būta and a Hindu god, some elements of the Brahmanical ritual are contained in the village būta shrine. At first glance, this seems like an example of Sanskritisation: an indigenous ritual of lower-caste people transforms itself by adopting and imitating Brahmanical rituals (Srinivas 1952, pp. 30–31).⁷ In the case of the village būta shrine in Perar, however, the existence of the asrāṅṅa and the Brahmanical ritual indicates other intricate issues that cannot be interpreted merely as an example of Sanskritisation. While the attendance of Brahmans such as the asrāṅṅa and Pejattāya is indispensable to the būta ritual today, some villagers remain ambivalent about the entry of Brahmans into būta worship, which had originally been conducted by non-Brahmans such as Baṅṅa and Pūjāri. Meanwhile, the Brahman priests concerned in būta worship in the village do not just apply Brahmanical rituals to the būtas, but also learn the ritual practices unique to each būta. This suggests that būta worship has not been simply Sanskritised, but rather brings the Brahman priests into it.

Moreover, while Brama is often identified with the Hindu god Brahma, the deity is also closely related to the earth goddess Nāga. The ambiguous identity of Brama has been one of the most controversial issues in the disputes concerning authority over the village būta shrine. As we will see in Chapter 8, in the court case between the asrāṅṅa and the first guttu family in the 1930s, the point of dispute became whether the Brama guṅḍa was a būta shrine or a Hindu temple, and whether the principal deity in the village shrine was Balavāṅḍi or Brama.⁸

The people responsible for būta worship

The būta ritual in Perar is based on a sophisticated system called kaṭṭu (custom or law), which governs the people in the village. Below, I will provide an overview of the main ritual roles and the people responsible for the rituals in the village būta shrine.

Each guttu family has specific duties in the būta rituals and management of the village būta shrine. The role of each guttu at the shrine is inherited within the respective family. As shown in Table 3.1, the prominent families in the village in relation to the būta ritual comprise a Brahman family called the Pejattāya and the 16 guttus. Except for one Kuḍubi family and three Pūjāri families, the other 12 families are Baṅṅa.⁹ These guttus are hierarchically ordered from the Muṅḍabeṭṭu guttu at the top to the Pērīru guttu at the bottom. Each guttu family has various roles and duties in organising rituals at the village shrine. The first and second guttus have primary responsibility for the patronage and management of būta worship at the village level.¹⁰

The roles of the 16 guttus are complemented by another 16 families called the *ulaguttu* (sub-guttus). Under these guttu and ulaguttu families, dozens of people called cākiridakulu (servants/people in service) render various services

Table 3.1 The prominent families in Perar in relation to būta worship

<i>General name</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Name of the family</i>	<i>Caste</i>	<i>System of inheritance</i>
<i>Pejattāya</i>	<i>Highest</i>	<i>Pejattāya</i>	<i>Brahman</i>	<i>Patrilineal</i>
Sixteen guttus	1	Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu	Baṇṭa	Matrilineal
	2	Brānabeṭṭu guttu	Baṇṭa	Matrilineal
	3	Tidyamuṇḍoṭṭu guttu	Baṇṭa	Matrilineal
	4	Pāldaḍi guttu	Baṇṭa	Matrilineal
	5	Alake guttu	Baṇṭa	Matrilineal
	6	Kolakebailu	Baṇṭa	Matrilineal
	7	Parāri	Baṇṭa	Matrilineal
	8	Gōldadi	Baṇṭa	Matrilineal
	9	Mairōḍi	Baṇṭa	Matrilineal
	10	Naḍi	Baṇṭa	Matrilineal
	11	Boṭṭottu	Baṇṭa	Matrilineal
	12	Uliya	Baṇṭa	Matrilineal
	13	Śāstāvu	Kuḍubi	Patrilineal
	14	Kabetti	Pūjāri	Matrilineal
	15	Tanya	Pūjāri	Matrilineal
	16	Pērīru	Pūjāri	Matrilineal

for būta worship. These people are from particular families who belong to several service castes in the village, for example, Maḍḍyele (washermen), Puruṣa or Jōgi (musicians), Baṇḍāri (barbers), and Pambada (dancers).

While the Pejattāya occupies the highest position in the ritual hierarchy in the būta shrine, it is actually the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu, represented ritually by the gaḍipatināru, who has assumed control of the shrine's management as well as the ritual practices. The priests (mukkāldi) for Balavāṇḍi and Pilicāmuṇḍi are selected from the male members of the Alake guttu and the Uliya guttu, respectively.

The social ranking of these main families and castes in the village corresponds to their hierarchical order in the būta ritual. In Perar, the people who often compete with each other for ritual status are not those who belong to different caste groups, but are instead guttu families of the same caste. The hierarchy of the guttu families, which is based on the oral epic, is performatively confirmed and dramatically publicised in the nēma: the main deities incarnated in the Pambada dancer-mediums dance around the heads of the guttus and call the names of the families in order of their rank. Next, I will outline the main ritual roles in the village būta shrine.

The gaḍipatināru

The primary patron of the village shrine is the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu head called the gaḍipatināru, and this person has command over all other guttu members and ritual workers. The present gaḍipatināru is Gangādara Rai, born in 1931. A tall figure in a white cloth and turban, sunglasses on his chiselled

face, he possesses an air of dignity and elegance. After his elder brother, the previous gaḍipatināru, died in 1999, he took over the role in 2001. To select the next gaḍipatināru, first a candidate is chosen by the core members of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu family. Then they consult Balavāṇḍi about their selection through a ritual. If acknowledged by the deity, the person can then be appointed the gaḍipatināru; if not, the family selects another person. The term ‘gaḍipatināru’ originally indicates the person who takes authority/responsibility (*gaḍi*), and this duty must be fulfilled to one’s dying days. Moreover, one must obey various rules and taboos. Since the gaḍipatināru contacts the deities and mediates the relationship between the people and deities, he should always keep himself pure and clean. Therefore, it is taboo for him to eat and drink outside, or to touch or even see a person regarded as being ritually polluted by death, childbirth, or menstruation.

In the village būta shrine, the gaḍipatināru plays a significant role both in shrine management and in ritual practice. Supported by the *madyaste*, the head of the second guttu, the gaḍipatināru is in charge of the management of the shrine’s property and of other administrative work concerning the būta ritual. Moreover, he is responsible for dealing with the būtas and their śakti. While the Pambada dancer-mediums embody būtas in the ritual, the gaḍipatināru plays the role of their most intimate caretaker. In every būta ritual at the shrine, the gaḍipatināru responds to every word and action of the deity, appeases the deity’s anger, and speaks to the deity on behalf of the other devotees. Gangādara Rai refers to his intimate relationship with the būtas as follows:

Only the gaḍipatināru can physically touch the deity—nobody else can do it. Only the gaḍipatināru can assuage the deity’s thirst.¹¹ The gaḍipatināru has *adikāra* to the deity and also the deity has *adikāra* to the gaḍipatināru. To hand a sword to the deity and receive it from her is the *adikāra* of the gaḍipatināru.

(2 July 2008)

As this narrative indicates, people often mention *adikāra* in relation to the relationship between humans and deities. *Adikāra* originates from the Sanskrit word *adhikāra*, which means authority, royalty, rank, and right (Monier-Williams 2008 [1899], p. 20). In Tuḷu, this word has a broader meaning, including authority, power, rank, office, administration, governing, and responsibility (Upadhyaya 1988–1997, p. 96). In the context of būta worship, *adikāra* describes the mutual rights and responsibilities of humans and būtas. It also indicates the privilege of the caretakers who have the right and responsibility to maintain an intimate relationship with the deities.

The gaḍipatināru is responsible not only for the būta ritual in the village shrine but also for all the būta rituals performed in Perar. He is expected to attend every ritual (*kola*), and if he cannot, a male member of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu should attend it on his behalf. The duty of the gaḍipatināru is thus held

by the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu as a whole. This is also shown by the fact that the title of the gaḍipatināru is primarily passed down from mother's brother to sister's son.

The mukkāldi

In many parts of South Kanara, the roles of the bŭta priests, called māni or pātri, are played by Pŭjāri. Although there are several mānis in Perar, Baṇṭa priests called mukkāldi mainly conduct the rituals for the rājanu daivas, or royal bŭtas, in the village bŭta shrine. The present mukkāldi of Balavāṇḍi is Bālākrishna Shetty, who was born in 1972 and belongs to the Alake guttu family. With thick black eyebrows, moustache, and penetrating eyes, Bālākrishna is a person of imposing presence. Despite his rather young age, he occupies the leading position among the heads of the guttus in Perar. He has a profound knowledge of the rituals and customs concerning the oral epic, history, and bŭta worship.

In 2005, Bālākrishna succeeded the title mukkāldi from his mother's brother. Similar to the case of the gaḍipatināru, the mukkāldi title is hereditarily succeeded within the kuṭuma (matrilineal joint family). After he was selected as the mukkāldi, Bālākrishna was purified by the asrāṇṇa in a ritual called *kalaśasnāna*. In this ritual, the asrāṇṇa pours *kalaśanīru* (sacred water in a pot) on a person who will render a sacred duty.¹²

As we will see in the next section, the mukkāldi and Pambada dancer-mediums have several similarities in terms of their roles in bŭta worship. Nevertheless, they are regarded as profoundly different in the ritual system in the village bŭta shrine. One of the differences between them is the mode and frequency of their possession by deities. In the case of the Pambada dancer-mediums, they are possessed by the rājanu daivas only in the nēma.¹³ Meanwhile, the mukkāldi is responsible for every bŭta ritual performed in the village from the *sōṇa* month to paggu month, and during this period, the deity frequently possesses him. Bālākrishna explains this as follows:

The work of the Pambada is to dance with makeup and a costume in the nēma. But the mukkāldi invokes daiva even in his plain dress. The Pambada cannot enter the inside of the shrine. It is the mukkāldi who conducts the rituals inside the shrine. From the month of *sōṇa* to the beginning of the month of paggu, the mukkāldi does so much work. For instance, *sōṇa saṅkrāṅti*, *parva*, *Māri pŭjā*, *kambuḷa* ... it is the adikāra for the mukkāldi to conduct these rituals.

(2 July 2008)

Throughout the nēma, the mukkāldi continuously engages in the ritual. As the priest as well as the medium of Balavāṇḍi, he swiftly transitions between states of being possessed and self-possession, and he occasionally manifests

physical power beyond his ordinary strength. He cannot control the overwhelming force of spirit possession.

Balavāṇḍi daiva is different from other deities. She follows her own wishes and desires. It is not necessary to dance and play music [to invoke her]. She can come anytime. Throughout the ritual, she remains in my body. Even when I'm just staying at home, she can come into me.
(Bālākrishna Shetty, 2 July 2008)

As we will see in Chapter 5, the mukkāldi possessed by Balavāṇḍi marches around the shrine precincts many times, offers votive lights at the altar, and recites oracles. Even when in his normal state, he cannot rest. As one of the heads of the guttu and the assistant to the gaḍipatināru, Bālākrishna must carefully organise the whole ritual process. In addition, in the more small-scale rituals held in each guttu house, the mukkāldi plays an important role. Embodying the principal deity, Balavāṇḍi, he states oracles, gives various orders to people, and finally blesses them. The figure of Balavāṇḍi incarnated in the mukkāldi is always filled with overwhelming power and anger, which arouses awe in others.

Both in rituals and in daily life, the mukkāldi, who belongs to a high-ranked guttu family and holds an influential position in the village, exercises an authority that exceeds that of other ritual workers, including the Pambada dancer-mediums. As we will see in Chapter 8, the authority and predominance of the mukkāldi influences disputes and negotiation among people concerning būta worship.

Pambada dancer-mediums

In addition to the mukkāldi, the Pambada dancer-mediums play a vital role in the village būta shrine. While the mukkāldi works as the priest, the Pambadas are unique in their ability to impersonate būtas, to dance, and to recite pāḍdana. In South Kanara, those who belong to the Pambada, Parava, and Nalike are engaged in būta worship as dancer-mediums. In relation to būta worship, these three groups are hierarchically distinguished from each other: the Pambada dancer-mediums mainly perform the higher-ranked būtas called rājanu daiva, and the Nalike dancer-mediums perform the lower-ranked būtas.¹⁴ While most būtas performed by Pambadas are enshrined in the main būta shrine in the village, most būtas performed by Nalikes, such as Satyadēvate, Kallurṭi, and Mantradēvate, are enshrined in small household shrines and altars. Regarded as inferior to the rājanu daiva, they are often called *kāṭu būta*, or the wild, untamed būta. For most villagers, the *kāṭu būtas* are more familiar than the rājanu daiva enshrined in the village būta shrine. Since there are no Nalike in Perar, Nalike dancer-mediums are called from other villages to perform the rituals for these būtas.

In Perar, the male members of a Pambada family living in the village render services to the village būta shrine as dancer-mediums. Though Pambadas are generally matrilineal, the profession of dancer-medium is hereditarily succeeded from father to son; close relationships and collaboration among paternal kin are also necessary to their performance. Among the Pambadas in Perar, two youths—Jayānanda and his second cousin Yatish Pambada—play central roles as the dancer-mediums of the three main būtas: Balavāṇḍi, Arasu, and Pilicāmuṇḍi. In addition to their roles in the village būta shrine, they perform at several small shrines in Perar. The areas each is responsible for is decided by the rājanu daiva that each performs: Yatish, who performs Balavāṇḍi, has the right to dance in Mudu Perar; while Jayānanda, who performs Arasu and Pilicāmuṇḍi, has the right to dance in Padu Perar. Each should not encroach on the other's domain, as this may cause tension and trouble between them.

Yatish, born in 1974, lives with his mother, wife, and children in a house near the village būta shrine. He devotes himself to his duties as būta dancer-medium and wears a white cloth and small gold earrings that symbolise his profession. He is a cheerful and modest person who maintains good relations with the other villagers, including the guttu heads. As we will see in Chapter 5, as the dancer-medium of Balavāṇḍi, Yatish plays the most important role in the nēma, which becomes a focal point.

According to Yatish, when one is appointed as dancer-medium of the rājanu daiva, the purification ritual is performed at the Bramma guṇḍa; one then receives a gold bracelet from the gaḍipatināru. Similar to the gaḍipatināru and mukkāldi, the dancer-medium must fulfil his duty until he is on his deathbed. Whatever the reason, he is never allowed to cancel a būta ritual that he is supposed to attend.

The other main dancer, Jayānanda, was born in 1975. As the dancer-medium of both Arasu and Pilicāmuṇḍi, he performs on the first and last day of the nēma. On the last day, in the long ritual that continues for more than ten hours, he dances, recites pāḍdana, speaks oracles, and judges people's problems as Pilicāmuṇḍi. Jayānanda is intelligent and gentle-mannered and has deep knowledge of būta rituals. His pride and principles distinguish him as a prominent dancer, but at the same time, they often cause him trouble with others concerning būta worship. As we will see in Chapter 8, Jayānanda is dissatisfied with the ways the nēma has been organised by the higher-ranked guttus. Taking the side of an influential person from outside the village claiming to promote the democratisation of the būta worship, Jayānanda has incurred the displeasure of the guttus.

Yatish and Jayānanda, through their performance involving spirit possession as dancer-mediums, manifest the wild śakti of the deities in the ritual. I will closely examine the experience of these dancer-mediums in Chapter 7.

As seen above, būta worship in Perar is based on a hierarchical system authorised by the kaṭṭu that consists of the 16 guttus, the priests, and the other

ritual workers. Among them, the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu occupies the most influential position, as local manor as well as the main organiser of the village būta shrine. The role of the highest guttu in būta worship corresponds to that of kings and chiefs in relation to Hindu deities (e.g. Dirks 1987, p. 304, 1992, p. 225). In the Hindu temple, the king and other devotees mediated by priests present offerings to gods, and in return they enjoy the distribution of honours accompanied by various rights (Appadurai & Breckenridge 1976; Appadurai 1981, pp. 20–37). Similar to this, the guttu families and other ritual workers enjoy various rights in return for their contribution to the būta shrine. The rights and duties of the people concerning būta worship, which the word adikāra indicates, are distributed to them through ritual transaction with the būtas.

Here, it is noteworthy that the rights and duties are never given to the devotees automatically, but rather they should be re-approved by the deities each time. Although customary law dictates that each family should execute its adikāra, there remains an essential uncertainty, since whether families can really assume their adikāra or not depends on the approval of the būtas within the ritual. Even the guttu families cannot maintain their authority without being acknowledged by the deities. In this sense, būta śakti, which is fundamentally contingent and uncontrollable, is superior to the mundane power of the guttus.

In the next chapter, I will examine the pāddana, which is one of the bases of the relationship between the villagers and the deities in Perar.

Notes

- 1 This is the formal name of the village būta shrine. Brammadēvaru and Ístadēvate are alternate names of Brama and Arasu, respectively. Kinnimajālu is the general name of the place consisting of Baṅṭakamba, village būta shrine, and treasure house.
- 2 Kinnimajālu and the village būta shrine are collectively called Kinnimajālu *sāna*.
- 3 Though it is believed that the village būta shrine has an 800-year history, these buildings were rebuilt in 1965. As we will see in Chapter 8, since 2013, the shrine has again undergone a controversial process of rebuilding.
- 4 There are altars for būtas in the houses of the higher-ranked guttus, and a Brahman priest living in the village performs rituals such as the *saṅkrānti* at these altars.
- 5 Uḷḷākḷu is the honorific title of a person of high rank. See Upadhyaya (1988–1997, p. 410).
- 6 Brama's identity and origin are controversial issues among folklorists. See Padmanabha (1976, pp. 24–39), Upadhyaya (1996, p. 202), and Claus (1978).
- 7 Srinivas (1952) first described the concept of Sanskritisation as the adaptation of Brahmanical rituals, beliefs, and ways of life through which low castes seek to improve their position in the caste hierarchy. For this Sanskritisation, the coupled notions of purity and impurity are important as they systematise and maintain the structural distance between different castes.
- 8 It is believed that one rank below Balavāṇḍi, Arasu, and Pilicāmuṇḍi, there are five more būtas; moreover, under these five būtas, there are another seven būtas.

This is expressed as ‘one Bramma, three uḷḷākḷu, five *kāraṇikeru* (those who can do anything), and seven *māyagarlu* (those who are intangible)’.

- 9 Geographically speaking, these guttu families are selected in order from Mudu Perar and Padu Perar.
- 10 Among the 16 guttus, the top five families have maintained close relationships through marriage.
- 11 In the *nēma*, Balavāṇḍi incarnated by the *mukkāldi* receives a coconut from the *gaḍipatināru* and pours its water on the ground.
- 12 This ritual is generally called *kalaśasuddhi* (Upadhyaya 1988–1997, pp. 715, 716). Pambada dancer-mediums also receive this ritual purification every year.
- 13 Though the Pambadas are possessed by the royal būtas in the village būta shrine only in the *nēma*, they act as the dancer-mediums of other būtas in several other rituals both inside and outside Perar.
- 14 It is generally regarded that Paravas occupy the rank between Pambada and Nalike.

4 *Pāḍdana*

The oral epics of deities

The traditional relationship between the būtas and the main families in Perar, such as the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu and the Pejattāya, is described in an oral epic called the pāḍdana. The pāḍdana narrates not only the origins of the būtas, but also their original relationship with the people who serve them. As we will see in Chapter 5, the dancer-mediums of Arasu, Balavāṇḍi, and Pilicāmuṇḍi sing the pāḍdana in the nēma. In front of the heads of the guttus and hundreds of spectators, the dancer-medium embodying the royal būta sings about mythological events such as battles and amicable settlements among būtas, and about interactions between būtas and humans. It is the pāḍdana that most villagers refer to as the history of Perar. In this chapter, I will introduce the main oral epics in Perar, beginning with the pāḍdana of Nādu, who is an earlier avatar of Balavāṇḍi.¹

The life of Nādu

The birth of Nādu

Once upon a time, when Mangaluru was called Maṅgāra, the land was ruled by a king called Chandrashekara. In the place called Gurupura in Maṅgāra, there was a guttu family called Doninja Gothli. In this family, there was a couple called Satya Bannar and Lakshmi. Since they had no child, they prayed to Brammabermeru² to be blessed with a baby. Hearing this prayer, Brammabermeru ordered one of his followers to come into being on the earth as a human child. Satya Bannar found this child when walking along the riverside and took him into their home. The couple raised the child with joy. Since they had found the child that they had been longing for, they named the child Nādu ('to seek'). When he had grown up and acquired an education, Nādu started to teach martial arts at a place called Nādi Doninja.

Satya Bannar achieved fame as one of the most efficient subjects of the king. Because he stood high in his master's favour, however, another subject killed him out of fierce jealousy. Due to the deep sorrow of losing her husband, Lakshmi soon killed herself. Nādu, his foster parents now both dead, stopped believing in any gods.

The travels of Nādu and the king

Before the birth of Chandrashekara, who would become king, his maternal uncle had taken a vow that if a nephew were born, he would present offerings to the gods enshrined in the Mahālingeśvara temple at Venōr.³ To fulfil this vow for his uncle, the king would have to make a pilgrimage to the temple. The offerings consisted of a small golden statue of a child, a silver cradle, and a handful of coins. Since the king did not know the way to Venōr, he decided to take Nādu as a guide and sent a messenger to him. Nādu received a letter from the king with the message that he should come to the king straightaway. Nādu hurried to the palace, and when he arrived, the king explained why he had called him. Nādu then expressed his resolution to the king: ‘Your Majesty, I will accompany you. However, on the way to Venōr, I will never pray to any gods, either in front of a god’s statue or in front of a temple’.

The king accepted all Nādu’s wishes, including that a white horse and parasol be prepared for him along with a palanquin for the king. Additionally, on the journey to Venōr, Nādu would lead the way, while on their way home, the king would take the lead. The carriers of the palanquin, decorated with flowers, began their journey from the palace and headed towards the temple. After a while, they reached the Manjunātheśvara temple. From there, they went on to the Sbrahmanya temple at Kudupu. In both temples, the king presented offerings to the gods. However, Nādu neither stepped inside the temple, nor got down from his horse. After passing through many other places, they arrived at Nāda Bailu, where there was a shrine to Brammabermeru. While the king visited the shrine, Nādu stood outside. At this moment, the deity Brammabermeru appeared to Nādu and said, ‘Now, you can go. When you come back, I will take care of you’. This was the deity’s promise to Nādu, who answered: ‘I will come back along the way I’m going’.

The battle between Nādu and Brammabermeru

The king and Nādu passed through the vast land of Nāda Bailu and finally arrived at the Mahālingeśvara temple, where the king dedicated his offerings to the gods. That night, they attended a ritual in Venōr and then started out for home at daybreak. On their way home, the king took the lead on the palanquin, with Nādu riding behind him on horseback. When they approached Nāda Bailu, a Brahman wearing a sacred thread suddenly took the reins of Nādu’s horse and stopped them. The Brahman was actually the deity Brammabermeru, who had disguised himself as a human being. Nādu and Brammabermeru glared at each other for a second, and then they began a great battle, which culminated in Brammabermeru turning Nādu’s horse to stone and forcing Nādu to disappear. When the king turned back, he could not find Nādu. When he prayed for him to come back, he heard a strange voice: ‘Today, the curse on Nādu has ended. He will appear at Kinnimajalu in Perra’.

In this way, Perra became the land from which Nādu appeared as Balavāṇḍi.

*

The oral epic summarised above shows the ambiguous relationship between Balavāṇḍi and Bramma (Brammabermeru). Balavāṇḍi, once a follower of Bramma, was banished to the human world by his master's curse and then killed by him in order to be transformed into a būta. As the next section illustrates, despite this antagonistic relationship with Bramma, Balavāṇḍi took the brammaliṅga to Perar to install it in the village shrine. Next, I will explain the pāḍdana narrating the encounter of Balavāṇḍi and Arasu (uḷḷākḷu).

The story of Arasu, king of the būtas

The uḷḷākḷu and the four guttu heads

Once upon a time, there were four guttu families. The names of the families were Kanaka Bottu Janana, Gundya's Janana, Kelinga's Janana, and Tumble Jāla Janana. Though each family had paddy fields, none of them had buffalo with which to cultivate the land. The guttu heads then heard that a fair for buffalo would be held in a place called Thippinge Neshēnki. They sold their bangles for 300 *varaha*⁴ and tied this money in their shawls. They also acquired 700 varaha by selling their chains and put this money in their pockets. After taking breakfast, the four guttu heads started their journey with their retinue.

After passing through many places, they finally reached Tippinge Neshēnki, where they found more than 4,000 buffalo. Each chose a buffalo to his liking and brought it to a place called Gujjaragoli. Resting there, they saw four men carrying coconuts and split coconut leaves and asked them, 'Why are you carrying those things?' 'We are taking them to the nēma for the uḷḷākḷu at Chavundeśvari. Why don't you come with us?' 'Sure, let's go. Please guide us'. Leaving their retinue and buffalo, the four heads set out for Chavundeśvari.

They arrived at Chavundeśvari in time for the performance of the nēma for the uḷḷākḷu. The uḷḷākḷu and four guttu heads saw each other, and the uḷḷākḷu gave them areca flowers, coconuts, and betel nuts. When they returned to Gujjaragoli with these things, however, they could not find their retinue nor their buffalo. They searched for them everywhere, but it was all in vain. 'What sort of magic is this? What went wrong?' they lamented. They decided to visit the uḷḷākḷu again to consult him about what had happened. They pleaded to the uḷḷākḷu, 'When we came back with prasāda, we found neither our retinue nor the buffalo. Please make them appear again'. The uḷḷākḷu asked them, 'If I do this for you, what will you do for me?' 'We will

build shrines for you in our four countries'. The uḷḷākḷu seemed satisfied with this answer and said, 'Go back to the same place. You will find your buffalo and retinue'. When they arrived back in Gujjaragoli, they found their buffalo and retinue, just as promised. Surprised and overjoyed, each of them went back home and built a shrine for the uḷḷākḷu.

Balavāṇḍi's invitation to the uḷḷākḷu

The uḷḷākḷu decided to make a pilgrimage to the east of the Māveri Ganga to perform ablutions. He went there from his palace on a palanquin, and after performing ablutions, he and his retinue started on their way back home. On this return journey, they took a rest at a place called Antharanga Kaṭṭe. Balavāṇḍi then heard that the uḷḷākḷu was coming and declared, 'We don't have a king of the daiva in our country. I will take the uḷḷākḷu here'. Balavāṇḍi went on horseback to meet the uḷḷākḷu at Antharanga Kaṭṭe, greeting him when he arrived. They liked each other immediately. Finally, Balavāṇḍi told the uḷḷākḷu his wish: 'Please come to our land. There is no king in our country'. 'I could go there, but your country is so poor and small. There are thousands of būtas by my side in my palace. It will be difficult to take them to your country'. 'Then I will make all but your favourites disappear by throwing this stone into the bush'. 'All right. Except for Kāntiri Jumādi and Paṅjūrli, you can erase the figures of all the other būtas'. But then the uḷḷākḷu pointed out another problem: 'Nāgabramma is not in your country. I need a daily ritual. If Nāgabramma is not there, I won't go'. 'Then I will definitely take Nāgabramma for you', Balavāṇḍi promised. Satisfied with that answer, the uḷḷākḷu sat back on the palanquin.

Balavāṇḍi's and Arasu's visits

Balavāṇḍi and Arasu passed many places before arriving at Kattalsar, where they found the house of Madurāya Pejattāya (an ancestor of the Pejattāya family). The two deities changed themselves into humans and visited his house. Madurāya welcomed the guests and offered them a bowl of milk. Sitting on a swing (*ujjālū*) in the hall, they drank it. After some time, when Madurāya was not paying attention, they vanished. His eyes filled with tears from the shock. After a few minutes, however, the guests appeared again in front of him and said:

Pejattāya, you gave us a bowl of milk, which we accepted since you clearly represent a very pious family. From now on, therefore, aside from the shrine to Brammabermēṇ, your house will be the only one allowed to be two stories and to have a swing. Moreover, among the Brahman families, your house will be the first.

Madurāya then covered his head to show his faith in the deities.

Next, the deities visited the Kabetti guttu house. They changed themselves into humans again and said to Dugganna Baidya, the then head of the house, ‘We are hungry. We need some food’. Dugganna went inside the house to prepare lunch for the guests. When he came out with a bronze pot filled with water, however, he could not find them. ‘Did I do something wrong?’ On the verge of tears, Dugganna considered what had gone wrong. After a while, though, the guests reappeared in front of him and Balavāṇḍi said:

In truth, we did not come here to have lunch. I have brought the uḷḷākḷu here, as I know you are one of his devotees. You should prepare food for the uḷḷākḷu, as long as the sun and moon exist.

With great joy, Dugganna accepted these orders.

The deities then visited the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu house, whose head was a Jain woman called Koratāi Balardi. After a formal exchange, they told her their request: ‘You should build a shrine with a māḍa for us’. She faithfully accepted this order. With the help of all the villagers, but laying the foundation stone herself, she built a guṇḍa for Brammabermeru, a māḍa for Arasu, and a hall (cāvaḍi) for Balavāṇḍi. Thereafter, all the land from Aggidaimata to Dambepāpu was governed by Balavāṇḍi.

The then head of the Bernoṭṭu⁵ guttu (the second guttu family) was a person called Bale Semita. The deities again changed themselves into humans and visited his house. ‘We are thirsty’, they said. Bale Semita ordered one of his servants to bring and peel tender coconuts for them. As soon as the guests drank the coconut juice, they disappeared. ‘They were just sitting here. Where could they have gone? What a marvel!’ he shouted. At that very moment, the guests manifested themselves again and said:

Bale Semita, we are not humans. We are daivas. I am Balavāṇḍi and have brought the uḷḷākḷu here. We have already visited several places and have now come to your place with love and respect. For us, the first place is the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu and the second is the Bernoṭṭu guttu. We will also create other guttu houses. I will bring Nāgabramma there too. In cooperation with these guttus, you should build a guṇḍa for Nāgabramma, a māḍa for Arasu, and a cāvaḍi for me. If you build all these shrines, we will protect all the people in Perar.

The first through the 12th guttus belonged to the Baṇṭa community, and the 14th through the 16th guttus were Pūjāri.⁶ These were the guttus created by Balavāṇḍi in Perar.

Balavāṇḍi’s acquisition of a brammaliṅga

Balavāṇḍi went to a place called Kaje to claim the brammaliṅga of Manibottu Brammēru.⁷ A būta called Kandettāya⁸ objected, however, to Balavāṇḍi taking this liṅga. They battled, but finally Balavāṇḍi succeeded

in taking the *liṅga* to Perra. Kandettāya went after Balavāṇḍi and stopped him near Perra: 'As you are receiving rituals here, please make the people perform rituals for me too'. Balavāṇḍi accepted this request.

In this way, a *guṇḍa* for Brammabermeru, a *māḍa* for the uḷḷākḷu, and a *cāvaḍi* for Balavāṇḍi were founded in Perar. Balavāṇḍi furthermore gave these orders to Koratāi Balardi, Bale Semita, and the other *guttu* heads: 'Perform a daily ritual for Brammabermeru. Offer a votive light for us every day. And perform the *nēma* once a year. If you keep these promises, we *dai-vas* will protect you'. With the help of the villagers, the 16 *guttus* organised the *nēma* to begin on the night of the full moon.

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As we have seen above, the *pāḍdana* describes how the deities came to Perar. Aside from Balavāṇḍi, who is believed to have appeared from the land of Perar itself, the other royal *būtas* are regarded as strangers from elsewhere. The *pāḍdana* also shows the centrality of Balavāṇḍi in Perar, as well as the inseparable bond between Balavāṇḍi and Bramma.

Another interesting aspect of these stories is that when Balavāṇḍi and Arasu changed themselves into humans and visited the houses, they complained of hunger and thirst and were offered food and drink by the head of each house. The deities' visits to the *guttu* houses and their reception by these heads constituted the event that modelled the ensuing relationship between the *būtas* and the villagers. In Perar today, the sequential order in which the deities are believed to have visited each house is regarded as grounds for the ranking of the *guttu* houses. In addition, a series of events are re-enacted in the *nēma*, such as the deities' visits and their reception by the *guttu* heads, the people's devotion to them and their promise to organise the *nēma*, and the deities' promise of protection.

As we will see later, the mutual exchange of offerings and blessings between the deities and villagers in the rituals has more significance than the mere re-enactment of mythical events. Rather, this performatively affirms and actualises the present rights and ranks of each *guttu* house. At the same time, it is a chance for villagers to reconfirm the supreme power and authority of the deities who give them protection and blessings. Part of the significance of the *nēma* is to perform this mutual transaction again and again in front of the villagers. Next, we will see the *pāḍdana* which describes the relationship between Balavāṇḍi and Pilicāmuṇḍi.

The story of Pilicāmuṇḍi, the *būta* of the wild tiger

Knowing that Arasu had come to Kinnimajālu, a *būta* named Pilicāmuṇḍi travelled there from a place called Balolli Nadu. He played a flute on a hill called Kompadaṇḍu while waiting for his chance to see Arasu and Balavāṇḍi. He then lit a torch with bronze grip and began looking for the uḷḷākḷu. Meanwhile at the *nēma*, Balavāṇḍi came to know of the stranger's visit and

said, 'A daiva has come. I will get him to go far away, and then I will come back'. Balavāṇḍi then changed himself into a human. When Balavāṇḍi got to Bolinji Guḍḍe, he saw the daiva of Balolli Nadu. 'Where are you from, and where are you going?' Balavāṇḍi asked the stranger. 'I came here to see my uḷḷākḷu', the būta replied. Balavāṇḍi responded, 'He is not your uḷḷākḷu, but mine!' The two quarrelled, and, finally, Balavāṇḍi said, 'Never get in my way! If I kick you, you will be seriously injured'. Pilicāmuṇḍi retorted, 'Well, if I kick you, you will be split into two!' 'Let us see how you go', Balavāṇḍi said, drawing three lines on the ground with his sword. 'If you cross these lines, you will receive the curse of the Manjunatha god in the Kadri Temple'. Balavāṇḍi then went back to the nēma.

After some time, Pilicāmuṇḍi managed to cover the three lines in Bolinji Guḍḍe with leaves and then went directly to Kinnimajālu, hiding himself in a field in front of the shrine. Bale Semita, the head of the second guttu house, happened to come to that field shortly thereafter to harvest bananas for Balavāṇḍi. Pilicāmuṇḍi kicked him, killing him instantly. After hearing of this incident, Balavāṇḍi called on Pilicāmuṇḍi: 'If you are so powerful, then bring him back to life. After that, make my sword in Balolli Nadu fall into my courtyard!' 'If I do that, what will you do for me?' Pilicāmuṇḍi asked. 'Now, the nēma is held for two nights; one is for me and the other is for Arasu. We will add a third night for you. In addition, we will give you the right to respond to people's consultations'. Accepting this challenge, Pilicāmuṇḍi made quick work of bringing Bale Semita back to life and making the sword fall into the courtyard. Thereafter, Balavāṇḍi, Arasu, and Pilicāmuṇḍi were known as the 'three uḷḷākḷu on one couch' (*mūve rullākulu oṅgi mañcāvudu ulleru*). A new shrine to Pilicāmuṇḍi was also built on the hilltop.

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This pāḍdana shows how Pilicāmuṇḍi came to be enshrined in the būta shrine in Perar. As already seen, among the būtas enshrined there, the status of Pilicāmuṇḍi is rather unique. Unlike Balavāṇḍi who appeared in Perar itself, or Arasu and Bramma who were invited there, Pilicāmuṇḍi arrived uninvited in Perar and then had trouble with Balavāṇḍi. Accepting Balavāṇḍi's challenge, the būta showed his power and earned the right to be worshipped in this land. Among the promises that Balavāṇḍi made Pilicāmuṇḍi in the pāḍdana, 'the right to respond to people's consultations' is especially significant. In the nēma, the ritual for Arasu is held on the first night and that for Balavāṇḍi is held the following day from midnight to dawn; the longest ritual, from dawn to the afternoon on the final day, is for Pilicāmuṇḍi. On the same day, there is a ritual called vāku piripuni, in which devotees consult Balavāṇḍi and Pilicāmuṇḍi about various problems and receive their judgement. 'The right to respond to people's consultations' accounts for the role of Pilicāmuṇḍi in this ritual.

This section has outlined the pāḍdana focusing on the royal būtas in Perar. We now turn to the pāḍdana regarding the relationship between the guttus and the deities, focusing on the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu and the Alake guttu.

The pāddana on the deities and guttu families

The Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu and the deities

About a thousand years ago, the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu, like the other guttus in South Kanara, belonged to the Jain community. A woman called Koratāi Balardi was the last descendant of this Jain family. When Balavāṇḍi and Arasu changed themselves into humans and visited her house, she was in charge of the whole family. She asked her servant to bring them a glass of milk, and the guests drank it. Then she went into the house to bring them betel nuts. When she came outside again, the guests had disappeared. She called to them, but heard only a strange voice from the other end of the house: ‘Oh!’ She approached and called again, but the same voice replied this time from the kambuḷa field: ‘Oh!’ She was surprised and began to wonder who the guests had been. Although she could have asked their identity when they came to the house, this would have been impolite. If guests did not volunteer their identities, the host could only ask them after providing them food and drink.

That night, the guests appeared in her dream and said, ‘We are daivas. We need a shrine in this village. We have already chosen the place’. Balavāṇḍi added, ‘We have appeared at Kinnimajāḷu. With the help of the sixteen households we have visited, together with the whole village, you should build us a shrine and worship us’. Following these orders, Koratāi Balardi built the village būta shrine and organised the nēma. Since she had no children, she received a brother and sister from a Baṇṭa family in Gurupura, who succeeded her in the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu.

Alake guttu and the origin of the mukkāldi

About 800 years ago, there was a house called Kukkunja, the sub-guttu (ul-aguttu) of the Alake guttu family. All the guttu houses were Jain, but then a Baṇṭa brother and sister from a clan called Kundarannāya came to live in Kukkunja. One day, the sister visited the main Alake guttu house. When the guttu people asked her identity, she told them her clan, even though her brother had told her not to tell anybody this secret. When she revealed their clan’s name, the brother, who had been working outside, was suddenly possessed by Balavāṇḍi. The deity had been searching for someone belonging to the Kundarannāya clan to serve her as mukkāldi, since this would adhere to the custom of matriliney called *aliyakattu* [aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu]. The Jain guttu family eventually bequeathed to the brother and sister their land and title. After this, the guttu was passed on to the sister’s children, and their family assumed the title of Alake guttu and the status of mukkāldi.

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These oral epics show the relationship between the būtas and the Muṇḍabeṭṭu and Alake guttu families. It is said that the guttus who governed the land when the people started their relations with the deities were

Jains. Today, however, 12 of the 16 guttu families in Perar are Baṅṭa. Each of these 12 families is said to have inherited its title and status from a Jain family who had relinquished them and the land. In the case of the Muṇḍabetṭu guttu, it is said that Balavāṇḍi selected the estate owned by a Jain family as ‘the first guttu’. After that, the Baṅṭa brother and sister adopted by Koratāi Balardi succeeded to this estate as well as the guttu title. In the case of the Alake guttu, it is said that Balavāṇḍi first selected the clan called Kundarannāya to undertake the role of the mukkāldi. A brother and sister of this clan then inherited the title of guttu along with the estate from the Jain family.

It is noteworthy that in both cases the ancestors who are said to have succeeded to the title of guttu were a ‘brother and sister’. As we will see in Part Two in more detail, in the matrilineal Baṅṭa community, the tie between brothers and sisters is very important. Brothers assume the role of head of the family as well as ritual roles such as gaḍipatināru and mukkāldi. This role and status are then inherited by his sister’s son. Meanwhile, the estate and deities worshipped by the family (kuṭumada būta) are passed on from the sister to her children. To this day, the Baṅṭa community still maintains this system of matrilineal inheritance. It is a system based on the ties between brothers and sisters, as well as on būta worship, which enables the maintenance of the kuṭuma as a whole.

As we have seen in this chapter, pāḍḍanas are stories about the original relationships between humans and deities, especially about the relationships between the guttu families and the royal būtas. Referred to as ‘matters of history’ by villagers, these serve to warrant each family’s status and the relations among families in the village. Pāḍḍanas are not holy scriptures, but oral epics that are spread and passed down through ritual performance. Since there is always a possibility for a pāḍḍana to be slightly changed in a performance, its contents regarding the ranks and roles of the families often become points of controversy among villagers.

It is also interesting that most of the pāḍḍanas examined in this chapter contain episodes that show the mystic power of the būtas, with deities vanishing (*māya āpuni*) or making someone disappear (*māya maḷpuni*). This suggests that in the human–būta relationship, the coming of būtas is always followed by their disappearance; people perceive that the vanishing of a deity who has appeared as an actual being demonstrates that it fundamentally belongs not to the realm of jōga, but to the realm of māya.

The relationship between the deities and people described in the pāḍḍana is not only sung as oral epics. In the nēma in Perar, it is also partially performed by the mukkāldi, the dancer-mediums, and the heads of the guttus. The people participating in the nēma thus experience the mutual transactional relationship with the būtas through ritual performance, as we will see in the next chapter.

Notes

- 1 The oral epics recorded in this chapter are based on the stories narrated by Gangādara Rai (interviewed on 3 July 2008), Bālākrishna Shetty (interviewed on 2 July 2008), and Narasouna Pejattāya (interviewed on 21 July 2008). As discussed in Chapter 8, part of the pāddana regarding the village būta shrine in Perar was recorded and edited into a Kannāḍa pamphlet by folklorists. I have also referred to this pamphlet.
- 2 Brammabermeru is another name for Bramma. This deity is also called Nāgabramma.
- 3 A vow made to perform certain rituals or to offer gifts to deities is called *parake* (Upadhyaya 1988–1997, p. 1934). In matrilineal communities such as those of the Baṅṅa, a maternal uncle often makes a vow praying for the birth of a child for his sister.
- 4 Varaha was the standard 3.4-gram gold coin in the Vijayanagara period.
- 5 Bernoṭṭu guttu is another name for the Brāṅabeṭṭu guttu. Similarly, the Muṅḍabeṭṭu guttu is also referred to as the Muṅḍoṭṭu guttu.
- 6 Today the 13th guttu is Kuḍubi.
- 7 There is a shrine to Bramma in Kaje, and the deity is called Manibottu Brammēru.
- 8 Kandettāya is one of the five būtas one rank below the three royal būtas.

5 Dances, oracles, and blessings in the ritual

The *nēma* starts on the night of the full moon in the month of *māyi* and is held for three days and three nights. In the *nēma*, the people and the *būtas*, incarnated in dancer-mediums, interact in several rituals. The ritual process provides us many clues regarding how to consider the question presented in Chapter 1, that is, how people create their lives and *umwelt* through encounters with nonhuman others. In this chapter, I will describe the process of the *nēma* in detail, in order to provide a basis for the theoretical analysis in the next chapter.¹ I will focus on the performances of the Pambada dancer-mediums, of the *mukkāldi*, and of the *guttu* heads in the rituals for *Balavāṇḍi*, *Arasu*, and *Pilicāmuṇḍi*. The *nēma* consists primarily of five main rituals: from the previous night to the next morning, there is a ritual called *pūve*, in which a flag is hoisted at the village *būta* shrine; from the first night to the next morning, there are rituals for *Arasu* and *Balavāṇḍi* (*puṇṇame*); on the second night, there are rituals for *Jumādi* and *Baṇṭa*; from dawn to the afternoon on the third day, there is a ritual for *Pilicāmuṇḍi* and *vāku piriṇuni*; and on the final night, there is a ritual involving taking down the flag (*koḍi jāṇuni*).

The day before the *nēma*

One day prior to the *nēma*, ritual workers build a wooden gate on the north side of the village *būta* shrine. This is the starting point for the rituals. Everyone and everything concerned with the *nēma* is supposed to enter the shrine precincts through this gate. In the evening of that day, worshippers hold a ritual called *padiari pattuni*. In this ritual, the *mukkāldi* gives 5 *sēru* of rice to *Jayānanda Pambada*, the dancer-medium of *Pilicāmuṇḍi*, and grants him permission to perform in the *nēma*.²

Now, it is 10 pm in the village. The beginning of the *nēma* is just a few hours away. Amid the shadows of the night, every building in the precinct sparkles with decorative illuminations. Several children, set to attend a ritual called *kañciḷ bali* later tonight, sit in the northern corridor with their mothers, who straighten the children's clothes and put jasmine flowers in the girls' hair. Some people chat in the outer garden as everyone waits for the ritual to begin.

Shortly after 1 am, a group of people carry the palanquin down a foot-path between the paddy fields. Fireworks explode into the sky, and drums and horns start to reverberate throughout the night air. Torches of fire and flashes of smoke pots light up the procession. Illuminated are the musicians playing the drums and horns, the guttu heads in their white clothes, and the many ritual workers carrying torches, big red and white umbrellas (*sattige*), a red banner (*naḍu cōṛṇa*), a silver umbrella (*bolgoḍe*), a silver mask (*muga*) of Pilicāmuṇḍi, a wooden couch (*katterimane*), and the palanquin with its various sacred objects. And when they all reach Baṅṭakamba, the horns blare to a crescendo.

The mukkāldi possessed by Balavāṇḍi is suddenly shaking all over. His eyes go wide, his limbs stiffen. He holds a silver sword (*kaḍsale*) and bell (*māḍa*) in each hand. Strings of jasmine flowers hang over his chest, nearly reaching his long white loincloth with its silver belt. A Maḍḍyele worker holding the long pole of the silver umbrella now also finds his skinny body trembling all over uncontrollably. The būtas are here. Shivering of the body is the most conspicuous sign of possession by a deity.

After a while, the party then starts out from Baṅṭakamba to the village būta shrine. A white cow (*basava*), a symbol of auspiciousness, is led through the ritual gate by two of the men. Ordinary villagers gather around the ritual gate and gaze at this procession. Women hide behind the crowd for fear of being seen by the mukkāldi possessed by Balavāṇḍi (Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi). Balavāṇḍi, who is believed to be androgynous, is said to become jealous of women when she sees them.³ Though she likewise becomes somewhat jealous of men when she sees them, it is especially prohibited for women especially to come within view of Balavāṇḍi, since the deity will become particularly enraged if she sees them. The procession passes through the ritual gate, marches around the shrine clockwise, and enters the precincts.

At 3 am, a white flag is raised on a flagpole in front of the Brama guṇḍa. The asrāṇṇa offers a votive light at the Brama guṇḍa, māḍa, and koḍiyāḍi (altar). The ritual called *tuḍara bali* then begins. Accompanied by the sounds of instruments, the mukkāldi, the guttu heads, and the carriers of the sacred objects walk around the koḍiyāḍi, māḍa, and Brama guṇḍa nine times. After this ritual, the dressed-up children come before the altar while their fathers and brothers carry votive lights. Following their male kin with their offerings to the būtas, the children walk around the altar and māḍa holding areca flowers. This ritual is called *kañciḷ bali* and is held for the children's health and for the resolution of family problems. At 5 am, after a dialogue (*nuḍikaṭṭu*) between the gaḍipatināṛu and Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi, the gaḍipatināṛu hands three coconuts to the mukkāldi, who then pours the coconuts' water on the ground.⁴ With this performance, the rituals stretching from the previous night to the dawn of the first day of the nēma come to a close.

The rituals to Arasu and Balavāṇḍi*The ritual to Arasu (the first half): gaggara decci*

By 8 pm on the first day of the nēma, the corridor of the village būta shrine is already filled with crowds of devotees. Most of them first visit the Bramma guṇḍa and pray in front of it. They throw money into an offertory box and receive prasāda from the Maḍḍyeḷ worker who guards the altar, which is surrounded by a thick curtain of white and orange flowers. Shining brilliantly on the altar covered with jasmine flowers are sacred objects such as the silver masks of Arasu and Pilicāmuṇḍi, Balavāṇḍi's sword, and silver statues of an elephant, a tiger, and Balavāṇḍi on a horse. On the north and south sides of the altar, there are two pedestals (*carva*) on which offerings are set.

Near the main entrance of the precinct, there is a wooden horse (*kudure*) and a big halo-like adornment called *aṇi* for Balavāṇḍi. A Pambada man sits cross-legged on the ground beside these objects making up his face under the fire of an oilcan. This man is Jayānanda Pambada, the dancer-medium of Arasu. A red cloth bound across his forehead holds his hair back as he carefully makes up his face to become the deity. He paints his face yellow and outlines the contour of his face from forehead to cheekbones to jaw with a lace-like design called *aruḍala*. He shades his eyes black. His eyebrows become arches from the bridge of his nose. His face thus made up, he holds up with both hands golden ornaments decorated with jasmine flowers to the fire of the oilcan for a moment, and then hangs these on his ears. He next puts on a red costume embroidered on the back with images of the sun and moon. He slips silver bangles onto his arms and wrists and places on his head a golden crown decorated with red *kēpla* [*Ixora coccinea*] flowers.

Meanwhile, under the canopy of the altar, the mukkāldi of Balavāṇḍi also prepares for the ritual. He wraps his hair in white cloth, prays to the altar, and picks up the bell. Horns suddenly reverberate throughout the precinct, and his body starts shaking. Receiving a burning torch from a Maḍḍyeḷ worker, the mukkāldi, who is now possessed by Balavāṇḍi, whirls the light in front of the altar. He starts walking around the altar and māḍa, and the guttu heads and other ritual workers follow him.

At 9 pm, the mukkāldi and Jayānanda face each other in front of the altar. Jayānanda holds *gaggara* (heavy flat bells) in both hands, and then his body starts trembling. Supported by his fellow Pambada, he puts the *gaggara* on his ankles and wraps a *tiri* (a skirt made of torn coconut leaves) around his waist. He steps forward and bows to the altar. The gaḍipatināru next places garlands of flowers around Jayānanda's neck, and the ritual workers light a fire on the *carva*. When the fire is lit, Jayānanda starts trembling all over and wriggling his upper body. Jayānanda possessed by Arasu (Jayānanda-Arasu) starts performing a dance called *gaggara dīpuni*, and then runs through the precinct with two torch-wielding Maḍḍyeḷ workers until he reaches the head of the Pejattāya, who sits in his seat for honoured guests. Jayānanda-Arasu steps lightly to the sounds of the horns, and he

starts talking to the Pejattāya head through gestures with his body and hands. He draws close to the Pejattāya head's face to look up at him, holds both his arms up in the air, and leans forward to catch his answers. All of these gestures are performed fluently as a part of the dance and steps. Jayānanda-Arasu next darts back to the altar and dances in front of the guttu heads according to their ranks. Through his facial expressions and gestures, he communicates with the guttu heads who stand up in respect and watch his every movement seriously.

Although these interactions between the devotees and the deity incarnated in the medium are relatively common in manner and process, the relationship between the gaḍipatināru and the deity is special. During the nēma, the gaḍipatināru occupies the position closest to every deity manifesting itself in the ritual. It is to the gaḍipatināru that the deity incarnated in the medium conveys her various requests and indications, and often this involves her communicating her dissatisfaction and anger over people's faults during the ritual. The gaḍipatināru follows the deity to respond to her every movement, treats her hospitably, and appeases her anger. Through their mutual interactions in the ritual, the gaḍipatināru and the deity incarnated in the medium create and embody the ideal relationship between būtas and devotees.

After dancing in front of the guttu heads, Jayānanda-Arasu dances facing the Pūjāri priests, who have been waiting near the wooden horse. He then runs through the precinct and dances lightly in front of the altar. As he steps to the sounds of the horns and spins pivoting on one foot, the tiri around his waist flares out from him and the gaggara around his ankles resound. Then he runs off again, weaving his way through the precinct. After again communicating to the guttu heads through gestures, he raises his hands beside his head as if to say good-bye, and then steps agilely around the precinct. After whirling many times, Jayānanda-Arasu seems about to fall on his back in front of the carva, but one of his brothers quickly catches hold of him. At that moment, all the music stops; only the lingering tone of a horn remains. Jayānanda remains held in his brother's arms for some time, before waking up and walking to a corner of the precinct. Only the sounds of his gaggara resonate now.

The ritual to Arasu (the second half): nēma decci

At 10 pm, soon after the gaggara dīpuni finishes, Jayānanda leans on a three-legged stool and starts singing the pāḍdana. Jayānanda's brother, who stands behind him, plays a drum hanging from his shoulder, and they each take turns singing phrases of the pāḍdana. Meanwhile, other Pambadas decorate the aṇi for Balavāṇḍi, while in front of the carva, under the fire of torches, three workers braid coconut fronds to make pieces called *maḍalu muḍepuni*, which symbolise farmland greenery. When the pāḍdana ends, people wander around the precinct in twos and threes, stopping occasionally at a canteen set in the field outside the shrine to have some snacks.

At 11 pm, the mukkāldi possessed by Balavāṇḍi walks around the precinct along with the guttu heads and ritual workers, and has a dialogue with the gaḍipatināru. Then Jayānanda, who stands in front of the mukkāldi, dons the costume of Arasu. Compared to the one for the previous ritual, this costume is heavily equipped. He drapes a purple cloth over his shoulders and his red upper garment, then adds a layer of red and green textile and blue cloth, and then drapes a red and gold textile on top of all of these. He next lifts a huge halo-like aṇi⁵ onto his back and ties it around his waist tightly. He also secures a semi-circular table called *jakkelaṇi* around his waist. To complete the costume, a long board (*kadar mudī*), on which the mask of Arasu is tied, is placed in the centre of the aṇi.

At 12 o'clock midnight, Jayānanda prays to the altar and receives a silver sword. To the sounds of horns, the guttu heads throw petals and grains of rice over him—at that moment, Jayānanda starts trembling all over. This is the start of the ritual called *nēma decci*. Jayānanda, carrying the big aṇi and holding the silver sword in his right hand and a bell in his left hand, turns slowly in front of the altar. As it is very difficult to turn by himself with such heavy and bulky adornments, several Pambadas hold up the back of the aṇi and the end of the *jakkelaṇi* to help him. Jayānanda-Arasu walks around the altar, goes to the head of the Pejattāya, turns in front of him, and comes back to the altar. With his sword raised overhead, Jayānanda-Arasu gives an oracle to the guttu heads. Each guttu head puts his palms together and listens attentively to the deity's words.

Jayānanda-Arasu then hands his sword and bell to one of the Maḍḍyele workers, receives a green coconut, and gives it to the gaḍipatināru with a blessing. He receives another coconut decorated with areca and kēpla flowers, picks off some of the petals and touches them to his forehead lightly, and throws these towards the guttu heads. The transfer of the coconut and petals shows the deity's blessings for the guttu heads and other devotees. After rinsing his hands with water, Jayānanda-Arasu takes up his sword and bell again. Shaking the bell, he trembles all over furiously, and when a horn reverberates, he suddenly stops moving as though he has breathed his last.

The ritual for Balavāṇḍi (the first half): gaggara dīpuni

A little after 1 am, a youth with a dark red cloth on his shoulders and a red and green loincloth starts roaming the precinct. His tanned, angular face is distorted and black hair falls in waves onto his shoulders. A hush falls over the hundreds in the precinct, with only his roar of 'Whoa-ee!' periodically breaking the silence. The ritual called *enne detonuni*, in which Balavāṇḍi incarnated in Yatish Pambada receives sacred oil, has begun. Yatish-Balavāṇḍi walks back and forth, dances waving a bronze plate in his hand, and runs to a Maḍḍyele worker waiting near the carva. As soon as the Maḍḍyele splashes sacred oil from a mud pot onto him, Yatish-Balavāṇḍi runs out of the precinct on the wings of the wind.

After some time, Yatish-Balavāṇḍi, who has meanwhile finished bathing at a well near the treasure house, runs back into the precinct with awful roar. Several Pambada workers immediately run to him, put the strap of a drum onto his shoulder, and give him a drumstick. When Jayānanda, who has by that time undressed himself and removed his make-up, starts singing the pāḍdana, Yatish-Balavāṇḍi, his body stiffening, starts playing the drum. After a few minutes, Yatish-Balavāṇḍi suddenly starts off running towards the east, rushing into the crowd in the corridor. He then faints into the arms of the other Pambadas.

Around 2:30 am, Yatish-Balavāṇḍi, wearing the gaggara and a gorgeous colourful skirt over red trousers, dances in front of the guttu heads. Two hours later, Yatish-Balavāṇḍi, who wears an aṇi resembling the huge wings of a butterfly, starts singing the pāḍdana. He then dances around again in front of the guttu heads, who stand up to show their respect for the deity. After dancing, he prays to the altar. The Maḍḍyele splashes water onto him from a bronze pot. He then bows to the altar and returns to the corner of the precinct, the sounds of the gaggara reverberating as he goes.

The ritual for Balavāṇḍi (the second half): the fight with Bramma

A short while after 5 am, on a rush mat in a corner of the precinct, Yatish prepares to wear Balavāṇḍi's aṇi. His face has changed into that of an intrepid man with a thick black moustache. He puts several thick pieces of cloth over his shoulders, layered on top of his red costume, carries the huge aṇi that is double his height, and tightens its backboard against his upper body. Since the aṇi is worn with its base above his head, its top reaches about 4 metres from the ground. In contrast, the silver jakkelāṇi worn around his waist is small, with a radius of about 40 centimetres.

With the aṇi in place, Yatish faces Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi in front of the wooden horse. Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi walks over to Yatish, who is now leaning on a stool, and hands over to him via a Maḍḍyele worker a silver sword, the tail of a yak, and a silver stick (*birāvū*) decorated with jasmine flowers. When the guttu heads behind Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi lean forward and throw petals and grains of rice onto Yatish, he immediately begins trembling all over. At this moment, the power of Balavāṇḍi is believed to have transferred from the mukkāldi to Yatish.⁶

Getting up from his stool, Yatish shakes the huge aṇi and turns, creating a rush of wind. He steps and dances around the precinct lightly to the sounds of the drums and horns, the aṇi over his head swaying. Then he walks around the altar and māḍa with the guttu heads and other ritual workers. Several Pambadas walk along with him to support the backboard of the aṇi. After that, Yatish-Balavāṇḍi approaches the wooden horse covered with flowers, while dancing with a sword raised overhead. Assisted by other Pambadas, he clambers onto the back of this horse with the huge aṇi still on his back. A full blast of drums and horns blares, and the Pūjāri workers pull

with all their strength the pulley rope of the carriage of the wooden horse. The procession centring around Yatish-Balavāṇḍi on horseback moves towards the altar. Several Pambadas, balancing precariously on edge of the carriage, hold the back of the aṇi to prevent it from falling.

After marching around the precinct, Yatish-Balavāṇḍi stops in front of the Brama guṇḍa and starts performing the dance of fighting on horseback. He expresses his anger by brandishing the tale of a yak and shaking his upper body aggressively. In these movements, the garlands of jasmine flowers on the aṇi are torn and scattered all around. Trembling all over, Yatish-Balavāṇḍi repeats the action of tearing his moustache away in a glow of anger. This dance demonstrates the fight between Nādu and Brama in the pāḍdana.

After this dance, Yatish-Balavāṇḍi dismounts from the wooden horse and comes to the head of the Pejattāya. The day breaks and the precinct begins to fill with growing light. Yatish-Balavāṇḍi starts talking to the guttu heads with a voice full of life and rich intonations. He reminds them of the authority of the būtas, who have protected the village and its people, and of the importance of the customs and tradition (*kaṭṭu kaṭṭale*) that form the basis of the ritual. He also accuses the people of ritual failure and orders them to correct the errors of their ways. The guttu heads nod along with each word of Yatish-Balavāṇḍi and attempt to pacify his rage by responding with gestures.

At last, the ritual for Kandettāya, who is one of the followers of the royal būtas, is held. Yatish dances around for a few minutes holding a coconut with a fire lit on top of it. With this short performance, the ritual for Balavāṇḍi has finally come to an end.

The ritual for Pilicāmuṇḍi and vāku piripuni

Before the dawn of the last day of the nēma, several Pambadas begin preparing for the ritual, sitting on a rush mat in a dim corner of the precinct. Jayānanda, who performed the dance of Arasu in the previous ritual, is among them. He is making up his face carefully in order to become the dancer-medium of Pilicāmuṇḍi in the last and longest ritual of the nēma. At around the same time, to the sounds of drums and horns, the asrāṇṇa, musicians, and other ritual workers start climbing the long stairs on the hill behind the village būta shrine towards the Pilicāmuṇḍi shrine at the summit. When they arrive at the shrine, the asrāṇṇa conducts a ritual to Pilicāmuṇḍi. When this ritual is completed, they return to the foot of the hill and next perform a ritual to a wooden tiger, the vehicle of Pilicāmuṇḍi.

A short while after 7 am, when Pilicāmuṇḍi incarnated in Jayānanda (Jayānanda-Pilicāmuṇḍi) has finished performing the gaggara dīpuni and singing the pāḍdana, Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi walks with the guttu heads and other ritual workers around the precinct, halting when they reach the altar. Jayānanda, who wears an aṇi on his back, sits in front of the altar, facing

Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi, who raises a sword over his head. At that moment, a Maḍḍyeḷ worker ties onto the centre of Jayānanda's aṇi, so that it is surrounded by palm leaves, the mask of Pilicāmuṇḍi, its silver tongue thrust out. This ritual is called *muga pattuni* or *muga dīpuni*, and it is believed to be a vital moment: the moment when the būta śakti fills the precinct. The drums and horns resound throughout the precinct and Jayānanda-Pilicāmuṇḍi starts dancing with burning torches in his hands. While raising and lowering the torches rapidly, he dances and flaps his skirt of palm leaves. He then receives a sword, yak's tail, bell, and petals from the Maḍḍyeḷ. He puts the petals on his forehead lightly, strews them in front of him, and starts dancing again with the sword in his hand.

A little before 8 am, Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi, Jayānanda-Pilicāmuṇḍi, the guttu heads, and the ritual workers carrying the palanquin march around the altar and exit through the main gate of the precinct. They walk to the north side of the shrine and pass through the ritual gate one by one. As Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi and Jayānanda-Pilicāmuṇḍi pass through the gate, a ritual worker pours water from a mud pot onto their feet. They depart from the outer garden and march to Baṅṭakamba.

The ritual at Baṅṭakamba

By 8 am, the outer garden and precinct of Baṅṭakamba are filled with crowds. It is getting hotter, the strong sunshine reflecting off the ground. Under a big tree in the precinct, Jayānanda-Pilicāmuṇḍi leans on a stool with the aṇi, and the guttu heads stand straight beside him. In front of the small shrine, where it is believed that Nādu reappeared on the earth, Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi's possession reaches its climax. He walks up and down trembling all over, suddenly running in a flash to the small shrine, then raising the sword with a roar and striking it against his stomach.⁷

After Jayānanda-Pilicāmuṇḍi's dance and the dialogue with the guttu heads, the ritual enters a new stage: from possession and dances to oracles, blessings (*nuḍi korpuni*), and the deities' judgements. Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi, Jayānanda-Pilicāmuṇḍi, and the guttu heads stand under a big tree. In front of them, the devotees who desire the deities' blessings queue up in a long line.⁸ Those whose prayers to the deities have been answered also come to give the deity offerings such as jasmine flowers and a silver cradle as tokens of their gratitude. Both Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi and Jayānanda-Pilicāmuṇḍi give blessings to each devotee. The devotee then receives a smear of sandalwood paste on a betel leaf as prasāda from a Maḍḍyeḷ worker.

A short while after 10 am, the ritual called vākṇ piripuni starts in Baṅṭakamba.⁹ The people who need the deities' judgement now form a long line and face the deities one by one. The devotee first explains his problem, and then, raising the sword above his head, Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi states his view on the issue. He intones in a clear voice, often turning to the gaḍipatināru to get his agreement. After Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi's statement,

Jayānanda-Pilicāmuṇḍi also states his view on the issue. Though their statements often go in different directions, in most cases they eventually reach similar conclusions. After they receive these words from the deities, devotees receive prasāda and withdraw into background.

The sacrifice and blessing

A short while after 11 am, the long ritual of vāku piripuni finally concludes. At this time, led by the musicians, Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi, Jayānanda-Pilicāmuṇḍi, the guttu heads, and other ritual workers carrying sacred objects begin marching from Baṅṭakamba to the village būta shrine. The roadside is filled with crowds hoping to glimpse the deities. Before the procession starts, about a dozen Pūjāri youths wearing orange loincloths race from Baṅṭakamba to the shrine. When they reach the shrine, they start pulling the wooden horse's dragrope. Accompanied by the guttu heads and ritual workers, Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi and Jayānanda-Pilicāmuṇḍi then enter the precinct.

At around 1 pm, Jayānanda-Pilicāmuṇḍi leaves through the east gate of the shrine and enters the outer garden. When he sits down under the simple eaves there, ritual workers spread out a straw mat in front of him and place on it various offerings such as coconuts, palm wine, and bananas. This is a ritual called the *bārne*, in which food and drink are offered to the deity.¹⁰ Unlike for Arasu and Balavāṇḍi, who are believed to be vegetarians, fowls are offered for Pilicāmuṇḍi. For that reason, the *bārne* for Pilicāmuṇḍi is held not inside the precinct but in the outer garden. A short while before 3 pm, the *bārne* finishes and Jayānanda-Pilicāmuṇḍi comes back into the precinct. He raises a sword in his right hand, dances around the altar and māḍa, turning around in front of the Brahma guṇḍa, and then falls onto his back. The guttu heads surround Jayānanda-Pilicāmuṇḍi, now sitting with his legs stretched out and leaning against the aṇi on his back. Jayānanda-Pilicāmuṇḍi looks up at the guttu heads, holds the sword towards each of them, and gives them blessings. After a short while, Jayānanda puts on the slim mask of Paṅjurli (the deity of a wild boar) and then dances in front of the altar. With this dance, the ritual to Pilicāmuṇḍi, which started at dawn, finally draws to a close.

Ritual transactions between deities and people

As we have examined thus far, the intimate yet tense relationship between people and deities is condensed in the process of the nēma in Perar. In the nēma, the guttu heads interact with the būtas in various ways. The most significant form of their interaction is the mutual gifting between the guttu heads and the būtas. The guttus offer the deities a part of their farm products, which embody the fertile śakti, along with human labour and services. The deities receive and consume these offerings and, in return, give them

blessings to ensure their future prosperity. The *būtas* also request that the *nēma* be continued, and the *guttu* heads give them their word. Through this interaction, the agreement between the deities and the villagers, which is said to be based on the ancient pledge between Balavāṇḍi and Koratāi Balardi, is renewed.

This mutual gifting relationship between the villagers and *būtas* can be described as the transactional network (Appadurai & Breckenridge 1976, p. 195) of humans and deities. Through the mutual gifting in the ritual, deities and devotees are placed in a transactional network in which they make each other partners. The deity becomes the 'special person' who is the recipient as well as the sender of the gift, the core of the distribution of resources. Regarding the transactional network and the deity's personhood, a more detailed examination follows in the next chapter.

Through the interaction between the *būtas* and the *guttu* heads, the hierarchy of the *guttu* houses is publicly reconfirmed and renewed. The deity, incarnated in a dancer-medium, dances in front of each *guttu* head and calls the name of each house and property in order. The deity also gives blessings to the *guttu* heads according to their ranks. As I have discussed, the ranks of the main houses in Perar are based on the ritual hierarchy in *būta* worship. As such, the *nēma* gives the villagers an opportunity to manifest and performatively approve the ranks of these *guttus*.

As seen above, what is essential in the village *būta* ritual is the mutual interaction between the deities and the *guttu* heads and other villagers. The success of the *nēma* is thus judged on the following criteria: the deities smoothly possess the mediums and receive offerings from the *guttu* heads; both the deities and *guttu* heads renew the ancient pledge; and all the rituals are concluded with the deities' blessings. Through a process that demonstrates the intimate relationship between the *būtas* and the villagers, as sung in the *pāḍḍana*, the roles and statuses of the present *guttu* heads are approved, and the harmony of the entire village is secured.

In practice, however, the ritual always involves instability and crisis. *Būta* worship in general is based on the customary law called *kaṭṭu*. *Kaṭṭu* indicates conventional law as a whole, and it determines every ritual practice in detail. The details of the *kaṭṭu* regarding *būta* worship are said to be known to only a few people such as the *gaḍipatināru* and *mukkāldi*. Moreover, the *kaṭṭu* here involves not only concrete rules regarding ritual practices, but also people's proper attitudes and devotion concerning *būta* worship.

Though each ritual is supposed to be conducted in accordance with the *kaṭṭu*, in reality, some changes or unanticipated failures often occur during the ritual. Some of these changes and failures are called out by the deity incarnated in a medium as mistakes that cannot be disregarded. The deity censures the *guttu* heads harshly and orders them to conduct the ritual properly, based on the *kaṭṭu*. In the *būta* ritual in Perar, it is mainly the role of *Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi* to indict the villagers for their ritual mistakes. When the *gaḍipatināru* and other ritual workers break the customary law

or neglect their duties, Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi warns that he will not merely no longer protect them, but will actively cause them misfortune (*būtoda upadro*). For example, in a ritual held in the second guttu's house, Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi expressed fierce anger, and accused the devotees of ritual mistakes and in-fighting:

Until yesterday, I raised my sword and blessed Perra [the old name of Perar]. But you have made me break the ancient promise [to protect the village and its people]. Never think that I am a deity who breaks the kaṭṭu ... I am the governing deity. If you break this promise, I will show you!

(23 August 2009)

In oracles, the deity often uses euphemistic expressions, and thus his/her intentions are interpreted in myriad ways. For example, although in this oracle, Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi did not state clearly what he thought was the problem, the villagers conjectured that the deity was expressing his anger about the disputes over the management of the village būta shrine. As shown in this oracle, the relationships between people and būtas are not always one of intimate, mutual appreciation and blessings; often it is a risky interaction, invoking fear and anxiety. While the roles and statuses of the guttus are based on customary law, they are not permanently guaranteed, but rather depend on the judgements of the deities. Thus, people always anticipate the būtas' anger and have developed skills for soothing it so that they might re-establish the proper relationship.

As I have mentioned before, the rights and duties given to the people concerning the būta ritual are called adikāra. Based on the above investigation, we find that the devotees desire and execute the adikāra based on the approval of the deities; at the same time, the deities often give the adikāra to devotees compulsorily or deprive them of the adikāra. Meanwhile, through the villagers' entreaties in the nēma that the būtas bless and protect them in exchange for their devotion, the būtas' supreme authority over them is confirmed and approved in public. This means that the villagers verify and reinforce the būta's adikāra towards them.

In the būta ritual, the guttu heads and other villagers are granted rights and statuses in exchange for their ritual services. However, their rights and statuses are kept unstable, since the būtas' supreme authority is regarded as the ultimate source of all entitlement. In this sense, būta worship cannot be interpreted merely as a way to justify and stabilise the prestige of the ruling class in village society (e.g. Gowda 2005). The būta ritual certainly provides particular rights and interests to the devotees, but at the same time, it always reminds them that these rights and interests are never permanent but are tentatively granted to them only through their negotiation with the būtas.

This reminder seems to be an important reason why people continue to strive to conduct the būta ritual, to give offerings to the būtas, and to

interact with the deities to reconfirm and actualise their own adikāra performatively. As we will see in Chapters 12 and 13, this is a vital point to keep in mind when we analyse the complex situation in which people who have widely varying interests in their daily lives nonetheless share the position of būta devotee and temporarily create a ritual community through participation in the būta ritual.

Notes

- 1 The description of the nēma in this chapter is based primarily on participant observation of the annual ritual in the Perar būta shrine from 11 to 13 March 2009.
- 2 According to Jayānanda, he brings the rice and spices received from the mukkāldi to his home. He and his family offer chicken and roti made from the rice to the deity and eat them.
- 3 Since Balavāṇḍi has feminine aspects, saris and jasmine flowers are offered to this deity in the nēma.
- 4 Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi has very little food or drink offered to him. He is said to receive only the 'air' of offerings. This act of pouring the coconut water on the ground shows that he has received it as an offering.
- 5 This aṇi is said to be made of 1,001 coconut leaf bones.
- 6 This is expressed in Tuḷu that '*patti māneccidū jōga battuḍu kaṭṭina māneccidū āpe* (the possession by taking the sword is transferred to the one who is tying [gaggara or aṇi])'.
- 7 This ritual is called *suriya pāḍonuni*.
- 8 During the ritual, only men can enter the precinct of Baṇṭakamba. Women gather outside the Baṇṭakamba and observe the ritual carefully.
- 9 The original meaning of vāku piripuni is 'removing āja'. Āja means that a person who disputes with one of his/her relatives makes a vow that his/her descendants will never contact with the descendants of the opponent. If the descendants break the vow, it is believed that a curse will fall on them. Vāku piripuni is the ritual to abrogate the vow in front of deity and reconstruct the relationship between the relatives (see Upadhyaya 1988–1997, p. 2791).
- 10 This ritual is also called '*kaṭṭu-kaṭṭuleda āvāra* (offering food according to the custom)'.

6 The transaction of wild *śakti*

In the previous chapters, I have described the basic components of the experiential *umwelt* of the villagers in Perar, which is based on their relationship with the land, nature, and deities: that is, houses, ranks, and ritual organization; the oral epics that narrate the history of *būta* worship; and the ritual process of the *nēma*. In this chapter, I will examine the transactional network formed performatively between the villagers and deities, focusing on their interaction in ritual processes. More specifically, I will mainly examine the following topics: the characteristics of the network formed through the interactions between devotees and *būtas* incarnated in mediums, the relationship between deities and villagers who participate in reciprocal transactions, and the circulation of forces and substances in the transactional network. Referring to previous studies on gift-exchange, substance-code, and personhood (Appadurai & Breckenridge 1976; Marriott 1976; Marriott & Inden 1977; Strathern 1988, 1996), I will investigate the ritual transactions between people and deities. In addition, referring to previous studies on purity, pollution, and *śakti* (e.g. Tanaka 1997; Sekine 2002), I will consider the features of the wild *śakti* circulating between deities and humans.

Transaction, dividuality, and the network in South Asia

In his essay ‘Hindu Transactions: Diversity without Dualism’ published in 1976, Marriott describes South Asian society as ‘an elaborate transactional culture, characterized by explicit, institutionalized concern for givings and receivings of many kinds in kinship, work, and worship’ (Marriott 1976, p. 109). He also proposes that South Asian personhood is characteristically ‘dividual’:

Persons—single actors—are not thought in South Asia to be ‘individual’, that is, indivisible, bounded units, as they are in much of Western social and psychological theory as well as in common sense. Instead, it appears that persons are generally thought by South Asians to be ‘dividual’ or divisible.

(Marriott 1976, p. 111)

According to Marriott, dividual persons absorb various material influences and emit particles of their own ‘coded substances’—essences, residues, or other active influences—to others.¹ They engage in transfers of bodily substance-codes through parentage, marriage, provision of services, and other kinds of interpersonal contact. As a result, ‘Dividual persons, who must exchange in such ways, are therefore always composites of the substance-codes that they take in’ (1976: 111).

Around the same time, Appadurai and Breckenridge (1976) also published an article describing the personhood of Hindu deities and the ‘transactional network’ involving humans and deities. According to Appadurai and Breckenridge, rather than as a mere image or symbol, the deity in a south Indian temple is conceived of more as a person who is both sentient and corporeal (1976, p. 190). Through worship and offerings, devotees enter into an ‘active transactional relationship’ with the deity, which initiates a process of redistribution. The devotees conduct transactions with the deity as a ‘special person’:

At one normative level, the deity ... commands resources (i.e., services and goods) such as those which are necessary and appropriate for the support and materialization of the ritual process described above. But these resources are not merely authoritatively commanded and received by the deity. On receipt, they are redistributed in the form of shares (*pañku*) to the royal courtiers, the donor (*yajamāna*), and worshippers at large. The authority to command and redistribute resources places the deity at the center of a *transactional nexus* in which the deity is expected to be generous. Ritual which constitutes worship provides the schematic and elementary unit in which to observe *the transactional network* where first the deity and subsequently the donor are the object of gifting activity.

(1976, p. 195; emphasis added)

As presented by Appadurai and Breckenridge (1976), this argument has close similarities to that of Marriott (1976). If Marriott’s ideas of dividual personhood and substance-code are applied to the account of Appadurai and Breckenridge, it can be said that both the devotees and the deity are dividual persons engaged in the exchange of their substance-codes as ‘gifts’ for each other in a transactional network that enchains them.² As we will see later in the case of *būta* worship, the substance-codes gifted by devotees to deities are offerings, while those given by deities are śakti and blessings, distributed among devotees in the form of *prasāda* (blessed offerings from the altar). On this point, Marriott (1976, pp. 110, 113) describes particles of substance-codes as constantly in circulation, just as power—present in various objects such as persons, gods, and land—flows everywhere. Thus, along with offerings, which are composites of various social relations, power circulates in transactional networks between humans and deities.

Before we consider this point more closely, it is worth considering Strathern's ideas about how persons, hybridity, and networks are presented (1988, 1996). The notion of 'dividual persons' presented by Marriott in the 1970s has spread beyond South Asian social contexts, yet most discussions have focused on individual–dividual dichotomy issues, assuming correspondence with a dichotomy between Western and non-Western personhood, or have made cross-cultural comparisons of conceptualisations of the 'person' (e.g. Busby 1997; Rasmussen 2008; Mosko 2010; Smith, FM 2006; Smith, K 2012). As we will see below, by discussing the disposition of dividual persons in networks that both link and sever social relations, Strathern presents an original analytical lens beyond the cultural-relativistic view of personhood.

Hybrid personhood in transactions, or how to cut the network

Strathern (1988) notably applied Marriott's notion 'dividual person' in her analysis of Melanesian society. In *The Gender of the Gift* (1988), she wrote, 'Melanesian persons are as dividentally as they are individually conceived ... Indeed, persons are frequently constructed as the plural and composite site of the relationships that produced them' (p. 13). Her remarks certainly recall Marriott's insistence that dividual persons are always composites of the substance-codes that they take in through transactions (1976, p. 111).

Later, in her 1996 essay 'Cutting the Network', Strathern elaborates her notion of the (dividual) person in Melanesia by applying the concepts of 'hybrid' and 'network' originally developed by actor–network theorists (e.g. Latour 1993; Warnier 1995). Using de Coppet's ethnography of the 'Aré'aré of the Solomon Islands (in Barraud et al. 1994, pp. 40–65), Strathern illustrates the hybridity of humans in this society. According to de Coppet, the 'Aré'aré divide living creatures into three elements: body, breath, and image. Upon death, the person decomposes into these: the body, the product of others' nurturing, is eaten as taro; breath is taken away in the breath of slaughtered pigs; and the image becomes the ancestor (Strathern 1996, pp. 525–526). Strathern thus argues that the living human being is a 'hybrid' person and, moreover, each of the three components is also a person.³ She writes:

I use the term 'person' since the human being is also conceived as an aggregation of relations; it can take the form of an object available for consumption by those others who compose it. In these acts of consumption, the person is, so to speak, hybridized, dispersed among a network of others.

(Strathern 1996, p. 526)

Here Strathern's main concern, however, is *not* how a network composed of both human and nonhuman persons extends itself, but how its extension

can be controlled or cut. In the Solomon Islands, shell money, which embodies the image of the deceased, plays an important role. In essence, an item of shell money has circulatory power because other entities, events, and products are converted into it: past encounters and relationships circulate in condensed form in its ‘body’. At death, there is a finalising sequence of exchanges in which the two other components of the living human, body and breath, are converted into money (Barraud et al. 1994, pp. 53–54). The ancestor-image eventually encompasses the others, and the sequence stops at that point. ‘Money thus becomes the repository or container of prior interchanges’ (Strathern 1996, p. 526).

Strathern’s close investigation of de Coppet’s ethnography of the ‘Aré’aré (including marriage and kinship systems in Melanesia, which are beyond the scope of this chapter) yields several important axioms regarding hybridity and networks: the hybrid is an amalgam of social relations (Strathern 1996, p. 527); networks—either homogeneous or heterogeneous—constructed through transactions must have limits; and the protocols for creating networks of varying lengths have different capacities for sustaining, reversing, or stopping flow (pp. 523, 528–529). This analysis enables Strathern to identify a problem with the analytical networks of actor–network theory, which are basically regarded as limitless (1996, p. 523). Contrary to the network as conceived by some actor–network theorists, Strathern’s network has a certain length and thus can be cut at some point.⁴

The above argument can be reconsidered from the perspective of the Gestaltkreis theory examined in Chapter 1: the transactional network is performatively formed through the interactions of both human and nonhuman actors; at the same time, it forms a cyclical circle, or Kreis, through the circulation of substances within the network. In other words, the transactional network describes its boundary through its motion, while it is performatively formed through the flow of substance-codes.

As we will see below, in *būta* worship in South Kanara, the transactional network which links humans, deities, and land and nature is formed through the circulation of offerings that embody the fertility of the land and blessings that manifest the wild śakti. At the same time, the network performatively creates the boundary which marks social as well as geographical borders.⁵ Moreover, through transactions of substance-codes, the participants of the transactional network (re)create their ways of being in relation to their human and nonhuman partners. Next, I will investigate in more detail the transactional network between the *būtas* and villagers in Perar.

Ritual transaction, dividual persons, and the circulation of śakti

First, I examine the *kambuḷa* ritual described in Chapter 2, which is dedicated to the *būtas* and organised by the first guttu of Perar. By analysing the interactions between *būtas* and humans in the *kambuḷa* ritual in terms

of individual persons, hybridity, and the network, I attempt to show how the circulation of substance-codes between the human realm and the wild is the flow of *life itself*, the basis of the villagers' lives.

As seen in Chapter 2, the whole ritual process can be understood as the circulation of *būta śakti* from the wild forests and hills (*guḍḍe*) to the cultivated field. The wild and fertile power of the deities, manifested in the buffalo *būtas*, is summoned by Subba. Through his invocation of the *būtas* in the *būta* territory of the wild mountain, Subba himself partly embodies their wild and fertile power. This power, concomitant with Subba's journey, first flows into the *manjotti* field and is distributed among the male members of the *Maṅṣa* family. Then the power of the *būtas*, which is expressed in Subba (metaphorically) as well as in the living buffalo (metonymically), finally flows into the *kambuḷa* field as the 'bride'. The *kambuḷa* field is filled with the *būtas*' power, and later this power is transformed into the paddy in the field.

In this ritual, the power or substance-code of the buffalo circulates in the network, linking the wild with the agricultural fields. Hence, the buffalo can be regarded as a 'dividual person' who is involved in, as well as constitutes, the transactional network. Subba, as an interim priest, works as a medium, or carrier of the power, of the buffalo-*būta*-person. At the same time, his movements guide the flow of this power by leading it first into the *manjotti*, then into the *kambuḷa* field, and finally into the young paddy, which he plants by hand. Correspondingly, at harvest time, Subba is the first person to cut the rice in this field. At this moment the *būta*'s power, which had been transferred into the land and produced paddy, returns to the people through Subba. Here, Subba acts as 'both container and channel, blocking flow and bodying it forth' (Strathern 1996, p. 528). And the paddy produced in the *kambuḷa* field can be understood as a hybrid composed of the wild *būta śakti*, human labour and service, and the kin relations of the first *guttu* family.

Next, focusing on the *nēma*, let us examine the process of the circulation and redistribution of the wild *śakti* personified in various forms such as human mediums, farm products, and *prasāda*.

As seen in Chapter 5, during the ritual, the devotees interact with the deities incarnated in the *Baṅṭa* priest and *Pambada* dancer-mediums. The most significant and repeated form of their interaction is the mutual gifting between the *guttu* heads and the deities. In the yearly ritual, the *guttus* offer the deities a part of their farm products such as paddy, coconuts, and areca nuts, which embody the fertile power of the deities, the labour and service of humans, and the social relations in the village. The deities receive and consume these offerings,⁶ and they in return give oracles and blessings to ensure the future prosperity of the whole village. Finally, some of the offerings are redistributed as *prasāda* among the devotees. Through this ritual process, concentrated in the farm products, offerings, and *prasāda*, the *būta śakti* flows and circulates in the transactional network, which is part of the more extensive network between humans and deities, as illustrated in Figure 6.1:

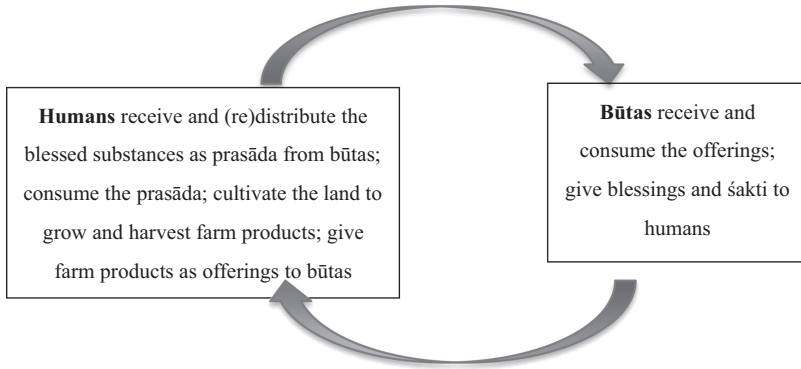


Figure 6.1 The transactional network between humans and būtas.

The farm products and prasāda, which embody the wild śakti and crystallise people's vital activities, are thus produced through the transaction between humans, deities, land, and nature; at the same time, they support and enable the reproduction of people's lives.

In these transactions, the offerings and their transformed substances, prasāda—regarded as the substance-codes of humans and deities, that is, hybrid 'persons'—are consumed and thus dispersed among the network (Strathern 1996, p. 526). Similar to the role of Subba in the kambuḷa ritual, here the būta mediums act as carriers of the būtas' power, and at the same time, their movements induce and direct the flow of the substance-codes. Likewise, the būtas and devotees are regarded as dividual persons who exchange their substance-codes with each other; or to use Strathern's words, they act as the 'turning point for directing the flow of fertility back' (Strathern 1996, p. 528).

Both in the kambuḷa and the nēma, the flow of substance-codes is primarily personified in and directed by the medium, the priest, or both. It is also noteworthy that the extension of the transactional network is limited by the rights and affiliations of both the humans and the deities (see Strathern 1996, p. 525). For the humans, the extension of the circulation and (re)distribution of substance-codes as prasāda is restricted to members who have the right and duty to enter into transactional relations with the deities (moreover, the flow and (re)distribution process of substance-codes is ordered according to the rank and sex of the participants⁷). For the deities, the extension of the circulation of substance-codes as offerings is limited to those deities worshipped by the main patrons of the ritual, that is, the būtas affiliated with or personifying the power of a particular house, plot of land, or guḍḍe. Therefore, for instance, in the ritual held at the family level, offerings are presented to the būtas affiliated with the family's land, and prasāda is distributed among the members of the family. Meanwhile,

in the case of the *nēma*, offerings are presented to the deities enshrined in the village shrine, and the *gaḍipatināru*, the heads of the *guttu*s, and other villagers responsible for the primary ritual services have priority regarding receiving *prasāda*.

Nevertheless, neither the extent of the transactional network nor the order of the distribution of substance-codes is permanent; rather, they are performatively formed through ritual practice. Therefore, as we will see in Chapter 8, the traditional order is often altered by new outsiders joining, and this results in disputes among the ritual participants. At the same time, as we will see in Chapters 8, 12, and 13, by joining in a newly formed transactional process, a new ritual community can be created among people with various backgrounds and intentions.

From the above description, it is clear that the ritual transactions and flow of substance-codes in the transactional network performatively link the participants, both human and nonhuman, and at the same time set the boundaries separating the people according to their affiliations and the *būtas* according to their identification with particular territories.

The importance of the boundary or limit of the transactional network corresponds to the importance of the boundary of a person directly interacting with the deities. Namely, as we will see in Chapter 7, in the *būta* ritual, a *Pambada* medium transforms himself through an exchange of perspectives with a deity, while he strives to maintain his boundary as a *person* to avoid the complete loss of himself. In other words, how to maintain one's boundary as a person becomes a serious question, because one has to interact with others not as an autonomous individual, but as a *dividual* person (see Gell 1995; Laidlaw 2000, pp. 629–631).⁸

I will next investigate more closely the characteristics of the wild *śakti*, the most important substance-code circulating in the transactional network.

Untamed śakti in the *būta* ritual

Wild śakti and ritual pollution

As seen in Chapter 2, *būta* worship is deeply related to the forests and hills called *guḍḍe*, and some wild animals dwelling in the *guḍḍe* are regarded as higher-ranked *būtas*. Likewise, the wild *śakti* flowing in the *guḍḍe* is the most important substance-code that circulates in the transactional network between humans and deities. I will first examine the characteristics of *śakti* in *būta* worship in terms of purity and pollution.

In previous studies on Hindu rituals in India, divine power or *śakti* has been uniquely related to the notions of 'purity' and 'pollution'. Namely, it is regarded that in the dualistic relation of purity and impurity, purity is endangered by impurity with contamination; meanwhile, *śakti* is transcendental and thus immune to pollution.⁹ In addition, *śakti* is regarded both

as dangerous and as the fertile energy of a fierce goddess (see Uchiyamada 2000, p. 71; Fuller 2004, pp. 44–48).

A number of fundamental characteristics of būtas are inextricably linked to wildness and femininity, in a word, śakti. It is notable that in Tuḷu, śakti can refer to power, the existence of the supernatural powers of the būta, or the būta itself (Upadhyaya 1988–1997, p. 2834). That the būtas are believed to be the spirits of local heroes/heroines who met tragic deaths—or those of wild animals—contributes to this sense of danger and feral power. This is further connected to a feminine aspect of the būta, as in Perar, Balavāṇḍi is regarded as androgynous, and devotees offer beautiful saris to the deity. As these elements show, the būtas embody the strong, dangerous, and fertile śakti. In būta worship, then, what is the relationship between purity (*maḍi* or *sudda*), pollution (*mayilige* or *asudda*), and śakti? Yatish Pambada, the dancer-medium of Balavāṇḍi in Perar, explained the rules he follows in terms of *sudda*:

We, as būta performers, should not eat food offered at a funeral. I strictly follow this rule. Apart from that, we should not eat food prepared by a woman who is menstruating. Also, we should not eat food in the houses of Ācāri, Catholics, or Muslims. Though it is not easy for us to obey all the rules (*niyama*) today, we try to be in a state of purity (*sudda*) as much as we can.

(Yatish Pambada, 16 June 2008)

Similarly, Jayānanda Pambada, the dancer-medium of Arasu and Pilicāmuṇḍi, explained that every dancer-medium should strictly obey particular rules to invoke the būta in the ritual:

The būta performance is called *nēma*. This word originated from *niyama* [rules and regulations], in Sanskrit. Only when the performer obeys the rules, will it be successful. So, we should be in the condition of *niyama niṣṭe* [devoting oneself to the rule]. We should follow several ritual practices. For instance, I'm a strict vegetarian and I never drink alcohol. If you obey these rules, *daiva* will definitely come to you.

(Jayānanda Pambada, 16 May 2008)

As shown in these narratives, for both, the notions of *niyama* and *sudda* are crucial to being a proper dancer-medium. At first glance, their keen concern for the rules and purity seems to be evidence of the Sanskritisation of the Pambada dancer-mediums; they seem to adopt both Sanskritic notions and the Brahmanical doctrine, such as vegetarianism and asceticism, to raise themselves up to a higher position in the caste hierarchy (see Srinivas 1952, pp. 30–31). However, the notion of purity in the context of būta worship cannot be reduced to a dualistic model in which *purity* is opposed to an *impurity* that endangers the former with contamination. Rather, the notion of purity

is closely connected with that of śakti, which is transcendental and thus immune to pollution. Jayānanda Pambada's comments on the relationship between the purification of a būta impersonator and ritual pollution provide a clue to understanding this point.

When a Pambada is selected as a būta impersonator, he should be purified by a Brahman priest. This ritual is called *kalaśasnāna*. After this ritual, he becomes immune to the pollution that occurs through either death or birth. He becomes free from them. Even if his father dies, he is exempt from *sūtaka* [death-pollution].

(Jayānanda Pambada, 16 June 2008)

The most critical events regarding ritual pollution are death and birth. Death and birth bring a state of ritual pollution, called *sūtaka* and *ame* respectively, within a *kuṭuma* (matrilineal joint family). If someone dies or gives birth in a *kuṭuma*, all of the *kuṭuma* members are regarded as being temporarily polluted, and thus they have to follow several taboos for a certain period.¹⁰ Purified by a Brahman priest, however, a Pambada dancer-medium does not have to take on the fundamental pollution of death and birth. While he has to keep himself away from these events, he is exempted from the ritual pollution which is automatically applied to all of the *kuṭuma* members.

The above issue helps us to understand the relationship of purity, pollution, and śakti in būta worship; after the purification ritual, a Pambada dancer-medium is enabled to access the śakti of the būta, and thus to obtain sacredness, which frees him from ritual pollution.¹¹ Though he must keep himself pure and clean by obeying various rules, it is not his ultimate goal to attain a *purity* that is opposed to, and endangered by, pollution. In other words, as Fuller (1979, pp. 463–464, 469) argues about rituals in a Hindu temple, purity is not the end of the ritual but is only a means of accessing divine power. Thus, the purity of a Pambada dancer-medium should be understood as a necessary condition for him to invoke śakti within himself.

Untamed śakti

I will next investigate the dynamic circulation of śakti in the *nēma* in Perar, focusing on the interrelation between *Balavāṇḍi* and *Bramma*. As already mentioned, śakti is generally regarded as the dangerous as well as fertile energy of a fierce goddess. It is not stable, but rather a dynamic flow of divine force (see Tanaka 1997, p. 13). Some previous studies on goddess worship in Indian and Sri Lankan villages have analysed the ritual as the process of the emergence and control of śakti. For instance, Tanaka (1997, p. 148) describes *abhiṣeka* (consecration rituals), in which śakti created in the fire is transferred to the *sanctum sanctorum*, the purest place in the temple, and finally taken into the village, as the transformation of divine power

‘from something hot, dangerous and wild, into “grace (the root meaning of prasāda in Sanskrit)”’. Similarly, focusing on a village ritual in Tamil Nadu, Sekine (2002) points to the mutually complementary relationship between god and goddess by describing the role of the Sanskritic god who tames the divine power of the fierce goddess. Here, their relationship is analysed not as a hierarchy based on the binary opposition of purity and impurity assumed by Dumont (1970, 1980), but as the dynamism of the active, creative śakti and its stabilisation.¹²

The above viewpoints of these previous studies are suggestive for considering the interrelation between Balavāṇḍi and Bamma in the nēma in Perar. In the ritual, Balavāṇḍi and Bamma are presented as contrastive deities to each other. While Balavāṇḍi is an active, dangerous, and androgynous deity belonging to the realm of the wild, Bamma, as shown in the stable statue of the brammaliṅga, is regarded as static and masculine. In the nēma, Balavāṇḍi, incarnated in Yatish Pambada, appears from outside the shrine as a half-naked, dangerous, and furious deity, dances around the precinct, and finally reaches the Bamma guṇḍa. This movement of Balavāṇḍi visualises the flow of the wild śakti embodied by the deity.

As already seen, *purity* for the būta medium is not the same as a purity contrasted to impurity. Rather, it is regarded as the necessary condition to invoke śakti within oneself, which transcends the binary opposition of purity and impurity. Likewise, it is undeniable that the interrelation between Balavāṇḍi and Bamma in the nēma also expresses *not* the simple opposition of impurity and purity, but the relation between śakti and something that is linked to it. In this ritual, however, the process in which the wild śakti embodied by Balavāṇḍi is tamed by Bamma and transformed into graceful prasāda is nebulous. What is emphasised in the ritual is not the influx of a goddess’s śakti and its transformation by a masculine god, but the battle of two powerful būtas. In this battle, however, Bamma never appears as himself except as the figure of the brammaliṅga; in addition, the Brahman priests serving at the Bamma guṇḍa never respond to Balavāṇḍi incarnated in the dancer-medium. Therefore, the battle seems instead one-sided, with only Balavāṇḍi approaching.

Unlike the cases shown in the previous studies, the nēma ritual seems insufficiently structured. As we will see below, this is due to the unique features of the relationship between Bamma and Balavāṇḍi, and also the relationship between the devotees and būtas, or the wild śakti. As already mentioned, Bamma is often identified as the Hindu god Brahma, and in the village shrine in Perar, only Bamma is served by Brahman priests. At the same time, Bamma occupies the position of supreme būta. Despite being enshrined in a temple-like guṇḍa and being offered special rites by Brahman priests, Bamma is still distinct from the Sanskritic Hindu god. Here, one cannot find the systematic ritual structure through which the Sanskritic masculine god receives and stabilises the goddess’s śakti.

Although Brama has features of a stable and masculine god, it is also a powerful and dangerous bŭta embodying wild śakti (see Claus 1978, pp. 4–10). Therefore, the interaction between Brama and Balavāṇḍi in the ritual expresses *not* the process of the influx of dangerous śakti and its stabilisation, but rather the influx, overflow, and struggle of śakti. In the ritual process, divine śakti is not fully stabilised but circulates with threatening features of the wild, and then is directly received by devotees in its ‘raw’ state. As seen in Chapter 5, the interaction between devotees and deities includes not only the reciprocal exchange of offerings and blessings, but also the fearsome bŭtas’ expressions of ire and their mollification by the devotees. This also shows that the bŭtas’ power emerges in the ritual as the dangerous, untamed, wild śakti itself.

Although Brama partially takes on the role of transforming the wild śakti into safer grace, this is not completed in the ritual. Instead, the uniqueness of bŭta worship not fully subsumed under the Brahmanical ritual—i.e. people being able to directly interact with the dangerous and fertile śakti without the mediation of the Sanskritic god—is preserved through this *in-completeness* of the calming of the wild śakti.

As seen in this chapter, the nēma in Perar has the basic structure of an influx of śakti from the realm of the wild and its distribution as prasāda among the devotees. The core of the whole ritual, however, is not the taming of śakti by a Sanskritic god, but the direct interaction between the devotees and the divine śakti. It is also a process of gift-exchange between humans and deities, which includes not only positive but also negative elements such as fury, curses, fear, and appeasement. For the devotees, therefore, the bŭta ritual is the means of receiving blessings and grace from the deities, and at the same time, it is an attempt to interact with the dangerous śakti in order to mediate the human realm and the wild realm. I will consider this issue in more detail in Chapter 13, focusing on the bŭta worship in an industrial plant.

The centrality of wild śakti shown in ritual practice, however, cannot be observed in the physical structure of the village bŭta shrine, in which the Brama guṇḍa is centred. As we will see in Chapter 8, this issue became the critical question in a trial pitting the first guttu family against the Brahman priest. Before considering this issue in detail, I will examine in the next chapter the mutual interaction between humans and deities, focusing on the experiences of the bŭta mediums.

Notes

- 1 On the concept of ‘substance-code’, Marriott writes:

Varied codes of action or codes for conduct (*dharma*) are thought to be naturally embodied in actors and otherwise substantialized in the flow of things that pass among actors. Thus the assumption of the easy, proper separability of action from actor, of code from substance ... is generally absent: code

and substance ... cannot have separate existences in this world of constituted things as conceived by most South Asians ... Before one begins to think of Hindu transactions, one thus needs firmly to understand that *those who transact as well as what and how they transact are thought to be inseparably "code-substance" or "substance-code"*

(1976, pp. 109–110; emphasis added).

On the issue of the self and personhood in South Asian societies, see also Marriott and Inden (1977), Daniel (1984), Busby (1997), Sax (2002), and Carsten (2011).

- 2 On gift-exchange in Hindu society, see also Parry (1986) and Raheja (1988).
- 3 In other words, as Parry (1986, p. 457) writes in his interpretation of *The Gift* (Mauss 1990 [1950]), there is no absolute disjunction between persons and things.
- 4 Strathern also argues, 'If we take certain kinds of networks as socially expanded hybrids then we can take hybrids as condensed networks. That condensation works as a summation or stop' (1996, p. 523).
- 5 Concerning the issue of the circulation and boundaries of substance-codes, arguments on landscape and topology are suggestive. See, for instance, Munn (1996) and Uchiyamada (1999, 2000).
- 6 Regarding the consumption of offerings by the būtas, after the ritual for Pilicāmuṅḍi inside the precinct is complete, the deity is offered both vegetarian offerings and blood sacrifices right outside the shrine building.
- 7 For instance, in the ritual held at the family level, first the head of the family and other male members receive the prasāda and then it is distributed among the female members of the family.
- 8 As seen in this chapter, one of the methods of maintaining the boundary in gift-exchange is to restrict who can participate in the transactional network and limit the circulation of substance-codes. Another possible way is to refuse to form the social relationship based on gift-exchange by keeping the gift as 'pure gift' or by impersonalising it. See Laidlaw (2000) and Copeman (2005).
- 9 On the notions of purity, impurity, and śakti, see Dumont and Pocock (1959), Harper (1964), Wadley (1977), Fuller (1979), Tanaka (1997, pp. 10–14, 138–139), and Sekine (2002).
- 10 If someone dies inside a kuṭuma, the kuṭuma members should not enter temples or shrines, and should not conduct any auspicious rituals for 16 days. The ritual pollution brought by death or birth is purified by a ritual called *sudda maḷpuni*, in which a Baṇḍāri (barber) man takes on the role of priest.
- 11 This is the case in purification rituals in Sri Lankan Tamil society presented by Tanaka (1997, p. 138). According to Tanaka, priests wearing a sacred *kāppu* cord containing *mantra śakti* become immune to death pollution.
- 12 On the complementary relationship among Hindu deities, see also Fuller (1988) and Ishii (2015a).

7 Playing with perspectives

In the previous chapter, I explored the formation and dynamism of the transactional network between villagers and deities. In this chapter, I will now focus more narrowly on spirit possession, investigating in more detail the relationship between people and *būtas*. Rather than following the extensive circulation of substance-codes such as offerings, *prasāda*, and *śakti*, I will examine the intangible corporal experiences involved: the experiences of the *būta* mediums who receive divine *śakti*, and the experience of the devotees who interact with the deities.

First, it is helpful to elaborate this point in terms of *jōga* and *māya*, which were examined in Chapter 1. I focused in Chapter 6 on the question of how wild *śakti*, which flows from the realm of *māya* into the realm of *jōga*, is transformed into other substances and distributed among the people. In this chapter, I will instead focus on the space and time of spirit possession, that is, the borders of the realms of *jōga* and *māya*, to understand the art of the *būta* mediums who manifest the wild *śakti* by becoming the deities while remaining in the ambiguous, liminal state of possession. I will also investigate from the viewpoint of perspective exchange how the devotees and *būta* mediums interact with each other and mutually form their selves.

As we will see below, spirit possession has often been analysed in terms of the permeability of the self. At the same time, the idea of perspective exchange has become a key issue in studies on ‘new animism’ (see Pedersen 2001).¹ Moreover, the issue of the transformation and reflexivity of the self, which is the crucial question in spirit possession and perspective exchange, is not only key to understanding the experience of the possessed, but also suggestive for understanding how people form their self and their *umwelt* through interrelation with others. Below, I will first examine several studies which analyse spirit possession in terms of the permeability of the self. I will then overview the studies on perspective exchange between human and nonhuman beings. Based on these previous studies, I will consider the exchange of perspectives between humans and deities in *būta* worship.

Spirit possession and the permeable person

Spirit possession has often been analysed in terms of perspective and its alteration. Kapferer (1979, 1991), based on Mead's (1962 [1934]) argument on the construction of the self, studies demonic possession in Sri Lanka as the disruption of reciprocal perspectives between the possessed self and healthy other. Kapferer then describes the exorcism as the process of reconstructing one's intersubjectivity. By contrast, Boddy (1988, p. 19; 1989, pp. 350–351) analyses the *zār* possession in Sudan as an occasion for the possessed to achieve a broadened perspective, which enables her to see the world 'with the eyes of the spirit', to transcend her everyday reality and herself.

Some scholars focus also on the concept of permeability to comprehend spirit possession. Boddy defines possession as

a broad term referring to an integration of spirit and matter, force or power and corporeal reality, in a cosmos where the boundaries between an individual and her environment are acknowledged to be permeable, flexibly drawn, or at least negotiable.

(1994, p. 407)

In the same manner, Keller insists that it is necessary to revalue 'receptivity and permeability beyond the usual, negative associations of such openness with passivity and weakness' (2002, p. 9) in order to interpret the agency of the possessed.

These arguments show that spirit possession has been regarded as a phenomenon concerning foremost selfhood and its shifting or fluid boundaries. This theme of shifting the boundaries or of a metamorphosis of the self in relation to the other closely relates to the notion of mimesis: the human faculty to 'yield into and become Other' (Taussig 1993, p. xiii).

Studies regarding spirit possession as mimetic practice tend to focus on its critical function. Stoller (1995), using Benjamin-Taussig's notion of 'mimetic faculty' (Benjamin 1966, pp. 96–99; Taussig 1993), describes Hauka possession in West Africa as the tactics of the colonised to mimic the colonisers in order to divert their power and to master them. Rosenthal (1998, pp. 75–76, 95–97) analyses Gorovodu possession in Togo as a mimetic ritual which manifests commentaries on 'modernity'. In a broader context, Boddy argues that the notion of mimesis enables us to recognise 'the multidimensioned resistances possession cults evince to Enlightenment myths of context-free Reason, the mischief they work with capitalist reifications, their iconoclastic interpretations of commodities and bodily disciplines' (1994, p. 425). Thus, spirit possession characterised by perspective alteration, permeability, and mimesis has been analysed as an 'embodied critique' (Boddy 1994, p. 419) of modernity, colonialism, or global political and economic domination.

This understanding of spirit possession as the critique of modernity and other hegemonies corresponds to a view that distinguishes the possessed self

from the ideal modern Western self. Here, the studies on spirit possession link with those on self and personhood. For instance, Smith (2006, pp. 19, 74–75) points out that Boddy's (1994, p. 407) definition of spirit possession, as the exposure of the fluid and permeable nature of personal identity, coincides well with the features of South Asian personhood, which is fluid, divisible, and permeable. The possessed person or the South Asian person is described in contrast with the ideal Western, 'impermeable, autonomous person' (Marriott 1976, p. 110, quoted in Smith 2006, p. 74).

Pointing out the critical function of spirit possession and also highlighting the fluid and permeable characteristics of the possessed, some of these approaches have effectively posed alternatives to the 'possessive individualism' of the West (MacPherson 1964, quoted in Johnson 2011, p. 417).² At the same time, by attributing these characteristics specifically to the possessed, this vein of argument has alienated from ordinary human experience the experience of the possessed as well as the permeable, mimetic status of one's being.³

However, as Boddy (1994, p. 425) partly admits, mimesis, permeability, and perspective alteration are all integral parts of one's being in relation to others. In this sense, the possessed may be those who best exercise the mimetic faculty as 'an inherent part of the human condition' (Willerslev 2007, p. 9). Still, as we will see later, the possessed person is not so permeable as to lose his self completely, just as the 'modern' person is not so impermeable to let nothing enter into her self.

To deepen the investigation into permeability, mimesis, and self-alteration in spirit possession, it is beneficial to consider a number of studies on perspective exchange, which extensively discuss comparable issues. Though there are various arguments on this subject, mainly in the fields of developmental psychology, phenomenology, and philosophy,⁴ here I focus on the anthropological discussion of *perspectivism*.

The exchange of perspectives between humans and nonhumans

In his article 'Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism', Viveiros de Castro (1998) presents perspectivism as the key concept characterising the human–nonhuman relationship in Amazonian societies. According to indigenous Amazonian theory, animals and spirits regard themselves as people, while they perceiving humans as the spirits or animals. Every animal species possesses a soul or spirit; hence, they are conscious subjects capable of having their own point of view. Or rather, in the context of Amerindian perspectivism, it is more accurate to say that this point of view creates the subject. Though animals see things in an analogous way to the way we do, each species sees different things because every species has its own bodily uniqueness and ways of being that constitute a *habitus* (Viveiros de Castro 1998, pp. 470–472, 476–478).

Focusing on shamanism and warfare in Amerindian societies in a more recent article, Viveiros de Castro (2004b) advances his argument on

perspectivism. Here, he not only points out the difference of perspectives among the species, but also considers the exchange of perspectives between humans and nonhumans, between self and other.

According to Viveiros de Castro, shamanism is the capacity to cross ontological boundaries and adopt the perspective of nonhuman subjectivities. It is also a form of acting that presupposes a mode of knowing: knowing the object by personifying it and taking on its point of view. Shamans can turn into nonhumans such as animals and spirits and see them as they see themselves. But this act also entails risk. If ordinary humans happen to see a nonhuman in human form, they may be overwhelmed by the nonhuman subjectivity and be transformed into an animal or a spirit. Thus for Viveiros de Castro, a 'meeting or exchange of perspectives is, in brief, a dangerous business' (2004b, p. 468).

Similar to shamans, warriors are also engaged in the dangerous business of exchanging perspectives with their enemies. In the same way that the shaman turns into an animal to acquire its perspective, the warrior must become his enemy to apprehend him from the inside. By gaining the enemy's perspective and seeing himself as the enemy sees him, the warrior can become himself as a full subject. This kind of enmity is 'a reciprocal subjectification: an exchange, a transfer, of points of view' (Viveiros de Castro 2004b, p. 479).

Viveiros de Castro's arguments on perspectivism have had a great influence on recent anthropology and have evoked much discussion.⁵ Through examinations of his ideas from various angles, some scholars have tried to present alternative understandings of perspective and its alteration. For example, Turner (2009) calls attention to the social, relational, and alterable aspects of the human body, which play a fundamental role in perspective transformation. Finding vestiges of structuralism in Viveiros de Castro's arguments, he claims that Viveiros de Castro's perspectivism characterises perspectives as fixed aspects of species identity, like synchronic signifieds abstracted from discourse. Against this, Turner argues that perspectives are rooted in the synthetic social and physical body, such that they can be transformed along with the transformation of the body, which is integrally and socially connected to other bodies. According to Turner, the body 'is not an abstract object with a fixed, culturally human perspective, but a process comprising a series of transformations, each of which entails a transformation of perspectives' (2009, p. 30).

Here, Turner presents a clearly different understanding of perspective transformation from that of Viveiros de Castro. Although Viveiros de Castro also surely considers the transformation of both body and perspective, he mainly deals with the drastic and total interchange of one set of body-perspectives with another; for example, a shaman shifts into animal form to assume its perspective, and then reverts to his human body-perspective. By contrast, Turner focuses on the more gradual or generative transformation of the body itself, which is accompanied by perspective transformation.⁶

Before considering this issue in detail, however, let us examine Willerslev's argument (2004, 2007) on hunter–prey relations and perspective exchange among Siberian Yukaghirs. According to Willerslev, in the world of the Yukaghirs, persons can take on a variety of forms such as trees, spirits, and mammals, of which human beings are only one type. Humans and animals can move in and out of different species' perspectives by temporarily assuming alien bodies. Among the Yukaghirs, 'this capacity to take on the appearance and viewpoint of another being is one of the key aspects of being a person' (Willerslev 2007, p. 2). It is their faculty for mimesis, Willerslev argues, which allows the Yukaghirs—especially hunters—to be similar to other species.

To lure and kill his prey, a hunter imitates its behaviour. Through this mimetic practice, he can assume the animal's point of view to exercise critical power over it. However, this is dangerous for the hunter because he may lose his original identity and undergo an irreversible metamorphosis (Willerslev 2004, p. 629). To avoid this risk, the hunter must retain his self-awareness during his mimetic practice. Even if he behaves as an animal to gain its perspective, he still has to maintain his identity and a kind of 'depth reflexivity' to be able to turn back into himself. Willerslev calls this state of the hunter's consciousness a 'double perspective'. Taking on an alien body, therefore, does not imply the full identification of a person with the other but a 'partial one' (Pedersen 2001, p. 416). It permits the person to act in between identities. It also gives him 'a new potential for action, as he is freed from the bodily limits of both his own species and those of the species imitated' (Willerslev 2007, pp. 95–96).

While arguing the significance of perspective exchange for the Yukaghirs, Willerslev points out the danger of a total exchange or fusion of perspectives and emphasises the importance of retaining reflexive self-awareness amid perspective exchange. Similar to Boddy (1988) and Keller (2002), here perspective, subjectivity, and identity are considered not as the fixed, stable, or intrinsic foundation of a person but rather as a vulnerable condition that can easily be transformed, eroded, or dissolved.⁷ Willerslev's argument is distinctive, however, in its focus not only on the permeable aspect of the self, but also on the indispensability of reflexive self-awareness for the protection of the self from total erosion.

This corresponds to the argument in the Gestaltkreis theory regarding the integrity and transformation of an organism as the *subject*. In his argument on the crisis of an organism, von Weizsäcker points out the importance of the self-referential function of perception for maintaining its homeostasis: that is, *not* taking the alteration of the self seriously (1997, p. 109; see also Blankenburg 1991, pp. 106–109). As we will see below, this issue of perspective exchange and self-reflexivity is important for understanding the experience of the *būta* mediums.

Nonetheless, Willerslev's argument cannot fully grasp the possibility of people not only switching their perspective momentarily but also transforming themselves through the continual experience of perspective exchange, since Willerslev stresses the protection and recovery of one's original identity.

In other words, when a hunter returns to the encampment from the hunt and turns back into himself, can he turn back into exactly the same self? Or rather, has he not been altered by his experience of exchanging perspectives with his prey? This latter possibility suggests that the hunter enters into a gradual process of transformation to become a ‘real’ or ‘better’ hunter/human in relation to his prey: he modifies his embodied perspective and his self accordingly to suit the social relations with his intimate other—his prey. To consider this possibility is to consider the reflexive and alterable aspects of one’s self, body, and perspective.⁸ In the next section, I will inquire into this issue focusing on the relations between deities, mediums, and devotees in *būta* worship.

The mimetic art of *būta* mediums

As seen in Chapter 3, the roles of the *būta* dancer-mediums are hereditary, played by the male members of a Pambada family living in the village. Among the Pambada family in Perar, two youths—Jayānanda and his second cousin Yatish Pambada—play the central role as the dancer-mediums of the three main *būtas*: Balavāṇḍi, Arasu, and Pilicāmuṇḍi. They have succeeded the profession and role of *būta* dancer-mediums from their fathers, who were also prominent dancer-mediums. Yatish narrated his story of becoming Balavāṇḍi’s dancer-medium in Perar this way:

Following my father, I started this profession when I was 11 years old. At that time, I performed only small deities and not great *daiva* [the honorific name for *būtas*]. Here, in our village, I started to perform Balavāṇḍi after my father died two years ago ... This means that this profession is hereditary. An outsider cannot be the performer of these *daivas*.
(Yatish Pambada, 16 June 2008)

According to Jayānanda, he started his profession as a *būta* dancer-medium when he was 12 years old. At the beginning, he performed a *būta* called *Bavano*, who is an assistant *būta* of Pilicāmuṇḍi. When he was 15, he started to perform one of the *rājanu daiva* (kingly *būtas*) with the help of his father. He narrates the succession of his profession as follows:

Yes, I have inherited this tradition from my father. But it was already in my blood too, as we belong to the community of performers. For example, you don’t need to teach a frog to swim; it swims on its own. Just like that, in some places, it comes spontaneously through the power of the *daiva*. Sometimes my father gave me some hints or knowledge, and our own observation also helps us ... When I was a child, I observed my father performing various *daivas*. After several years, I performed the attendant deity, following the *rājanu daiva* performed by my father. This helped me to learn [the performance].

(Jayānanda Pambada, 16 May 2008)

Like Yatish and Jayānanda, most boys born in the Pambada family frequently attend būta rituals with their close male kin. They take on various small tasks such as tearing coconut leaves into shreds to make the performer's skirts, holding up a mirror when the performer is making up his face, or fanning the performer after his performance. Through these various minor tasks, these boys learn the techniques of ritual preparation and its process, the dance and pāḍdana of each būta, and the mode of communication between būta and devotee. Some of them make their debut as an attendant būta as young as ten years old.

As Jayānanda pointed out, the art of the būta dancer-medium is gradually acquired by a candidate through his observation and practice of the performance among his kin. In this sense, it can be considered that the art is acquired first through copying another's performance; a young candidate begins by mimicking the performance of his father, brother, or paternal uncle to learn how to behave as the būta dancer-medium, and, furthermore, as the deity itself. Through this mimetic practice, he also learns how to relate his bodily self to others on the ritual stage, for example, to the heads of the guttus, the mukkāldi, the musicians, and other ritual workers. In other words, he gradually modifies his perspective to relate himself to the other actors in the ritual. We will return to this issue later.⁹

Multiple mimesis and the gift of being possessed

To become a būta dancer-medium is, first of all, to learn how to mimic the deity and assume its perspective—just as to become a hunter among the Yukaghirs entails learning how to mimic an animal to assume its viewpoint. However, contrary to the Yukaghir hunter, who directly imitates his prey's behaviour, the būta dancer-medium does not mimic directly what are believed to be būtas, such as the wild tiger or serpent. Rather, the candidate imitates another performer impersonating the deity to assume this perspective. In this sense, for the būta dancer-mediums, taking on the deity's behaviour and perspective is the mimesis of mimesis, or double mimesis. However, if we examine their mimetic practice more carefully, we soon realise that it should be characterised rather as *multiple mimesis*: the senior dancer-medium, whose performance the candidate imitates, must have also acquired his art through mimicking his senior, who was in turn also mimicking another performer. Thus, the performance of a dancer-medium is possible through a chain of multiple mimetic practices in which the deity is regarded as the always-implicit prototype. Here, the dancer-medium's perspective inevitably assumes the multiple perspectives of the other mimicking the other mimicking the other, and so on, as when a person sees the reflections of reflections of reflections in two opposing mirrors.

At the same time, for experienced dancer-mediums, the deity exists not only as an imaginative prototype far beyond their mimetic practice, but as the actual power, or śakti, which comes over their bodies through spirit

possession. Most Pambada dancers, moreover, assert that without incarnating the deity's power, their performance cannot be successful. In this sense, the art of the bŭta dancer-medium consists not only of the active ability to imitate another performer to acquire his perspective, but also of the passive capability of *being possessed* by the deity and being given its perspective. This capability or gift, however, cannot be acquired by the medium's intentional practice alone, but rather can only be given by the grace of the deity.

In other words, through his relation with others in the realm of jōga, the bŭta medium remoulds himself, and at the same time, he opens his corporeal self and receives the divine śakti from the realm of māya, which enables him to transform himself into the deity. This way of being of the bŭta medium shows the *pathisch* aspect of human life that is inevitably related to the realm of māya.

As seen in the previous chapter, in order to receive this divine favour, the dancer-medium tries to keep himself in the state of niyama niṣṭe (devoting oneself to the rules), the ideal condition from which to invoke the deity's power. As the deity's partner in the sacred transaction, he is very much aware of the circulation of his substance-codes, limiting them in order to temporarily transfer his body into the deity and achieve its perspective.

From this discussion, it is clear that the bŭta dancer-medium first acquires his art through a chain of mimetic practice within his community and that thus both his art and his perspective inevitably assume a certain degree of multiplicity. At the same time, however, his art is incomplete unless he has the capability of being possessed and receiving the deity's power. It is only through the simultaneously active *and* passive ability to relate oneself to other people and deities that the bŭta medium can take on the deity's perspective.¹⁰

Playing with perspectives

How, then, do the bŭta mediums realise their experience of incarnating the deity's power and assuming its perspective? Here I consider this question by focusing on the experiences of the Pambada dancer-mediums and the mukkāldi.

According to Jayānanda Pambada, the deity possesses him momentarily, while its power remains longer in his body to vitalise it.

The daiva enters my body only for a while. This is called, in Tuḷu, *muk-kālu mŭji gaḷige* [for three seconds]. However, the power of the deity remains for hours. It's just like charging a battery. It takes a short time to charge it, but its power lasts long. Or, it's just like the first rain. Receiving the first rain, dried land sucks up all the water. But in the rainy season, the ground does not suck water and it just flows into the river.

(Jayānanda Pambada, 8 June 2008)

By contrast, Yatish Pambada expresses his experience of being possessed as *ākaraṣaṇe*, the moment of divine fascination.

YATISH: At the moment [of being possessed], my consciousness concentrates totally on the daiva. This is the moment of *ākaraṣaṇe*. For about three seconds, my soul goes to the daiva ... Then I recover my senses enough to be able to distinguish people.

ISHII: During the ritual, you have to call every guttu's family name in order.¹¹

If you were to make a mistake with the order, it would create major problems. If you lose consciousness, how can you remember this order?

YATISH: No, by that time, I have already recovered my senses. After *ākaraṣaṇe*, a time of *śānta svabhāva* [the calm state of mind] will come.

When people chant prayers and throw petals and grains on me, I receive *āvēśa* [spirit possession].¹² After that I know what to do next.

(Interview with Yatish Pambada, 16 June 2008)

Lastly, Bālākrishna Shetty, the mukkāldi of Balavāṇḍi, describes the alteration of his bodily senses caused by spirit possession this way:

BĀLĀKRISHNA: The moment the daiva enters into my body, I can't see other people at all. It lasts for only a few seconds though. After that I recover my consciousness, but the power of the daiva still remains in me. Because of that, I sometimes feel unusually fierce anger. Balavāṇḍi especially is always angry. When the daiva enters my body, a bodily alteration occurs. I feel my hands and feet become stiff, and my stomach fills with gas. My face also changes.

ISHII: After you have passed the power to the Pambada,¹³ can you free yourself from these feelings?

BĀLĀKRISHNA: Here in Perar, from the flag hoisting until its lowering ceremony [from the start to the end of the *nēma*], we don't know when Balavāṇḍi will come to us. I can be possessed anytime. Even when Balavāṇḍi possesses the Pambada, he can suddenly come to the mukkāldi. That is the speciality of this place.

(Interview with Bālākrishna Shetty, 2 July 2008)

As shown in these narratives, for the *būta* mediums, spirit possession is experienced for only a few seconds. When the deity enters his body, the medium is totally fascinated by its power. Though he soon recovers his senses, he is still overflowing with the deity's energy, which enables him to behave as the deity throughout the entire ritual. Thus, in order to behave as the deity in the ritual, the medium must first let the deity enter his body and then recover from the captivation to work his reflexive awareness to 'know what to do next'. Contrary to our common supposition about spirit possession, it is not always the case that the medium is completely overwhelmed by the deity's power and loses himself; rather, he should experience the doubleness of being both the deity and himself. In other words, the medium incarnates

the deity's power in himself and yet keeps his self-reflexivity in order to activate both his and the deity's perspectives together. This corresponds to the Yukaghir hunter's double perspective, which enables him to retain his depth reflexivity while assuming the other's viewpoint (Willerslev 2007).

As noted, the art of the *būta* medium consists of both active and passive aspects. This art is acquired practically through the mimesis of an intimate other, and at the same time it is gifted only by divine favour. This gift for being possessed, however, is not purely a blessing; it can also be dangerous for its recipient. As illustrated in Bālākṛiṣṇa Shetty's narrative, the medium cannot foresee how or when the deity will possess him. It suddenly comes over the medium regardless of his will and forces him to alter his bodily senses, sentiments, and perspective. Therefore, the ultimate art of the *būta* medium is that of accepting the new perspectives which unexpectedly appear to him, activating them, and playing with them without being totally absorbed into them. In other words, it is the art of letting various perspectives—of the self, of the other performers in the chain of mimetic practice, and of the deities—play among themselves through his self, and yet doing so self-referentially.¹⁴ It is also the art of manifesting the divine śakti through his body, while remaining on the border of the realms of *jōga* and *māya*.

How, then, does the *būta* medium transform his perspective as well as his self through the continual experience of mimicking and becoming the deity? To consider this question, it is necessary to examine the relation not only between the deity and the medium, but also between the medium and the other devotees in the ritual. The next section explores the medium's transformation through these ritual transactions as well as his self-modification.

Ritual transaction and the transformation of the self

In the *nēma*, the *būta* dancer-medium must first prepare for his performance by breathing a prayer in front of the deity's altar. He then puts on his make-up, a special garment, anklets, and other ornaments. His make-up and garments indicate the particular deity he is going to perform. Through this process of dressing himself, the dancer-medium gradually prepares his bodily self to become the deity, and, at the same time, to be identified as the deity by others. This process can be considered as the transformation of his social body (Turner 1995, 2009), which is inevitably accompanied by a certain degree of vitalisation or alteration of his bodily senses. Jayānanda explains the necessity of the visual, auditory, and olfactory factors for the *būta* performance as follows:

The most essential things for the performance are *rūpa*, *rasa*, and *gandha*. *Rūpa* denotes the garments of the *daiva*: make-up, a red smock and trousers, *tiri* [a skirt made from coconut leaves], anklets, silver headgear decorated with flowers, and *aṇi*. All of them are a part of the *rūpa* and they are very important for the performance. *Rasa* refers to the instruments and songs (*vādyā saṅgīta*). Drumming is indispensable

for the performance. Gandha means the scent of flowers and sandalwood paste ... The ritual becomes meaningful only when these things are completely present. If they are present, the daiva will spontaneously come into the performer's body.

(Jayānanda Pambada, 16 May 2008)

The performer's social body is transformed from his mundane form into divine form by means of the ritual circumstances and paraphernalia. Above all, he is performatively transformed into the deity through the ritual transactions with the other participants.

As seen in Chapter 5, the most important transaction is the one with the gaḍipatināru. In the first stage of the ritual, called the gaggara decci, the gaḍipatināru chants a prayer to summon the deity into the medium's body. His body begins to shake at the moment the gaḍipatināru offers the prayer, and then the other guttu heads throw rice and flowers on him. The dancer-medium possessed by the deity (hereinafter referred to as the deity-medium) dances around the precinct and greets the head of each guttu. The next stage is the recitation of the pāḍdana by the deity-medium in front of the thousands of devotees thronging the shrine. In the third stage, called the nēma decci, the deity-medium speaks oracles and then receives a tender coconut from the gaḍipatināru, pours its water on the floor, and gives it back to the gaḍipatināru with blessings. At the end of the ritual, the deity-medium touches the hands of each guttu head with his sword and gives them blessings.

In this ritual transaction, the gaḍipatināru always accompanies the deity-medium in order to respond to his every act as a representative of the devotees; at the same time, the deity-medium needs the presence of the gaḍipatināru so that through their interaction he can make his divine power conspicuous to all the devotees. They are thus in a dialogical and reflexive relation, which demonstrates the 'ideal' behaviour of the deity and the human in relation to each other.

This ritual transaction allows the devotees to form a link between the realm of jōga—their experiential umwelt—and the incomprehensible realm of māya. It also constitutes and substantialises the social relations between humanity and the deities (cf. Appadurai & Breckenridge 1976). This does not necessarily mean, however, that humans and deities or their 'worlds' exist prior to their ritual transaction. Rather, they performatively come into existence through the process of ritual transaction.

Through the verbal and physical communication with the deity incarnated in the medium, as exemplified in the interaction between the gaḍipatināru and the deity-medium, the people come to partially assume the deity's perspective, which remoulds their perspective from mundane to divine: the people transform themselves into beings related to the realm of māya. In the same manner, the medium also assumes the people's perspective through ritual transaction: he sees himself as the deity in their view, and thus transforms his perspective into that of a deity related to the realm

of *jōga*. Through ritual communication and transactions, each actor learns and re-learns how to behave and relate him- or herself to the other, and modifies his or her perspective in relation to the other.

At the same time, it is notable that even though the medium performatively becomes the deity in the course of ritual transaction, he is not completely subjectified as the deity. Rather, as an expert medium, he keeps his self in a reflexive and permeable state through which multiple perspectives appear, act, and play among themselves. In this sense, the whole ritual is primarily designed not for the subjectification of the medium and devotees, but rather for introducing the divine perspective into the everyday human world and activating it in order to decentralise, shake up, and estrange the latter, if only temporarily.

As we have seen, the *būta* medium undergoes perspective transformations at various levels and for various durations. He transforms his perspective by mimicking other performers, altering his social body, communicating with ritual participants, and being possessed by the deity. It is through these complex and generative processes of perspective transformation that a person comes to acquire the art of incarnating the deity: that is, the art of entering into the other, and at the same time letting the other enter into oneself, without totally losing one's self. The *self* here, however, is not a subject obtaining an immanent viewpoint and voluntarily switching it to another, but rather a reflexive state or condition through which a person is able to let various perspectives come and go. In other words, it is the art of remaining on the edge of the realms of *jōga* and *māya*, avoiding being overwhelmed by the force of the metamorphosis while nonetheless manifesting the passivity of one's self. For the *būta* medium, *niyama niṣṭe* is thus the manner in which he modifies his self to be in the right condition for the deity to come and play through his body.

I have investigated in this chapter the experiences of the *būta* mediums and the devotees who exchange perspectives with the deities in the ritual. The relationship between people and deities, which is revealed through spirit possession, forms the basis of the transactional network and also generates the actuality of the divine *śakti* circulating within it. Through the experience of gazing at the deity incarnated in the medium and responding to her words and actions, the devotee partially undertakes the deity's perspective and also remoulds his/her own perspective in an *umwelt* that embraces the coming and going of *būtas*. Moreover, while remaining in the realm of *jōga*, one nevertheless perceives the incomprehensible wild *śakti* and attempts to tune his/her life to it. For each devotee, this means learning the way to become a *person* related to the divine *śakti* that fills the realm of *māya* and momentarily manifests itself as the deity in the realm of *jōga*.

This mutual and concrete experience of interactions with *būtas* enables the people to form and sustain the transactional network composed of a more extensive circulation of substance-codes, including raising agricultural products; caring for the land, nature, and deities; receiving the wild *śakti*; and reproducing their lives and social relations in the village community.

Notes

- 1 For recent studies focusing on animism, in addition to the works of Viveiros de Castro and Willerslev examined in this chapter, see, for instance, Descola (1996), Bird-David (1999), and Pedersen (2001).
- 2 As mentioned in Chapter 1, recent studies on magical-religious phenomena, including spirit possession, tend to analyse them not as a mere critique of modernity, but as components of it (e.g. Behrend & Luig 1999; Comaroff & Comaroff 2002). One can still find in this new trend the vestiges of the conventional framework of recasting these phenomena as political discourses about modernity. For a critical view of this trend, see Kapferer (2003) and Ranger (2007).
- 3 This analytical position corresponds to those of the several previous studies examined in Chapter 6, which tend to analyse the individual–dividual dichotomy as if it corresponds with Western and non-Western personhood (e.g. Busby 1997; Rasmussen 2008; Mosko 2010). At the same time, as Johnson critically points out, nearly all ethnographers ‘must now at least address the prospect of their possession, respond to it, apologize for its lack, somehow *account* for it, as they construct their authorial position in relation to the work of spirits’ (2011, p. 417, *italics* original).
- 4 See, for instance, Mead (1927), Merleau-Ponty (2012 [1945]), Piaget (1954), Schütz (1970), Husserl (1973), Blankenburg (1991), and Sakabe (1999).
- 5 See, for example, Pedersen (2001), Kohn (2007), Pedersen, Empson and Humphrey (2007), and Swancutt (2007).
- 6 Holbraad and Willerslev (2007) also present an alternative to Viveiros de Castro’s model by illustrating the Inner Asian ‘transcendentalist’ model characterised by the asymmetrical, temporal, and generative transformation of one’s perspective.
- 7 On the instability and vulnerability of the self and the body, see also Taylor (1996) and Vilaça (2005).
- 8 In her investigation of Mongolian games, Swancutt (2007, p. 240) points out that shifts in perspective bring about long-term changes in personhood. Additionally, Santo (2012) analyses spirit mediumship in Cuba as the mutual constitution of self and spirit, which implies the development of a particular kind of self.
- 9 Būta worship at the village level is characterised by relatively systematic training and ritual processes similar to those of other theatrical performances in India (e.g. Frasca 1990; de Bruin 2006).
- 10 This ability of the būta medium can be understood through Lienhardt’s (1961, pp. 151) notion of ‘*passiones*’ (see also Kramer 1993, p. 58; Lambek 1993, p. 312; Ishii 2012).
- 11 In the būta ritual, the deity incarnated in the medium calls out the names of the 16 guttus according to their rank.
- 12 Ākarṣaṇe and āvēśa mean spirits’ ‘attraction’ and ‘possession’, respectively (Upadhyaya 1988–1997, pp. 219, 277). Possession by būtas is variously described such as *jōga* (ecstasy), *darṣana* (trembling owing to spirit possession), and *būta pattuṇḍu* (‘the būta caught ...’) (see Claus 1984; Smith 2006, p. 138).
- 13 In the nēma, the mukkāldi and the Pambada dancer-medium are usually possessed by turns.
- 14 Regarding the transformation of perspective, Blankenburg (1991) points out the importance of one’s ability to play with the various perspectives that one happens to be given. See also Sakabe (1999) and Ishii (2013).

Part Two

**Social transformations
and the emergence
of a new umwelt**



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8 *Būta's agency in conflicts over the village shrine*

In Part One, we examined various aspects of *būta* worship in Perar, such as the characteristics of *būta* worship related to land, nature, and the social composition of the village; the ritual practices based on the *kaṭṭu*; and the experiences of each person involved in the ritual. It was necessary to examine these issues first in order to understand the *būta* worship that forms a part of the *umwelt* for the villagers, as linked inseparably with land and nature, houses and their ranks, people's lives and roles, and the myths and local history of the area.

Needless to say, however, *būta* worship in Perar has been involved in much wider social and political contexts and has undergone numerous historical transformations. In Part Two, I will investigate issues such as the advent of the modern judiciary and administration, as well as the expansion of massive development projects, which have caused drastic changes in village communities. Focusing on the relationship between people and deities, I will examine various practices of the people who live in the midst of entanglements and conflicts between customary orders, systems, and *śakti* on one hand, and novel orders, systems, and power on the other.

In this chapter, I will examine the transformation of *būta* worship, focusing on the development of the modern judiciary and administration as well as their effects on villagers' lives. Through this investigation, I attempt to show the significance of the deities' agency, not only in rituals but also in the wider social and political context.

As we have seen, *būta* worship in Perar is based on a hierarchical system consisting of the 16 *guttus* and the ritual servants, and every role and detail of the rituals is strictly determined by the *kaṭṭu*. At the same time, whether rights and honours in reward for ritual services can be granted to a particular person or family depends on the deities' approval. Therefore, while *būta* worship is thoroughly structured by customary law and systems, the entirety of the custom and people's rights and ranks is based on ritual practices, the core of which is formed by direct interaction between people and deities.

In addition to customary law and systems, modern law and administration are important factors concerning rights and rulings in *būta* worship. Villagers' rights and duties in *būta* worship have been determined by

customary law, systems, and ritual practices, but at the same time, they have been formed and reformed by modern law and administration since colonial times.

As we will see in this chapter, the villagers participating in the *būta* rituals in Perar have responded to the modern judiciary and administration, which have promoted the regulation of religious institutions. In their endeavours to deal with the new conditions, some people have attempted to use modern law and systems to increase their own rights and interests regarding the management of the village *būta* shrine. The heads of the higher-ranked *guttu* houses, who were traditionally in charge of *būta* worship in the village but have confronted these new demands, have also felt pressured into appealing for their shrine rights in conformity with modern law and systems.

At the same time, people frequently turn back to the realm of traditional ritual practices. These are governed by the deities' sovereign agency, which emerges through possession and oracles. Through the mutual communication of people and deities in the ritual, the relations among people regulated by modern law are again converted into those arranged by the customary law authorised by *būtas*' divine agency.

In this chapter, I will investigate the practices of people who need the power of the *būtas* at the core of rituals, but also must engage with modern law and systems. Through this investigation, I will show how modern law and customary law encounter each other regarding religious practice and become entangled despite having different origins and histories and representing different logics and values. I will also describe the endeavours of the people, who are in between the diverse orders of the courts and the deities, to reorganise their social relations regarding *būta* worship. First, I will outline the previous studies on the institutional transformations of Hindu temples in South India to understand the situation in the *būta* shrine. Next, referring to Gell (1998), I will highlight the importance and actuality of the deities' agency in the context of the modernisation of, and institutional changes in, religious institutions, which is rarely discussed in the previous studies. Lastly, I will closely examine two cases of disputes over the village *būta* shrine in Perar, focusing on the relations and mutual effects between legal disputes and ritual practices. The first case is a lawsuit in the early 1930s dealing with the trusteeship of the village *būta* shrine. The second case is an ongoing dispute since the beginning of the 2000s caused by a movement in Perar that has aimed to create a legal subject of shrine management by organising a committee.

Modern administration of religious institutions in South India

Anthropologists studying Hindu temples in South India have focused on the institutional changes in the temples caused by bureaucratic centralisation under colonial rule. From the 1970s to the 1980s, a number of important

studies on the rise of colonial power, the decline of traditional kingship, and the transformation of Hindu temples were published.¹ These studies on the relations of Hindu temples and kingships, the colonial government, and the modern nation state provide an important reference point for considering the transformation of the būta shrine as a religious institution in South Kanara. At the same time, by examining the relation between customary law and modern law in concrete practices in the būta rituals, it becomes possible to reconsider the perspective of previous studies that tend to disregard the agency of deities, an agency that influences not only ritual proceedings but also judicial procedures. Focusing on Appadurai (1981), I will next provide an overview of the studies on Hindu temples in South India.

Appadurai described the transformation of the Śrī Pārtasārati Svāmi temple in Madras city, Tamil Nadu, in reference to social and political changes from the fourteenth to the twentieth century. The foci of his study were the relationships between kings, sects, and temples in the pre-colonial period, and institutional changes and conflicts caused by the advent of colonial power after 1700. First, Appadurai pointed out the importance of the deity as the paradigmatic sovereign in the Hindu temple in pre-colonial South India. As discussed in Chapter 6, he focused on the role of the deity as a very special *person*, who should be placed in the centre of the transactional network. According to Appadurai, it was the process of redistribution in the temple that enabled the deity to be the paradigmatic sovereign; the deity received offerings from devotees, and in return granted them honours along with various rights and authority. Through mutual exchange with the deity, people were involved in the transactional network centred on the deity (Appadurai 1981, pp. 20–37).

Based on the exchange of offerings and honours, the deity thus reigned over the people. At the same time, because it was made of stone, the deity could not really arbitrate or adjudicate conflicts among devotees concerning shares and rights. Therefore, the king, who was the greatest endower to the temple and also shared in the paradigmatic royalty, fulfilled the function of arbitrating conflicts and protecting the temple. The role of the king in regard to the temple, however, was not legislative but administrative (Appadurai 1981, pp. 50–51, 214; see also Appadurai & Breckenridge 1976, pp. 206–207). This delicate system was greatly altered with the introduction of British rule. In accordance with the development of a centralised bureaucracy, the British gradually expanded their day-to-day involvement with temples but grew reluctant to resolve temple disputes. Disputes concerning the temple were regarded as the object of judicial trials, and the institutional separation of the executive and the judiciary created ambiguities in the arbitration of temple disputes. The temple and the Anglo-Indian judiciary grew entangled, and trials based on modern law provoked new conflicts over shares and rights in the temple (Appadurai 1981, pp. 109–110, 215).

The outline of the historical transformation of Hindu temples described by Appadurai, i.e. the close relationship between temples and kings in the

pre-colonial period, and the decline of kingship and institutional changes in temples in accordance with the advent of the modern bureaucracy and judiciary, is broadly shared in most studies on Hindu temples in South India. For instance, Fuller (1984, pp. 104–109), who examined the transformation of the role and status of Brahman priests in a Hindu temple in Tamil Nadu, called the indirect exchange relationship between kings, priests, and deities a ‘triangular scheme’ and pointed out the importance of this relationship for sustaining the traditional kingship and temple. He argued that this cycle of exchange was then destroyed under British rule because the secular state could not undertake the role of the traditional king in relation to the deity.² Likewise, Dirks (1987), who investigated the historical vicissitudes of a kingdom called Pudukkottai located in Tamil Nadu, described that the penetration of the bureaucratic regime from the nineteenth century onwards hollowed out the traditional kingship and provoked new conflicts over honours given in temples. According to Dirks, people came to use new forms of discourse and definitions based on administrative ideas and modern law to mediate conflicts over temple honours, whereas these used to be arbitrated by kings. This led to the reinforcement of the bureaucratic regime as well as the commoditisation of honours and the commercialisation of worship (1987, pp. 358–383).

As seen above, previous studies presume a certain historical transformation of South Indian temples, from the rule of kings and deities to control by the modern state and law. However, referring to Gell (1998), I will examine the relationship between people and deities by focusing on their mutual exchange and point out the actuality and effect of the deities’ agency, which has been disregarded by most previous studies.

Transactional networks and the deity as a ‘sovereign person’

Previous studies on Hindu temples in South India have described how in the nineteenth century, in accordance with the advent of the modern judiciary and administration, traditional kingship declined and temples came under the control of the modern state and law. This transformation process of Hindu temples is broadly similar to the transformation that the *būta* shrine has undertaken as a religious institution in South India. As we will see later, the rise of modern administration caused new conflicts over shrine management, and consequently the *būta* shrine has inevitably undergone institutional transformation.

When we closely investigate the practices of *būta* worship, however, it is clear that we cannot presume a unilateral transition from the rule of kings and deities to control by the modern state and law. As we will see in this chapter, the people participating in *būta* worship are certainly under the control of the modern state and law, and moreover, they practically support this control by responding to, and making use of, the modern judiciary and administration. At the same time, by communicating with deities and

consulting oracles, people strive to comprehend and act in conformity with the deities' agency, which directs the state of affairs in the realm of *jōga*. Under these circumstances, people's legal rights and duties—determined by modern law and administration—and their customary rights and duties (*adikāra*)—based on their actual interactions with deities—are variably in conflict, overlapping, and transposed. Since the colonial era, *būta* worship in South Kanara has been conducted in situations in which the power of the modern judicial and administrative systems and deities' agency have been entangled, and thus the rules and systems regarding ritual practices and shrine management have been duplicated. Regarding these issues, I will reconsider the transactional network between deities and devotees in Hindu temples before considering concrete cases.

As seen in the previous section, Appadurai illustrated how in a pre-colonial South Indian Hindu temple, the deity reigned over the people through a mutual exchange relationship with devotees. At the same time, because the deity could not arbitrate disputes, the authority of the deity was complemented by the power of the king, who arbitrated conflicts and protected the temple. In accordance with the rise of the colonial power and the hollowing out of traditional kingship, disputes over honours and rights in the temple came to be judged by modern law, and the temple fell under the control of the modern state and law.

When discussing the Hindu temple in the pre-colonial period, Appadurai emphasised the importance of the deity as a special person and the importance of the transactional network between the deity and devotees.³ Strangely, however, in his description of the institutional transformation of the temple in the colonial era, the deity as a special person disappeared. There may be two reasons for this absence: first, Appadurai described the transformation of, and disputes over, temples in the colonial era primarily based on court records. Since he depended on records written in the terminology and logic of modern law, perhaps he overlooked the concrete relationship between the deity and devotees. Second, while Appadurai focused on the social personhood of the deity as a prerequisite for establishing the ritual transaction that supported the centrality of the temple, he did not consider the possibility that the deity could *actually* manifest its agency towards people in cases of dispute. Based on his disregard of the deity's agency, Appadurai could conclude that the temple was fundamentally transformed by the decline of the king and fell under the control of the modern state and law. When we reconsider, however, how the deity as a special person is not only a prerequisite for the ritual exchange in the temple but also something which emerges again and again through the interactions between the deity and devotees, we become aware of the possibility that the deity actually exercises agency in the chain of gift-exchange.

Regarding this issue, Gell (1998), who investigated the agency of nonhumans such as artefacts and deities in social relations, offers an important perspective. Though he studied the agency of idols and deities through

many cases, here I will introduce only two. The first example is the religious practice in ancient Tahiti. Based on Babadzan (1993), Gell examined the exchange relationship between the priests, hunters, and the 'hau of the forest', or the principle of the productivity of the forest. The exchange of these three participants forms a cycle: the priests make offerings to the hau of the forest, the hau of the forest responds by providing the hunters with birds to capture, and a portion of these birds must be returned to the priests. According to Gell, in this exchange process, the forest is considered to be passive in relation to the priests, who are the prime movers. It does not mean, however, that the forest has no intrinsic agency at all. The agency of the forest, that is its potential productivity, has simply been co-opted by the agency of the priests (Gell 1998, pp. 106–109).

The exchange relationship between the priests, hunters, and the hau of the forest is similar to the triangular scheme of the priests, kings, and deities in Hindu temples, as described by Appadurai and Fuller.⁴ Likewise, a similar structure can be observed in the exchange relationship in the bŭta ritual, where the priests, the heads of the 16 guttus, and bŭtas act as the main participants. In Gell's argument, it is important that the agency of the hau of the forest is manifested towards humans through the cyclic exchange and distribution of the fertility of the forest. If we extend this idea to the gift-exchange in a Hindu temple, the deity who is the centre of the transaction of offerings and honours is considered not just to *be* a special person as the prerequisite for the exchange relation, but rather to *become* the social actor who manifests agency through the ritual transaction.

Next, based on Eck (1998 [1981]), Gell focused on the exchange relationship between devotees and images of Hindu deities through eye contact. According to Gell, by looking into the eyes of the deity, a devotee obtains darshan (Skt. *darśana*), a particular type of blessing from the deity conveyed through the eyes.⁵ Darshan is a gift, or a mode of divine agency, and the worshipper is the patient who receives it. At the same time, s/he is also an agent who initiates the transitive action of 'taking' it (*darshan lena*) from the deity. Through the mutual relationship of looking and being seen, the deity and the worshipper each come to be both agent and patient in relation to the other (1998, pp. 116–120).⁶

Gell's argument shows that, through the mutual exchange between deity and devotee, both become social actors in a transactional network, and at the same time, the agency of each actor is evoked. According to Gell, even if it is a statue or a painting, the deity is able to manifest its agency in the transactional network. From this viewpoint, the transactional network in a Hindu temple is considered to be not simply formed on the assumption that the deity *is* the supreme sovereign; rather, it is the dynamism of the transactional network through which the agency of the deity comes to be manifested and actualised. Therefore, it is considered that as long as the ritual is performed, the deity's agency continues to manifest itself and affect the process of exchange and redistribution, even though the power of the king is no

longer and instead government officials are involved.⁷ Gell mainly focuses on the agency of idols and artefacts, but in the case of spirit possession in which the deity manifests itself in the body of a medium, the deity's agency can be perceived far more obviously and distinctively by the devotees.

Based on the theoretical viewpoints examined above, I will next investigate the people's struggles in the midst of entanglements of, and conflicts between, customary law and modern law, and those of and between the deities' agency and the power of the courts.

Disputes over the trusteeship of the village būta shrine in the 1930s

In this section, I will examine a lawsuit in the early 1930s regarding the trusteeship of the village būta shrine in Perar, which was disputed between the higher-ranked guttu families and the then asrāṇṇa. Before considering this case, I will provide a brief overview of the legislation on religious institutions in South India before the 1930s.

The Madras Endowments and Escheats Regulation, 1817 (Regulation VII of 1817) was the first legislation on religious institutions in Madras and was superseded by the Religious Endowments Act of 1863 (Act XX of 1863). In 1926, the Hindu Religious Endowments Board (henceforth the HRE Board) was formed and the Madras Hindu Religious Endowments Act (Madras Act II of 1927, henceforth the HRE Act) was passed by the Madras Legislative Council. Through the foundation of the HRE Board and the HRE Act, the state enhanced its administrative power over local temples and gradually undermined the autonomy and traditional authority of local temples (Presler 1987, pp. 15–35). Under these circumstances, the trusteeship of local religious institutions became a common subject of competition and dispute (Appadurai 1981, pp. 52–53; Dirks 1987).

As we have seen, the village būta shrine in Perar consists of the māḍa for Arasu and the cāvaḍi for Balavāṇḍi, and the special sanctuary or guṇḍa for Bramma. The daily worship and rituals for Bramma are only conducted by an asrāṇṇa, a Brahman priest who is hired by the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu for this purpose.

However, in 1928, L. Udupa, who was then the asrāṇṇa of the village būta shrine in Perar, filed a suit in the district court against the then head of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu 'for delivery of the properties appertaining to the Padu Perar institution' (Original Suit [O. S.] No. 26 of 1932: 6).⁸ This case was contested before the subordinate judge of South Kanara in 1932, with L. Udupa as the plaintiff and the six main members of both the Muṇḍabeṭṭu and Brāṇabeṭṭu guttus as the defendants. There were three main points of contention in the suit: first, which religious institution in Perar could be identified as the one over which the asrāṇṇa insisted on his trusteeship; second, who had received the allowance (*tastiku*) granted by the government to the religious institution in question; and third, whether the institution in question

was a 'hereditary temple' that could be 'excepted' from the provisions of the HRE Act.⁹ According to the court record, the Padu Perar institution in question was registered in Mangalore taluk in 1875 as 'Perar Shastavu Brahma Bhoota' (O. S. No. 26 of 1932: 9). An asrāṇṇa named A. Shibaraya was the then trustee (*moktēsare*) of the institution and he had an allowance of nine rupees from the government. Since this precedent, the person who became the asrāṇṇa received the institution's allowance. In addition, L. Udupa had been appointed by the Mangalore Circle Temple Committee (later replaced by the South Kanara District Temple Committee), which had been constituted under the HRE Act, as a trustee of an institution in Padu Perar described as 'Shastavu Brahma Balavandi'. Based on these facts, L. Udupa insisted on his trusteeship of the village būta shrine, which he identified as 'Shastavu Brahma Balavandi Pilichamundi Daivastanam' of Padu Perar.

On the other hand, the guttu members insisted that the Padu Perar institution was known not as 'Shastavu Brahma Balavandi Pilichamundi Daivastanam', but as 'Kinni Majalu Ishta Devata Balavandi Pilichamundi Daivastanam', whose management was traditionally vested in the hereditary rights of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu and Brāṇabeṭṭu guttus. They also insisted that the institution was a 'hereditary temple' exempt from the provisions of the HRE Act; therefore, neither the Mangalore Circle Temple Committee nor the South Kanara District Temple Committee had jurisdiction over it.

After a number of hearings and detailed investigations into exhibits from both the plaintiff and defendants, the court finally settled the suit in September 1933. Among the total of 57 exhibits, the one the judge regarded as the most decisive was a report submitted to the Temple Committee in January 1930 by A. S. Pai and P. V. Rao, both advocates of the court and members of the Temple Committee. According to the report, they inspected the Padu Perar institution in question in the presence of the plaintiff (L. Udupa) and first defendant (J. Naik) and held an enquiry. B. G. Avargal, the then Subordinate Judge of South Kanara, stated the following about this report in the court record:

They observed in their report that the form and appearance of the building in which the idol of Brahma was kept led them to conclude that *the building was a temple and not a Daivastanam* [būta shrine] but that the 'mada' of Ishta Devate [another name of Arasu] and the 'chavadi' of Balavandi within the same enclosure had the appearance of Daivastanams ... They have further observed as a result of their inspection and enquiry that the institution for which the Plaintiff was appointed trustee by the Mangalore Circle Temple Committee and for which tasdik was paid by Government is the one in Padu Perar, that *the principal deity therein is Brahma* and that the 3 daivas, viz., Ishta Devata, Balavandi and Pilichamundi, are subsidiary deities.

(O. S. No. 26 of 1932: 7–8 [emphasis mine, to illustrate the hierarchy of the deities presumed by the judges])

Based on the observations of two influential advocates, the judge concluded that the institution for which L. Udupa was appointed as a trustee was identified as the Padu Perar institution (that is, the village būta shrine), in which Bramma was the presiding deity and the other būtas were attendant deities. The judge also pointed out that the Padu Perar institution was not an 'excepted temple', since it had at least one office of trustee that was not hereditary (O. S. No. 26 of 1932: 19–21). The judge thus approved the Temple Committee's right to exercise jurisdiction over the institution and therefore decided that its appointment of L. Udupa as a trustee was valid.

At the same time, based on documents of land purchase in the name of the village būta shrine, the judge authorised that the representatives of the two guttu houses had undertaken the management of the shrine property. As already seen, the land owned by the village būta shrine was managed by the heads of the first and second guttu families, and rewards for ritual servants had been paid in products of the land. The documents about land purchase with the joint signatures of the then heads of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu and Brāṇabeṭṭu guttus were recognised as proof of their hereditary trusteeship of the property of the village būta shrine. Therefore, while the judge approved the official trusteeship of the asrāṇṇa appointed by the Temple Committee, he also approved the hereditary trusteeship of the first and second guttu houses. In conclusion, the judge gave the decision that the plaintiff and the defendants should be co-trustees of the property of the Padu Perar institution.¹⁰

In this judgement, Bramma was identified as a quasi-Hindu god enshrined in a 'temple' and regarded as superior to the other būtas. In the same manner, the judgement guaranteed the status of the asrāṇṇa as the priest for the main deity and also the trustee of the institution. This judgement was apparently influenced by the preconceptions of the judge and two advocates, who presumed the supremacy of Sanskritic deities.

As we have seen, Bramma has ambivalent characteristics both in the pāḍdana and in worship at the village būta shrine, for he is treated as a local as well as a Sanskritic deity. In conjunction with legal discourse, the Sanskritic aspect of Bramma became evidence of his supremacy and the existence of Brahmanical caste hierarchy in the village būta shrine. As a result, at least at the level of legal discourse, the village būta shrine in Perar became recognised as an institution where a quasi-Hindu god is the supreme deity and a Brahman priest occupies a crucial status.

The modern judicature, which presumed the supremacy of Hindu gods and focused only on 'objective facts' such as the structure of the village būta shrine and the appointment of a trustee by the Temple Committee, could comprehend neither the mutual interactions between the būtas and devotees nor the centrality of the būtas embodying the circulation of wild śakti. In this judgement, the royal būtas were marginalised as subsidiary deities to Bramma. At the same time, the roles of the guttu houses, which had been pivotal in both ritual practice and shrine management, were disregarded, except regarding their management of shrine property.

As seen above, through the formulation and penetration of modern law and administration from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, similar to most religious institutions in South India, the būta shrine in Perar was also involved in rulings by the modern state and law. The court record examined in this section, however, suggests that while successive asrāṅṅas strived to expand their rights in the village būta shrine by using new laws and systems, the heads of the higher-ranked guttus had rather negative attitudes towards modern law and systems.

For instance, in the trial in 1932, the heads of the first and second guttus insisted that the village būta shrine was a private, hereditary temple exempt from the provisions of the HRE Act. The heads of the guttus probably resented the bureaucratic administration of the shrine, so they intended to keep their distance from it. At the same time, their negative attitude to modern law and administration also seemed to be based on their principle of putting the highest priority on the kaṭṭu and būtas' oracles, which formed the basis of social relations in the village and linked villagers to the wild śakti. For the heads of the guttus, who had assumed charge of the village būta shrine based on ritual practice and observance of the kaṭṭu, the adikāra granted by the deities was the matter of highest priority. Therefore, at first, they did not give much importance to rights and allowances granted by the state. Only when their hereditary trusteeship was endangered by the asrāṅṅa who tried to expand his rights and interests through the authority of modern law, did the heads of the guttus begin to appeal for their rights in terms of modern law.

As we will soon see, the heads of the guttus found themselves in a similar predicament again about 70 years later regarding shrine management and strived to solve the difficulty in between the power of modern law and the agency of deities.

The foundation of a management committee and the crisis of traditional rights

I will next investigate people's endeavours in between customary law and modern law, focusing on the ongoing conflict over the management of the village būta shrine. First, I will outline the rise of a new faction claiming rights to shrine management as well as the response of the higher-ranked guttu houses, focusing on their relation to modern law.

A series of incidents began in 2000 with the advent of a man who presented himself as a relative of the third guttu family in Mudu Perar. His name was N. Shetty, a wealthy restaurateur living in Mangaluru city. He explained to villagers that he was told by an astrologer that his ancestors had originated from the third guttu family and that he therefore came to Perar for the purpose of contributing to his ancestors' land. He soon started various activities using his abundant funds. First, he reconstructed the shrines of Nāga and būta on the estate of the third guttu house. He also asked two

folklorists to collect the oral epics in Perar and published a pamphlet. Moreover, in 2001, he established a committee called *Sēvā Samiti* (service committee) for organising *būta* rituals in Perar. In this process, N. Shetty invited about 80 villagers to the committee and organised them. The committee began to gradually take charge of the preparation of the *nēma* and also of the administrative work regarding the village *būta* shrine, tasks conventionally undertaken by the members of the first and second *guttu* families.

At first, the members of the committee and the heads of the first and second *guttus* maintained a good relationship. When establishing the committee, N. Shetty persuaded these *guttu* heads by insisting that the aim of the committee was only the development of the village *būta* shrine. *Gangādara Rai*, who was the head of the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu* and served as the *gaḍipatināru* at the village *būta* shrine, agreed to the committee's establishment, and N. Shetty asked him to be the committee's honorary president. Soon afterwards, however, the situation took a turn for the worse for the *guttu* families. In early 2002, the *asrāṇṇa* who had taken charge of donations to the shrine in cooperation with the *gaḍipatināru* was discharged after a quarrel with the committee members, and the committee came to hold the key to the safe and started to manage the finances of the shrine directly. The discharged *asrāṇṇa* was called B. Udupa, a descendant of the L. Udupa who had filed the 1928 suit described in the previous section. This Brahman family had long held the office of *asrāṇṇa* in Perar. After B. Udupa left the village *būta* shrine, N. Shetty brought a young Brahman priest from another village and placed him in the position of *asrāṇṇa*.

Triggered by this incident, discord between the committee and the first and second *guttus* soon came to the fore. The head of the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu* appealed to the Deputy Commissioner of the Dakshina Kannada district that their family held hereditary trusteeship of the village *būta* shrine and petitioned for their right to shrine management. The Deputy Commissioner, however, turned down this petition and instead granted the right to N. Shetty, who was the representative of the service committee in Perar. Dissatisfied with this decision, *Gangādara Rai* and other core members of the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu* appealed to the Commissioner for Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments in Bangalore, who was superior to the Deputy Commissioner.¹¹ Meanwhile, N. Shetty formed a new management committee, which was prescribed in the Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments Act, 1997 (Karnataka Act No. 33 of 2001), and again appealed to the Deputy Commissioner for the committee's right to manage the shrine in Perar. This case was carried into the High Court of Karnataka, and as of 2015, it was still the subject of litigation.

In this series of disputes, it is interesting how the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu* family represented by *Gangādara Rai* and the committee led by N. Shetty have constructed their respective claims. Referring to the court records kept in the Deputy Commissioner's Office (Records of Disputes on Law CR No. 7/2002–2003),¹² we can grasp the primary logic of each side. For instance,

in the statement submitted in 2003 by the advocate of Gangādhara Rai to the Commissioner for Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments, the advocate denounced the Deputy Commissioner for appointing N. Shetty as the fit person to manage the shrine, and appealed the decision as follows:

The 6th respondent [N. Shetty] intends to usurp the Trusteeship of the Daivasthanam [the village b̄ta shrine] and interfere with the day to day management of Daivasthanam. In fact the overall management of Daivasthanam is being looked after by the appellant [Gangādhara Rai] as one of the joint hereditary trustees ... The 1st respondent [the Deputy Commissioner] by order dated 27-4-2002 appointed the 6th respondent as the fit person ... The 1st respondent has no jurisdiction to appoint the fit person or frame a scheme when there are hereditary trustees ... The order under challenge is arbitrary and illegal ... Any activities undertaken by the Samithi [committee] were under the guidance of the appellant and Sadashiva Shetty [the head of the second guttu family] as heads of the Committee. The appellant had hardly dreamt then that the very Samithi created by him would prove self-destructive and threaten the very position of the appellant as trustees. The appellant had hardly realized then that he was being tricked and deceived.

(Records of Disputes on Law CR No. 7/2002–2003: 176–178)

Meanwhile, in the statement submitted in 2002 to the Deputy Commissioner, the advocate of N. Shetty stated that the village b̄ta shrine in Perar was a public religious institution in which Brama was the presiding deity and accused the conventional managers of the shrine of negligence:

There has been no declaration or any order to the knowledge of the petitioners [N. Shetty and others], as contemplated under the provisions of Madras HR & CE [Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments] Act¹³ regarding the alleged right of hereditary trusteeship of the respondent [Gangādhara Rai] ... The respondent did not account for any of the income. He had not paid the contribution payable by the Daivasthanam, and the accounts were not audited for several years. The respondent had not shown any interest in the betterment, development, improvement or maintenance of the institution.

(Records of Disputes on Law CR No. 7/2002–2003: 183)

In addition, the advocate enumerated the achievements of the committee, such as the improvement of the facilities of the shrine and the properness of the management, and argued for the necessity of framing a scheme for the better management of the village shrine:

Such rules or regulations are very much necessary to define the powers, duties, rights and responsibilities of the persons in management.

Accountability can be imported to the management only by such a Scheme. It is a common well accepted principle that when power of administration and management are given, the accountability and responsibility has to be incorporated with the powers so that there will be scope for exercising control.

(Records of Disputes on Law CR No. 7/2002–2003: 186)

As seen in these statements, throughout these disputes, the members of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu consistently insisted on the authenticity of their hereditary trusteeship and criticised the committee for taking over their rights in the village būta shrine. Meanwhile, the members of the committee criticised the slipshod management of the guttu members and insisted that the committee could improve the shrine by managing its property more effectively. There is an obvious contrast in the two sides' statements regarding what is of most importance for shrine management: while the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu insisted on the priority of hereditary and traditional rights and duties, the committee based their claims on the rationalisation of management and the establishment of discipline. It is also notable that both sides hired advocates and constructed their opinions according to the logic and terminology of modern law.

As already seen, while the traditional rights and duties (adikāra) of the guttu houses are determined by the kaṭṭu, they are actualised only through interaction with, and approval by, the deities in rituals. Here, the adikāra are based on an agreement between the deities and the heads of the guttu houses, an agreement believed to extend back to ancient times; and for these heads, to conduct a ritual according to the kaṭṭu means to accomplish their duty and to exercise their rights in būta worship. Needless to say, in the realm of customary law and ritual practice, the supreme authority which approves or disapproves of people's rights regarding būta worship has been vested in the deities.

Meanwhile, in the lawsuit regarding shrine management rights, the supreme authority is vested in legal procedures and court orders, and the authority and effectiveness of the deities' orders are disregarded from the start. The points of contention in the court are neither the ancient agreement with the deities based on pāḍdana nor the appointment of the gaḍipatināru by the deity, but the management and administration of the shrine in relation to government offices and the matter of who is appropriate for trusteeship in terms of modern law.

The adikāra of the higher-ranked guttu houses, which can be called 'hereditary trusteeship' in the terminology of modern law, is based on the detailed kaṭṭu, pāḍdana, and mutual interaction with deities, and it is very difficult to legitimate their factual grounding. The actors who compete with the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu for trusteeship or management rights of the village būta shrine, such as the asrāṇṇa and N. Shetty, neither appear in the pāḍdana nor have been approved by the deities. Simply by being registered as

the trustee with the government and approved by its jurisdiction, however, they can gain an advantage over the guttu families. Therefore, the members of the higher-ranked guttus involved in the dispute recognised that they should also claim their rights in the logic recognised by the judiciary.

As seen in Chapter 5, in a ritual in the village bŭta shrine, the heads of the 16 guttus pleaded with the deities for their blessing and authorisation, and at the same time, they performatively consented to the supremacy of the deities by obeying their orders. For the heads of the guttus, this is the essential procedure for maintaining their relationship with the realm of the wild through interactions with the deities manifested in spirit possession. In the process of the lawsuits and court trials, however, the guttu families seem to be longing also for the approval of the judiciary and to be obeying the authority of modern law. Rights and duties regarding the bŭta worship, which the members of the guttus and ritual servants must hold, seem to have changed in meaning from the mythical adikāra to trusteeship confirmed by modern law. If so, in the series of disputes, does the practice of people competing for judicial approval indicate a transition from customary law to modern law, from divine oracle to court order, and from adikāra to legal rights? Next, I will consider these issues by focusing on the nēma in 2009.

A conflict in the nēma and the judgement of the deity

As of March 2009, in the series of disputes between the Muṇḍabettu guttu and the management committee, the committee held the advantage, and the preparation of the nēma was carried out by the members of the committee. As we will see in this section, however, the nēma, which seemed to be proceeding smoothly under the command of the committee, fell into confusion due to the fierce anger of Balavāṇḍi incarnated in the mukkāldi. In the judgement ritual (vāku piripuni) in the final part of the nēma, the oracles of the bŭtas restored some of the customary rights of the gaḍipatināru which had been taken over by the committee. I will summarise this process below.

A short while after 11 o'clock on the night before the nēma, the ritual which should have started an hour before had still not yet started, due to the absence of the mukkāldi. Devotees were seated on the cloister of the precinct of the village bŭta shrine waiting for the ritual to begin. It was almost midnight when the mukkāldi, possessed by Balavāṇḍi (hereafter, Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi) and accompanied by the heads of the guttu houses, appeared in the precinct. Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi had covered his head with a white turban and was trembling all over and occasionally groaning. He rushed at one of the guttu heads and knocked him down, so then others frantically tried to restrain the deity. Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi sat on a seat on the cloister and a crowd surrounded him. They watched his movements with bated breath. The tense silence persisted for some time. Suddenly, Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi jumped up from his seat and rushed forwards, scattering the crowd around him. He dashed towards the treasure house, and the heads of the guttus hurried to

follow him. The *nēma*, which was held from 10 to 13 March 2009, thus had a very turbulent start.

Prior to this extraordinary expression of anger of Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi, there were several incidents in the conflict between the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu and the committee. It began with an incident regarding invitations to the *nēma*. A few weeks before the *nēma*, several members of the first and second guttu families made invitations and delivered them to the main houses in the village. The members of the committee responded by publishing an article in a local newspaper accusing the guttu families of 'illegally' sending invitations as if they were the organisers of the *nēma*. In the midst of the tension between the two factions enflamed by this affair, the second incident happened. Traditionally on the day before the *nēma*, the members of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu with the help of villagers had treated the visitors to the *nēma* to lunch in a public hall next to the village *būta* shrine. This year, however, the members of the committee refused to give the key to the public hall to the villagers on the side of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu. The quarrel over the key between the villagers and the committee members quickly escalated, and finally a police officer from the neighbouring town was called on to settle the quarrel. Hearing of this, Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi flared up and declared that he would not enter the shrine profaned by the disturbance. On the next day, N. Shetty, the leader of the committee, apologised to the deity for blaspheming the shrine with the matter involving the police, but the anger of Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi was not assuaged.

The *nēma* proceeded in this tense atmosphere, and finally it came time for the ritual of the judgement (*vāku piripuni*), which was the most important ritual of the last day. This ritual is usually held at Baṇṭakamba, which is about 80 metres far from the village shrine. This time, however, the ritual of the judgement concerning the conflict between the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu and the committee was held in front of the Brahma *guṇḍa*, in the precinct of the shrine. Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi, Pilicāmuṇḍi incarnated in Jayānanda Pambada, and the heads of the 16 guttus stood in front of the *guṇḍa*, and a crowd surrounded them. N. Shetty also stood alongside of the heads of the guttus. The exchange of anger and entreaty between the deities and the heads of the guttus continued for several hours. Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi harshly accused the guttu heads of violating the *kaṭṭu* and causing disaster, and the heads of the guttus strived to placate the deities. After a long time, the ritual finally ended with an oracle by Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi ordering observance of the *kaṭṭu* and reconciliation between the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu and the committee:

You should be together. Otherwise, all of you will suffer. We need the *pergaḍe* [the head of the first guttu], *madyaste* [the head of the second guttu], the sixteen guttus and the villagers.

The heads of the guttus and N. Shetty together held jasmine flowers on a banana leaf and swore to obey the oracle. The ritual of the judgement ended

with the oracle and the vow, and at the end of the *nēma*, Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi and Jayānanda-Pilicāmuṇḍi blessed both the heads of the *guttus* and N. Shetty by touching their hands with swords. On the next day, the *gaḍipatināru* and N. Shetty together opened the safe of the shrine, and according to the custom before the establishment of the committee, the rewards for the ritual servants were paid from the hands of the *gaḍipatināru*.

The process of the *nēma* examined above provides us with a new perspective from which to understand the relation between *būta* worship, customary law, and modern law. As we saw, in the dispute between the higher-ranked *guttus* and the committee over the management of the shrine, both factions appealed to the modern judiciary and administration, and the rights and position of each party were determined through the logic and terminology of modern law. Here, not only the authority of the *kaṭṭu*, which had formed the basis of ritual practices, but also the authority of the deities who approved the *adikāra* of the devotees was disregarded as being outside the modern judicial and executive systems.

In the ritual during the *nēma*, however, the people involved in the lawsuits became subordinate to the authority of, and the order derived from, the *būtas* through direct interaction with the deities. By participating in the exchange relationship with the deities, all the actors concerned in the event, including the parties to the lawsuits, came to recognise the deities as the supreme authority in the ritual. Consequently, the relations among the actors, which had been regulated by modern law, were converted into the mythological relationship based on the *kaṭṭu* and transaction with the deities. In this relationship, even though the members of the committee could have gained an advantage over the members of the *guttus* in the courts, they came under the authority of the *guttus* based on an ancient promise with the deities.

By making their promise to obey the *kaṭṭu* and receiving blessings from the deities, the parties to the lawsuits became involved in the transactional network in which the deity is the supreme person. While still pursuing rights through modern law, they also reinforced the *adikāra*, the mythical rights and duties authorised by the deities.

The complication of people's intentions and the evolution of disputes

As seen in the last section, even while people were engaged in a legal dispute over shrine management, they were also subordinate to the divine and were repositioned in the customary transactional network in the *būta* ritual. The dispute over the village *būta* shrine thus transpires simultaneously in two realms, the court of law and the *būta* ritual, each manifesting its own values, logic, and power. In this section, I will investigate the dispute's transition between the realms more closely, focusing on the social positions and intentions of each actor concerned. As I will clarify, the transition process should

be understood neither as a unilateral process of customary law's gradual disappearance after the advent of modern law nor as a process of customary law's subsumption under modern law and the exclusion of the deities' agency.

The series of conflicts examined in the previous sections points to how people have been groping to find a way to deal with the logics, systems, values, and resources recently introduced into their lives. For instance, as seen in the legalisation of shrine management and the foundation of the management committee, new systems based on modern logics such as legality, rationality, and democracy have spurred people to reform the old system. At the same time, with the advent of a new actor, N. Shetty, who had built a fortune in the city in the food service industry and then entered into shrine management, an unprecedented scale of capital was invested in the shrine, leading to its new economic value. As we will see below, the new logic and value have often conflicted with the traditional system in which the heads of guttus approved by the deities managed būta rituals using local resources, and this has caused various disputes and complications among the villagers.

The expectation of democratisation and the development of the shrine

As discussed, a series of issues arose when N. Shetty visited Perar and proposed financial support for the development of the village būta shrine. At first, Gangādara Rai, who was in charge of shrine management as the gaḍipatināru, embraced N. Shetty's plan and agreed with him. Gangādara Rai expected that he would offer sufficient funds for the renovation and reconstruction of the institution without changing the existing organisation and management. Meanwhile, what N. Shetty intended was not only to contribute to the development of the shrine as one of the devotees, but also to obtain management rights, authority, and honour as the top patron of the shrine. While persuading the heads of the higher-ranked guttus with his plan for shrine development, he gained villagers' support by proposing the democratisation of shrine management and the regularisation of payments for ritual servants.

Most of the villagers who came to be members of the committee had originally worked under the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu for the maintenance of the village shrine and preparation for the nēma. Among these villagers, some had complaints about the shrine management under the first and second guttu families. Some suspected that core members of the higher-ranked guttus had embezzled from the shrine endowments instead of distributing them fairly to the workers. In these circumstances, most villagers approved of N. Shetty's proposal that ordinary villagers establish a committee to determine endowment use and shrine management systems.

The ritual servants' attitudes about this, however, were not uniform. For instance, Yatish Pambada and Jayānanda Pambada, the two main būta

dancers in Perar, illustrate contrasting attitudes towards N. Shetty's plan: while Yatish did not openly cooperate with N. Shetty and kept his distance from him, Jayānanda became close with N. Shetty and gradually came to be seen by others as being under his influence. It seems that Jayānanda accepted N. Shetty's plan because he was dissatisfied with the existing shrine management under the guttu families, and he expected to improve the status of the būta dancers and participate in decision-making concerning the treatment of ritual servants. Meanwhile, for N. Shetty, getting a leading Pambada dancer on his side was important for enabling him to intervene not only in shrine management but also in the ritual practice. As we will see below, however, Jayānanda, who had been regarded as being on the side of the newcomer in daily social relations, strongly affirmed the traditional ways of būta worship when he embodied the deity's agency in the ritual.

The withdrawal of the guttu family from the shrine and the dilemma of a būta dancer

As seen in the previous section, in the nēma in 2009, the tension between the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu and the committee was arbitrated, and the traditional authority of the gaḍipatināru was temporarily recovered. N. Shetty, however, did not leave the shrine but continued to appeal to the Deputy Commissioner for the rights of the committee and to promote 'reform' for the shrine.

In November 2012, amid the unceasing tension between the two factions, the Deputy Commissioner ordered Gangādara Rai to hand over the key of the treasure house to the management committee. This decision deprived the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu of its hereditary rights to the property of the shrine. In reaction to this order, the core members of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu immediately gathered at the main hall in the head house to discuss a suitable response. They also invited an astrologer to divine the future course of action.¹⁴ They received an oracle that the misfortune the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu was suffering had been caused by the goddess Durgā,¹⁵ who had long been forgotten while dwelling in this house. According to the astrologer, in order to escape their misfortune, they had to worship the goddess properly in the head house and appease her anger. After a long discussion, they decided that all the members of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu family should withdraw from the management of, and ritual practice in, the village būta shrine, and instead concentrate on the worship of the goddess and deities in the head house. Gangādara Rai also declared that unless he could recover his dignity, he would never return to the shrine.

In February 2013, after this decision, the nēma was held at the village būta shrine without the members of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu. In this nēma, N. Shetty took the place of Gangādara Rai as the chief patron and interacted with the possessed priests and mediums. In the ritual of the judgement, however, there was an incident of which N. Shetty had never dreamt. While Jayānanda Pambada was usually thought to be on the side of the committee,

when he spoke an oracle as Pilicāmuṇḍi in the ritual, he expressed outrage about the absence of the head of the first guttu and scolded N. Shetty in front of the devotees. Regarding this incident, a villager who knew of the close relationship between Jayānanda and N. Shetty said that the oracle must have really been spoken by the daiva.

We should consider several aspects of why Jayānanda, as the deity Pilicāmuṇḍi, gave the oracle that supported the traditional kaṭṭu and ordered the reinstatement of the gaḍipatināru. As seen in Chapter 7, a būta medium is overwhelmed by the power of the deity and falls into trance just for a moment. After that moment, he acts as the deity while maintaining the dual perspective of the deity and himself. Needless to say, however, the real oracle is believed not to be the words of the medium, but to be the expression of the deity's will. In this case too, it is possible that the būta śakti filling the body of Jayānanda solely produced the oracle. At the same time, this incident can also be considered as a result of the entanglement of various powers, both social and spiritual.

In the ritual, Jayānanda spoke an oracle as Pilicāmuṇḍi, with Balavāṇḍi incarnated in the mukkāldi. In daily social relations, Jayānanda Pambada is positioned under the mukkāldi, who belongs to the guttu family. In the relations among the deities in the village shrine too, compared to Balavāṇḍi, Pilicāmuṇḍi is regarded as a rather marginal deity. Bālākrishna Shetty, who plays the role of the mukkāldi, is one of the core members of the fifth guttu family and has consistently supported the Muṇḍabetṭu guttu in the dispute over shrine management. In addition, in ritual practice, Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi has issued strong orders to devotees regarding the observance and recovery of the kaṭṭu, and his words and deeds have gained him respect from the people as embodying the kaṭṭu. Under these circumstances, in a ritual in which hundreds of people follow every move of the medium as the deity, it was almost impossible for Jayānanda-Pilicāmuṇḍi to speak an oracle that completely contradicted that of Mukkāldi-Balavāṇḍi. While in daily social relations he may have joined with N. Shetty and strived to free himself from the conventional system of worship, in the ritual practice, affected by entangled forces—the wild śakti that enabled him to become the deity, the power of the mukkāldi as the powerful other, and the power of the people's gaze—Jayānanda was forced to act in line with these forces.

The reconstruction of the shrine and confusion in the committee

In 2013, N. Shetty launched the reconstruction of the village būta shrine. To raise funds for the construction work, he collected 5,000 rupees from each house and 500,000 rupees from each guttu house in Perar. He announced a large-scale plan to construct a brand-new shrine complex after demolishing all the existing buildings. The most prominent change in his plan was to move the Brama guṇḍa, which had been regarded as the centre of the village būta shrine, outside the shrine precinct. According to N. Shetty,

the reason why the guṇḍa had to be relocated outside the shrine was that the deity enshrined in it was not the ‘real’ Brama. He insisted that an astrological divination revealed that the līṅga enshrined in the guṇḍa was not the embodiment of Brama, but that of another deity called Śāstāvu Brama. He therefore decided to move the existing statue and the entire guṇḍa outside the precinct and to build a new shrine in which a new statue of Brama would be enshrined.

The members of the higher-ranked guttu discussed this relocation plan with reference to the behind-the-scene circumstances and the lawsuit between L. Udupa and the Muṇḍabetṭu guttu in the 1930s. In the lawsuit, as discussed above, the then asrāṅṅa L. Udupa who was also responsible for the daily ritual to Brama asserted his trusteeship in the guṇḍa. Based on this past event, the guttu members conjectured that the real reason for the relocation of the guṇḍa was that N. Shetty feared retaliation from B. Udupa, a descendant of L. Udupa who had been driven out of the shrine by the committee. In short, if the guṇḍa were located outside the precinct, it would be easier for N. Shetty to prevent interference from B. Udupa, who might also demand his rights in the guṇḍa. N. Shetty could then yield to him these rights only in the building *outside* the shrine. The guttu members’ conjecture was therefore that the relocation must have been planned to prevent any future claims on the shrine from B. Udupa.

Meanwhile, as the construction work progressed under N. Shetty’s command, splits were gradually appearing among the members of the committee. First, there were pent-up complaints about the compulsory collection of expensive donations among the villagers, including the committee members. Second, N. Shetty’s arbitrary management of the committee added to their antipathy towards him. For instance, he proposed a new rule that would prohibit the Pūjāri workers from entering the shrine buildings, which as a matter of course antagonised the Pūjāris. Third, soon after the construction work began, it was suspended because the workers’ payments were overdue. Concerning this nonpayment of wages, some of the committee members requested that N. Shetty show the shrine’s account book, but he refused.

Some of the committee members thus became estranged from N. Shetty, and around the same time, a rumour spread among the villagers that the newly enshrined statue of Brama in the village būta shrine was shaking. This rumour soon led to the increasingly shared apprehension that the new statue was not appropriate for the village shrine. As we will see next, this phenomenon of the ‘shaking Brama’ was a decisive factor in the estrangement of the villagers from N. Shetty, and it encouraged those who aimed to recover the rights of the guttu families.

The astrological oracle and the return of the guttu family

From the beginning of 2014, the members of the second guttu house as well as other villagers who anticipated that the committee’s term of service

would expire in April 2015 often visited the head house of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu and asked for the return of Gangāḍara Rai. Responding to these persistent requests, the core members of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu again organised an astrological ritual in the head house in September 2014. Through the ritual, they received an oracle from the astrologer:

It is not necessary for you to return to the village shrine. At present, however, the villagers are in a predicament. The difficulty was caused by the deities. The first and second guttu houses are the rulers of the whole village, and if the villagers have problems, you have to take responsibility for that. Therefore, you must go back to the shrine. If you do not take care of the villagers, the whole of your family will be punished by daiva.

This result was acceptable to the members of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu because it recognised their right and duty to represent and protect the villagers under the approval of the deities, and encouraged them to return to the shrine. After some discussion among the core members, it was decided that Gangāḍara Rai and all the other members of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu would return to the shrine in October. Regarding this, however, one of the core members of the guttu family told me: 'We cannot make this decision by ourselves. We should organise an astrological ritual, and only if we get permission [from the deities], can we go back to the shrine'. Gangāḍara Rai also expressed his attitude as follows: 'If our kuṭuma [matrilineal joint family] goes back to the shrine, I will also go back. If the kuṭuma people agree, I will return. However, I would never go back alone'.

When deciding whether they should go back to the village shrine or not, the members of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu thus left the final decision to the agency of the deity, which was interpreted through astrology. The words of Gangāḍara Rai also indicate that even his decision as the head of the family depended on the decision of the kuṭuma as a whole. As seen in the previous section, in the lawsuit over shrine rights, Gangāḍara Rai took part in the modern judiciary and appealed for his rights using its logic and terminology. At the same time, his words and deeds were always influenced by, and also depended on, the will of the whole family and the agency of the deities.

It can be pointed out that there is a duality not only in the attitude of Gangāḍara Rai, but also in those of the members of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu. Namely, while they engage in the dispute in the realm of the modern judiciary by using the whole family's human and material resources, for their final decision regarding their course of action, they depend on divine oracles and astrology. As we will see next, the villagers in Perar have shown a similar duality in their striving to discern a course of action in the conflict and confusion regarding shrine management and ritual practice.

The cursing goddess, shivering deity, and foundation of a new committee

Soon after the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu family had decided to go back to the village shrine, a large-scale astrological ritual was held in the village būta shrine for nine days and nights, from 26 December 2014 to 3 January 2015. Some of the villagers contributed funds and organised the ritual to consult astrologers about the background and future of the dispute over the village būta shrine. In the course of this ritual, one astrologer delivered an oracle that surprised the participants: a goddess surrounded by rivers on three sides had cursed N. Shetty. In response, N. Shetty consulted another astrologer in hopes of contradicting this divination, but he could not receive any oracles that negated it. After a great deal of discussion and speculation about this oracle among the participants, they arrived at the conclusion that the goddess in question must be Durgā, as she was worshipped in the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu house surrounded by a river and canals on three sides.

In addition, in this ritual, another oracle was delivered, namely, that the present asrāṇṇa was not suitable for the village shrine. Receiving this oracle, some of the villagers made noises about the possibility of the return of B. Udupa, who had left the shrine as a result of the conflict with the service committee. They received the following reply from him:

If I go back to the village shrine, it will be when even the shadow of N. Shetty has disappeared from Perar. Above all, Bamma, which has been moved outside the shrine, must be brought back.

This reply from B. Udupa aroused discussion among the villagers about the rights and wrongs regarding the relocation of the Bamma guṇḍa. In the long discussion, several villagers pointed out that the rumoured phenomenon of the new shaking Bamma statue might signify that relocation was not a good decision.

The ritual did not lead to a consensus among the villagers about how to solve the problems regarding the village būta shrine. Most villagers, however, came to take the astrological oracle and the shivering statue as warnings about the unsuitableness of various changes in the village shrine as well as the inadequacy of N. Shetty's leadership. As a result, this ritual decided the estrangement of most of the villagers from N. Shetty, and subsequently the dispute over the village būta shrine entered a new stage.

On 15 March 2015, about two months after the astrological ritual in the village būta shrine, a meeting was held in a small meeting hall in Mudu Perar. About 50 people participated in the meeting, including the mukkāldi Bālākrishna Shetty, an advocate who belonged to the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu, and other core members of the higher-ranked guttu houses. The main subject of this meeting was how they should manage the village būta shrine after the expiration of the present committee's term of service. Above all,

discussion centred on the issue of how to deal with N. Shetty and his supporters, who would likely try to interfere in the establishment of the next committee: 'Should we stand up to N. Shetty's faction, or should we consult an astrologer again about our course of action?' 'First of all, do the daivas really need astrology?' After long and lively discussion, it was decided that interested villagers would collect contributions and organise another astrological ritual. It was also decided that they would establish a new society for social activities and register it at the Deputy Commissioner's Office. The society would be called 'Perara Sanskriti Protishtāna (Perar Cultural Committee)'. All the participants agreed that through this new committee, they would recover their rights in the village būta shrine and then establish a new system of management that, while based on the kaṭṭu, would also be open to all villagers.

Between the agency of deities and the power of modern law

Focusing on the disputes over the village būta shrine in Perar, we have examined the entanglement of different logics and forces, such as customary law and modern law, and the agency of deities and the power of the judiciary, to clarify people's struggles to deal with these forces.

As seen in the first section, one of the main subjects in previous studies on Hindu temples in South India has been the institutional change of temples since colonial times. For instance, Appadurai (1981) and Dirks (1987) described the process of the decline of traditional kingship and the transformation of temples in accordance with the advent of a centralised bureaucracy and modern judiciary. The transformation process of Hindu temples is for the most part similar to the changes that būta shrines in South Kanara have seen. In line with the development of centralised administration for religious institutions, the būta shrine in Perar also became subject to management and control by the modern state and law. In this process, some people strived to acquire or enlarge their own rights and interests in the village būta shrine by using the modern judiciary. In response to villagers' demands for the redistribution or transference of rights in the village shrine and for the democratisation of shrine management, the members of the higher-ranked guttus, who had long occupied the status of trustees of the village būta shrine, were faced with the need to appeal for their rights in the shrine in terms of modern law.

At the same time, turning to the ritual practice in the village būta shrine, it becomes clear that we cannot presume the unilateral historical change described by previous studies, such as from the rule of the deity and king to control by the modern state and law, or from the ritual exchange of offerings and honours to the 'commoditisation of honours' and 'commercialisation of worship' (Dirks 1987, pp. 361, 383).

In the nēma and other būta rituals, people communicate with deities in various ways. Among these, the most important mode of communication

is the transaction of offerings and blessings between devotees and deities. Through this transaction, the mutual rights and duties (*adikāra*) of both humans and deities are reconfirmed and the supreme power and authority of the deities is publicly recognised.

As seen in this chapter, both the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu family and the members of the committee participated in ritual transaction with the *būtas*. Through these transactions with the deities incarnated in mediums, they not only affirm the supreme power of the deities, but also become recipients of their agency. While engaged in the lawsuit over the rights and duties defined by modern law and approved by the judiciary, through ritual practice, they were all placed in the transactional network and came to act as those who bear the mythical *adikāra* that determine the relationship between humans and deities.

In relation to both the *būta* ritual and the courts, with their different manifestations of logic and power, the people involved have sought better positions and courses of action. Here, it is noteworthy that their practices almost always contain a duality, or entanglement, of activity and passivity, autonomy and heteronomy. In the ever-changing situation, the people concerned in the dispute, such as the guttu families, ritual servants, other villagers, and the committee members, all plan to maintain and enlarge their rights and interests, and sometimes act strategically. At the same time, on the verge of a difficult situation, they often depend on the oracles of deities and astrology as the basis for their decision-making. Acts and decisions based on the agency of deities, which temporarily appears in between the realms of *jōga* and *māya*, thus influence relations in, and processes of, disputes, and thereby generate further responses and transformations.

It should be noted, however, that it is overly schematic to view people as acting rationally and autonomously in the realm of the modern judiciary while acting passively and heteronomously in the realm of traditional worship. When participating in lawsuits, people are constrained by the various rules, customs, terminologies, and systems of the modern judiciary, and they strive to organise their modes of action in accordance with its strict logic and force. Likewise, in ritual practice, people strive to control their behaviour and shape their modes of action by following various rules and taboos called *kaṭṭu*, norms and logics manifested in the oral epic, and, above all, the agency of the deities.

This is probably the reason why people often search in modern law and systems for ways to free themselves from the constraints and difficulties of customary law and systems, and yet at the same time, they return again and again to ritual practice to communicate with the *būta śakti* that directs their lives beyond any of the rules and restrictions of modern law and systems. While coming from different origins and histories, and embodying different values and logics, modern law and customary law thus appear to the people who relate themselves to both as deeply entangled, and even complementary, realms of power.

The cases examined in this chapter thus cannot be understood as illustrating the mere process of new laws and systems which embody modern values and logics encompassing, changing, and surpassing traditional systems based on būta worship. They also cannot be interpreted as a process of the conservation and recovery of traditional laws and systems by avoiding modern influence. Rather, these cases show how people who have been involved in entanglements of, and conflicts between, the modern judiciary and būta worship reorganise their relationships with others and recreate their modes of life, not only by following, but also by utilising the respective power of modern law and deities. This point will be considered again in the succeeding chapters, as part of the investigation of people's practices under large-scale social changes such as the reorganisation of the matrilineal system and land tenure, the implementation of land reforms, and the advent of a massive development project.

Notes

- 1 See, for instance, Appadurai and Breckenridge (1976), Appadurai (1981), Fuller (1984), Presler (1987), and Dirks (1987).
- 2 Fuller (2003), however, carried out a follow-up survey on the same temple and clarified that the traditionalism of priests and authority of the temple had actually increased under state policy.
- 3 On the juristic personality of Hindu deities in terms of religious endowments, see Sontheimer (1965).
- 4 On the gift-exchange relationship in Hindu society which does not form a closed cycle, see Parry (1986).
- 5 In Tuḷu, *darṣana* indicates vision or sight, and also means trembling due to possession by deities. See Upadhyaya (1988–1997, p. 1571).
- 6 Regarding the issue of agency manifested through interactions between humans and deities, see also Gell (1997), Pinney (2001), and Ishii (2014a).
- 7 On the participation of government officials in Hindu rituals in temples, see Appadurai (1981, p. 49) and Fuller (1984, pp. 76–77).
- 8 Because the village būta shrine was located in Padu Perar, the institution was called 'the Padu Perar institution' in the court record.
- 9 Under the HRE Act, 'hereditary' temples (that is, temples whose managers had not previously been selected by government officers) were seen as private institutions and were thus relatively free from any direct outside control. The 'excepted' temple category was abolished in 1959 (see Presler 1987, pp. 24, 48).
- 10 The dispute between the asrāṇṇa and the higher-ranked guttu houses over the management of the village būta shrine continued intermittently. In 1960, a judgement was given that dismissed the asrāṇṇa's rights in the village būta shrine, except for his right in the guṇḍa (O.S. No. 25 of 1960).
- 11 In principle, Deputy Commissioner of the Dakshina Kannada district serves concurrently as Deputy Commissioner for Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments and executes his duties under the Commissioner.
- 12 'Law CR [Court Records] No. 7/2002–2003' indicates the original order by which the Deputy Commissioner appointed N. Shetty as the fit person for the shrine management in January 2003. It is also the title of the body of documents about the disputes regarding this order.
- 13 The Madras Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act, 1951 had been in force until the Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable Endowments Act came into force in May 2003. See Presler (1987, p. 28, note 32).

- 14 People in South Kanara often invite astrologers from Kerala who belong to the community called Poduvāl. This time too the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu family invited famous astrologers from Kerala, and in addition to the expenditure for the ritual, the family had to pay all the expenses for their travel and stay in Mangaluru. On Poduvāl, see also Thurston (1975[1909d]), pp. 203–205).
- 15 Durgā is one of the great Hindu goddesses, who is believed to be the wife of the god Shiva and to be a dreadful warrior who kills demons.

9 Historical changes in land tenure in South Kanara

As I discussed in Part One, people involved in *būta* worship in South Kanara consider the deities not just as objects of worship in shrines, but as circulating power that link the realm of the wild and the realm of the human. The *būta śakti* enables the continuance and reproduction of people's everyday life by constantly changing its form as it flows through the mountains, fields, village houses, and shrines, bringing fertility to the land and prosperity to the families. However, though the *būta śakti* brings about fecundity, it is at the same time dangerous; hence, the people must direct its flow through ritual, and adjust their relationship with the realm of the wild. They need to keep placating the dangerous power by offering the products of the land they cultivate in return for receiving the fertile power of the wild.

Oral epics and rituals in Perar express such relationships between the people, land and nature, and deities. In the *pāddana*, the mythic origin of ritual is chanted, recounting how *Balavāṇḍi* and other *būtas* demanded that the *guttu* houses should worship them in exchange for rights to control the village land. Through the exchange of offerings and blessings between the *guttu* heads and deities, the *nēma* also re-enacts a mythical drama in which the deities demand the performance of rituals and grant the *guttu* heads *adikāra* to the land and its people. The *guttus'* control and rights over village land are thus renewed through rituals. At the same time, the people reaffirm the fact that such rights are transitory and impossible to attain without the deities' acknowledgement. It is the *būtas* dwelling deep in the forests as the ultimate 'owners of the land' who rule over agricultural fields, forests, houses, and products of the land in Perar. The people only receive transient rights by offering rituals to the deities and appeasing them.

Būta rituals have been the basis of land use and holding, as well as production and distribution of agricultural products in village society. At the same time, the continuation of such rituals has been supported by the traditional land tenure system by which *guttus* who ruled over vast areas of land managed the shrine, and distributed land and products according to the ritual status of each family. As we will see in Chapters 10, the maintenance and succession of *būta* rituals and land tenure among the *guttus*, constituted mainly by the *Baṇṭa*, was possible due to the traditional matrilineal system called *aliyasantāna kaṭṭu*.

Land in South Kanara was an important source of income for the state and government of the region from the pre-colonial period to the present day. Moreover, it has been a significant target of public policy since land was the key to rule and governance over the local people whose livelihood depended on farming. Therefore, land has continued to be the site where the logic, values, and power of public policy and law meet, compete, interact with, and mutually influence the logic, values, and power shaped by customary relationships between people. In this process, the people have crafted many imaginative and conflicting practices to modify their relationships with land, nature, and others to the various new institutions that demanded the reassembling of and changes in customary relationships.

In this chapter, I will look at the historical development of land tenure in South Kanara from the pre-colonial era to the period of land reforms after independence. This will set the context for understanding people's practices in dealing with changes in public policies over land by focusing on their relationship with *būta* rituals in subsequent chapters. I will first give an outline of the land tenure system in South Kanara based on historical sources. Next, I will focus on the introduction of the ryotwari system in the colonial period and analyse the characteristics of the system in South Kanara. I will then examine the official documents published in the early twentieth century on land tax assessment and the registration of landholders (*paṭṭadār*) in Perar.¹ The results of this analysis will show that not only did the existing landlords take on the role of *paṭṭadār*s, but the traditional kinship system based on matriliney was also applied to the new land tenure system. I will deal with this matter in more detail in the subsequent chapters. Last, I will present an outline of the effects of land reform in South Kanara based on previous studies as a background to what I will discuss in Chapter 11.

Land tenure in pre-colonial South Kanara

The history of South Kanara before British colonial rule may be divided roughly into four periods: Āḷupa period (around sixth century to end of fourteenth century);² Vijayanagara period (mid-fourteenth century to seventeenth century); period of Keḷadi Nāyakas (early seventeenth century to eighteenth century);³ period of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan (1763–1799) (Ramesh 1970; Abhishankar 1973, pp. 33–85).

Ramesh analyses the history of South Kanara based on inscriptions on stone and copper plates (Ramesh 1970, p. xvii). He classifies inscriptions from the mid-seventh century to the Battle of Rakkasa-Taṅgaḍi in 1565 as follows: early Āḷupa period (mid-seventh century to mid-tenth century); mid-to late-Āḷupa, Hoysala period (968 to late fourteenth century); Vijayanagara period (1345–1565). I will give an outline of land tenure and socio-economic conditions of South Kanara in the Āḷupa and Vijayanagara periods based mostly on Ramesh's work.⁴

Land tenure in the Āḷupa period

We do not have much evidence about the everyday lives of people in South Kanara before the early Āḷupa period. According to Ramesh, it is written in an inscription of the mid-seventh century that South Kanara was ruled by Āḷuvarasa, and Āḷuva or Āḷupa appears as names of the royal family in later inscriptions. South Kanara was predominantly agricultural since early times, and land wealth was called *bāḷu*, which meant life and subsistence. Land was owned not only by royalty but also by private citizens. In early Āḷupa period, the king's land was bestowed on temples, Brahman priests, private citizens, and warriors. The royal family also collected taxes on paddy, rice, pepper, cotton, and areca nuts (Ramesh 1970, pp. 269–272).

By the mid- to late-Āḷupa period, the word *bāḷu* became a synonym for land wealth. In this period, names of measuring vessels of agricultural products (*muḍi*) and terms relating to land tenure used in present-day South Kanara began to appear in the inscriptions. For example, *gēṇi* referred to land tenancy or rent paid to the landholder by the tenant,⁵ and *mūḷiga* referred to farmers who permanently borrowed cultivable land from land owners (Ramesh 1970, pp. 275–276). The people subsisted mainly on agriculture, and land and its products were the major source of income for the royal family. Many kinds of taxes were levied on land, its products, and trade in this period. According to the inscriptions of the period, it was the duty of the villages to pay tax in cash to the royal treasury. These taxes were called *samudāya*, which meant collective tax or contribution. Landholders and farmers also paid a part of the products of the land to the royal treasury as tax. Landholders paid tax on land ownership in cash. This tax was called *bhukti samudāya* from the word *bhukti* meaning 'enjoyment' and 'ownership'. Various plots of cultivable land were also taxed (Ramesh 1970, pp. 277–278).

From the above description, we see that land was a valuable resource for people's livelihood during the Āḷupa period. We also see that the state levied various taxes on land and its products as a major source of income.

System of land tenure in the Vijayanagara period

During the period of Vijayanagara rule, South Kanara was divided into two parts, Bārakūru *rājya* and Maṅgaḷūru *rājya*, each region being governed by a ruler appointed by the kingdom. Most of the areas, however, were under the rule of local chiefs (Ramesh 1970, p. 279). As the Āḷupa royal family declined and the Vijayanagara kingdom came to dominate, there was a rise of many families of local Jain rulers in South Kanara. These families ruled over each region as landlords, and at the same time seemed to have contributed to the spread of the matrilineal system (*aḷiya santāna kaṭṭu*) in South Kanara. According to Ramesh, there are no records of an inheritance system other than that from the father to son in South Kanara until the mid-thirteenth century. The Āḷupa royal family had not practised the *aḷiya santāna* system of inheritance from

mother's brother to sister's son. However, the Jain rulers generally followed the matrilineal system; hence, their emergence appears to have led to the spread of this system in South Kanara (Ramesh 1970, pp. 279–281).⁶

Commerce developed in South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period. Several merchant guilds, including *seṭṭikāra*, were established in many cities. Some agricultural products were imported from beyond the Ghats. Since the growth of trade made the merchants rich, according to records of the Vijayanagara period, the merchants and their guilds became significant donors of cash and land to temples, along with the rulers of the kingdom (Ramesh 1970, pp. 283–284).

However, rights to land tenure and cultivation in this period were almost the same as those in the Āḷupa period. In many cases, the state owned the villages and the cultivable land affiliated to them, which are described as *bhaṇḍāra-sthaḷa* and *aramanege saluva bhaṇḍāra-sthaḷa* in the inscriptions. Land owned by temples and private citizens was called differently according to who the owners were. In this period too, land tax constituted the major income of the state treasury. In the inscriptions of the Vijayanagara period, there are descriptions of many kinds of land and land tax, including the main ones in the Āḷupa period.

Ramesh lists several kinds of land, landowners, agricultural workers, and taxes that appear in the inscriptions (Ramesh 1970, pp. 284–287). The richness of the vocabulary referring to land and taxes indicates the importance of land policies and affluence of the tax system of this period. In fact, as Ramesh points out, there was a great development in land policies of South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period. Income from land tax was re-evaluated from time to time, and buying and selling of land was governed by administrative rules. The borders (*gaḍi*) of plots owned by temples, individuals, and guild organisations were fixed (Ramesh 1970, pp. 287–288).⁷

From this, we have a glimpse of the socio-economic conditions in South Kanara, the administration of land in particular, in the Vijayanagara period. Taxation and land management became more institutionalised during this time compared with the Āḷupa period. But each region in South Kanara was related to the centre through the rule of chieftains, rather than being directly under the control of the central government (cf. Karashima 1994). The presence of Jain landlords who exercised control at the local level in South Kanara in this period and the establishment of administrative areas related to taxation are particularly significant in relation to *būta* rituals. I will discuss this in the next section by referring to the work of Gowda (2005).

Administrative system and būta rituals in the Vijayanagara period

Gowda investigates the institutionalisation of *būta* rituals in South Kanara in relation to the administrative system of the Vijayanagara period (Gowda 2005, pp. 17–38). He points out that various regions in South Kanara were placed under the administrative system of the central government.

The inscriptions of the period include references to names of administrative units, such as *dēśa*, *rājya*, *nāḍu*, *sīme*, *māgaṇe*, *grāma*, *ūru*, *cāvaḍi*, and *guttu*. *Rājya*, *nāḍu*, and *sīme* were larger administrative units, while *māgaṇe*, which constituted a part of *nāḍu* or *sīme*, was a medium-sized unit consisting of several *grāmas*. *Grāma* was a unit consisting of several villages and *ūru* was a settlement inhabited by several families (*okkahu*). The units were hierarchically ordered from largest, *rājya* (or *dēśa*, *maṇḍala*), to the smallest, *okkahu* (Gowda 2005, pp. 27–28). *Guttu* functioned as an administrative unit as well as an economic one. A village usually contained four to eight traditional *guttus*, and the head of a *guttu* was responsible for collecting and paying a fixed amount of tax to the state treasury. Village administrative organisations included *grāma*, *jaḡattu*, and *mukkāldi*, and village administrative officers were known by titles such as *grāmani* and *madhyastha*.⁸

If we compare the administrative system in South Kanara during the Vijayanagara period to the system of *būta* worship, we see that they are correlated. Gowda points out that *būtas* can be classified according to their power in the region as follows: *Būtas* of *sīme* (or *nāḍu*); *būtas* of *māgaṇe*; *būtas* of *grāma*; *būtas* of *ūru* (village); *būtas* of *guttu*; and *būtas* of *kuṭuma* (family) (Gowda 2005, pp. 29–30). In *būta* rituals, *sīme* as a whole was under the control of *arasu būtas* or *sīme būtas*, which were called the ‘royal *būtas*’ (Gowda 2005, p. 30). All *būtas* below the *māgaṇe būtas* were subordinate to *sīme būtas*, and had jurisdiction over their respective geographical areas, such as *māgaṇe*, *grāma*, and *guttu*. In this way, in principle, the power of the *būtas* was geographically constrained and there was a hierarchy of *būtas* with *sīme būtas* at the top, just as in the administrative system of the Vijayanagara period.

A correlation between the Vijayanagara administrative system and *būta* rituals can also be seen in the names and roles of the *būtas*. The king of *sīme* in the Vijayanagara period was known as ‘king over two hundred people (*innūrāla arasu*)’ and ‘king over one thousand people (*sāvīrāla arasu*)’. The same kind of names were used to refer to *būtas*, for example, *Pañjūrli būta* was often called the ‘*Pañjūrli* of a thousand people’. *Būtas* were said to have royal jurisdiction (*paṭṭa*) in ritual contexts.

From the above facts, Gowda concludes that the *būtas* upheld the existent hierarchical administrative system and its authority, and functioned as its advocate in *būta* rituals such as *nēma* and *kōla*. Hence it can be said that *būta* rituals functioned to maintain and reproduce the administrative system in ritual contexts in South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period. Politico-economic authority and land ownership rested in the hands of the rulers and landlords in South Kanara up to the twentieth century, and the development of *būta* rituals was closely linked to its history (Gowda 2005, p. 31).

If we combine the insights of the research by Ramesh and Gowda, we see the possibility of a close connection between the organisation of *būta* rituals and the establishment of administrative divisions and landlords’ rule over land in the Vijayanagara period. As I have already mentioned, land policy in

South Kanara greatly developed during the Vijayanagara period, and various regions were ordered in a hierarchy of territories from the uppermost *sīme*, a little kingdom ruled by a local king, to *guttu*, the domain of the village landlord. Some of the rulers of *sīme* seemed to have been Jains who had become prominent in South Kanara during the Vijayanagara period. In this period, *būta* rituals were ordered to correlate with the administrative and geographical units, and had jurisdiction over local society along with the heads of administrative units. The highest in rank were the king and the *būta* of *sīme*, and at the bottom of the hierarchy were the family head and its *būta*.

Oral epics (*pāddana*) narrating the origin of *būta* rituals reflect this history. As we saw in Chapter 4, according to oral epics, royal *būtas* were first welcomed in Perar by Koratāi Balardi, a female head of Jain *guttu* family, who built a shrine and began the *būta* worship. It is said that the *būta* ritual and the status of *guttu* were inherited by a Baṅṭa family through the brother and sister she adopted. Balavāṅḍi of Perar begs a *būta* called Arasu, that is to say, the *būta* king corresponding to the *sīme* king, and invites him to Perar. By comparing the contents of such oral epics with the history of South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period, we may presume that *būtas* came to take on governing roles as they were coupled with their respective administrative units, namely small states governed by Jain rulers and local societies of different scales, such as *grāma* and *ūru*. This process promoted the organisation and hierarchy of *būta* rituals.

We should also consider why it was the *būtas* that came to complement the administrative system and the landlords' authority in South Kanara. It is not easy to give a definitive answer to this question, but it may be because the *būtas* were widely worshipped as indigenous deities strongly linked to nature and particular lands, and were the 'owners of the land' who determined the fertility and productivity of the region. Incorporating deities that were considered to be the ultimate 'owner' and basis of the land and its products into the administrative system based on land tax, and correlating the head of administrative unit with the *būta* at each level, made it possible to legitimise political rule over land and those who cultivated the land as having the blessings and acknowledgement of the deities.

However, we should note that the relationship between *būtas* and humans cannot be reduced to such a functional interpretation. As we saw in Part One, *būta* rituals not only grant the *guttus* legitimacy but also destabilise the authority of the devotees, including that of the *guttus*, by making the people aware of the supreme authority of the *būta* itself. The correlation between *būta* rituals and administrative systems mentioned by Gowda thus should not be understood merely in terms of the political use of *būta* rituals by the rulers. That is to say, the linking of the system of governance and *būta* rituals does not imply an absolute domestication or institutionalisation of the latter. Rather, it is a process whereby the wild *śakti* penetrates the realm of politics and becomes the source of political power.

As I have discussed so far, in South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period, the authority and power of būtas were hierarchically organised correlating with the establishment of administrative units. Systems of political, legal, and religious rule were formed at the level of village society, and land and families were organised under this system. Also during this period, there was probably a hierarchical ordering of families devoted to the village būta shrine, as well as distribution of grants and agricultural products according to the status and role of each family.

As I have already mentioned, in Perar, there was a hierarchical ordering of the main families centred on the guttu families and the village būta shrine. There was a system whereby each family was given land belonging to the shrine and a part of agricultural products along with the būta's blessings. The heads of guttu families not only ruled the village society based on their land ownership, but also were in charge of distributing the products of and rights to the land. Central to this distribution process were the 'rājanū daiva', who owned vast amounts of land as shrine wealth, accumulated local products as offerings, and controlled the redistribution of land and its products through the guttu heads.⁹

Land policy in South Kanara in the colonial period

Land system in the Keḷadi Nāyaka period

In this section, I discuss the land policy in South Kanara during the colonial period. Before I do so, let me give a brief account of the conditions in South Kanara from the seventeenth century to the end of eighteenth century, the period of transition from Keḷadi Nāyaka to British rule.

South Kanara was ruled by the Keḷadi Nāyakas from the early seventeenth century to 1763.¹⁰ Historical records of land policy of this period, however, are insufficient (Stein 1989, p. 71). Madhava analyses religious organisation and land tenure in coastal South Kanara from the late Vijayanagara period to the Keḷadi Nāyaka period by using primary sources including inscriptions (Madhava 1985). He notes that the ruling classes and wealthy citizens donated land to religious institutions in South Kanara during this period. Transfer of land was made in the deity's name and the deity held proprietary rights. This was known as *dēva paṭṭe*, and donated land (*paṭṭi*) was usually exempted from tax.

Many inscriptions refer to land transfers called *inām*, *umbaḷi*, and *uttāra*. *Umbaḷi* was essentially land for the purpose of self-sufficiency. *Uttāra* referred to land that was a source of income for special use such as for ritual purposes. The person managing the religious institution at the time was said to have often appealed to the ruler for the transfer of *uttāra* (Madhava 1985, pp. 133–134). As we saw in Chapter 2, the families of workers (*cākiridakulu*) serving the village būta shrine in Perar were given land called *umbaḷi*. Based on Madhava's research, we can assume that such land was for the purposes

of self-sufficiency and was transferred to various families tax-free in lieu of services they offered to the būta shrines.

What is interesting about such land donations is that the ruling classes and individuals sometimes donated land they purchased from the original holders to religious institutions. In such cases, religious institutions were given the original rights to the land by paying the donors some money. Those in positions of authority in the religious institutions also personally bought and sold land. In such cases, they were able to buy new land by paying tax called *kānike* to the state treasury. It was also possible to mortgage and rent donated land to tenants. Rulers of coastal South Kanara donated land to religious institutions and at the same time had an income by collecting taxes from them. There were also cases of rulers interfering in the use of the land they donated (Madhava 1985, pp. 133–142).

In this way, in South Kanara during the period of Keḷadi Nāyakas, land was an important medium for linking the ruling classes with the ordinary people through donations and transfer. Land was also subject to sale and rent, and an important source of income for religious institutions.¹¹

Introduction of the ryotwari system by Munro

In 1763, Hyder Ali defeated the Keḷadi Nāyakas and occupied South Kanara. After the war of 1767, Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan fought many wars against the British. When Hyder Ali died in 1782, Tipu Sultan, his successor, defeated the local chiefs of the region except for the southernmost area. Tipu Sultan died fighting the Fourth Battle of Mysore in 1799, and South Kanara came under British rule (Abhishankar 1973, pp. 4–5, 61–65). Since then the land policy of South Kanara entered a new phase.

Many British, including Thomas Munro and John Sturrock, who governed South Kanara, refer to the brutality and exaction of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan resulting in the ruin of the region and poverty of the landlords. According to the historian Rao, who examines the discourses of colonial administrators in nineteenth-century South Kanara, the British often mention ‘the destructive performances of the Mysore rulers’ in South Kanara and Malabar (Rao 1991, pp. 64–65). It was part of the British administrator’s mission to restore the ‘wise and liberal institutions of the antient (sic) Hindoo government’ (Stein 1989, p. 67)¹² destroyed by the ‘rapacious Mysorean rule’ (Stein 1989, p. 67). In spite of the brevity of his term in Kanara,¹³ Thomas Munro, who drafted and headed the taxation system in the region, also proposed the land tenure system in the Vijayanagara period as the ideal.

Thomas Munro was appointed as the first collector when Kanara came under British rule in 1799. He worked on assessing land tax and establishing a taxation system for around 15 months until he was appointed as the collector of the Ceded Districts in October of the following year (Stein 1989, p. 64). I will first give a brief account of Munro’s work in Kanara and its evaluation at the time based on the writings of Arbuthnot (1889). Next, I will

analyse the land policy in colonial Kanara based on Stein's research (1989), which questions the predominant view of Munro by a critical reading of the existing material about him.

According to Arbuthnot, the land of Kanara, which had been prosperous with lower taxes than other regions in the past, was in a state of anarchy and confusion due to having been 'grievously oppressed by the exactions of Hyder and Tipoo' (Arbuthnot 1889, p. 55) by the time Munro took office as the collector (Arbuthnot 1889, pp. 55–56; see also Stein 1989, pp. 64–65). Munro was thus faced with the difficult task of recovering order and establishing a taxation system, but he was adamant in creating a system which was to become the basis of a tax system in Kanara. Munro traced the records on systems of land tenure and tax assessment dating back to the mid-fourteenth century when Kanara was under Vijayanagara rule. He thought the system of assessment introduced in this period was valid for his purposes (Arbuthnot 1889, p. 58; see also Beaglehole 1966, pp. 46–47).

Arbuthnot points out that taxes in the Keladi Nāyaka period were reasonable, as it did not go over a quarter of the total products. After Hyder Ali conquered Kanara, however, people suffered due to heavy taxes and oppression. Land in Kanara was originally considered as private property and there were no restrictions placed on land transfer through sale. Many land owners used tenants but these tenants had more or less permanent possession. Moreover, most of the land in Kanara had high sale value. However, this situation was changed during the rule of Hyder and Tipu. Many of the old landlords were annihilated and rights of landholders were restricted. According to Munro, however, the rights that endured were 'still as much cherished, and the title to it as obstinately contested, as it ever was perhaps at any former period' (Arbuthnot 1889, p. 60).

The land tenure and tax system promoted by Munro in Kanara was the ryotwari system. This was a system by which taxes were collected from owners of small plots without the intervention of any form of intermediaries, such as zamindars.¹⁴ Ota's research focuses on Baramahar where the assessment method based on the ideas of the ryotwari system by Alexander Read and Munro was first introduced in South India (Ota 1994). Ota points out that under this system all land was owned by the state, and peasants who used the land were all considered to be tenants, who signed a contract with the state individually every year and were obliged to pay a fixed amount of land tax per parcel. That is to say, there were three characteristics of the ryotwari system: land ownership by the state, individual liability of land tax, and exclusion of intermediaries for tax collection (Ota 1994, p. 223; see also Mizushima 1999, pp. 443–445).

According to Ota, the ryotwari system was formed essentially to adapt to the natural environment and agricultural conditions of the dry region of Baramahar. In late eighteenth-century Baramahar, land had little significance in agricultural production and did not have commodity value. Ties between peasants and land were weak, and there was a high rate of spatial

and social mobility. Under such conditions, it was reasonable to have a system of state land ownership where tax was levied only on land cultivated each year. However, it goes without saying that the situation in Baramahar differed from that in Kanara, which was a pluvial region where land was highly valued and old landlord classes were prominent.

The ryotwari system introduced in Kanara by Munro was appropriate for the kind of land use in Kanara, so it differed from the system introduced in Baramahar. Arbuthnot points out two characteristics of the ryotwari system in Kanara. First, in many cases, land tax was to be paid not by the actual cultivator, but by the landlord who used tenants and collected rent, and by those who had semi-permanent land rights. Second, the amount of tax assessed was not based on each plot of farmland but on each estate or *warg* (Arbuthnot 1889, p. 62; Sturrock 1894, p. 118; Mukherjee 1962, p. 17; Bhat 1998, pp. 90–91). Estates referred to by Arbuthnot as *warg* originally meant the leaf that was used for land records by the Vijayanagara government.¹⁵ It later came to refer to the collection of several plots of land owned by one family recorded on these leaves. The landholder was called *wargdār* or *mūlawargdār* meaning ‘original or hereditary holder’ (Baden-Powell 1990 [1892], p. 147).¹⁶

Such methods of land assessment and taxation were suited to land use in Kanara where a landlord owned several plots scattered in various places and tenants cultivated some parts of them. Thus, it was possible to assess and collect land tax without introducing major changes in the existing form of land use. Arbuthnot interprets this as a result of Munro’s respect for the local system of land use (Arbuthnot 1889, p. 62; see also Beaglehole 1966, pp. 8–9). Arbuthnot argues that Munro’s tax policy accepted the existing local system and did not introduce changes that were deemed unnecessary. Munro discovered ‘a very widely established system of private property in land’ (Arbuthnot 1889, p. 62) in Kanara, and tried to reconstruct a system that was valued by the local people, and to strengthen it, instead of replacing it with a new system. He strongly opposed the demands made by the Madras government to submit a plan to divide the region into large-scale estates so that the principles of Bengali zamindari system can be applied. Munro argued that all kinds of land in Kanara were considered as private property and a significant value was attached to land and its title deed; therefore, it would not be possible to divide Kanara into large-scale estates and collect land taxes from a small number of large-scale landlords, unless all the rights of existing landlords were annihilated (Arbuthnot 1889, pp. 62–63).

The sociologist, Damle, presents a different view from Arbuthnot of the ryotwari system introduced in Kanara by Munro. Damle points out that the ryotwari system was introduced in South Kanara without surveying the plots.¹⁷ Several plots, the size of which were unknown and often located in different places and villages, formed a holding called *warg*. These holdings were not marked with borders appropriate for the ryotwari system, and ownership rights of any size of land were permitted if the landholder agreed

to pay the amount of tax assessed by the government. Damle argues that Munro levied tax not on farmland but on warg without changing the size of the holding. Hence the ryotwari system did not change the existing system of land tenure or lead to new rights. In other words, the position of landlords as paṭṭadār was strengthened as the existing form of land holding was institutionalised (Damle 1991, pp. 147–148).

We gain an insight into the characteristics of the ryotwari system in Kanara from the accounts of Arbuthnot and Damle, though they differ in that the former views Munro's policy in a positive light while the latter is critical of it. The ryotwari system introduced in Kanara differed from that in Baramahar. It suited the conditions of existing land tenure in Kanara as land tax was levied on warg consisting of several plots, and the warg holders were made to pay land tax. Thus, the rights of existing landlords were not lost due to introduction of this system. In fact, as Damle points out, the status of the old landlords may have been strengthened by the institutionalisation of the customary form of land holding. As we saw in the previous section, village landlords had holdings at the village level in the Vijayanagara period. We could say that several plots owned by such landlord families came to be established as warg, and the family head (or the representative of the sub-group of entire family, which I will mention later) became the paṭṭadār.¹⁸

Munro's intentions and the 'invention of tradition'

What kind of logic did Munro employ to proceed with the introduction of land policy and new system in Kanara? Stein analyses this by looking at Munro's use of historical sources (Stein 1989). Stein points out that Munro submitted reports about Kanara to the Madras government on two occasions, on 31 May and 19 November 1800. In the report submitted in May, Munro argued that individual, private property in land dated back to ancient India. His claim was based on the view that Harihara, the king of Vijayanagara, had created a system of assessment in fourteenth-century Kanara in accordance with ancient Hindu texts (Stein 1989, p. 66).

About six months later, in the report of November 1800, Munro focused on the importance of private property rights and the large number of lawsuits over land in Kanara at the time rather than on historical sources. He took pains to respond to the request of the Madras government to introduce land and tax system in Kanara following the example of the Bengali zamindari system. As we have already seen in Arbuthnot's account (1889, pp. 63–64), Munro argued against the government's request, pointing out that since there were already private land holdings, and validity of land title deeds was debated in law courts in Kanara, it would be impossible to create large-scale holdings and landlords without annulling the rights of existing landlords. Munro pointed out the value of small-scale holdings in Kanara, and if the government were to proceed in creating large-scale holdings,

these holdings should adhere to the existing social and community borders. He contended as follows:

The most convenient arrangement would be the ancient one of maganies or gramams ... To break in upon ancient boundaries and landmarks for the sake of ... squaring estates, would occasion much trouble ... because these boundaries serve not only to divide lands, but also particular tribes or families who form distinct communities in their respective villages.

(Stein 1989, p. 67)¹⁹

Stein points out that such statements by Munro could have dislodged his own logical basis for promoting the introduction of the ryotwari system. The claim that there were communities in local society weakened Munro's claim about the ryotwari system based on agreement between the state and individual peasants. Moreover, references to 'distinct communities' (Stein 1989, p. 67) and land holdings cast doubts over Munro's theory of there being small-scale private property ownership by individuals. In spite of such risky argumentation, Munro's report gained the support of high officials in the Madras government, and in 1804 the Court of Directors of the East India Company expressed their appreciation of Munro's achievements in extracting land tax records of the past 400 years based on ancient historical sources.

However, Munro's 'historical' reconstruction of ancient tax system, according to Stein, was in fact nothing more than a conjecture based on extremely vague evidence. In his report of May 1800, Munro said that village accountants in Kanara kept records of land holdings and transfers, and 'black books (*kaddatams*)' (Sturrock 1894, p. 95) with revenue reports over several centuries. He stated that many of these black books were lost during the rule of Hyder and Tipu, but enough of them remained to understand the tax system of 400 years. Munro also claimed that according to ancient tradition and descriptions, all cultivable land was privately owned and land owned or rented by the state was unclaimed waste. He pointed out that there was no land tax before the rule of King Harihara of Vijayanagara, and it was after the reign of King Harihara that a system of dividing the products of the land between the landlords, cultivators, and the government began. He saw this as the standard for land tax in Kanara.

Stein argues that such claims by Munro were not historically verified. Only Sturrock, one of Munro's successors in Kanara, queried the existence of the 'black book' on which Munro's theory depended, and hinted that Munro could not have reconstructed the tax rates of the time due to lack of historical sources on areas of cultivated land and currency value of the Vijayanagara period (Sturrock 1894, pp. 95–96; Stein 1989, pp. 67–70).

Stein critically analyses Munro's hypothesis based on the historiography of medieval Kanara by Ramesh (1970) and Bhatt (1975). Stein argues that these historical studies do not support any of Munro's hypotheses. First, as

opposed to Munro's theory on the transformation of the land tax system under the Vijayanagara kingdom, in Stein's view, the expansion of Vijayanagara power had almost no administrative influence in the coastal region. Stein points out that the ruling authority of chiefs from the olden days continued in Kanara in this period. These chiefs included the matrilineal Jains, and they maintained political independence from the Vijayanagara administrative system. There was also continuity of a village administrative system based on warriors and community of farmers. Second, whereas Munro argues that there were no state-held lands in the Vijayanagara period and periods preceding it, historical research of the medieval period refers to land that was taxed at the government level (*bhaṇḍāra-sthāḷa*).²⁰ Third, Munro's theory suggests that the land administration system introduced by the Vijayanagara rulers was fundamentally changed by the Keladi Nāyakas, but historical research points out that there are very few sources about the land policy in the Keladi kingdom and Munro's claims cannot be substantiated.²¹ Stein thus argues that 'Munro's "historical" reconstruction of Kanara's land-revenue system was deceptive' (Stein 1989, p. 71). Munro had created a history in order to legitimise the level of tax assessment in the region he managed and collect taxes without resistance from the old dominant landholders (Stein 1989, pp. 70–71).

Stein's critique of Munro's report seems partly correct. Munro placed importance on avoiding resistance and confusion among the landholders of Kanara at the time when introducing new land and tax policies. For this purpose, he came up with the idea of introducing the ryotwari system that suited the existing form of land use/holding; and he tried to legitimise the introduction of this system by referring to the 'accounts and traditions' (Stein 1989, p. 66) of the Vijayanagara period. He set up the warg as the unit of taxation, made the warg holder the tax payer, presented the tax system of the Vijayanagara period as the model for land policy, and stressed the importance of existing boundaries and system of land tenure.

There are, however, some points in Stein's critique of Munro's hypotheses that do not seem appropriate. One is Stein's view of 'political independence' (Stein 1989, p. 70) of chiefs in the Vijayanagara period. Ramesh's historical research indeed refers to the emergence of local rulers in South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period. However, we cannot infer from this that such rulers were politically independent from the Vijayanagara kingdom. Rather, we see how the rulers of the kingdom and its citizens were linked through the people's allegiance to local rulers (Ramesh 1970, p. 279). Moreover, Ramesh's research makes it clear that the land tax system greatly developed during the Vijayanagara period (Ramesh 1970, p. 287), in contrast to Stein's view that the Vijayanagara kingdom had little administrative influence in the coastal areas.

The ryotwari system in Kanara was designed for a stable collection of tax, without taking away the rights of existing landholders, and avoiding resistance from the dominant landlords. In this sense, the introduction of

the system in Kanara was the same as the case in Baramahar, which stressed continuity rather than disjunction from the existing form of land tenure in the region (see Ota 1994, p. 232). Munro presented the land and tax system of the Vijayanagara period as an ideal type, and considered the ryotwari system as succeeding this ideal type. By doing so, he insisted on the historical continuity of the old and new systems, and called for a return to the ideal state before the period of despotism of Hyder and Tipu.

As Stein points out, Munro's policy and use of history may have been a reconstruction or invention to legitimise the colonial plan and avoid resistance from the landlord class, which was also the armed forces in Kanara at the time. However, we could also say that Munro's theory in the 1800 report was an 'invention of history' to initiate land and tax policies suited to the land use/holding specific to Kanara, and to convince the Madras government not to import the zamindari system of Bengal.

Characteristics of land and tax policy of colonial Kanara

So far we have seen that land and tax system of colonial Kanara matched the existing land tenure system rather than introducing new changes. Hence the rights of existing landholders were maintained. However, it is doubtful whether it can be called 'private, individual ... proprietorship' (Stein 1989, p. 67; see also Stein 1983, pp. 44–45) as Arbuthnot states in accordance with Munro's theory.

Munro repeatedly stresses the existence of small-scale private land ownership in Kanara. This may have been an attempt on his part to promote the application of the ryotwari system, and to persuade the Madras government that its request to introduce a land tax system based on the zamindari system would be unsuitable for Kanara. As I will mention later, in South Kanara, it was actually the matrilineal joint families (*kuṭuma*) of village landlords or *guttus* that owned several plots as family land. Hence it is not appropriate to consider this in terms of private land ownership by individuals. A *guttu* family's rights to land and its products were inseparable from its ritual duties and rights in village society.

Many of the powerful landlords in colonial Kanara were *Baṅṭa* (Madhava 1984; Stein 1989, pp. 71–72). Munro's land policy took into consideration the rights of *Baṅṭa*, who constituted the armed forces at the time, to avoid their resistance. Hence their rights to land were not so impaired by the introduction of new policies. In fact, as Damle points out, it is possible that the village landlords became the *paṭṭadārs* under the new land policy and strengthened their status and authority in village society (Damle 1991).

What is interesting in relation to this point is the role of *patteru* (Patel). As Ota points out in the case of Baramahar, *patteru*s were appointed from upper-class farmers to collect land tax from each village and mediate conflicts in the villages, along with the introduction of the ryotwari system (Ota 1994, pp. 230–231).²² In South Kanara, this contributed to strengthening

the authority of village landlord families. In the case of Perar, the eldest man of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu was appointed as the pateru from generation to generation, and this was the second most important post after that of the gaḍipatināru. This is significant in relation to būta rituals. The gaḍipatināru's role in būta rituals and the pateru's role in village administration were complementary in leading and constructing the ritual, political, and legal system on which local society was based. These roles were monopolised by the family of the most powerful guttu.

The selection of paṭṭadārs and appointment of pateru in colonial South Kanara re-established the guttus' land rights and administrative/judicial roles in local society, which had hitherto been inseparable from their roles in būta rituals, as 'secular rights' cut off from the ritual context. At the same time, these rights were re-defined as subordinate to the authority of the colonial government. That is to say, the colonial government made a selection from the various rights and roles of the guttus given and acknowledged by deities, and attached new politico-judicial rights and roles to those that they thought belonged to the secular sphere. At this stage, it seems that guttu families, who had been exercising rights related to būta rituals, monopolised secular authority established by colonialism. As a result, the powerful guttu families came to take on both the rights and roles based on būta rituals and customary law, and the politico-judicial roles ascribed by the colonial government.

In this way, the colonial land and tax system strengthened rather than weakened the rights and status of landlords by institutionalising the existing land tenure system. As I will mention later, the monopoly over land by Baṅṭa landlords became one of the targets of land reform in South Kanara after independence. In the next section, I will look at land holding and use, and the registration of paṭṭadārs in early twentieth-century South Kanara focusing on cases in Mudu Perar.

Paṭṭadār and land tenure in early twentieth-century Perar

Land policy in South Kanara after the period of Munro

In this section, I will examine land tenure and paṭṭadārs in early twentieth-century Mudu Perar based on administrative records published in 1904. Before doing so, let me summarise the history of land tenure in South Kanara after the introduction of a new system by Munro, based on the writings of Sturrock (1894), Abhishankar (1973), and Bhat (1998).

The Revenue Board considered Munro's land and tax policies to be sufficient, and tax collection policy in line with Munro's plan was put into practice for approximately ten years. However, in the report about taxation from 1810 to 1812, it was suggested that the landholders were being excessively affected by land tax assessment. In response to this, the Revenue Board demanded submission of a report from Alexander Read, the collector at that time. In a report submitted in January 1814, Read called for attention to be

paid on the maximum limit of tax suggested by Munro. Read also suggested reducing the assessment from 4% to 7% according to region (Sturrock 1894, pp. 101–102; Abhishankar 1973, p. 429).

The report by Read and his successor, Thomas Harris, made the Board see that the actual tax rate was a heavy burden on landholders. The Board ‘were of opinion that the best standard of demand would be the average collections realised from each estate since the province had been under the British Government’ (Sturrock 1894, p. 102). This assessment was carried out in the year Fasli 1229 (1819–1820) (Sturrock 1894, pp. 102–103; Abhishankar 1973, pp. 429–430; Maclean 1989 [1885], p. 63; Bhat 1998, pp. 107–108).²³

In 1834, the collector, H. Viveash, suggested the introduction of a comprehensive assessment of uniform and permanent land tax. Viveash also classified various holdings (warg) according to how they were taxed, including *bharti*, holdings where it was possible to pay all the tax levied by the fixed assessment, and *kambharti*, holdings where it was not possible to pay all the tax levied by the fixed assessment. The method of tax collection he proposed was put into practice by local administrators, but it was not ultimately approved by the Revenue Board (Sturrock 1894, pp. 107–108; Bhat 1998, pp. 114–115). The failure of Viveash’s revision of assessment was considered to be a problem of the tax collection system in Kanara where there was no accurate registration. The Revenue Board then began to search for a fairer method of assessment. In 1848, T. L. Blane submitted a detailed report on the land use and tax collection in Kanara, and debates over revision of survey and assessment continued till the 1880s (Sturrock 1894, pp. 107–114).

By the end of 1859, a major administrative change took place dividing Kanara into North Kanara district and South Kanara district. In 1862, North Kanara district was annexed to the Bombay Presidency, and only South Kanara district came under the Madras Presidency. Survey for taxation was conducted in South Kanara district from 1889 to 1896. The survey made it clear that many warg were no longer units of land holding.²⁴ Warg included several types of wetland, dryland, such as *bayilu*/bailu, majalu, and *beṭṭu*, as well as land called *bagayat* suitable for cultivation of areca nuts and coconuts. Supplementary survey was conducted to classify land in further detail, and survey classifying the soil of bagayat continued until 1903. Reassessment mainly restricted to the rise in prices of standard crops was conducted from 1934 to 1935 (Abhishankar 1973, pp. 431–436).

Land tenure and paṭṭadār/paṭṭadārṭi in early twentieth-century Mudu Perar

What were the conditions of land tenure in colonial Mudu Perar? How did landlords, such as the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu, respond to the introduction of land tax assessment and registration of paṭṭadār? I discuss this in this section by referring mainly to *Survey and Settlement Register, Mudu Perar Village*, No. 53 (Couchman 1904, referred to below as SSRM).²⁵

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Mudu Perar and Padu Perar were originally one village which was administratively divided in 1904. According to SSRM, land tax assessment was introduced to Mudu Perar in the year Fasli 1312 (1902–1903). SSRM of Mudu Perar I refer to in this section was recorded by M. E. Couchman, the Special Settlement Officer, and published by the Revenue Settlement Office of Mangalore.

According to SSRM, the area of Mudu Perar was 2,208 acres 1 cent. Table 9.1 shows holdings of paṭṭadārs in Mudu Perar in year Fasli 1312. According to the table, 104 single paṭṭadārs and 10 joint paṭṭadārs, that is a total of 114 paṭṭadārs, were registered in Mudu Perar. The total area owned by these paṭṭadārs was 936 acres 35 cents. The average area owned by a paṭṭadār was 8 acres 21 cents, and the total amount of land tax was 3,320 rupees 10 annas.

If we look at the number of paṭṭadārs in terms of payment, the largest group of 44 cases was within ‘Rupee 1 to Rupees 10’. The average holding of paṭṭadārs in this category is 2 acres 92 cents. The next largest group of 26 cases was those that came under ‘Rupees 10–30’ with the average holding of 6 acres 90 cents. There were nine paṭṭadārs whose payment exceeded 100 rupees. Within this category, only two cases were included in the category of ‘Rupees 250–500’ with the average holding of 93 acres 42 cents.

From the above, we see that in Mudu Perar in year Fasli 1312, most registered paṭṭadārs were comparatively small-scale ‘ryots’ with approximately 3–7 acres of land. However, if we count joint paṭṭadārs, and religious institutions, such as temples, mutts, churches, mosques as ‘one paṭṭadār’,

Table 9.1 Land holding and land tax assessment of paṭṭadār in Mudu Perar (Fasli 1312)

Paṭṭadār paying	Number			Area				Assessment	
	Single	Joint	Total	Total		Average		Total	
				Acres	Cents	Acres	Cents	Rupees	Annas*
Rupee 1 or fewer	15	...	15	8	28	0	55	8	10
Rupee 1 to Rupees 10	37	7	44	128	56	2	92	182	13
Rupees 10–30	24	2	26	179	51	6	90	532	2
Rupees 30–50	11	1	12	104	71	8	73	473	13
Rupees 50–100	8	...	8	128	29	16	4	574	8
Rupees 100–250	7	...	7	200	16	28	59	900	6
Rupees 250–500	2	...	2	186	84	93	42	648	6
Rupees 500–1,000	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Rupees 1,000 or more	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
Total	104	10	114	936	35	8	21	3,320	10

Source: Based on Couchman (1904: 2) with addition of the average area by the author.

* 1 rupee = 16 annas.

we see that the total number of 114 paṭṭadārs only constituted 6.4% of the total population of 1,768 Mudu Perar in 1901. It may appear from this that just 6.4% of the total population monopolised land, but the situation was not so simple.

It should be noted that apart from religious institutions, many people registered in the SSRM of 1904 were *not* land owners with exclusive rights to land assessed in their name. Their names were registered as representatives of families who had joint rights to the land. This was especially the case with female paṭṭadārtis belonging to Baṅṭa matrilineal joint families. For example, as we will see later, the name of a paṭṭadārti called ‘Muṅḍabeṭṭu Poovu’ appeared the most in SSRM. This did not mean that she ruled over or occupied many holdings. Rather, her name represented the rights of the members of her kuṭuma over family land.

Table 9.2 shows the 114 paṭṭadārs registered in SSRM by caste and type. We see that the ‘single’ category constituted mostly of Muslims with 37 registered as paṭṭadārs, then of Baṅṭa with 31 registered as paṭṭadārs. Names of 13 Brahmans, nine Christians, and seven Konkani are registered as paṭṭadārs. Among the religious institutions registered as paṭṭadārs in SSRM were Pējāvara Mutt in Udupi,²⁶ God Sri Venkatramana temple of Gurple, and the village būta shrine in Padu Perar. The names of managers of these respective institutions were registered as the paṭṭadārs. It is interesting that in SSRM, the village būta shrine was registered as ‘God Bala Madi Temple’. This shows that būta shrines were considered to be the same as Hindu temples in administrative terms and were treated as such at the time. The Roman Catholic Church and the mosque in Mudu Perar were also registered as paṭṭadārs.

Table 9.2 Caste/type of paṭṭadārs

	<i>Caste/type</i>	<i>Number</i>
Single	Muslim	37
	Baṅṭa	31
	Brahman	13
	Christian	9
	Konkani	7
	Temple *	2
	Mutt	2
	Unknown	3
	Pūjāri or Kuḍubi	1
	Mosque	1
	Kuḍubi	1
	Church	1
	Joint	Baṅṭa	4
Brahman and Baṅṭa		1
Brahman and Muslim		1
Total		114

* Includes one shrine in Perar registered as a ‘temple’.

Four groups consisting only of Baṅṭas, one group of Brahman and Baṅṭa, and one group of Brahman and Muslim were registered as joint paṭṭadārs. From this, we see that apart from the religious institutions mentioned above, Muslims, Baṅṭas, Brahmans, Christians, and Konkani were the main land-holders in Mudu Perar at the time. However, the number of names registered as paṭṭadārs, such as 37 Muslim and 31 Baṅṭa, did not necessarily accurately reflect the number of plots owned by each group. This was because there were many cases of several plots being registered under the name of one paṭṭadār. Table 9.3 shows the total number of registered paṭṭadārs corresponding to assessed plots.

As we can see from Table 9.3, single holdings were mostly plots registered in the name of Baṅṭa paṭṭadārs. The order of numbers of registration changed to Brahmans, Muslims, Christians, and Konkani. A total of 20 cases of joint paṭṭadārs constituted of Baṅṭas were registered. As we have already seen, a total of 31 Baṅṭa names were registered as single paṭṭadārs. This meant an average of about 10.9 plots per person; that is to say, one Baṅṭa was registered as the paṭṭadār of an average of over ten plots in SSRM. In this way, in SSRM, several plots were registered under few names of persons as paṭṭadārs. In particular, a woman called ‘Poovu’ of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu was registered as the paṭṭadārṭi of a total of 68 plots. Table 9.4 shows the total number of registered Baṅṭa paṭṭadārs by family.

As Table 9.4 shows, the most numerous of the single paṭṭadārs were 93 belonging to the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu, followed by 30 of the fifth guttu family,

Table 9.3 Total number of registered paṭṭadārs corresponding to assessed plots

	<i>Caste/type</i>	<i>Number*</i>
Single	Baṅṭa	337
	Brahman	129
	Muslim	108
	Christian	49
	Konkani	35
	Mutt	28
	Pūjāri or Kuḍubi**	15
	Temple***	12
	Unknown	5
	Church	4
	Mosque	3
	Kuḍubi	1
	Joint	Baṅṭa	20
Brahman and Baṅṭa		6
Brahman and Muslim		3
Total		755

* Number of holdings assessed = total number of registered paṭṭadārs.

** Unable to determine the caste from the registered surname.

*** Includes the shrine of Perar registered as a ‘temple’.

Table 9.4 Total number of registered paṭṭadārs belonging to Baṅṭa (by family)

	<i>Family</i>	<i>Total number*</i>
Single	Unable to specify	208
	Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu	93
	Alake guttu	30
	Tidyamuṇḍoṭṭu guttu	6
Joint	Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu	20
Total		357

* Number of landholdings assessed = total number of registered paṭṭadārs.

Alake guttu, and 6 of the third guttu family, Tidyamuṇḍoṭṭu guttu. Members of joint paṭṭadārs registered under several names all belonged to the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu. We can specify the above three families among the paṭṭadār/paṭṭadārti in cases where the name of the registered person and the name of the family to which she belonged are written next to each other, for example, 'Muṇḍabeṭṭu Poovu' and 'Alake Mammu'.²⁷

It is interesting that in the case of these guttu families, persons registered as representing each family were all women, and there were no male paṭṭadārs prefixed with the name of the family. In the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu, there were two names of women, 'Muṇḍabeṭṭu Poovu' and 'Muṇḍabeṭṭu Kunni'. Two women called 'Alake Mammu' and 'Alake Kunni' in the Alake guttu, and a woman called 'Sanna Muṇḍabeṭṭu (small Muṇḍabeṭṭu) Mammu'²⁸ in the Tidyamuṇḍoṭṭu guttu were registered as paṭṭadārtis. As I have already mentioned, Poovu was registered as the paṭṭadārti of a total of 68 plots, and Kunni as that of 25 plots in the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu. Mammu was registered as the paṭṭadārti of 26 plots and Kunni as that of four plots in the Alake guttu. Mammu was registered as the paṭṭadārti of six plots in the Tidyamuṇḍoṭṭu guttu.

These women were chosen as paṭṭadārtis of several plots held by their respective matrilineal joint families (kuṭuma Ka. kuṭumba). This seems to explain why so many plots were registered under the name of one paṭṭadārti. There were 19 women (approximately 17.6%) among the total of 108 single paṭṭadār/paṭṭadārti registered in SSRM. Baṅṭa paṭṭadārtis were the most numerous, as there were fifteen Baṅṭas, two Christians, one Muslim, and one unknown. Among the total number of 31 Baṅṭa paṭṭadārs, almost half were women.

As we will see from the following chapter onwards, the registration of paṭṭadārti came about due to the combination of aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu, the matriliney of South Kanara, and the modern legal system. Due to the introduction of land tax assessment in the early twentieth century, local landlords including the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu were made to publically register the 'owner' of plots hitherto jointly held and managed by matrilineal joint families. The eldest woman representing the kuṭuma was chosen as

the paṭṭadārti following the legal interpretation and definition of matriliney constructed during and after the colonial period.

From such selection and registration of paṭṭadārtis, we can see that not only did the existing landlords become paṭṭadārs under the new system of land tenure, but the kinship system based on matriliney was also applied to the new system in South Kanara. As I will explain in more detail in Chapter 10, legal and administrative policies since the colonial period, such as land tax assessment, registration of paṭṭadār/paṭṭadārti, and modernisation of customary matriliney, fixed the category of matrilineal joint family and required the construction and substantiation of land rights of its members.

Land reform after independence

After India's independence from British rule in 1947, land policy in South Kanara entered a new phase led mainly by the state government (the state of Mysore, which later became the state of Karnataka). In this section, I will discuss the contents and consequences of land reforms in South Kanara after independence focusing on the Mysore Land Reforms Act, 1961 (Mysore Act No. 10 of 1962) and the Karnataka Land Reforms (Amendment) Act, 1973 (Karnataka Act No. 1 of 1974). I will give an outline based on previous research before discussing the details of individual cases in Chapter 11.

In this section, I will mainly deal with works by political economists on the state of Karnataka, whose common question was 'Why were land reforms unsuccessful in Karnataka?' Political economists, such as Thimmaiah and Aziz, classify the history of land reforms in Karnataka since independence into four periods, namely, 1947–1956: period from independence to reorganisation of the state; 1956–1971: period from reorganisation of the state to the period of the enactment of the Mysore Land Reforms Act; 1971–1977: period of Karnataka Land Reforms (Amendment) Act and its compulsory enforcement; and period after 1977. They examine the contents and results of the land reforms in each period, focusing on the actions of interest groups (Thimmaiah & Aziz 1983, 1984a, 1984b). Let us take a look at the outline of the history paying special attention to South Kanara.

1947–1956: period from independence to reorganisation of the state

The abolition of tax-free land (*inām*) was promoted in the first period mentioned by Thimmaiah and Aziz, that is, from 1947 to 1956. In the state of Mysore at the time, Vokkaliga, Lingayat, and Brahmans constituted the landlord class, and many Brahman landlords owned *ināms*. Many of them were absentee landlords residing in cities, and their estates were cultivated by tenants belonged to Vokkaliga and Lingayat.

The tenant class was a vote bank of the state government at the time, and non-Brahman landlords dominated the state government. The Indian National Congress introduced progressive land reforms just after

independence, including abolition of the zamindari system. Inām holders were the targets of reform in Karnataka. The state government began to prepare the legal grounds for abolition of inām, but required the cooperation of Brahman bureaucrats to bring them into effect. It faced difficulties in executing laws due to powerful resistance by Brahman landlords.

The Legislative Assembly passed a resolution to abolish ināms in 1947, but the resolution was not made into law until 1954. The Mysore Alienated Villages (Protection of Tenants and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act was passed in 1950 in order to protect tenants from inām holders and regulate tenancy. The Mysore (Personal and Miscellaneous) Inams Abolition Act was passed in 1954, and eventually the Mysore (Religious and Charitable) Inams Abolition Act in 1955, ordering the abolishment of religious ināms.

1956–1971: period from reorganisation of the state to the period of the enactment of the Mysore Land Reforms Act

Let us examine the land policies of the second period from 1956 to 1971. The state was reorganised in 1956, and a new state of Mysore was created from the old state of Mysore, state of Coorg, and the Kannāḍa-speaking areas of the former Bombay and Madras provinces, and of the Princely State of Hyderabad (Iyer 1997, p. 179).²⁹ If we look at the political situation of the time, Brahmans continued to be bureaucrats, and the Lingayats and Vokkaliga constituted the landlord class. But it was the poor peasants, tenants, and the landless who constituted the important voting banks for the state government. Hence the state government could not ignore demands for land reform, and the Mysore Tenancy and Agricultural Land Laws Committee was set up in 1957. The Mysore Land Reforms Bill was submitted to the state parliament in 1958, passed in 1961, and approved by the president in 1962. However, the bill required partial amendments, and it only came to be enforced as the Act. No. 14 of 1965 (Abhishankar 1973, pp. 443–445; Thimmaiah & Aziz 1983, p. 815).

Thimmaiah and Aziz point out that pressures exerted by the landlord class, which was a powerful interest group, led to the delay in the law taking effect. Through the legal measures by the state government, the landlord class had accumulated knowledge about land reforms from the 1940s to the early 1950s and lobbied at many stages of the decision-making process. Lingayat and Vokkaliga, the traditional landlords, sent representatives of their respective groups to parliament, and the parliament was dominated by these groups until the early 1970s. As a result, the content of the land reforms reflected the views of the landlord class. First, the Mysore Land Reforms Act set the maximum holding of a household of five persons at 27 standard acres (Thimmaiah & Aziz 1983, p. 816).³⁰ Actually, however, different maximum holdings were fixed according to fertility of land, availability of irrigation, and so on. For example, 216 acres of dry land was determined as equivalent to 27 standard acres. There were also provisions for allowing separate acre

holdings per one extra family member for households with more than five persons, and exemptions for widows and the handicapped. These measures led to raising the maximum holding and served the interests of landlord class.

In this way, existing landlords did their best to protect the interests of their own groups regarding provisions for maximum holdings. We should note, however, that they did not show much resistance to tenancy regulations. These were constituted mainly of regulated rents and regulated tenures. The latter was a regulation to restrict landlords from evicting tenants and reclaiming land as their own farmland. But this provision was not sufficiently effective in the Mysore Land Reforms Act, and as a result, there was a dramatic increase in the number of evicted tenants on the pretext of landlords farming their own land.

The Mysore Land Reforms Act seemed contradictory as it put severe restrictions on tenancy on the one hand, and made provisions for raising maximum holdings on the other. But in fact, it served the interests of the dominant landlord class. Loose regulations on maximum holdings allowed landlords living in countryside time and leeway to reorganise land records so that they could continue to keep their land intact. Severe tenancy regulations enabled tenants belonging to the same group as the dominant landlord class to take away land rights of absentee landlords (mainly Brahmans) living in cities. Landlords living in the countryside were able to get around this regulation by reclaiming land from tenants as self-cultivated farms. The interests of existing landlords were maintained by such legal and administrative strategies (Thimmaiah & Aziz 1983, pp. 815–822).

1971–1977: period of Karnataka Land Reforms (Amendment) Act and its compulsory enforcement

After the Indian National Congress split up in 1969, non-landlord ‘Backward’ minorities dominated the parliament in the Mysore state, paving the way for more radical land reforms. In 1969, the National Planning Commission submitted a guideline in which the average family was defined as a family of five, with a father, a mother, and three underage children, and limits of land holding were set between 10 acres and 18 acres of double cropping irrigated agricultural land. It also suggested that cultivation rights of tenants and sharecroppers and existing tenancies should be guaranteed. The Mysore state government (Karnataka after November 1973) began the amendment of the Mysore Land Reforms Act. A draft of a comprehensive bill was submitted in 1971, received advice from a Joint Select Committee, and the state government passed the Karnataka Land Reforms (Amendment) Act in 1973, which was approved by the president in March 1974.

Let us look at the characteristic features of the Karnataka Land Reforms (Amendment) Act. First, it was absolutely forbidden for landlords to re-occupy leased land. Leasing of land was also abolished with the exception

of cases involving soldiers and sailors. The maximum holding was reduced to ten units.³¹ A land tribunal was to be established in each taluk. This law was enforced before 1977, but the impetus for land reform gradually decreased after 1978 (Thimmaiah & Aziz 1983, pp. 822–826).

Let us be clear about the functions of the land tribunals. By the enforcement of the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act, all private holdings leased at the time of 1 March 1974 came to belong to the government. The person leasing the land from the owner had to apply to the land tribunals for ownership. The land tribunal decided whether the land in question was leased legally and hence be handed over to the government, and whether the applicant was qualified to occupy the land. If these conditions were met in the lease, the land tribunal separated the relation between the landlord and tenant, negotiated payment of compensation between the landlord and government, fixed the land price, and arranged for a certificate of occupancy between the tenant and government. To make people abide to the amendment of the maximum holding, all those who owned more than the stipulated area had to present a declaration. The declaration was submitted to the land tribunal after checking and surveying. The tribunal had the authority to determine the area of the excess land declared (Rajan 1984, pp. 139–140).

The Land Reforms (Amendment) Act seemed to be progressive at first sight, but resulted in maintaining the interests of the existing dominant landlord class. First, regarding tenant land, apart from the cases of soldiers and sailors, all benefits for widows and the handicapped were abolished, as well as rights of landlords to reoccupy tenant land. But this law did not prevent landlords from asserting rights as tenants of other land, and this worked as an advantage for tenants belonging to the dominant landlord class. Landlord class tenants were not only given the same rights as poor tenants, but were also in a better position to purchase land. Pani (1984, p. 46) points out that, strictly speaking, the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act in Karnataka did not provide land to tenants, but gave rights to buy land at fixed prices. The government bought leased land from landlords at fixed prices cheaper than the market price, and tenants bought land from the government at the same prices. Thus, tenants who had the funds to buy land were at an advantage, and those who did not have the money had to arrange for loans.

Regarding the maximum holding, we have already seen that the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act reduced the maximum to ten units from the 27 standard acres stipulated by the Mysore Land Reforms Act. This seems to be a substantial reduction, but in reality, other changes were applied that raised the maximum holding. To identify what actually happened, we need to understand the significance of the change from acre to unit. In the Mysore Land Reforms Act, one acre of first class irrigated land was set as one standard acre. In the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act, a unit constituted land classified as over eight annas and irrigated by government irrigation facilities or water tank to ensure double cropping. Land meeting this irrigation standard was categorised as Class A, regardless of the soil type.

This meant that land irrigated by a privately owned water source was permitted to be held at a maximum higher than land irrigated by government facilities. As a result, landholders with private irrigation facilities were given preferential treatment.

The redefinition of the family under the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act also privileged large-scale landholders. The Mysore Land Reforms Act stipulated that a family constituted of husband, wife, and dependent children and grandchildren. Meanwhile, the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act stipulated that a family constituted of husband, wife, unmarried daughters, and underage sons. An adult son was able to demand land under the maximum amount as a member of a separate family. In the case of a large extended family, where one family member farmed the land of another member, the former was able to demand land rights as the 'tenant' of the latter (Pani 1984, pp. 44–50).

In this way, the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act appeared at first sight to be highly advanced, but, in reality, it resulted in favouring the dominant landlord class who had the money. Pani, a political economist, analyses this in terms of the gap between 'ownership' and 'control' in local society in Karnataka (Pani 1984, p. 54). He points out that the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act emphasised attack on land ownership rights, and did not consider the issue of who controlled the land. Ownership and control did not necessarily match in local society in Karnataka. For example, by registering the land under the names of several family members, a landlord could control several hundred acres of land without leaving any redundant land for redistribution. The incursion on ownership by the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act thus provided an 'ideal' way to maintain social control. By only confronting ownership rights without doing anything about the aspect of control, the Act had led to disadvantaging small-scale peasants and agricultural labourers while privileging the landlord class.

Pani's distinction between 'ownership' and 'control' is insightful. In particular, he makes an important point about the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1974 that targeted 'ownership' of plots, when in fact the idea of ownership of plots had little meaning in the context of existing form of land tenure in local society in Karnataka. This also applied to the establishment of *paṭṭadārs* by the colonial administration. The collector divided land into plots and made the person possessing the title deed of each plot the land owner who was responsible for paying land tax. But, there was no corresponding relationship between a plot and an exclusive owner, as the system of land tenure in the locality was based on family groups.

We need to consider, however, the local practices of land tenure in more detail before we discuss the division between 'ownership' and 'control'. As we will see from Chapter 10 onwards, in villages in rural South Kanara, it was the matrilineal joint family (*kuṭuma*) as a whole that had joint rights over several holdings. It was not that one landlord controlled a vast amount of land registered under names of family members, as Pani assumes. The sub-group

of kuṭuma, *kabarū* (Ka. *kavalu*), was the unit of exercising usufruct for each holding, as well as managing and distributing land and its products. Such form of land tenure makes not only the 'ownership' of each holding but also the 'rights to control' of land owned by the kuṭuma unclear. As I will discuss in more detail later, joint holding of land by the kuṭuma was intimately connected to matrilineal inheritance and the succession of būta rituals in the kuṭuma.

Transformation of land tenure in South Kanara

I have given an overview of the transformation of the land tenure in South Kanara from the Āḷupa period through the colonial period to land reforms after independence. In the wetlands of South Kanara where agriculture was predominant, land and its products were important resources for the people and income for the state treasury since the early Āḷupa period. Land also connected various people and groups through donation, transfer, sale, and lease. In the Vijayanagara period, types of land and land tax were classified in detail, and land policies were developed including assessment of land tax.

The colonial introduction of the ryotwari system divided land, which had plural and layered rights, into holdings, and tried to bring about a new one-to-one relationship between each holding and its holder/tax payer. But in South Kanara, the ryotwari system was changed to suit the existing system of land tenure. Land tax assessment based on the unit of warg constituting several holdings, and system of tax collection with the warg holder being the tax payer was adopted. As a result, the existing form of land holding did not undergo great change, and the rights of landlords were maintained. After independence, South Kanara underwent two large-scale land reforms. But, in spite of measures such as the establishment of maximum limit of land holding and abolishment of leasing, the existing landlord class continued to maintain their rights through various measures that gave them leeway.

In this way, various land policies were carried out in South Kanara from the colonial period to after independence, but these did not lead to the collapse or fundamental changes in the local system of land tenure. Hence we also cannot unquestioningly presume changes or decline in būta rituals that were closely connected to land holdings of landlords, as some previous studies suggest (Rajan 1986, p. 54; Gowda 1991, p. 18).

Enforcement of land policies by governments and their transformation indeed had significant influence on land tenure in local society. However, we should consider the entanglements and reflective relationships between the traditional system and various measures carefully, rather than simply seeing the measures as external forces that led to change and dismantling of the traditional social system. Analyses I discussed in this chapter that focus mainly on politico-economic aspects tend to overlook the relationships between traditional system of land tenure, kinship organisation, and local religious rituals, as well as the dynamics between them. In the case of

South Kanara, these relationships would be those between land tenure and family organisation based on matriliney, and būta rituals. In Chapter 10, I discuss the process of modernisation of matriliney in South Kanara since the colonial period. I also analyse the people's responses to the introduction of new legal systems focusing on the attempts to divide inheritance of land in the Muṇḍabetṭu guttu.

Notes

- 1 Paṭṭadār literally means the holder of land deed (*paṭṭa*) and refers to the landholder. However, as I will mention later, paṭṭadār (male) and *paṭṭadārti* (female) among the Baṅṭa landlord class in South Kanara were not 'land owners' with exclusive rights to land, but representatives of matrilineal joint families with joint landholdings.
- 2 The period of beginning of Āḷupa rule is unclear. References to Āḷupa rulers appear in inscriptions from the sixth century (Abhishankar 1973, pp. 37–38).
- 3 The Keḷadi clan emerged in the early sixteenth century. Keḷadi Nāyakas continued to be feudatories of the Vijayanagara Empire even after the defeat of Vijayanagara forces at the Battle of Rakkasa-Taṅgaḍi in 1565. In 1614, Veṅkatappa-nāyaka I declared independence from the empire (Abhishankar 1973, p. 54; White 2015, pp. 63, 92).
- 4 See also Bhatt (1975) for a history of South Kanara.
- 5 I refer to the person who held the land and was responsible for paying land tax as the 'landholder'. I also use the term 'landholder' interchangeably with paṭṭadār, who paid land tax after the colonial period. In South Kanara, land was jointly held by Baṅṭa matrilineal kin groups, and their representatives were registered as paṭṭadārs. I distinguish between the 'landholder' and 'landlord (guttu)'. Guttu is the dominant class in village society and have ritual roles. (As I will show, the landlords and landholders overlap. But not all landholders are guttus.)
- 6 According to Vasantha Madhava, Jain landlords exercised power in administrative districts called māgaṇe in the Vijayanagara period (Madhava 1984, p. 5). However, during the rule of Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, these Jains lost their position as rulers and became simply landholders.
- 7 There are many references to the borders of land owned by guild organisations in the inscriptions of this period. It was the duty of the managers of land donated to temples to offer prescribed amounts of crop to the temple deities, irrespective of good or bad harvest (Ramesh 1970, p. 288).
- 8 These titles are used today in Perar as names of būta priests and heads of landlord families.
- 9 Such a system can be called a 'system of entitlements' centred on the būta shrine and guttu families, and is important for understanding the nature of landlords in South Kanara. For details on system of entitlements, see Tanabe (2006).
- 10 Nāyaka was a title given to Chaudappa Gauda (1500–1540) of the Keḷadi clan by the Vijayanagara king of the time (Abhishankar 1973, p. 54).
- 11 Madhava points out that in this period, some of the būtas were seen as 'secondary deities' and were demoted to the status of deities subservient to sīme deities. At the same time, the form of būta rituals came to be influenced by Brahmanical rituals (Madhava 1985, pp. 21–23, 143).
- 12 India Office Library and Records, London, *Madras Revenue Consultations*, 19 September 1800, pp. 2239–2248 (quoted in Stein [1989, pp. 67–68]).
- 13 Kanara is a region corresponding to Uttara Kannada, Udupi, and Dakshina Kannada districts in the present state of Karnataka, and Kasaragod district in the

- present state of Kerala. Munro's term in Kanara was from July 1799 to October 1800 (Bradshaw 1894, p. 87). Kanara was divided into South and North in December 1800, but was reunited in 1805. It was governed as one of the collectorates in the Madras Presidency until it was divided into North Kanara district and South Kanara district in 1859 (Bhat 1998, pp. 4–8). North Kanara (except for Kundāpura taluk, which was included in South Kanara district) was annexed to Bombay Presidency in 1862, and South Kanara district was part of the Madras Presidency until it was unified with the new Mysore state in the reorganisation of states in 1956. Kasaragod taluk became part of the state of Kerala in 1956 (Abhishankar 1973, pp. 4–5). In view of this history, I refer to the place of Munro's posting as 'Kanara'.
- 14 Zamindar refers to the 'landlord' defined by the zamindari system, the system of land tenure and taxation introduced by Governor Cornwallis in Bengal Presidency in 1793, and practised since then throughout the British colonial period mainly in northern parts of India.
 - 15 The word seems to have originated from the Sanskrit word *varga*, or Arabic word *warg*, meaning leaf (Sturrock 1894, p. 118; Baden-Powell 1990 [1892], p. 147).
 - 16 On the other hand, according to Damle, warg showed the revenue account of each landholder, and this often included land of unknown size scattered in different villages and regions (Damle 1991, p. 158, note 15). Hence Damle points out that it is not appropriate to refer to warg as 'estate'. I will refer to warg as holding. For details regarding warg, see also Bhat (1998, p. 85).
 - 17 See Maclean (1877, pp. 99–101, 114–115) and Sturrock (1894, p. 118). For details on surveys and assessments under the ryotwari system, see Baden-Powell (1907, pp. 199–206).
 - 18 In the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu, the eldest woman of the matrilineal joint family (kuṭuma) was registered as the paṭṭadārti.
 - 19 'Memorandum Relative to Revenue Servants: Extracts of a Letter from A. Read [then sub-collector in the CD under Munro] to Another Junior Colleague, James Cochrane'. IOL, MC, F/151/10, f.95 (quoted by Stein [1989, p. 66]).
 - 20 Bhaṇḍāra-sthaḷa more accurately refers not to 'state land', but land which is not tax-free.
 - 21 Against Stein's view, Chitnis (1974) points out the importance of the survey carried out by Śivappa-nāyaka in the seventeenth century.
 - 22 See Maclean (1987 [1885], p. 154; 1989 [1885], p. 64).
 - 23 In 1831, peasants dissatisfied with heavy taxes broke out in a 'no tax campaign' in Kanara (Sturrock 1894, pp. 104–105; Abhishankar 1973, p. 68; Rao 1991; Bhat 1998, pp. 112–113).
 - 24 Mudu Perar and Padu Perar were also surveyed in this period. The maps kept today in public offices, such as the Deputy Commissioner's office of Dakshina Kannada and the panchayat office of Padu Perar, as maps of these two villages are based on the lithograph originals marking land zones in 1893.
 - 25 This document is basically a closed document kept in the archives of the Deputy Commissioner's office.
 - 26 Pejāvāra Mutt was registered twice as 'Rama Vittla Matt of Pejāwar' under registration numbers 37 and 38. The name of a Brahman mūla gēṇi is registered under number 38.
 - 27 In SSRM, there are cases where the sex of the registered person is written after the name of the paṭṭadārti, such as 'Muṇḍabeṭṭu Poovu (female)'.
 - 28 'Sanna Muṇḍabeṭṭu' means the same as Tidyamuṇḍoṭṭu, namely, the third guttu family.
 - 29 The state of Mysore was renamed the state of Karnataka on 1 November 1973 (Kamath 1982, p. 388). In 1997, South Kanara district (Dakshina Kannada) was divided into present-day Udupi and Dakshina Kannada districts.

- 30 According to the Mysore Land Reforms Act, one acre of first-class irrigated land was stipulated as the standard acre (Pani 1984, p. 48).
- 31 According to Thimmaiah and Aziz, the 'land ceilings' were cut down to 10 'standard acres' (Thimmaiah & Aziz 1983, p. 823), but I think they have mistaken it for 10 'units'. In the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act, 'a unit was defined as land with a soil classification of above 8 annas and "having facilities for assured irrigation from such *Government Canals and Government Tanks* as are notified by the State Government to be capable of supplying water for growing two crops of paddy in a year"' (Pani 1984, pp. 48–49; emphasis added by Pani).

10 Modern law, customary law, and the reflexive imagination

As seen in the previous chapter, since the colonial period, various land policies such as the ryotwari system and land reforms have been introduced in South Kanara. Some of the main targets of these policies have been the Baṅṭa landlords, whose land tenure and inheritance are based on the matrilineal system called the aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu. Since the end of the nineteenth century, the colonial judiciary recognised the aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu, which had long regulated people's practices concerning legal issues such as marriage and inheritance, and came to reconstruct this system as modern law.

How, then, has the aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu been reinterpreted by the modern judiciary? How has its reinterpretation and redefinition influenced matriliney in South Kanara? How is the modern system different from the customary one, and how have the local people dealt with these differences? To answer these questions, in this chapter I will investigate the modern judicature's evolving interpretation and (re)construction of matriliney in colonial and postcolonial South Kanara and examine local practices of matriliney, focusing on their relation to bṭta worship. As we will see later, people have sustained and revitalised their own meaning of the aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu through various practices as they have tried to cope with new legislation on matriliney. By analysing legal discourse and popular practices, I will bring into view the reflexive imaginations of the modern judicature and of the local people, which create and recreate the reality of matriliney in South Kanara.

The encounter between the aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu and modern law

The only distinctive custom of the Tulu people ... is the Aliya Santana rule of inheritance, which ... means that the property of a family is vested in the female line and descends from mother to daughter; but as titles and dignities are vested in the males, and the management of the property is also usually exercised by a brother, the line of descent is ordinarily taken to be from the deceased holder to his sister's son ... Division of property cannot be enforced, and is in fact forbidden, but temporary arrangements for separate management are often made

for convenience, and by lapse of time become practically permanent divisions in many cases.

(Sturrock 1894, pp. 140–141)

J. Sturrock was a collector in the district of South Kanara in the Madras Presidency, and his description of the matrilineal system, called the *āliyasantāna kaṭṭu*, shows its essence as understood by the British colonial officers of the time. It was understood both as a local ‘custom’ and as the system governing the inheritance of family property. This British understanding of the *āliyasantāna kaṭṭu* was not entirely wrong, but was very limited. Despite their limitations, such interpretations of the *āliyasantāna kaṭṭu* prevailed in the law courts of South Kanara from the end of the nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth century. Moreover, through a complex interaction of modern legal thought, the principle of *stare decisis*, and the discourse/practice of both the judges and the local people, the *āliyasantāna kaṭṭu* gradually transformed into a new system: Aliyasantana Law.

Below I investigate the *āliyasantāna kaṭṭu* with a focus on the issue of the (in)divisibility of family property, which was one of the key issues during the process of its modernisation and modification. Regarding the local term ‘matrilineal joint family’, I use the Kannada term ‘*kuṭumba*’ when I refer to official governmental practice or codification, while I use the corresponding Tulu term ‘*kuṭuma*’ when I refer to local practice. While *kuṭumba*, which has been used in legal discourse, emphasises the descentance and economic functions of the matrilineal joint family, *kuṭuma* generally indicates the basic unit of kin who perform rituals together (see Upadhyaya 1988–1997, p. 819). As we will see in this chapter, the *kuṭuma* under customary *āliyasantāna kaṭṭu* is not only an economic unit but also a ritual community; it is kin relations as well as everyday life-space. Moreover, it is the node of the transactional network linking people, deities, land, and nature.

The Aliyasantana Law in colonial South Kanara

Bhat, who has investigated the various court cases concerning matriliney in both South Kanara and Kerala, argues that the *āliyasantāna kaṭṭu* was transformed into and established as modern personal law when the British system of the judiciary and ownership of property came to be established in India (2004, p. 5). The process of the transformation of the *āliyasantāna kaṭṭu* from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century was marked by the following significant developments: (1) the codification of the *āliyasantāna kaṭṭu* and the creation of the modern form of the Aliyasantana system in the British Indian courts, (2) the enactment of the Madras Aliyasantana Act, 1949 (Act No. 9 of 1949), (3) the enactment of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 (Act No. 30 of 1956), and (4) the enactment of the Madras Aliyasantana (Mysore Amendment) Act, 1961 (Act No. 1 of 1962).

Beginning, then, with the first phase, we should investigate the codification process of the *āliyasantāna kaṭṭu* by the British judges in colonial South Kanara. From the middle of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century, British judges relied on a pamphlet known as '*Bhuthala Pandya's Kattu Kattale*' as the primary source and authority on customary *āliyasantāna kaṭṭu*. The pamphlet contains the story of Bhuthala Pandya as well as the 14 *kaṭṭu* and 16 *kaṭṭale* (commandments) relating to the management of matrilineal families. For example, it expounded on the management of family property and the perpetuation of lineage through adoption.

The origins of the *āliyasantāna kaṭṭu* narrated in the pamphlet are rather mystical. According to the pamphlet, the *āliyasantāna kaṭṭu* was first introduced around the year 77 CE by a despotic prince called Bhuthala Pandya, the maternal nephew of a king called Deva Pandya, in order to supersede the *makkaḷa santāna* (inheritance from father to son), which was then the prevailing system in South Kanara. It is said that when Deva Pandya wanted to launch his newly constructed ships, a *būta* king called Kundodara demanded a human sacrifice. The king asked his wife's permission to offer one of their seven sons, but she refused; his sister Satyavati then offered up her son Jaya Pandya (later renamed Bhuthala Pandya). The *būta* saw a sign of future greatness in the child and permitted the ships to sail without the sacrifice. Later, Kundodara demanded that the king bestow the wealth of the kingdom on the same child, his sister's son, Bhuthala Pandya. As the newly enthroned king, Bhuthala Pandya ruled that inheritance in his kingdom must be passed from maternal uncle to nephew, and thus the *āliyasantāna kaṭṭu* was established in the first year of the Shalivahana Era, about 77 CE (Rao 1898, pp. 7–8; Bhat 2004, pp. 6–7).

The pamphlet first attracted the notice of the courts in 1843, forming the basis of the decision in Appeal Suit (A.S.) 82 of 1843. After this decision, Bhuthala Pandya's *kaṭṭu* was frequently referred to by the local courts, and in the early decisions of the High Court it was regarded as conclusive upon the subject. In *Munda Chetty v. Thimmaju Hengsu* (1863), which considered the question of the divisibility of *āliyasantāna* family property, the decision relied entirely upon Bhuthala Pandya's *kaṭṭu* as 'the work of authority' (Rao 1898, p. 14).

Through this ruling, the right to the compulsory partition of *āliyasantāna* family property was repudiated. This was upheld until the enactment of the Madras Aliyasantana Act of 1949, even though the pamphlet had gradually come to be considered unreliable as a source of customary *āliyasantāna kaṭṭu* (Rao 1898, pp. 14–15, 104–105; Bhat 2004, pp. 7–9).¹

In the mid-nineteenth century, British judges began to codify the *āliyasantāna kaṭṭu*, first by referring to Bhuthala Pandya's *kaṭṭu* as the 'code', and then by reviewing court precedents. In this process, *stare decisis* in the courts was determinative; in other words, precedents themselves constituted the law, influencing subsequent decisions as well as people's practice. Through this reflexive interrelation between the law and practice, customary *āliyasantāna*

kaṭṭu was transformed into the Aliyasantana Law. Simultaneously, in the legal discourse, the local families following customary aliyaśantāna kaṭṭu were reconstituted as legal entities, namely, the Aliyasantana families. In this newly formed and authorised Aliyasantana Law, the following features were distinctive: (1) the tracing of kinship in the female line and (2) the prohibition of the compulsory division of family property (Rao 1898, p. 4).

Among these features, the second seems to be the more problematic, as it engendered many disputes. The rule was inseparable from the ideal form of the Aliyasantana family as imagined by the colonial judges, namely, that ‘the family presents a type of a joint family system, pure and simple, in its most archaic form’ (Rao 1898, p. 78).

In the colonial courts, the unity of the Aliyasantana family and of its joint property was pre-eminently valued and persistently declared. At the same time, the rights of individual family members to the family property were limited. One judge stated, ‘The preservation of the unity of the family is the only effectual mode of securing to the members, severally a full share of the beneficent enjoyment of the joint estate’ (Rao 1898, p. 6).²

Additionally, the Aliyasantana family was regarded as a unit controlled by the most senior male or female member, called *yajamāna/yajamāni* (in the masculine and feminine, respectively).³ The *yajamāna/yajamāni* was defined by the judges as the head of the Aliyasantana family, and he or she had the right and duty to manage the family members and their joint property. It was regarded that their duty was primarily to protect the interests of the entire family; hence, the *yajamāna/yajamāni* was unable to make alienations of the immoveable property without the assent of the other family members (see Rao 1898, pp. 61–65).

The judges’ privileging of the unity of the Aliyasantana family and of its joint property then directed their decisions concerning the status of women in the Aliyasantana family. According to Rao (1898, pp. 48–49), the perpetuation of lineage in the female line and the devolution of property to the descendants of these women gave rise to the idea that women alone could be the sole proprietors and that men have no more than the bare right of maintenance from the family property. Thus, at least until the end of the 1880s, British judges tended to give priority to women with regard to *yajamāna*-ship and rights to family property. For example, in 1863, Justices Frere and Holloway declared that among the Aliyasantana families in their district, ‘females alone are recognised as the proprietors of the family estate’ and ‘all rights to property are derived from females’ (Rao 1898, p. 58). Due to the influence of this view, it was persistently maintained in the courts that the *yajamāni* was ordinarily the most senior of the female members. This, however, does not mean that any woman could be privileged with proprietorship; rather, the status of a woman was upheld only when she was approved as the representative of an Aliyasantana family. Thus, while the law secured the property rights of senior women representatives of Aliyasantana families, it restricted the rights of ‘sterile’ women.⁴

Through their reinterpretation of precedents, the colonial judges codified the *aliyasantāna kaṭṭu* and transformed it into modern personal law. In the process, women were primarily regarded as the channel of succession as well as the proprietors of the family property, though later the family property was considered to be vested instead in the whole family. It was precisely this united Aliyasantana family as legal entity that was created by the legal discourse in colonial South Kanara and that continued to influence law in the postcolonial era. The Madras Aliyasantana Act, 1949, inherited much from the idea of the Aliyasantana system created in the colonial period.

Translating the ‘custom’

The kuṭumba in the Madras Aliyasantana Act

The Madras Aliyasantana Act was first published in the *Fort St. George Gazette* on 26 April 1949. In this Act, the word ‘*aliyasantāna*’ was newly defined, and some important terms concerning the Aliyasantana family were formally renamed in the Kannada language.

According to Definitions 3 of the Act, (a) ‘*aliyasantāna*’ denotes the system of inheritance in which descent is traced in the female line, but does not include the system of inheritance known as the *marumakkattāyam* in Malabar;⁵ (b) i) ‘*kavalu*’, used in relation to a woman, means the group of persons consisting of the woman herself, her children, and all her descendants in the female line; (ii) ‘*kavalu*’, used in relation to a man, refers to the *kavalu* of the mother of that man; (c) ‘*kuṭumba*’ means the group of persons forming a joint family with a community of property governed by the Aliyasantana Law of inheritance; (d) ‘*nissamtati kavalu*’ denotes a *kavalu* that is not a *samtati kavalu*; (e) ‘*samtati kavalu*’ means a *kavalu* of which at least one member is a woman who has not yet passed the age of 50 years; (f) ‘*yajamāna*’ means the oldest member, man or woman, of a *kuṭumba* or *kavalu*, in whom the right to manage its properties vest, or any other member or members in whom such right is vested by family custom, contract, decree of Court or otherwise (Bhat 2004, p. 25).

Of the terms that were redefined, *kavalu* and *kuṭumba* are the most important to this investigation. *Kavalu* originally meant ‘branch’ in Kannada, but in the context of the Madras Aliyasantana Act, it is defined as a sub-division of the *kuṭumba*. On the other hand, *kuṭumba*, which was referred to as the Aliyasantana family by the colonial judges, was defined primarily as a ‘community of property’. No member should request his/her share of the property of a *kuṭumba* by compulsory division. The *kuṭumba*, therefore, was defined in the Madras Aliyasantana Act as a matrilineal descent group whose members have common rights to the joint property. This definition corresponded to the notion of matriliney, which had formed in the nineteenth century (Bhat 2004, p. 32). Succeeding the definition and interpretation of local practice by the colonial judicature, the Madras Aliya Santana Act was designed to remould matriliney in South Kanara.

From ritual community to community of property

In conformity with the fact that the kuṭumba was defined as a community of property, the Madras Aliyasantana Act assigned bookkeeping duties for each kuṭumba to the yajamāna/yajamāni (Bhat 2004, pp. 65, 71). Indeed, in the Act, the kuṭumba was primarily defined as an economic unit and the yajamāna/yajamāni was regarded as the manager or trustee of its property. Here, the economic function of the original kuṭuma was highlighted, but was at the same time separated from its other functions. In the customary aliyasantāna kaṭṭu, meanwhile, the head of the kuṭuma has had management responsibilities for not only family property but also būta rituals. Next, I will briefly overview the relationship between the kuṭuma and būta worship under the customary aliyasantāna kaṭṭu.

In a kuṭuma, both the family property and būta shrine are inherited in the female line. Among the deities worshipped in the kuṭuma, the kuṭumada daiva (family būta) closely related to the house and land of the matrilineal family is the one who grants the kuṭuma permission to use the land; at the same time, the prosperity and reproduction of the kuṭuma are ensured through the rituals for the būtas (see Claus 1991, p. 163). Part of resources and products of the land are given back to these deities as offerings and then distributed among the family members as prasāda.

The management of the property and resources of the kuṭuma is, therefore, not limited to the economic realm, but must be provided in relation to the būtas, who determine the continuation and prosperity of the kuṭuma. In this sense, the property and resources maintained by the kuṭuma are not *indivisible* family property (Bhat 2004, p. 91) over which the kuṭuma has exclusive proprietorship, but rather they constitute a substance-code or *divisible person* that circulates between people, deities, and nature (see Chapter 6). Moreover, as a household inseparably related to its surroundings, and as involved in the flow of substance-codes generated through everyday activities such as marriage, reproduction, nurture, and care, the kuṭuma itself has been an important constituent of the transactional network (see Moore 1985; Fuller & Moore 1986).

Now it is clear why *both* the būta ritual and the property of the kuṭuma are supposed to be maintained and inherited in the female line. Since it is only the būta ritual that ensures the continuation and prosperity of the kuṭuma, from the mythological past to the future, both must be passed down through the women who link the generations. The kuṭuma, therefore, should be first understood as a community of ritual, rather than as a community of property.⁶ Despite this close relationship between the kuṭuma and būta worship, the religious function of the original kuṭuma was disregarded in the Madras Aliyasantana Act, and it was redefined as an economic unit: the kuṭumba. The head of the kuṭumba was likewise defined as only the manager of the joint property, while his/her religious role was excluded from the legal definition.

The property of the kuṭumba and its partition by kavalu

The definitions of terms such as kuṭumba, kavalu, and yajamāna in the Madras Aliyasantana Act were mostly in conformity with the concepts of the Aliyasantana system formed in the colonial period. On the other hand, the Act was epochal in that it gave the kavalus the right to claim a partition of the family property.

While providing for the partition of family property, the Act made two broad divisions: (1) one category for partition claims in families who had remained undivided for four generations or more, and (2) another category for those families who had not. Under the first category, the mode of property division was three-quarters per capita among all the members of the kuṭumba then living, and one-quarter per stirpes among the kavalus. Regarding the second category, the mode of division was half per capita among all the members of the kuṭumba, and half per stirpes among the kavalus.⁷

Another key feature of the Act was its distinction between saṃtati kavalu (which refers to a kavalu that contains at least one female member who is not yet 50 years old) and nissaṃtati kavalu (which refers to a kavalu that has no female member under the age of 50 years).⁸ The relevant provision of the Act stated that if the kuṭumba had even one saṃtati kavalu, any nissaṃtati kavalu in the kuṭumba would have only a life interest in the properties allotted to it. Upon the death of the last member of the last nissaṃtati kavalu, the life interest of that kavalu would then devolve upon the kuṭumba (Bhat 2004, pp. 117–120).

This classification of saṃtati and nissaṃtati kavalu actually meant a distinction between kavalus that still had a possibility of maintaining the matrilineal line and those which did not. A nissaṃtati kavalu was regarded as ‘sterile’, and such a kavalu could not devise the properties allotted to it to the next generation, because it had no matrilineal descendants. This fact shows that in the Madras Aliyasantana Act, even though the partition of family property by kavalu was approved, the property itself was still regarded as joint property that should be maintained within the matrilineal descent group. This new legislation concerning the partition of the family property presented challenges for the local guttus. Before investigating how the guttus tried to cope with these challenges, I will consider in the next section the changes in the modern judiciary’s recognition of the divisibility of the kuṭumba and its property.

From dividual person to individual property?

The Madras Aliyasantana (Mysore Amendment) Act of 1961 revised the 1949 Act. In this Amendment Act, which was introduced as Act No. 1 of 1962 in the Mysore Legislature, it was declared that the living members of the kuṭumba had the right to claim a partition of the family property.

Also, the per capita mode of division was extended to include voluntary partition among the living members of a kuṭumba. Thus, the Amendment Act approved the right of individual members to claim and use an allotment of family property during their lifetimes.⁹ Additionally, the allotments of each member were regarded as separate properties, which could be devised to his/her descendants.

Since the nineteenth century, then, customary aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu has been transformed into modern law by the colonial as well as the postcolonial judiciary. An analysis of this process reveals that the views of the modern judiciary regarding the Aliyasantana system have gradually shifted from those that strongly insisted on the indivisibility of the kuṭumba and its joint property to those that affirmed the right, first of the kavalu and then of individuals, to make claims for the partition of family property. This shift may be interpreted as indicating an ideological change in the legal discourse in South Kanara from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, namely, the change from the construction and cementing of the Aliyasantana system by the colonial judiciary to its gradual liberalisation by the postcolonial judiciary.

On this point, the bench of the Madras High Court stated in 1955:

Before the establishment of Courts by the British Indian Government, the customary law in this country contained in itself the mechanism of change reflecting the principle of growth. Changing situations led to changes in customs, and variations in the law and practice were effected to keep pace with such changes. It was only the establishment of Courts by the British Government with the principle of stare decisis that arrested this process of natural growth.¹⁰

The bench also stated that such a solidification of the law had become inconvenient to the community, 'when individualism was expressing itself and replacing the earlier concept of group-life and family entity'.¹¹

As seen in this chapter, the establishment of the aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu as modern law also entailed defining the ideal form of matriliney and joint families in South Kanara, such as aḷiyasantāna, kuṭumba, and kavalu. At the same time, people's practices came to be oriented and regulated by modern law. As the bench of the Madras High Court pointed out, this may be interpreted as a process of the reconstruction and solidification of the aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu and the matrilineal joint family by modern law (cf. Jeffrey 2004/2005). Moreover, if we consider the discussion in Chapter 6, the transition of the aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu might be understood this way: the kuṭumba—originally part of the *dividual persons* linking people, deities, land, and nature—was redefined by modern law, first as an *indivisible* community of property or kuṭumba, and subsequently as separated from its property, when individuals were authorised as the proprietors of the divided family property and the kuṭumba as a whole gradually dissolved.

It risks oversimplification, however, to take the matrilineal joint family as only a community of property and to conclude that this community was unilaterally constructed by colonial legal discourse and then deconstructed by the postcolonial judicature. This attitude of evaluating the kuṭumba merely by its economic function, an attitude shared by the colonial and postcolonial judicature, tends to disregard another significant aspect, which generates the actuality and communality of the matrilineal joint family: the (spi)ritual aspect.

Unlike the kuṭumba defined by legal discourse as an indivisible community of property, the kuṭuma under the customary aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu had, and still has, multiple facets: it is an economic as well as a ritual community; it is kin relations as well as life-space; and it is a component of the transactional network linking people, deities, land, and nature. Needless to say, this multiplicity of the kuṭuma has not been unilaterally constructed by modern law, and hence it cannot be easily dissolved by transitions in law. It is therefore necessary to consider the difference and reflexive relationship between the kuṭumba, whose unity can indeed be shaken by legal change, and the kuṭuma, which can be maintained as a multiple community despite such change.

The above investigation clarifies that when we consider the transformation of the aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu in South Kanara, it is not appropriate to assume a unilateral transformation of customary law into modern law. Neither is it appropriate to assume that the process of modernisation after independence has somehow rectified the 'biased' colonial-period views that led the colonial judicature to create the Aliyasantana Law and the ideal family, the kuṭumba, as an 'archaic form of matriliney' (Rao 1898).

Throughout the colonial and postcolonial period, the aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu has been reconstructed as modern law, and its definition and interpretation by the modern judicature has oriented people's practices. The legal discourse, however, has focused on and regulated only a limited part of the vast phenomena related to the aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu. While coping with new legislation, people have maintained various practices that have never been regulated fully by modern law. The aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu and kuṭuma for the local people have certainly been *partially* reconstructed by modern law, yet they have never been identical to those defined by modern law. With this discrepancy and ambivalence, people have experienced the transitions in law and have reflexively (re)created the aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu and kuṭuma for themselves. Next, I will investigate people's practices concerning the transition in the aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu, focusing on the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu in Perar from the early- to mid-twentieth century.

Under the enactment and amendment of modern law

Since the nineteenth century, customary aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu in South Kanara has been reconstituted as modern law, and the modern judiciary has defined important terms concerning the matrilineal family. In the succession of the

enactment and amendment of laws, how have the local people practised the *aliyasantāna kaṭṭu*, and how have their practices transformed? To answer these questions, focusing on the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu*, I will first investigate people's understanding of the customary *aliyasantāna kaṭṭu*, which has been formed and practised historically. The *guttu*'s interpretation and practice of the *aliyasantāna kaṭṭu* mostly correspond to the modern *Aliyasantana Law*, yet they remain partially distinct, most remarkably in that the *aliyasantāna kaṭṭu* and *būta* worship are inseparable in their practice. I will then examine the partition plan of the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu*'s family land, which was designed in the 1950s. Through these investigations, I will show how the people have understood and practised their *kaṭṭu*, while also coping with modern law.

Kuṭuma, pergade, and būta worship

I will first elucidate the customary *aliyasantāna kaṭṭu* practised among the *guttus*, based on interviews with the core members of the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu*.

The matrilineal joint family is called *kuṭuma*. Descent is based on the female line, and a *kuṭuma* is composed of several sub-groups called *kabarū*.¹² In the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu*, there are three major *kabarū*s in the *kuṭuma*, and these are regarded as the original *kabarū*s descended from three female ancestors. The ordinary *kabarū*s, which each consists of a mother and her matrilineal descendants, are generally called *oṅjappa jōkulu* ('one mother's children') or *ula kabarū* ('sub-*kabarū*'). Hereafter, I refer to the three original *kabarū*s as the 'major *kabarū*' and the ordinary *kabarū*s simply as 'kabarū'.

In the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu*, while only female members can act as the fulcrum for descent and any bifurcation of the *kabarū*, in most cases a senior male member has been selected as *pergade* (the head of the family), who is responsible for the management of the joint property and *būta* worship in the *kuṭuma*. The title of the *pergade* is generally succeeded from mother's brother to sister's son.

Customarily, the management of family land was entrusted to the *pergade*, who distributed agricultural products to the other members. Therefore, the family land could be neither divided nor registered as private property. In such a situation, in the beginning of the twentieth century when the government requested the *kuṭuma* to register a representative/taxpayer of the joint property at the Revenue Board, it was the most senior female members who were selected as *paṭṭadārti* (see Chapter 9). When registration started, it was necessary not only for the *kuṭuma* but also for each *kabarū* to register a representative of its joint property (land called 'land from grandfather', as discussed later). It was again the most senior female member who was selected as the representative of her *kabarū*'s land ownership. In addition, as we will see, in the beginning of the 1950s when the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu* attempted to partition the joint property, female members were given land rights that

could be passed down to their matrilineal descendants, while male members were given land rights only for their lifetime.

For the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu, the continuation of the kuṭuma in the female line has thus been vital: female members have been regarded as the axis of succession for both the family land and būta worship, while senior male members have taken on the role of managers of the joint property and rituals in the kuṭuma.¹³

The land tenure of the kuṭuma and kabaru

In Perar, the land held by villagers under the aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu is classified into three categories: (1) family land, (2) purchased land, and (3) land acquired through land reforms. Moreover, among the guttu families, ‘family land’ is further classified into two subcategories: (a) traditional family land (*kuṭumada būmi*) and (b) land purchased by a member of the kuṭuma (*ajjer-eṟuḍu baidena*: ‘land from grandfather’, hereafter, ‘grandfather’s land’).

Among these subcategories, the traditional family land is the land that is believed to have been passed down for centuries in the female line. In a guttu family, the pergaḍe is in charge of the management of this kind of land, while all the members of the kuṭuma potentially have rights to it. Unlike this traditional family land, ‘grandfather’s land’ is land that was purchased by a male member of the kuṭuma in the past. Unless it has been registered in the name of the purchaser and also legally inherited by his children, this land is customarily inherited by his sisters and their matrilineal descendants. In other words, after the death of the purchaser, ‘grandfather’s land’ becomes part of the joint property of his mother’s kabaru. Unlike traditional family land, in which all the kuṭuma members have potential ownership, in the case of ‘grandfather’s land’, the range of kin who have rights to it is limited to the members of the purchaser’s mother’s kabaru. Therefore, as we will see later, ‘grandfather’s land’ has been the main subject of dispute and negotiation among the people, as they try to cope with modern law and sustain their land rights.

As already seen, the Madras Aliyasantana Act was enacted in 1949 and the Hindu Succession Act was enacted in 1956. In addition, in the 1950s the government started preparations for the legislation of the land reforms. In this situation, to retain the land rights of the entire family, the core members of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu planned to divide and register both the family land of the kuṭuma and the ‘grandfather’s land’ belonging to each kabaru. I will next examine the partition plan of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu.

A partition plan for the kuṭuma land

The Madras Aliyasantana Act approved for the first time the partition of family property by the kabaru. We now turn to the struggle of the leaders of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu as they tried to cope with this legislation. Needless to say,

it proved very difficult to divide the joint property properly and to calculate the appropriate allotment to each *kabarū*—and the larger the *kuṭuma*, the more problematic the task. In a judgement on one dispute over the partition of family property, Judge Govinda Menon addressed this difficulty:

At the very outset one has to marvel at the phenomenally large number of shares into which the properties are to be divided and the allotment of the various shares to the respective sharers. It is stated that this state of things is the necessary result of the working of the Madras Aliyasantana Act, 1949 ... by which the division of the properties is to be in a very complicated manner. It would require the skill of statisticians and mathematicians to work out the figures properly ...¹⁴

In the case of the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu* in Perar, it was Muttaya Shetty and some other 'elite' members of his *kuṭuma* who planned to complete this complicated task. Muttaya Shetty (1879–1952) attained the status of *pergaḍe* of the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu*, succeeding his mother's brother, Ishwara Shetty, in the late 1930s. A few years prior to his death, Muttaya started to plan for the partition of the family property. He drafted an elaborate plan of the partition and managed to complete a survey of the family land. However, his plan was never carried out because of disagreement among the family members about the allotment and because of Muttaya's death. His plan was written down in Kannada in 1954 and copies of it have been kept carefully by some senior family members as the 'authority' on the land proprietorship of each *kabarū*. Next, we turn to the details of this unrealised plan.

In 1950, the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu* held a total of 79 acres of paddy fields, which could yield 600 *muḍi gēṇi* of paddy¹⁵ per year, as well as a total of 83 acres of forest. Muttaya Shetty planned to divide the paddy field based not on its size but on crop yields. He planned to divide half of the 600 *muḍi gēṇi* fields by '*janasaṅkyepālū*' (division by population) and half by '*kabarupālū*' (division by *kabarū*).¹⁶ This plan actually corresponds to the mode of division of family property under the second category of the Madras Aliyasantana Act: half per capita and half per stirpes.

Basically following the prescription of the Act, Muttaya Shetty made the rules of division as follows: (1) in the case of *janasaṅkyepālū*, 300 *muḍi gēṇi* fields should be divided up according to the number of people in the *kuṭuma* (at the time, the *kuṭuma* had 231 living members). The total sum of the allotments for the members of a *kabarū* should be allotted to that *kabarū*. Here, the base point of each *kabarū* should belong to the same generation as Muttaya Shetty and could be either male or female. A woman who is both the base point and representative of her *kabarū* would receive the total sum of the allotments for her and for the other members of her *kabarū* (i.e. her matrilineal descendants). If the *kabarū* consists of only a man, he can enjoy his allotment only for his lifetime; after his death, the property should be handed over to one of his sisters' *kabarūs*. (2) On the other hand,

in the mode of *kabarūpālu*, the other 300 *muḍi gēni* fields should be divided equally among all 21 *kabarū*s of the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu*. Again, if a *kabarū* consists of only a man, after his death the allotment for that *kabarū* should be devised to one of his sisters' *kabarū*s.

Muttaya Shetty not only envisioned the above rules of division but even calculated the actual allotment of paddy fields and forest for each *kabarū*. He also arranged allotments from A-schedule to W-schedule (see Table 10.1). Here, it is noteworthy that the allotments for the family shrines worshipped by two major *kabarū*s headed the lists of those schedules. Muttaya Shetty allotted 17 *muḍi gēni* for one shrine and 6 *muḍi*, 1 *kaḷase*, and 7 *sēru* for the other; he made these allotments as the A-schedule and B-schedule.

As this suggests, Muttaya's plan itself was actually originally designed for the smooth maintenance of *būta* worship in the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu*. That is, Muttaya Shetty and other senior members tried to secure the resources necessary for the family shrines by keeping part of the family property for those shrines. In the preface of Muttaya's written plan, this was explicitly stated:

Following the Aliyasantana Law and the decision of the *kuṭuma*, here we shall divide the land of this house. All the rituals should be maintained without any suspension. The A-schedule and the B-schedule properties should be appropriated for the expenditure on the family shrines ...

As seen in Table 10.1, his plan and calculations were very elaborate and comprehensive. He paid careful attention to each *kabarū*'s economic conditions as well as to the relationships among the family members in order to make the allotment as equal as possible for every member. If this plan had been carried out, the proprietorship over the family property of each *kabarū* today would be clearer and each *kabarū* might be more independent of one another. However, in actuality the plan miscarried and the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu* has through today kept its family property undivided. As a result, both the actual form and the members' image of the *kuṭuma* of the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu* have, in a sense, remained as those of the pre-Aliyasantana Act.

In addition to the miscarriage of Muttaya's plan, there was another factor that obstructed the partition of the family property of the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu*. At the time of Muttaya Shetty, three senior women (two called *Anthakke* and one called *Rukku*) were selected as the representatives of each of the major *kabarū*s and were registered as *paṭṭadārti* at the Revenue Board.¹⁷ Within just one or two generations after these three women, however, the succession and registration of *paṭṭadārti* stopped. This means, because nobody was registered after them, the names of the last successors—all of whom have already died—have become 'frozen' as the registered *paṭṭadārti* of the family property. Because of the un-renewed registration of the *paṭṭadārti*, each living member's right to the family property has become highly obscure. In such conditions, as we will see in the next chapter, the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu*

Table 10.1 Muñdabeṭṭu guttu family property partition plan

Schedule	Representative of kabaru	Gender of rep.	Population of kabaru	Yield of paddy (muḍi. kalase. sēru)	Area of paddy fields (acres. cents)	Area of forest (acres. cents)	Total area (acres. cents)	Supplementary information
A	Mudu Perar family shrine	-		17	1.64	0	1.64	Family shrine
B	Badakare family shrine	-		6.1.7	0.67	0	0.67	Family shrine
C	Sesamma	f	31	55.1.3	8.21	8.38	16.59	
D	Lakshmi	f	9	28.2.6	4.93	4.97	9.9	
E	Thungu	f	25	48	6.02	9.94	15.96	
F	Subbaya Shetty	m	22	44.1.8	3.82	5.39	9.21	Subbaya represents his mother.
G	Kinchanna Hegde	m	1	12	1.63	0	1.63	Upon the death of Kinchanna, the land will devolve upon E.
H	Vāchanna Hegde	m	1	12	1.7	0	1.7	Upon the death of Vāchanna, the land will devolve upon F.
I	Mundappu	f	9	22.11	2.52	2.24	4.76	
J	Somakke	f	8	21.0.5	2.77	3.07	5.84	
K	Chinna Kājava	m	1	13	1.38	0.04	1.42	Upon the death of Chinna, 1 acre 18 cents will devolve upon I and 20 cents will devolve upon J.
L	Anthakke	f	16	36.0.13	6.68	6.47	13.15	
M	Pōvakke	f	29	51.0.10	7.36	11.8	19.16	
N	Muttu	f	14	28.0.1	5.46	15.92	21.38	

(Continued)

<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Representative of kabaru</i>	<i>Gender of rep.</i>	<i>Population of kabaru</i>	<i>Yield of paddy (muḍi. kaḷase. sēru)</i>	<i>Area of paddy fields (acres. cents)</i>	<i>Area of forest (acres. cents)</i>	<i>Total area (acres. cents)</i>	<i>Supplementary information</i>
O	Rukkayya Shetty	m	1	13	1.47	0	1.47	Upon the death of Rukkayya, 55 cents will devolve upon Q and 92 cents will devolve upon P.
P	Koropalu	f	11	24.1.10	2.97	2.19	5.16	
Q	Dhiramma	f	15	29.0.7	3.65	4.41	8.06	
R	Rādhamma	f	9	22.0.11	2.45	0.69	3.14	
S	Subbaya Naik	m	1	13	1.28	0	1.28	Upon the death of Subbaya, the land will devolve upon R and N.
T	Thungu	f	11	32.1.5	4.17	2.2	6.37	
U	Anthakke	f	4	19.2.7	2.7	2.28	4.98	
V	Ramanna Semita	m	12	34.0.11	3.65	2.66	6.31	Ramanna represents his sisters.
W	Vittal Shetty	m	1	14.1.4	1.75	0	1.75	Upon the death of Vittal, 90 cents will devolve upon V and 80 cents will devolve upon U. The other 70 cents will devolve upon T.
Total				593muḍi 21 kalase 108sēru	78.88	82.65	161.53	

guttu has since 1974 also dealt with the legislation of the Karnataka Land Reforms (Amendment) Act. Before considering this issue, however, next I will examine the partition plan of the ‘grandfather’s land’ of a *kabarū* in the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu.

Following the kuṭuma, coping with modern law

As discussed above, ‘grandfather’s land’ is the land previously purchased by one of the matrilineal family members. The land is generally inherited to the purchaser’s sisters and thus becomes part of the joint property of his mother’s *kabarū*. Below, I will examine the case of the division of the ‘grandfather’s land’ purchased by the maternal uncle of Ishwara Shetty, the *pergaḍe* of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu prior to Muttaya Shetty.

According to Harish Shetty, one of the core members of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu, the maternal uncle of Ishwara Shetty was originally the *mūla gēṇi* of the Pējāvāra Mutt. As we will see in the next chapter, *mūla gēṇi* refers to an ‘original tenant’ who has cultivated some particular land for generations and has relatively strong rights to the land compared with ordinary tenants. The uncle paid some amount of money to the matha and gained ownership (*mūla hakku*) of the land. After his death, this land was inherited by one of his sisters, Ishwara Shetty’s mother. The partition plan for this land arose for Ishwara Shetty’s sisters’ children’s generation. Ishwara Shetty had three sisters, Rukku, Muttu, and Munjappu. Munjappu had no child, so only the descendants of Rukku and Muttu were concerned regarding land inheritance. In 1949, this land was divided and inherited by the *kabarū*s of their daughters: Rukku’s daughters Sesamma, Kusamma, and Anthakke; and Muttu’s daughter Lakshmi. Based on the *janasaṅkyepāḷu* (division by population), each woman gained an allotment for her and her matrilineal descendants.

The partition of the land, however, did not go smoothly. Before the land was divided and inherited by these four *kabarū*s, Antappa Shetty, who was the eldest son of Rukku, contrived to register this land in the name of his wife. If the land were registered in the name of Antappa’s wife, no other descendants of Rukku and Muttu could execute any rights to it. Against this scheme, however, Sesamma’s husband objected strongly, and the land partition and inheritance to the four women’s *kabarū*s was carried out. At the time of registration, a photograph of the four women, their husbands, and their children was taken for ‘proof’ that should prevent any further trouble concerning the land. The land purchased by the matrilineal uncle of Ishwara Shetty was thus finally partitioned and registered in the name of the four women.

As seen above, since the 1950s, members of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu endeavoured to partition and inherit the joint property of the *kuṭuma*. This was an attempt to confirm each member’s rights in the allotment, and to avoid disputes among kin over the land. The partition and registration of the traditional family land, however, was never accomplished and the land rights of each member remain highly ambiguous. Meanwhile, in the case of the

‘grandfather’s land’, land partition and registration has been executed, but this was often accompanied by conflict among kin. The reason the ‘grandfather’s land’ could be partitioned successfully was that the land belonged solely to the purchaser’s mother’s *kabarū*, and thus the number of kin concerned with this land inheritance was limited.

As explored above, modern law after independence has compelled the members of the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu* to verify their land rights in conformity with modern law. For this purpose, it became necessary for them to understand every aspect of the joint property, to calculate the value of each plot, and to compare them to each other. In addition, as shown in Muttaya Shetty’s plan, in order to allocate plots appropriately to each member of the *kuṭuma*, it was necessary to confirm the genealogy of the *kuṭuma*, to group the *kabarū*s clearly, and to redefine each individual’s position in the *kuṭuma*. In this sense, the partition plan of the joint family property was the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu*’s endeavour to reorganise both the *kuṭuma* and its property in relation to each other.

The Madras Aliyasantana Act, therefore, did not simply redefine and stipulate the customary *āliyasantāna kaṭṭu*. Rather, it compelled people to reconstruct and substantialise the category of matrilineal family and the proprietorship of each group and individual in conformity with modern law. In the case of the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu*, however, the partition plan for the traditional family land has not been accomplished, and the land rights of the *kuṭuma* members have remained obscure. Consequently, in the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu*, modern law has not really promoted the distribution of the joint property or the division of the *kabarū*s; indeed, the ‘wholeness’ of the *kuṭuma* as a multiple community is still maintained today (see Ishii 2014b).

For the *kuṭuma* members, this has a double meaning: the *kuṭuma* as a multiple community, which is based on vast family land and *būta* worship, is the *ideal* form of the *kuṭuma* as the basis and core of their lives. At the same time, since the joint property has never been partitioned, no member can fully exercise his/her right to an allotment. Thus, in between duty to the *kuṭuma* and ambitions for individual rights, people have taken various measures to cope with problems concerning land proprietorship. Especially when the Karnataka Land Reforms (Amendment) Act was enacted in 1974, the landowners—most of them actually just the representatives or managers of part of the family land—strived to establish their land rights. In the next chapter, I will investigate people’s various efforts regarding these Land Reforms, focusing on the relations between the tenants and the landowner.

Notes

- 1 From the 1880s, several judges began to convey their doubts about the authority of Bhuthala Pandya’s *kaṭṭu*, owing to the influence of Arthur Coke Burnell’s criticism of the pamphlet. Burnell was the Judge of the District Court from 1872 to 1874 and was the author of the first English book on *būta* worship (Navada & Fernandes 2008).
- 2 *Subba Hegade v. Tongu*, (1869) 4 *Madras High Court Reports*, 196.

- 3 Yajamāna and yajamāni are the Kannaḍa words equivalent to yajamāne and yajamāni in Tuḷu, respectively.
- 4 For instance, in the court case held at the Madras High Court in 1890, the bench judged that a lunatic woman, Puttamma, who was the last survivor of an Aliyasantana family, should be entitled to the family property, rejecting the appeal of the wife and children of the last male survivor of Puttamma's family (Sanku v. Puttamma, 1891, *Indian Law Reporter* 14, Madras, 289). Also, in a court case held in 1910, the judge stated that it was reasonable to remove the elder sister, who had only one son, from the position of yajamāni and instead appoint the younger sister who had numerous children, from the viewpoint of family interests (Thimmakke v. Akku, 1911, *Indian Law Reporter* 34, Madras, 481).
- 5 Most research on matriliney in South India has dealt with marumakkattāyam, the form of matriliney that prevailed among the Nayars in Kerala. In both the academic literature and legal documents, the aliyasantāna kaṭṭu in South Kannaḍa has often been defined through a comparison with marumakkattāyam, as its 'sister system' (Bhat 2004, p. 11). It is generally considered that in both aliyasantāna kaṭṭu and marumakkattāyam, descent is traced in the female line. Also, the basic unit in the matrilineal society is the joint family called *taravāṭṭu* in Malayāḷam, kuṭumba in Kannaḍa, and kuṭuma in Tuḷu (see Gough 1952, p. 72).
- 6 See Moore (1985, p. 531) and Menon (1993) on the case in Malabar. It is also believed that if the kuṭuma do not conduct the būta ritual properly, the family members who are responsible for the ritual must suffer the curse of the būtas.
- 7 When the Madras Aliyasantana Act was enacted in 1949, it was determined that this Act would remain in effect for 15 years and that from that point forward the per stirpes mode of division would be applied uniformly. In 1962, however, the Madras Aliyasantana (Mysore Amendment) Act, 1961, was enacted, and the mode of division was changed to per capita.
- 8 In Kannaḍa, *samṭati* means 'group', 'offspring', and 'lineage', while *nissamṭati* means 'childless'. See Učida and Rajapurohit (2013, pp. 589, 897).
- 9 Prior to this Amendment Act, the Hindu Succession Act was enacted in 1956. In the Hindu Succession Act, it was declared that when a member of a kuṭumba or kavalu who had rights to the undivided family property died, his/her allotment should be what the person would have received if the per capita mode of division had been accomplished just before his/her death; also, the allotment of the deceased person should be succeeded to his/her descendants whether he/she was a member of a nissamṭati kavalu or not. In the Hindu Succession Act, even though the heirs of the deceased person could be entitled to the predecessor's allotment, the person concerned could not enjoy his/her allotment during his/her lifetime. See Bhat (2004, pp. 127–128).
- 10 Santhamma v. Neelamma, (1956) *All India Reporter*, Madras, 642.
- 11 Similarly, Bhat pointed out that people's rights in family property had been individualised by the amendment of law, and that under the recent social and economic change, the 'traditional Aliyasantana law is on the wane' (2004, pp. 164, 189).
- 12 Kabaru is the Tuḷu word equivalent to kavalu in Kannaḍa.
- 13 The manager of the būta ritual at the family level is called the *malpāvunāye*, while the one at the village level is called the *tūvonunāye*.
- 14 Kaveri v. Ganga Ratna, (1956) 1 *Madras Law Journal*, 98.
- 15 'Muḍi gēṇi' is a unit of the weight of paddy paid as rent. One muḍi is approximately 39.2 kg (1 muḍi corresponds to 3 *kaḷase* or to 42 *sēru*). In the above case, the total weight of paddy that the Muṇḍabetṭu guttu got yearly from all the tenants/cultivators was 600 muḍi (approximately 23,520 kg).

- 16 This system for the partition of family property is not unique to the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu, but is popular among the Baṅṭa families in Perar even today.
- 17 Anthakke, from the first major kabaru, was the sister of Muttaya Shetty, and Rukku, from the second major kabaru, was the sister of Ishwara Shetty. According to the records of land registration (*paṭṭe*) kept in the Deputy Commissioner's Office, Anthakke from the first major kabaru and another Anthakke from the third major kabaru were registered as paṭṭadārti, in 1938 and 1950, respectively.

11 Land reforms and deities as the ‘owners of land’

As we have seen up to the previous chapter, various laws and policies on land tenure and matrilineal joint families were effected in South Kanara from the colonial to post-independence periods, and the people were required to respond to these measures. By contending with the new measures, the people reorganised the traditional systems of matriliney, land tenure, and the joint family or *kuṭuma*. At the same time, however, they engaged in practices which did not necessarily adhere to the definitions of ‘Aliyasantana system’, ‘*kuṭumba*’, and ‘land ownership’ under modern law. In this sense, there was a reflexive interrelation, as well as slippage and mutual tension, between legal and political measures pertaining to the Aliyasantana system, land tenure, and joint family on the one hand, and the people’s practices on the other.

As we saw in Chapter 9, from the time of introduction of the *ryotwari* system to the enactment of the Karnataka Land Reforms (Amendment) Act in 1974, most of the rights of existing landlords remained intact in South Kanara in spite of execution of various land policies. In order to understand the reasons for this more fully, we need to analyse the land reforms and the continued rights of the landlords not only from a politico-economic perspective, as we have done in Chapter 9, but also from the viewpoint of people’s practices at the micro level. Focusing on the people’s practices leads us to ask the following questions: what was the relationship between landlords, who had privileged rights to management and control of land based on execution of *būta* rituals, and other farmers? How were the *būtas*, intimately linked to land and nature as the ‘owners of land’, intertwined with people’s practices concerning land reform?

In this chapter, I focus on the Karnataka Land Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1974, and examine negotiations between landlords and tenants over land rights, as well as people’s attempts to maintain or gain land rights by taking up cases in *Mudu Perar*. First, I will give an outline of tenants and domestic labourers in the village. I will also reconstruct an approximation of caste constitution of landlords, tenants, and domestic labourers before land reform, based on results of the household survey I conducted. Next, I will analyse the characteristics of land tenure and inheritance pattern of matrilineal families, focusing on cases of *Baṅṭa* landlords. Last, I will discuss concrete instances of how the landlords dealt with land reforms, and

how *būta* rituals were involved in negotiations and conflicts between landlords and tenants over land rights.

Tenants and domestic labourers in Perar

Two types of tenants: mūla gēṇi and cāla gēṇi

In Perar prior to land reform, people who worked on the landlords' land were collectively called *okkelu*. They were further divided into two categories, *gēṇi okkelu* and *kāli okkelu*. *Gēṇi okkelu* referred to 'tenants', who cultivated land rented from landlords, and paid the landlords farm rent (*gēṇi*) in the form of rice. *Kāli okkelu* were 'domestic labourers', who lived on the landlords' land, engaged in farm work, took care of cattle, and so on.

Gēṇi okkelu were further divided into *mūla gēṇi* and *cāla gēṇi*.¹ *Mūla gēṇi* meant 'old-time/original tenants' and referred to families of tenants working on particular land over several generations. Landlords could not drive out *mūla gēṇi* or exchange them for other tenants. The tenant rights of *mūla gēṇi* were stable and hereditary, unlike those of *cāla gēṇi*.² *Cāla gēṇi* were 'mobile tenants', who had gained tenant land relatively recently and were employed on the basis of annual or seasonal contracts. The landlords could change the rent or evict them. The majority of tenants working on landlords' land before land reform in Perar were *cāla gēṇi*.³

Domestic labourers (kāli okkelu)

Domestic labourers (*kāli okkelu*) lived on the landlords' estates and performed a variety of work, including farming, taking care of cattle, collecting fodder, and managing forests. Unlike tenants (*gēṇi okkelu*), who cultivated landlords' land and paid the landlords a part of the produce as land rent, domestic labourers could not gain products of the land they cultivated themselves; hence, they did not pay landlords any land rent. Landlords are said to have given around 1–2 kilograms of rice per day for a family of five to six persons as payment for the work of domestic labourers.⁴ Domestic labourers and their families were provided housing on the outskirts of a landlord's estate or in forests owned by a landlord. These were usually very humble dwellings with mud walls and thatched roofs. One house was shared by about five families with one family occupying a single room each. Such houses often collapsed during the monsoon season, and labourers were sometimes made to live in the landlords' cowsheds.

After the enforcement of land reforms from around 1977 to the 1980s, many domestic labourers and their families moved to small plots of land 5 cents in size provided by the government and became daily wage labourers. Some families, however, continued to live in their homes on the landlords' land after this period because they could not afford to buy a plot of land for 5 cents and build a house there.

Land reforms in village society: registration records of application of land rights

In this section, I will give an overview of the application of land rights in Mudu Perar based on administrative records at the time of land reforms preserved in the Deputy Commissioner's office in Mangaluru. The records I refer to are those documented in the *Villagewar Resister of Applications Filed under Section 48-A before the Tribunal* (VRA) submitted to land tribunals between 1974 and 1979.

According to VRA, there were 379 applications in total for land in Mudu Perar between 1974 and 1979, and the total area applied for was 918.08 acres.⁵ The majority of applicants were Muslims, constituting half of the total. This corresponds to the fact that a mosque constituted the most numerous type of landlord (a total of 149 cases) (Table 11.1). In VRA, we find many cases of inhabitants of the Muslim residential area, Guru Kambuḷa, applying for a part of the holding of the mosque located there from the end of 1975 to 1979.

Table 11.1 Types of applicants and landlords

	Type	Number
Applicants	Muslim	189
	Christian	55
	Pūjāri	35
	Baṅṭa	30*
	Kuḍubi	27
	Unknown	14
	Moyli	8
	Brahman	7
	Ācāri	7
	Other Hindus	3
	Baṅḍāri	1
	Dēvaḍige	1
	Konkani	1
	SC	1
Total	379	
Landlords	Mosque	149
	Baṅṭa	92
	Muslim	41
	Temple/mutt	26
	Unknown	22
	Christian	13
	Brahman	12
	Catholic church	11
	Konkani	8
	Other Hindus	2
	Kuḍubi	1
	Pūjāri	1
	Moyli	1
	Total	379

* Ten of these are members of the Muṅḍabeṭṭu guttu.

Table 11.2 Types of Baṅṭa landlords

<i>Baṅṭa landlord family</i>	<i>Number</i>
Muṅḍabeṭṭu guttu	43
Other Baṅṭa	36
Tidyamuṅḍoṭṭu guttu	7
Alake guttu	6
Total	92

In most cases, the inhabitants each applied for a very small plot of land, less than 1 acre. Hence we see that in this period, vast land owned by the mosque was distributed to Muslim households in Guru Kambuḷa. In the same way, we see from Table 11.1 that land owned by temples, mutts, and Catholic churches, such as Sri Venkatramana Temple and Pējāvāra Mutt, were also distributed to tenants through land reforms.⁶

The second most numerous landlords were the Baṅṭa (92 cases). As we see in Table 11.2, 43 families were the Muṅḍabeṭṭu guttu, followed by other Baṅṭa (36 cases), the third guttu house Tidyamuṅḍoṭṭu guttu (7 cases), and the fifth guttu house Alake guttu (6 cases). Hence, it seems that among landlords, excluding religious institutions, the Baṅṭa, particularly those of the Muṅḍabeṭṭu guttu, were greatly affected by land reform.

Interestingly, however, there were comparatively more Baṅṭa applicants for land rights (30 cases) of which 10 belonged to the Muṅḍabeṭṭu guttu family. From this, we note that though the land reforms led to transfer of land from landlords to tenants to some extent, village landlords/landed farmers also tried to establish their land rights by applying to land tribunals, and transferred land among themselves. Moreover, if we look at the details of the Muṅḍabeṭṭu guttu's holdings that were subject to applications, the most numerous were land purchased by a member of the matrilineal family, called 'grandfather's land', constituting 21 out of 43 cases (Table 11.3). This indicates that not only did tenants acquire 'grandfather's land', but members of the sub-matrilineal joint family (kabarū), who collectively owned the land, also applied for rights over this type of land.

Table 11.3 Types of land applied for rights in the Muṅḍabeṭṭu guttu

<i>Type of land</i>	<i>Number</i>
'Grandfather's land'	21
Traditional family land	12
Purchased farmland	10
Total	43

Group composition of landlords, tenants, and domestic labourers in Mudu Perar

What kinds of people, then, were landlords, tenants, and domestic labourers in Perar before land reform? In this section, I reconstruct an approximation of the group composition of each of these three categories, and examine their details based on the door-to-door household survey I conducted in Mudu Perar.

Methods and subjects of the survey

Before examining the details, let me explain the methods and subjects of the survey. I surveyed 227 households (total population 1,082) in Mudu Perar from 18 July to 28 August 2008.⁷ I visited each household with questionnaires and carried out interviews along with my research assistant, Ms Akshaya Shetty. Sometimes Akshaya's father, Mr Harish Shetty, accompanied us as a guide and introduced me to the interviewees. We conducted the survey during the monsoon season, so we walked to the houses in the village every day in the pouring rain, passing through fields that had sunk underwater and had become like ponds, crawling up mountain roads covered by bushes, occasionally slipping and falling on footpaths between fields. Most of the villagers were acquaintances of Harish and Akshaya, and were happy to answer questions when I explained my intentions.

The survey was conducted mainly in Hindu residential areas in Mudu Perar. Out of the 227 households I surveyed, 219 households were Hindu and they constituted 31.8% of the Hindu households (total 689 households) in Mudu Perar. Table 11.4 shows the numbers of households by caste and group. As we can see in the table, the caste constitution of 227 households is similar to that in Mudu Perar which I discussed in Chapter 2.

*Table 11.4 Caste/group of households and population**

<i>Caste/group</i>	<i>Number of households</i>	<i>Population</i>
Kuḍubi	79	436
Baṅṭa	56	203
Pūjāri	47	224
Ācāri	9	61
Moyli	8	37
Catholic	8	25
SC*	5	25
Belcaḍe	5	25
Brahman	4	15
Puruṣa	3	18
Baṅḍāri	2	9
Mūlya	1	4
Total	227	1,082

* SC in Table 11.4 are Mansā and those who call themselves *harijana*, but their exact caste name is unknown.

Group composition of landlord households

Forty-three households out of the 227 households I surveyed were landlords before enforcement of the Karnataka Land Reforms (Amendment) Act in 1974, constituting approximately 18.9% of the total.⁸ Table 11.5a shows the numbers of these 43 households by caste and group. As we can see from the table, 40 households, approximately 93% of the landlord households, are Baṅṭa. If we look at the details of the families of Baṅṭa households (Table 11.6), we see that 19 households, constituting 47.5%, belong to the Muṇḍabettu guttu.

Table 11.5 Number of (a) landlord households, (b) tenant households, (c) domestic labourer households, and (d) other households by caste/group

		<i>Caste/group</i>	<i>Number of households</i>	<i>%</i>
(a)	Landlord households	Baṅṭa	40	93.0
		Brahman	2	4.7
		Catholic	1	2.3
		Total	43	100
(b)	Tenant households	Kuḍubi	27	39.7
		Pūjāri	18	26.5
		Baṅṭa	8	11.8
		Ācāri	6	8.8
		Catholic	4	5.9
		Others*	5	7.4
		Total	68	100
(c)	Domestic labourer households	Kuḍubi	40	55.6
		Pūjāri	17	23.6
		Moyli	7	9.7
		Baṅṭa	3	4.2
		Puruṣa	2	2.8
		Belcaḍe	2	2.8
		SC	1	1.4
		Total	72	100
(d)	Other households	Kuḍubi	12	30.0
		Pūjāri	12	30.0
		Ācāri	3	7.5
		Belcaḍe	3	7.5
		Baṅṭa	2	5.0
		Catholic	2	5.0
		SC	2	5.0
		Moyli	1	2.5
		Mūlya	1	2.5
		Baṅḍāri	1	2.5
		Brahman	1	2.5
Total	40	100		

* Caste of 'Others': SC 2, Brahman 1, Puruṣa 1, Baṅḍāri 1.

Table 11.6 Families of Baṅṭa landlord households

<i>Baṅṭa household affiliation</i>	<i>Number of households</i>	<i>%</i>
Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu	19	47.5
Other Baṅṭa	13	32.5
Alake guttu	4	10.0
Tidyamuṇḍoṭṭu guttu	4	10.0
Total	40	100

Group composition of tenant households

Out of the 227 households surveyed, 68 households were tenants (gēṇi okkelu) before land reform.⁹ Table 11.5b shows the numbers of these 68 households by caste and group. Forty-five households, constituting approximately 66% of the total, are Kuḍubi and Pūjāri, followed by Baṅṭa and Ācāri, and Catholic.

Group composition of domestic labourer households

Seventy-two households out of 227 were domestic labourers (kāli okkelu) before land reform.¹⁰ Table 11.5c shows the numbers of 72 households by caste. Just as in the case of tenant households, Kuḍubi and Pūjāri households are the most numerous, as 55.6% are Kuḍubi, followed by Pūjāri, Moyli, and Baṅṭa.

Group composition of other households

Of the 227 households, 40 households were not landlords, tenants, or domestic labourers before land reform (Table 11.5d). Among these, 26 households live on housing sites 5 cents in size developed by the government after the 1970s. Adult members of these households were daily wage labourers engaged in agriculture or other work before land reform, and were not live-in domestic labourers.

From the above, we see that the socio-economic structure of Mudu Perar before land reforms was such that while the Baṅṭa occupied much of the farmland and forests, Kuḍubi and Pūjāri engaged in the actual farm labour as tenants and domestic labourers.

Characteristics of land holding and inheritance among the Baṅṭa landlords

Land holdings and acquisitions by the landlord households

Next, I will analyse the land holdings of landlord households in Mudu Perar. Table 11.7 shows the area of holdings of 43 households in 2008, who had been landlords before land reform.

Table 11.7 Area of land holdings of landlord households (2008)

<i>(Unit: acre)</i>	<i>Farmland</i>	<i>Forest</i>	<i>Total</i>
Total area	129.41	201.05	333.96*
Average area**	3.16	4.9	7.77

* Total calculated by adding 3.5 acres of total holdings of two households, whose type of land is unknown, to the total of farmland and forest.

** Average area of farmland and forest excludes two households whose type of holdings is unknown.

As we see in Table 11.7, the total holding of landlord households is approximately 334 acres. The average holding of each household is approximately 7.8 acres, including farmland and forests. How did these households acquire land? Table 11.8 illustrates the manner of land acquisition by these 43 households.

As Table 11.8 shows, holdings of many landlord households were a part of traditional family land of the *kuçuma*, or land bought in the past by a matrilineal family member that later became a part of joint holdings of the *kabarü* to which the buyer belonged ('grandfather's land'). With the exception of five households who acquired land through purchase by the present head of household before land reform (four *Baņas*, one Catholic), and two Brahman households who only inherited land bought by the father, the rest of the landlord households (*Baņa*) have all inherited a part of the traditional family land or 'grandfather's land'.

Table 11.8 Classification of holdings of landlord households according to manner of acquisition

<i>Manner of land acquisition</i>	<i>Number of households</i>	<i>%</i>
Matrilineal inheritance of traditional family land ¹	16	37.2
Traditional family land + matrilineal inheritance of land purchased by matrilineal family member ²	9	20.9
Purchase before land reform	5	11.6
Traditional family land + inheritance of land purchased by maternal grandfather or maternal great grandfather	4	9.3
Traditional family land + acquisition due to land reform ³	3	7.0
Inheritance of land purchased by father	2	4.7
Traditional family land + purchase before land reform	1	2.3
Traditional family land + purchase before land reform + acquisition due to land reform	1	2.3
Traditional family land + 'grandfather's land' + inheritance of land purchased by father	1	2.3
'Grandfather's land' only	1	2.3
Total	43	100

1 Abbreviated as 'traditional family land' in this table.

2 Abbreviated as 'grandfather's land' in this table.

3 Landlord households who acquired land due to land reform were tenants of other landlords before the reform.

In this way, in Mudu Perar, many household heads, who were landlords before land reform, are either inheritors or managers of a part of the land holding of the matrilineal family. It should be pointed out that as we saw in the case of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu in Chapter 10, present-day inheritors or managers of each plot in the kuṭuma are not necessarily officially registered as the holders. Hence those whom we have referred to until now as ‘landlords’ are *not* ‘land owners’ with legal and exclusive rights to a plot of land, but rather the representatives of the plot jointly held by the kuṭuma. Below I will examine land tenure among the Baṇṭa landlord households based on concrete cases.

Inheritance of traditional family land and ‘grandfather’s land’

Case 1 Inheritance and management of family land registered in the name of a deceased person

Baṇṭa, Alake guttu family. Household composition: Sampavati (77-year-old, female), her eldest son Vittal, his wife and children. The household owns 3 acres of farmland and 7 acres of forest. These lands are all holdings of the matrilineal joint family, but are registered in the name of Sampavati’s deceased mother, and have not been divided or registered anew by succeeding generations. The total of 10 acres of land is presently managed by Vittal and its income is consumed by only this household.

Case 2 Inheritance and management of family land registered in the name of a deceased person

Baṇṭa, Alake guttu family. Household composition: Bālākrishna (36-year-old, male), his wife and children. The household owns 5 acres of land. Bālākrishna’s mother had matrilineally inherited this land, but it is registered in the name of the elder sister of Bālākrishna’s maternal great-grandmother (MMMZ). Bālākrishna’s maternal uncle used to manage the land before Bālākrishna took over.

Cases 1 and 2 show how family land (or a part of it) is registered in the name of a deceased (female) member of the matrilineal family, inherited by the eldest woman who represents a kabaru, and managed by the woman’s brother or son. As we see in Case 2, the management rights of land usually pass from the brother of the woman who inherits the land to her son.

Case 3 Various types of matrilineal inheritance by a female landlord

Baṇṭa, Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu family. Household composition: Devaki (82-year-old, female) and her daughter. Devaki owns approximately 2 acres of land inherited matrilineally; 2.5 acres jointly held by the offspring of Devaki’s mother and the offspring of Devaki’s mother’s sisters; and approximately 3 acres purchased in the past by a matrilineal family member (‘grandfather’s land’). In addition, she used to own approximately 7 acres located outside Mudu Perar purchased by the matrilineal family.

- i Land inherited matrilineally: this 4-acre land was owned by Devaki’s mother, Sesamma, and was subsequently divided and inherited by Devaki and her sisters. At present, the land of all

- three sisters is managed by Devaki's eldest son, and its income converted into cash and distributed to the sisters.
- ii Land owned by the offspring of Sesamma and the offspring of Sesamma's sisters: this land is part of a joint holding of the *ka-baru* headed by the mother of Sesamma and her sisters.
 - iii and iv 'Grandfather's land': these plots are part of the land purchased by the maternal uncle of Devaki's maternal grandmother (MMMB). Seven acres of land located outside Mudu Perar was transferred to a Kuḍubi tenant after land reform.

This is a case of the eldest woman of the *kuṭuma* inheriting and owning several holdings, including both traditional family land and 'grandfather's land'. There is a tendency among the *Baṅṭa* for women belonging to the *kuṭuma* to inherit a lot of land and accumulate holdings, as land purchased by a matrilineal family member (male) is passed on to the buyer's sisters and their daughters along the matriline.

Inheritance from father to son among the Baṅṭa

Table 11.8 shows that four households (all *Baṅṭas*) have inherited and own land purchased by the maternal grandfather (MF) or maternal great grandfather (MMF) in addition to inheriting the traditional family land. Among the *Baṅṭas*, the maternal grandfather and the maternal great grandfather belong to different *kuṭumas* from the successor. Hence inheriting land purchased by them is a different mode of inheritance from the usual matrilineal one. Let us examine this mode of succession below.

Case 4 Inheritance of family land and of land purchased by maternal grandfather

Baṅṭa, Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu family. Household composition: Jayashila (67-year-old, male), his elder sister Rohini, Rohini's daughter, and Rohini's daughter's children. They own matrilineally inherited land of 4 acres 86 cents and farmland purchased by the maternal grandfather yielding 21 *muḍi*.

- i Land inherited matrilineally: when Anthakke, the maternal grandmother of Jayashila and Rohini, was alive, the *kuṭuma* elders at the time promised that Anthakke's daughter Lamakke (mother of Jayashila and Rohini) and her sister Manjakke would divide and inherit the land. The land owned by Jayashila and Rohini at present is part of the land that their mother Lamakke inherited.
- ii Land purchased by the maternal grandfather: this land is part of the land yielding 100 *muḍi* (approximately 60 acres) purchased by Appanna Rai, the husband of Jayashila's maternal grandmother, Anthakke. This land was inherited by his children, the sisters Lamakke and Manjakke, in accordance with Appanna's will. Out of this 60-acre land, Jayashila manages the plot yielding 21 *muḍi* and Manjakke's son manages the

plot yielding 63 muḍi at present. The remaining land was acquired by a Catholic tenant at the time of land reform.

The above is a case of a Baṅṭa family where a part of the family land of the kuṭuma to which the household head belongs is inherited matrilineally, while land purchased by the maternal grandfather of the household head is inherited by his own children and their offspring. As we have already seen, among the matrilineal Baṅṭa, land purchased by a male member of the matrilineal family becomes part of the family land, as it is inherited not by his own children but by his sisters and their offspring. However, in Case 4, it was possible for Appanna Rai's daughters, belonging to a different kuṭuma from him, to inherit the land he purchased because he left a will. Such mode of inheritance whereby the children inherit land purchased by their father diverts from the traditional matrilineal inheritance among the Baṅṭa.¹¹

Case 5 Inheritance of family land and of land purchased by maternal great grandfather

Baṅṭa, Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu family. Household composition: Single person household of Sumati (67-year-old, female). Sumati currently owns approximately 4 acres 60 cents of land she inherited matrilineally. Before land reform, she owned 2 acres of matrilineally inherited farmland in Mudu Perar, and had usufruct of 3 acres out of 25 acres of family land outside the village. Before land reform, Sumati also owned farmland that yielded 42 muḍi (approximately 8 acres) in Mudu Perar. This land was purchased by the husband of her maternal great grandmother, Unnyakke, but was transferred to a Pūjāri tenant at the time of land reform.

In the above case, the eldest woman, the household head, matrilineally inherits the holdings of the kuṭuma she belongs to, and at the same time inherits land purchased by her maternal great grandfather. The latter was passed from her great grandfather to her grandmother, and then to her mother before her. Land purchased by a man of the matrilineal family ('grandfather's land') can be inherited matrilineally, or it can be directly inherited by the man's children and their offspring, as we saw in Cases 4 and 5. Inheritance from the father to his children can lead to discord between the members of the buyer's matrilineal family and his children, since land is inherited by members of a kuṭuma other than that to which the buyer belongs.

Disputes between the landholder's children and the matrilineal family over inheritance occur not only in cases of land purchased by the holder himself. In the case below, we see how a conflict develops between a deceased landholder's elder sister and his child over land purchased by a matrilineal family member that later came to be divided and inherited.

Case 6 Conflict between the deceased landholder's sister and son over land
Household composition: Dinakara (Baṅṭa, 52-year-old, male), his wife and children. Dinakara's father, Narayana, owned a part of the 'grandfather's land', which had been purchased in the past by a member of the matrilineal family to which Narayana belonged. It was divided and inherited by

Narayana and his brothers and sisters according to division by population (*janasāṅkypāḷu*). After Narayana's death, his land was inherited by his elder sister (Dinakara's paternal aunt). This led to a dispute between Dinakara and his paternal aunt over the land, and they are currently involved in a lawsuit.

As we have already seen, the landlords, many of whom are Baṅṭa, owned farmland and forests in Mudu Perar before land reform. Many of them matrilineally inherited and own parts of traditional family land as well as 'grandfather's land'. Land holding and inheritance based on matriliney prioritises inheritance by women and grants authority and benefits to the women's brothers or sons as the managers of the land. There are cases where the child (most often the daughter) inherits land purchased by her father. Such cases, however, are few compared to those of matrilineal inheritance.

Traditional family land of a kuṭuma often remains registered in the name of a kinswoman who died several generations ago. As in the case of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu we discussed in Chapter 10, the larger the holding of a kuṭuma, the less smooth the division, inheritance, and registration of land among the members, resulting in the continuation of joint holdings by the kuṭuma to the present day.

In this way, since land is not registered in an individual's name, or past registration is not updated, rights of family members to plots that are part of family land are not fixed, and individuals' rights are restricted. For instance, if a person matrilineally inherits a part of family land, he/she will not have rights to sell the land as real estate or borrow money from a bank by mortgaging it, unless the land is registered in his/her name. Due to this problem, land is often bought and sold within the kuṭuma without changing the name in the register, as we see below.

Case 7 Land transaction 'in private' without changing the name in the register

Baṅṭa, Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu family. Household composition: Harish (55-year-old, male), his wife and child. Harish owns 7 acres 75 cents of land at present. He purchased this land from a family member belonging to the same kuṭuma. The land is registered in the name of Harish's maternal grandmother, Sesamma. Two households, also direct descendants of Sesamma, had rights as joint managers. Harish purchased the land with permission from all the adult members of these two households and paid the money, but the land remains registered in Sesamma's name. Hence Harish fears the possibility of losing the land, if the offspring of the households who had management rights decide to claim their rights in the future.

In this way, land holding and inheritance based on matriliney enables maintenance and accumulation of land within the kuṭuma. At the same time, however, it leaves the rights of family members to each plot ambiguous. How were the Baṅṭa landlords that practised such methods of land holding and inheritance affected by land reforms, and how did they deal with the changes? Let us now turn to the relationship between landlords and land reform.

Enforcement of the Karnataka Land Reforms (Amendment) Act and the people's practices

Land reforms and landlords in Perar

In the survey I conducted in Mudu Perar, out of the 43 households who were landlords before land reform, 15 households, constituting 34.9% of the total, lost land due to the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1974. Table 11.9 shows the area of land that each household (or kutuma to which the head of household belonged in cases where land was not divided) lost due to land reform, types of land based on how they were acquired, and their location.¹²

Table 11.9 Landlord households that lost land due to land reform

<i>House hold number *</i>	<i>Land area lost due to land reform (in acre)</i>	<i>Manner of acquisition</i>	<i>Location</i>
38	1.5	Farmland purchased by household head	Mudu Perar
47	0.16	Traditional family land** (homestead)	Mudu Perar
146	2.1	Traditional family land	Mudu Perar
147	0.43	Traditional family land	Mudu Perar
148	10.38	Traditional family land, land purchased by maternal great grandfather	Inside and outside Mudu Perar (family land), outside Mudu Perar (purchased land)
149	1 acre + land yielding 26 muḍi	Traditional family land, land purchased by maternal grandfather	Mudu Perar
152	1 acre + land yielding 200 muḍi	Traditional family land	Mudu Perar (1 acre), outside Mudu Perar (land yielding 200 muḍi)
153	Same as 152	Traditional family land	Same as 152
157	11.2	Farmland purchased by household head's father	Mudu Perar
158	7	'Grandfather's land'	Outside Mudu Perar
162	1.5	Traditional family land	Mudu Perar
163	8	Land purchased by maternal great grandfather	Outside Mudu Perar
196	4	Traditional family land	Mudu Perar
197	Same as 196,198	Traditional family land	Mudu Perar
198	Same as 196,197	Traditional family land	Mudu Perar
Total	48.27 acres + land yielding 226 muḍi***		

* Serial number of each household in the survey.

** Includes joint holdings that are not divided.

*** Approximate average 3.22 acres + land yielding 15.1 muḍi.

As we can see in the table, the total area of land the 15 landlord households lost due to land reform is 48.27 acres. The average area each household lost is approximately 3.22 acres.¹³ If we look at the different kinds of land according to the ways they were acquired, 12 households, that is to say, 80% of the total of 15 households, lost a part of family land (including both traditional family land and 'grandfather's land'). As for the location of the land, 13 households lost their land within Mudu Perar to tenants.

However, 28 households, constituting 65.1% of the total of 43 landlord households, have not lost land due to land reform. Also, as we saw in Table 11.7, landlord households currently own a total of approximately 334 acres of land, and each household owns an average of approximately 7.8 acres of farmland and forest. Thus, among the landlord households surveyed, there were more households who did not lose land due to land reform than those that did, and those who were landlords before land reform still maintain vast amounts of land. So how was it possible for the landlords to keep their land?

Before land reform, out of these 28 households, 4 households had no tenants (*gēni okkelu*), and only employed domestic labourers (*kāli okkelu*). Fifteen households used neither tenants nor domestic labourers, and out of these, the household heads of three households were tenants of other landlords. The remaining nine households employed tenants before land reform, but managed to evade transfer of land to the tenants because for some reason the tenants did not apply for land rights at the time of land reform.¹⁴ In most cases, these households were able to keep land, in spite of the fact that they had tenants, either because the tenants had left the land of their own accord before the enforcement of the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act, or because they had evicted the tenants just before and after the enforcement of the Act. Let us examine concrete cases below.

Case 1 Landlords evicting tenants

Household composition: Ishwara (Baṅṭa, 75-year-old, male), his wife and children, and two grandchildren. This household owns 14 acres of farmland and forest purchased by Ishwara in 1968. There were tenants on the land before the purchase, but Ishwara asked them to leave before the enactment of land reform, and they did so. Hence he lost no land due to land reform.

Case 2 Conflict between landlords and tenants over application for land rights

Baṅṭa, Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu family. Household composition: Mahabhara (85-year-old, male) and his wife Hemabati. They own 3 acres 40 cents of farmland and forest inherited matrilineally by Hemabati. They used to have a Catholic tenant and Kuḍubi domestic labourer before land reform. At the time of land reform, the Catholic tenant tried to apply for land rights, resulting in a dispute between the tenant and Mahabhara. Mahabhara paid the tenant some money and persuaded him to give up the application.

Cases 1 and 2 involve landlords evicting tenants and retaining their land rights at the time of enforcement of the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1974. In both cases, the landlords drove the tenants off the land before the

tenants applied for land rights. Below is a case where the landlords, who lost a part of land to a tenant due to land reform, evicted a tenant working on another plot of land in order to preserve their rights there.

Case 3 Landlords holding on to their land

Household composition: Lukumuni (Baṅṭa, 65-year-old, female) and her daughter. Lukumuni owns 2.5 acres of matrilineally inherited farmland and forest. Before land reform, Lukumuni's family lived in Kompadavū, a village adjacent to Mudu Perar, but moved to Kokkar in Mudu Perar in 1976 because they had lost their holdings due to land reform. Lukumuni's maternal uncle, his wife and children had lived on the land owned by Lukumuni's matrilineal family in Kokkar, but after the maternal uncle died, Lukumuni's family paid the uncle's wife some money and made them leave the land. Later, a Kuḍubi tenant came to work on this land, but Lukumuni's family occupied the land before the tenant could apply for land rights and evicted the tenant. According to Lukumuni, her family evicted the Kuḍubi tenant because they feared that tenants would take over the land not only in Kompadavū but also in Kokkar.

Case 4 Landlords evicting tenants

Baṅṭa, Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu family. Household composition: Lalita (60-year-old, female) and her son. Four acres of land owned by the matrilineal family of Lakshmi, the mother of Lalita's deceased husband, was acquired by a Pūjāri tenant due to land reform. For this reason, Lakshmi's maternal uncle evicted the Pūjāri tenant from the land of which he himself was the landlord.

Case 5 Dismissal of tenants and use of short-term tenants

Baṅṭa, Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu family. Household composition: Ramani (84-year-old, female), her daughter, son, his wife and children. They own 5 acres of farmland and forest matrilineally inherited by Ramani, as well as 4 acres of forest and 3 acres of farmland purchased in 1993. An old-time Baṅṭa tenant worked on the matrilineally inherited land, but when the tenant died in 1968, his wife and child left the land. After that, Ramani's mother's siblings managed the land, and tenants came and went as they were employed on a short-term basis.

As we see from the above, some landlords fearing that the tenants would apply for land rights evicted them just before and after 1970, and held on to their land rights. Also, as we see in Case 5, some landlords took measures to ensure that particular tenants would not apply for land rights by dismissing tenants after a short term and continually changing the tenants they employed.

Application for land rights by village landlords

As I have already discussed, people who managed land and had rights to the products of that land did not necessarily establish their rights to the land by registering with the government. Rights of family members to joint holdings of the kuṭuma were ambiguous. As we will see below, the enforcement of

the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act provided opportunities for them to fix their rights to parts of the family land by applying for land rights as landed farmers.

Case 1 Application for ‘grandfather’s land’

According to *Villagewar Resister of Applications Filed under Section 48-A before the Tribunal (VRA)*, on 27 August 1974, Gangādara Bandāri’s wife, Maloti, applied for land rights over 0.7 acre of land owned by Pējāvāra Mutt, and her application was accepted. Harish Shetty, a member of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu, explained the context of this application as follows. The maternal uncle of Ishwara Shetty, the head of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu before Muttaya Shetty, paid Pējāvāra Mutt some money and acquired rights as a landholder. However, he continued to pay a small amount of rent to the mutt. Later, the land was divided and inherited by members of the sub-matrilineal joint family (kabarū). The 0.7 acres of land that Gangādara Bandāri’s wife applied for was one of the plots that was divided and inherited at that time. This land had been gifted to Gangādara as a part of dowry by Gangādara’s maternal uncle, who was also Maloti’s father (i.e. Gangādara and his wife were cross cousins). This land was cultivated by a Pūjāri tenant, but Gangādara successfully applied to the land tribunal for rights to this land in his wife’s name. He did so in order to determine his own rights to the land.

Case 2 Application for ‘grandfather’s land’

According to VRA, on 31 December 1974, Pōvappa Shetty’s wife, Girija, applied for and was granted land rights of a total of 10.8 acres of land owned by the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu. These plots had been purchased by a member of the matrilineal family and inherited by Pōvappa Shetty’s mother. Pōvappa applied for and acquired land rights in his wife’s name in order to determine his own rights to the plots.

Case 3 Arbitrary application for ‘grandfather’s land’ and conflict among family members

According to VRA, on 29 June 1976, a man of Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu called Bōba Shetty applied for and was granted the rights of several plots of land totalling 39.08 acres. This land was originally owned by a kabarū belonging to the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu, and there was an ongoing conflict among the family members about dividing it. Bōba applied for land rights over these plots in order to determine his rights over them in spite of the fact that he was not cultivating them. Bōba’s maternal uncle belonging to the same kabarū filed a lawsuit against Bōba’s application, and the case is still in dispute in the high court.

All the above three cases involve a member of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu using land reform to determine rights over a part of land purchased by a matrilineal family member (‘grandfather’s land’). However, in the VRA, we find no cases of a member of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu applying to the land tribunal for rights to a part of the traditional family land. Hence we see that it was extremely difficult for members of a kuṭuma to declare individual rights over

traditional family land, and it was easier to assert rights over ‘grandfather’s land’ of the *kabarū* to which they belonged. This corresponds to what we discussed in Chapter 10: traditional family land of the whole *kuṭuma* cannot be easily divided, and family members’ rights over land remain ambiguous, whereas division and inheritance of ‘grandfather’s land’ is a comparatively smooth process because there are fewer family members who have rights to it.

As we saw in Chapter 10, the people of the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu* find themselves in between customary law (*kaṭṭu*) and the modern judiciary system. They have to contend with the dilemma between duty towards the continuity of the *kuṭuma* and pursuit of individual rights. Land reforms posed crises for the encompassing and complex *kuṭuma* based on large family land, but they also offered opportunities for individual members of the *kuṭuma* to determine their land rights officially by applying to land tribunals. In this context, it was easier for individuals to assert their ownership rights over ‘grandfather’s land’ since the land was purchased by comparatively recent ancestors. Such land had weaker links with the deities worshipped by the *kuṭumas*, and did not have the historical significance as a collective resource of the entire *kuṭuma*. In other words, ‘grandfather’s land’ offered chance of a compromise between the demand to protect family land of the *kuṭuma* and the need to determine individual land rights.

Lastly, let us examine a case where a man of *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu* applied for rights over several plots of land including family land of the *kuṭuma*.

Case 4 Eviction of tenant by landlord, and application and determination of land rights

Baṇṭa, Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu family. Household composition: Yashoda (77-year-old, female), her son, his wife and children. They own 10 acres of land matrilineally inherited by Yashoda, and total of 16 acres of land, the rights over which were acquired due to land reform. According to Yashoda, her deceased husband, Sundar Rai, was a tenant (*mūla gēṇi*) of *Pējāvāra Mutt* before land reform. He applied for and was granted land rights over this tenant land at the time of enactment of land reforms. A *Pūjāri* tenant used to work on the land matrilineally inherited by Yashoda, but Sundar evicted the tenant.

This case shows how a man, who was a landlord and at the same time a tenant of another landlord, acquired ownership rights over a vast amount of land by applying for land rights of several plots. The case, however, is related to problems over land in another household in the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu*, and the situation is more complex than the above explanation given by Yashoda and her son. Devaki, an 82-year-old woman belonging to the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu* as Sundar Rai did, points out that Sundar was not the *mūla gēṇi* of *Pējāvāra Mutt*. It was Devaki who was the *mūla gēṇi* of the *mutt*, and Sundar was a subtenant (*ulamūlagēṇi*) whom Devaki had employed to cultivate the land she had rented from the *mutt*. In 1966, Devaki registered the family land that had been divided and she had inherited, including the land of *Pējāvāra Mutt*, but she continued to pay the *mutt* an annual rent of 38 rupees 88 paise

and 17 muđi of rice as the mūla gēni. However, at the time of enforcement of the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act in 1974, Sundar applied for rights over the mutt's land, three plots of farmland on which he worked as a tenant, and the holding of the kabaru to which he belonged. Sundar applied for land rights to the holding of kabaru, in spite of the fact that he did not cultivate that land, because otherwise the land would be matrilineally inherited by his sisters, and he wanted to establish his own rights to the land. In the case of the mutt's land, too, Sundar was not actually the mūla gēni but a subtenant, so he should not have had the right to apply for land rights. But since Sundar had the real power over the land, Devaki, the mūla gēni, says she did not apply for land rights because she wanted to avoid trouble. As a result, Sundar acquired rights over several plots of land.

Tenants and land reforms in Perar

Until now, we have examined the effects of land reform in Perar from the viewpoint of landlord households. So our next question is, how did tenants experience land reform at the time of enforcement of the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act?

Forty households, that is to say 58.8% of the 68 tenant households I surveyed, acquired land due to land reform. The 40 households acquired a total of 122.83 acres of land, and the average area acquired per household is 3.07 acres. These figures may suggest that many tenants successfully acquired land due to land reform. However, the processes of their acquisition were by no means easy. Many tenant households experienced conflict with their landlords and competition with other tenants. Many acquired land after prolonged court cases. Moreover, 28 households, approximately 41.2% of the tenant households surveyed, have not acquired land due to land reform. Let us examine the experiences of the tenant households below.

Case 1 Conflict with the landlord over application of land rights

Household composition: Kunnyanna (Baṅṭa, 78-year-old, male), his wife, daughter and her children. Kunnyanna's family was a tenant of 3 acres of land from his maternal grandmother's generation. There was a dispute with the landlord over application of land rights around 1974. Kunnyanna demanded that the landlord submit the contract between the landlord and the tenant called 'gēni sheet', but the landlord refused. Since Kunnyanna had not paid any land tax, he did not have any other documents to certify his case, but his application was approved by the land tribunal and he was able to acquire the land.

Case 2 False declaration by the landlord

Household composition: Lila (Baṅṭa, 70-year-old, female), her son and his wife. Lila's deceased husband and his father were tenants of land (3.75 acres) of a landlord. When the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act was enforced in 1974, the landlord made a false declaration to the land tribunal, stating, 'All my land is forest so I have no tenants. I only employ day labourers'.

Since Lila's husband and his father were uneducated, they did not know that they were deceived by the landlord. But, later they received help from their brothers to apply for land rights with success.

Case 3 Court cases with the landlord over land rights

Household composition: Lakshmi (Pūjāri, 55-year-old, female) and her children. Lakshmi's late husband and his father were tenants of an absentee landlord residing in Mangaluru city after 1964. They applied for land rights in 1974, and acquired rights in 1975. However, the landlord objected to this and asserted his own rights, leading to a court case. But Lakshmi's husband won the case in 1998.

Case 4 Competition with other tenants

Household composition: Muthu (Pūjāri, 70-year-old, female), her son, his wife and children. Muthu and her husband were tenants of a Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu landlord before 1974. But in 1974, their Pūjāri neighbour suddenly became the tenant, and Muthu and her husband were evicted. The Pūjāri man, who became the new tenant, acquired rights to the land due to land reform.

Case 5 Landlord's plotting

Household composition: Shina (Pūjāri, 50-year-old, male), his elder sister, his wife and sons. Shina's father was a tenant of a Muslim landlord. Shina's family lived on the landlord's holding, but in 1972 just before the enforcement of the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act, a Baṅṭa man, who was also a tenant, bought the land from the landlord. The landlord gave Shina's family a mere 12 cents of land and evicted them. According to Shina, the landlord had predicted the enforcement of the Act, and sold the land before Shina's family applied for land rights.

Case 6 Court cases with other tenants

Household composition: Amma (Kuḍubi, 80-year-old, female), Amma's son, his wife and children. Amma's family was a tenant of a Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu landlord from her paternal great grandfather's generation. At the time of enforcement of the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act, there was a dispute over land rights between Amma's father and a Baṅṭa man, who was also a tenant. They fought for land rights in court for five years having applied for the rights in 1974. Amma's father won the case, and paid 7,500 rupees, the assessed cost of land, through a government bank.

Case 7 Landlord's plotting and selling of land

Household composition: Koragu (Pūjāri, 66-year-old, male), his wife, daughter, her husband and children. Before land reform, Koragu and his wife were tenants of land yielding 2 muḍi. At the time of enforcement of land reform, the landlord drew up a certificate saying, 'This land belongs to the landlord' and made Koragu put his thumbprint on the document. Since Koragu was uneducated, he put his thumbprint on the document without knowing what it was, and as a result could not apply for land rights. The landlord later sold the land, and Koragu's family acquired only 10 cents of land from the Pūjāri man who had bought the land. When I asked, 'Why were you unable to acquire land during land reform?' Koragu seemed unwilling

to tell me the reasons at first. His wife and daughters each began to tell me, 'Father was uneducated, so he was deceived by the landlord'. The angry and resentful tone of the wife and daughters, and Koragu's regretful demeanour left lasting impressions on me.

As we have seen so far, disputes over land rights between landlords and tenants, or between tenants who cultivated the land of the same landlord, were not uncommon at the time of implementation of the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act. From the viewpoint of landlords, protecting the land under their control meant not only preserving their own rights but also safeguarding the rights of the entire *kutuma* to that particular land. At the same time, land reform provided an opportunity for them to determine land rights, which had been hitherto ambiguous, by officially applying for their own rights over parts of the family land. For the tenants, however, applying for land rights over tenant land was not easy since it involved a variety of risks, such as disputes with landlords, competition with other tenants, and even eviction.

Fear of the būtas' curse over transfer of land rights

How were the būtas as 'owners of land' involved in the negotiations over land rights between landlords and tenants, and transfer of land rights due to land reform? Let us examine this in the cases below.

Case 1 'Būta's curse' in a conflict between the landlord and the tenant

Baṅṭa, Alake guttu family. Household composition: Bālākrishna (36-year-old, male), his wife and children. Bālākrishna is currently the priest (*muk-kāldi*) of one of the main deities in Perar, Balavāṇḍi. This household owns 5 acres of matrilineally inherited farmland and forest. Before land reform, Bālākrishna's maternal uncle employed a Pūjāri family as tenants to cultivate 3 acres of farmland. At the time of land reform, the maternal uncle and the tenant family fought over land rights of the tenant farmland. During this conflict, the Pūjāri family members became mentally ill one after another. This was interpreted as a curse of the būta worshipped by Alake guttu not only by Bālākrishna's maternal uncle but also by the Pūjāri family. As a result, the Pūjāri family gave up the application for land rights fearing the būta's curse. They acquired only 16 cents of homestead land. In 2006, Bālākrishna paid them some money and evicted them, regaining the 16 cents of land.

Case 2 Conflict within the family over land acquired due to land reform and būta ritual

Household composition: Kōsa (Pūjāri, 47-year-old, male), his wife and children. Kōsa's maternal grandfather was a tenant of a Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu landlord before land reform. The land acquired by the grandfather due to the land reform of 1974 was later passed on to Kōsa's mother's elder brother (MB) and then to his son (MBS). The land was not distributed to Kōsa's mother and her sisters, who only received homestead land of 11 cents each in its place. Kōsa is critical of the fact that the land was passed on from his maternal uncle to his son, leaving out his mother, who was supposed to be

given the land according to the tradition of matrilineal inheritance among the Pūjāri. Kōsa, however, has given up taking the case to court because if he were to fight in court with his maternal uncle over land rights, the ritual of 'land būta (jāgeda daiva)' worshipped on the land would have to be interrupted, which could lead to the būta's curse.

Case 3 Transfer of land rights and rituals due to land reform

Household composition: Mōnappa (Pūjāri, 60-year-old, male), his mother, and his wife. Mōnappa's family has the role of decorating the wooden horse of Balavāṇḍi with flowers and pulling the reins in the yearly ritual of the village būta shrine. The family is also the 15th guttu in Perar, and worships the būta, Kaḍalūta Pañjūrli, who is said to be a vassal of Balavāṇḍi. Mōnappa's father and grandfather were tenants of a Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu landlord from around 1948. When his father and grandfather were tenants, the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu organised a ritual for Kaḍalūta Pañjūrli once in every four years, and other daily rituals were performed by Mōnappa's family. Mōnappa's father applied for land rights in 1974, and acquired the land in 1979. Since then, Mōnappa's family performs rituals every year for the būta after obtaining the būta's permission through oracles.

Case 4 Tenants of land in the shrine's name

Household composition: Harish (Moyli, 38-year-old, male), his wife and children. Harish's family performs the role of carrying Pilicāmuṇḍi's mask in the yearly ritual of the village būta shrine and watching over the ritual items worshipped on the altar of the shrine during the festival. Harish's father was originally a domestic labourer in a Kuḍubi landlord's house, but was lent 1 muḍi of land in 1958 for performing ritual duties at the shrine from Pōvappa Chowta, who was the gaḍipatināru at the time. When land reform was enacted in 1974, Harish's father applied for land rights of farmland on which he worked as a tenant, but did not apply for land rights over land on loan from the gaḍipatināru because it was 'daiva's land (*daivada jāgu*)'. Hence this land is still registered in the name of the shrine.

In Cases 1 and 2 above, we see how fear of the curse of the būta worshipped on the land prevents escalation of conflict when disputes and tensions arise between landlords and tenants, or between relatives. In Case 1, the būta's curse leads to continuance of landlord's rights and interests by making the tenant family give up applying for land rights. In Case 2, the fear of būta's curse prevents the surfacing of conflict of interests among relatives over inheritance of land acquired through land reform. In this way, it seems that the presence of deities worshipped on particular land suppresses conflict over the land to a certain extent, and contributes in preserving the existing land rights as a result.

In actual fact, however, the landlords also fear the deities' curse because if būta rituals are discontinued due to an inappropriate land transfer, the deities' curse will fall not only upon the person who receive the land but also upon the family of the original landholder. Hence, we should not overlook the fact that landlords hold on to land linked with būtas not only because they want to

protect their interests but also because they are obeying the orders of the deities who demand the maintenance of ties between families, land, and deities. This can be seen in the resistance movements of landlords against pressures of land acquisition by large-scale developers in the following chapter.

In Case 3, we see how the rights for worshipping the land *būta* were handed over from the landlord family to the tenant family when land rights were transferred from the landlord to tenant. Case 4 shows how the tenant of the land belonging to the village *būta* shrine did not apply for land rights because it was considered to be 'daiva's land'. The Moyli tenant gave up applying for rights because he perceived that only the trustee of the shrine, the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu*, could have rights to 'daiva's land'.¹⁵

These cases illustrate the villagers' notion that even though the registered name of the land may have changed outwardly due to land reform, the ultimate 'owner' of the land is the deity worshipped on that land and thus the holder/manager of the land is responsible for the *būta* rituals. Equally, it is thought that even though a person may be recognised as the 'land owner' in administrative terms, it would be difficult for him/her to have a good long-term relationship with the land and its deity without carrying out the rituals properly. For a person to make use of a particular plot of land means creating an intimate relationship with the deity linked to the land and with the realm of the wild. Hence, a person must accept the rights and responsibilities (*adikāra*) towards the deity before exercising rights over land. As we will see below, this logic applies not only to *būtas* linked to particular plots of land, but also to *Nāga* who is said to be the earth goddess.

As I have already mentioned, when the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act was enforced in 1974, people who lived on landlords' land as domestic labourers lost their homes and moved to small plots provided by the government. These plots were generally referred to as 'five cents' according to the area of each plot of land per house. Most of these plots were located in the dry hilly areas that were left unused. Such deserted dry areas were called *kumki* and the landlords' houses nearby had customary usufruct over them.¹⁶ After the late 1970s, people who had moved to the plots of 5 cents began to participate in the rituals of the *Nāga* shrine worshipped by the *Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu* who lived nearby. This was because although the people had purchased the plots from the government, the true owner of the land was considered to be the neighbouring *guttu* and not the government. Moreover, the ultimate 'owner' of the land was thought to be the deity whose shrine was located there. The people came to worship the *Nāga* shrine so that they could form and maintain an appropriate relationship with the 'owner' of the land where they had come to live.

Duties to the kuṭuma and pursuit of individual rights

By focusing on the period just before and after the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1974, I have discussed concrete examples of the ways in people negotiated over land rights. From observations in this chapter, we see that

land transfers from landlords to tenants were not extensive in Perar, and as a result the existing system of land tenure was maintained on the whole, just as we saw in Chapter 9 when we examined the analyses of politico-economists on land reform in Karnataka (e.g. Thimmaiah & Aziz 1983; Pani 1984).

As we have seen in this chapter, administrative land reform not only interfered in the traditional land system in village society but also intervened and enforced changes in people's relationships with their families, neighbours, farmland, and deities. The people reassembled various social relationships, including those within the *kuṭuma*, and those between landlords and tenants, to deal with the demands of the modern law and institutional changes.

Higher-ranked *guttu*, such as the *Muṇḍabetṭu guttu*, were faced with conflict between the demands of maintaining family land and establishing individual rights, which were not easily compatible. Land reform brought about a crisis for the inclusive and complex nature of the *kuṭuma* based on large joint land holdings, and at the same time, presented opportunities for individuals belonging to the *kuṭuma* to officially determine their own land rights. They protected the rights of the *kuṭuma* as a whole by preventing parts of the family land they managed from falling into the hands of tenants. At the same time, they tried to acquire land rights as individuals by applying for rights over 'grandfather's land' of the *kabaṛu* to which they belonged.

The *guttu* people thus viewed land reform that encouraged large-scale reorganisation of relationship between farmers and land in terms of crisis, and took pains to preserve the traditional land tenure system that was intimately connected to *kuṭuma* and deities. At the same time, however, they also saw land reform as a chance, and contrived to establish their individual rights without disturbing the welfare of the *kuṭuma* as a whole. This was by no means an easy task, since it required negotiations and compromises with various others, such as family members, tenants, and officials in the land tribunals, as well as the deities that exercised agency through curses and oracles. It was a process in which people, who were linked to the realm of the wild and had *adikāra* to the deities, reassembled new relationships with land and nature. This process involved a reimagining of their relationships under conditions where the meaning of 'land' was transformed under the governance and control of the modern judiciary system.

In the meanwhile, land reform gave tenants the opportunity to gain rights over land to which they were closely connected through their daily farm labour. However, for them, applying for land rights was a difficult task with multiple risks, including harassment from landlords, competition with other tenants, and eviction. What the tenants feared most was incurring the curse of the deities, the 'owners of land', by obstructing the relationship between the landlords' families, land, and the *būtas*.

What was seemed to be a straightforward transfer of rights of land ownership from landlords to tenants under the modern judiciary system was in fact a matter of much greater significance for the people, whose lives were based on concrete relationships with land and nature. From their point of view, it

was a matter of wagering the chances of maintaining the life-sustaining relationship between humans and the realm of the wild mediated by *būta* rituals. Hence, tenants relinquished the opportunity of applying for land rights at times in fear of the deities' curse, or entrusted the deities with the decision of whether or not they were fit to be granted *adikāra* to the land and deities.

The people of Perar tried to deal with the modern judicial system, which defined and demanded appropriate legal relationship between persons and land, by registering the names of land owners, dividing the inheritance of parts of family land, and applying for registration at land tribunals. At the same time, they sought for various ways to preserve the fundamental connection with fields, forests, hills, and deities, maintained and inherited by *kuṭumas* and brought about through ritual practices. The people attempted to reassemble relationships between others in accordance with the demands of modern law, as well as continue to fulfil their rights and responsibilities towards the deities. Such endeavours and practices fraught with conflict enabled them to sustain the circulation of wild *śakti* and continue to form transactional networks between humans, deities, and the realm of the wild, in spite of being governed and controlled by the modern legal system.

The modern judiciary system brought about crises for traditional matriliney and land tenure system by interfering with them and demanding reform in accordance with the law. At the same time, however, through dealing with such crises, the people came to reflect upon and clearly envisage what aspects of the *kuṭuma* and their relationship to land should be preserved, and reassembled these aspects in relation to the modern legal system. We should note, however, that the people were able to maintain and renew their fundamental connection to the deities and the realm of the wild even after land reform. This suggests that though the reforms promoted, to some extent, the fragmentation of *kuṭuma* and redistribution of land, they did not overturn the commonly held belief of land being the basis of farmers' lives. As we will see in the next chapter, however, the people living in this region confronted a new crisis after the 2000s which was to fundamentally overturn such a supposition. I refer to the large-scale development project of the Mangaluru Special Economic Zone.

Notes

- 1 The two kinds of *gēṇi okkelu*, *mūla gēṇi* and *cāla gēṇi*, are generally referred to as *gēṇi*. *Kāli okkelu*, who live and work on the landlords' land, are commonly called *okkelu*. I refer to *mūla gēṇi* and *cāla gēṇi* as 'tenant', and *kāli okkelu* as 'domestic labourer'. For accounts on *mūla gēṇi* and *cāla gēṇi*, see Sturrock (1894, pp. 130–131), Abhishankar (1973, p. 432), Maclean (1989[1885], p. 64), and Bhat (1998, pp. 86–89).
- 2 *Mūla gēṇi* who have secure land rights can be seen as a 'minor landholder' rather than a 'tenant'. In colonial South Kanara, tax levied on *mūla gēṇi*'s farmland was paid either by the *mūla gēṇi* or the landlord (Abhishankar 1973, p. 434; Maclean 1989 [1885], p. 64). According to the interviews I conducted in Perar, the landlord paid tax through the *patteru* for both *mūla gēṇi* and *cāla gēṇi*.

- 3 Cāla gēṇi were sometimes subtenants of mūla gēṇi. In Mudu Perar, there are cases of Baṅṭa landlord households being the mūla gēṇi of other more powerful Baṅṭas and mutts outside the village. In the household survey conducted among 227 households in Mudu Perar, out of the 111 households who used to be landlords or tenants, only three households replied that they were mūla gēṇi before enforcement of the Land Reforms (Amendment) Act of 1974. Out of these three households, two households were Baṅṭas (out of which one was a landlord household) and the other one was Kuṭubi.
- 4 Apart from rice rations, they said they received no aid from landlords even for family funerals and weddings of domestic labourers.
- 5 I have equated the number of plots with the number of applicants. For instance, if one person has applied for two plots, the number of applicants would be two. Where I have written 'unknown' in Table 11.1 are cases where I could not read the handwritten information on the VRA.
- 6 Many of the tenants who applied for land belonging to the Catholic Church were Christians, and many of those who applied for land belonging to Hindu temples and mutts were Hindus.
- 7 All the ages of family members in the cases mentioned in this chapter are those of 2008.
- 8 Includes households in which the household head was the landlord of one of the following before land reform: family land of kuṭuma; land purchased by a member of matrilineal family; and other purchased land, as well as households in which the household head managed a part of the family land before and after land reform. I exclude one Baṅṭa household who is currently a landlord but the information about them is unclear, and three households (two Baṅṭa households, one Catholic household) who became landlords by purchasing land after land reform. I have indicated those households which were landlords before land reform and were also tenants of other landlords at the same time as 'landlord'. Out of the landlord households, six households were tenants of other landlords before land reform, and out of these, one household was the mūla gēṇi of Pejāvāra Mutt.
- 9 Include households in which the household head, or his/her parent's and grandparent's generation were tenants, and households in which the deceased husband of the female household head was a tenant.
- 10 Include households in which the household head, or his/her parent's and grandparent's generation were domestic labourers, and households in which the deceased husband of the female household head was a domestic labourer.
- 11 Land inheritance from father to child seems to correspond to the extension of the rights of the natural child due to enforcement of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956 and the Madras Aliyasantana (Mysore Amendment) Act, 1961. However, we should note that in the survey I conducted in Mudu Perar, all four households who owned land directly inherited from the father to the child involved inheritance from father to daughter. As we see in Case 5, land inherited directly from the father to the child is inherited matrilineally from the grandmother to the mother and to the daughter. From this, it is possible that women, and not men, were prioritised in cases of land inherited directly from the father to the child. That is to say, once land was inherited by a matrilineal family, it would be maintained within the same kuṭuma, and males would be excluded from inheritance.
- 12 'Household number' in Table 11.9 refers to the serial number I gave to each household at the time of the survey. As we see in the table, Households 152 and 153 belong to the same matrilineal family, as do Households 196, 197, and 198. Hence answers about holdings of Households 152 and 153 apply to one matrilineal family land, as do those of Households 196, 197, and 198. I have excluded areas that overlap in the total land area. I have calculated the average by dividing the total land area by 15 households. Households 152 and 153 were landlords

living in Kompadavu, a village adjacent to Mudu Perar before land reform, but since they moved to Mudu Perar after losing land due to land reform, they differ from other households in Mudu Perar.

- 13 Excludes land yielding 226 muḍi, the area of which is unknown.
- 14 Out of these, one household employed tenants while the household head was a tenant of another landlord.
- 15 Even in cases other than those involving land reform, land belonging to būta shrines is generally supposed to be transferred only in the form of gifts and not sold.
- 16 Kumki usually refers to wasteland without permanent settlers or users. Neighbouring landlord has latent holding rights, but the government can expropriate it when need arises. In Perar, development of housing plots 5 cents in size began in the hilly regions around 1977, and migration of landless classes continues till today.

12 *Būtas* in the midst of the development project

As seen in previous chapters, modern laws such as the Madras Aliya Santana Act in 1949 and Land Reform (Amendment) Act in 1974 have prompted people in South Kanara to transform customary systems of kinship and land tenure by partially rearranging or replacing them with those defined by modern law. However, these customary systems, which are deeply rooted in land and nature and are based on transactions with deities, have not been totally destroyed by the new laws and policies. For instance, even though the transfer of land from landlords to tenants was accomplished to some extent through land reforms, most of the plots of land previously owned by the Baṅṭa landlords have been maintained under the co-ownership vested in the members of kuṭumas. In most cases, the worship of būta and Nāga related to particular land has also been maintained even after the landowners have changed.

Recently, however, the relations among people, land, and nature based on būta worship have been thrown into crisis by a massive development project in the area. Executing modern law and policy has accomplished the partial transformation, or the legal substantialisation, of customary laws and systems by interfering in people's daily practices, and by urging them to respond reflexively to the new laws and systems. In contrast, the project examined in this chapter is one which neither requires a response from the local people nor aspires to involve itself in the villagers' daily lives, but instead aims to achieve the physical erasure of village communities. The goal of this project is to undercut the basic premise that farmers are inseparable from their land—a premise that had been guaranteed in preceding reforms—and to use the vast acquired land in an entirely new manner.

In this chapter, I will investigate this development project's effects on local communities and examine the movements that emerged in response to it, focusing on būta worship. Būta worship has evolved as people have dealt with various critical situations, such as the encroachment of the development project, their eviction from their land, and the demolition of village communities. Indeed, continuities can be observed between the people's conflict or collaboration with the development project and those regarding būta worship; moreover, the intimate relationship between people and deities still forms the basis of their actions.

Below, I will first provide an overview of the features of the development project and its general effects on local communities. I will then examine the antidevelopment movement which achieved the partial withdrawal of the development project, focusing especially on the relationships between landlords and former tenants. Lastly, I will examine the complicated relations among the people, deities, and land and nature that have emerged through the encroachment of the development project. In so doing, I will also look into the transformation of power relations in the local community with an emphasis on the ongoing disputes over land acquisition.

The Mangalore special economic zone and the new role of būta worship

From the winding path through the densely forested hills connecting the interior villages to the coastal towns, there suddenly appear massive steel-frame buildings. Security guards flank the gates, while high walls and barbed-wire entanglements surround the entire complex of industrial plants. Driving along the industrial area, one can observe the red exposed soil of slashed hills and forests transformed into construction sites. Trucks piled high with earth and sand come and go, while all that remains on the roadside are a few coconut trees and some deserted houses covered with dust. Where industrial plants are already in operation, massive pipelines cut across the sky, and an extended succession of cylindrical tanks, smokestacks, and metallic plants range across the vast land. Even from afar, one can see buildings rising to the sky on the hilltops and fires burning on the highest smokestacks. At night, the lights glare from the centre of the industrial area. It is difficult, however, to grasp the entire picture of the industrial area, since it extends across thousands of acres. It is like a strange megalopolis transplanted from a different world—this was my first impression of the huge industrial plants.

These industrial plants are a part of the development area called the Mangalore Special Economic Zone (MSEZ). The MSEZ has been promoted by the central and state governments, and by several multinational corporations, mostly related to the petroleum and petrochemical sectors.¹ The organisation that governs the development project is called Mangalore Special Economic Zone Limited (MSEZL, hereafter also called the ‘company’), founded in 2006. In general, SEZs are primarily established with the aim of attracting foreign direct investment, especially from multinational corporations (Farole 2011). As Bedi (2013, p. 38) describes, SEZs are unique enclaves with a free-market orientation, governed by legal and tax environments that transcend regular national laws. SEZs that create economic incentives different from those in the nation as a whole are touted as enabling countries to create an advanced infrastructure. In the case of SEZs in India, the private sector is enticed with offers of cheap land to develop these zones and create world-class industrial and commercial infrastructures (Levien 2011; see also Sharma 2009 and Vijayabaskar 2010).

Similarly, by employing one person per displaced household and paying compensation, the MSEZ has created both advanced infrastructures and new economic opportunities for some of the local people. Some have moved to rehabilitation areas offered by the company and have begun to enjoy their modern facilities. Nevertheless, as we will see below, most villagers from the requisitioned areas became destitute after being expelled from their agricultural fields.

In the course of this project, several villages and numerous religious structures, including būta shrines, were destroyed, and land acquisition by MSEZL displaced numerous people. Prior to the foundation of MSEZL, in the mid-1990s, Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Limited (MRPL), the industry adjoined to and closely interrelated with the MSEZ, had already acquired 1,850 acres of land and had displaced about 930 families. In the first phase of the project, MSEZL acquired another 1,800 acres in Bajpe, the village adjacent to Padu Perar, and several neighbouring villages, and displaced 1,518 families (Cook, Bhatta, & Dinker 2013, p. 41; see also Dhakal 2009).

How have the people living in this area responded to this land acquisition? How has būta worship been transformed in the course of the development project? I will next examine the antidevelopment movements that emerged and the new role of būta worship.

Būta worship as the stronghold of resistance?

Since the 2000s, various antidevelopment movements have arisen in Mangalore against MSEZL's land acquisition, destruction of villages, and environmental contamination. At the outset, most movements warned of environmental pollution and protested the forceful land acquisition. For example, the members of a fishermen's association organised a sit-in to denounce marine pollution, and environmental nongovernmental organisations reported on the destructive impact of the MSEZ (e.g. Hosbet & Bhatta 2003). Similarly, displaced farmers, social activists, religious leaders, and college students have organised antidevelopment rallies and demonstrations.

In addition to concerns about the environment and land acquisition, notions of 'local culture' and 'tradition' have recently become an essential part of antidevelopment discourse. As mentioned, in the course of the MSEZ project, several villages and numerous religious structures have been destroyed, and it has become impossible to continue rituals in those villages. The būtas, closely related to the local landscape and worshipped by the villagers, have been taken as a symbol of local culture as well as the basis of people's identity. In various media such as local newspapers, broadcasts, and websites, the oracles of būtas in villages acquisitioned by the company have been reported as voicing the deities' objections to the development project.

This growing public attention to būtas is mainly due to social activists, who have focused on the 'cultural issue' and its appeal to the media, for example, U. Uday, a photographer and social activist, held an exhibition of

photographs of village life at risk of destruction. This exhibition was covered by several local newspapers and became rather high profile. Likewise, Vidya Dinker, an activist involved in leading several social movements in Mangaluru, made a documentary of the *būta* ritual held in a village manor house, whose members had been protesting against land acquisition. Regarding *būta* worship and the antidevelopment movement, Vidya said,

I think environmental pollution is a universal problem. Meanwhile, your research [on *būta* worship] is important because it can help us grasp the issues which often relate more deeply with local communities, and also are never recorded or discussed by NGOs. The traditional belief system can help the local people build resistance [against the exploitation of the company], and if it is taken away from them, their inner strength will be totally lost.

(Vidya Dinker, personal contact, 15 March 2012)

As reflected in this comment, most social activists advocate the ‘local culture’ and ‘traditional belief system’ of villagers and regard these as the core of the people’s identity and worldview. Through this interpretation and representation by the activists and mass media, the people’s everyday practice of *būta* worship has been transformed into an ‘alternative epistemology’ (Stoffle & Arnold 2003) as well as a stronghold of resistance against the development project. At the same time, such discourse represents these villagers as the subjects of the antidevelopment movements, protesting against exploitation based on their identity as *būta* worshippers. Here *būta* worship, taken as a symbol of cultural protest, seems transformed from people’s embodied practice into an icon of the antidevelopment movements.

When one examines closely people’s various responses and practices regarding the development project, however, it is clear that the significance of *būta* worship in relation to the development project cannot be reduced to a mere icon of antidevelopment movements. As we will see, the deities who order the villagers to protect the land and shrine become a driving force for them to protest against land acquisition. The deities’ oracles also have the compelling power to prohibit villagers from leaving their land. Moreover, new frictions among people regarding land acquisition and migration cause further disputes concerning the question of which deity should be worshipped by whom on the land in question. Thus, due to the deities, the situation of the people facing the development project becomes more and more complex. Below, I will investigate the emergence of antidevelopment movements in the villages adjacent to Bajpe (hereafter called ‘the Bajpe area’), focusing first on a movement based in a village called Tenka Yekkar involving various actors, including high-caste landlords, former tenants, Dalit activists, and local deities, who consequently achieved the partial withdrawal of the MSEZ’s second phase.

Local movements against the MSEZ

The antidevelopment movement led by a local magnate and a village deity

Tenka Yekkar is a village adjoining the MSEZ. In 2007, the government chose the village for acquisition as part of the development project. However, after many twists and turns, the village was notified in 2010 that the land acquisition plan had been cancelled. Let us consider this very rare successful case of an antidevelopment movement, first from the viewpoint of a member of a powerful guttu family, and second from the viewpoint of a Dalit activist.²

Kavaramane guttu, the top guttu of Tenka Yekkar, is responsible for the worship of a powerful village būta called Kodamanittāya. The family owns 150 acres of land. Before land reforms, many villagers worked on their land as tenants and agricultural labourers. Their manor house is situated amid beautiful paddy fields, and at the site, there is a magnificent treasure house for Kodamanittāya.

Nitin Hegde, the young head of Kavaramane guttu, stated that the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board notified him in 2007 that the government would acquire a total of 2,035 acres of land in Tenka Yekkar and three adjoining villages. Since 2005, MSEZL had started land acquisition for the first phase of the development project, and already in 2007, it began more land acquisition for the second phase. The Board initiated a survey of the village land soon afterwards.

In response to an urgent call by Nitin Hegde, more than 200 villagers in opposition to the land acquisition, including former tenants and workers of the guttu's land, gathered at the Kavaramane guttu house. Due to their protests, the survey by the Board stopped temporarily. During this time, the guttu family held an annual ritual for Kodamanittāya. In the ritual, the deity, speaking through a medium, stated its opposition to the land acquisition, saying, 'You should not undertake any more troubles. Go ahead, I will protect your land'.

Receiving this oracle, Hegde and the villagers held a meeting at a village public hall and decided to organise a committee called Krishi Bhumi Sanrakshan Samiti, or the 'Save the Cultivated Land Committee', as the foundation for protests against land acquisition. Through this committee, the guttu family, former tenants, and agricultural workers together developed a movement under the slogan of 'Protect farmland!'

This story illustrates a dimension of the antidevelopment movement from the perspective of a powerful local guttu family. From this viewpoint, the movement was successful thanks to several main factors: first, the strong leadership of the local guttu family; second, the solidarity of the villagers/former tenants and workers, who were united under the guttu; and third, the supreme agency of the village deity which symbolised the land and nature

to be protected and was the driving force of people's protests against land acquisition.

In this view, the movement is conceived of as organised around traditional authority, which united the villagers and ensured that the movement was effective. Solidarity among the people was only made possible by the social prestige and power of the top guttu, following traditional notions of hierarchy and religious authority in the village. As we will see, however, a different aspect of the same movement may be revealed by taking the perspective of Ragu, a Dalit activist.

Protest against the company and landlords by small farmers

Ragu was born in Tenka Yekkar in 1975. When the village was targeted by the development project, he was a member of Dalit Sangharsh Samiti, the Dalit movement in the state of Karnataka. His family had been agricultural workers for the Kavaramane guttu family before the Land Reform (Amendment) Act was legislated in 1974 and had made a living by farming a small plot of land.

According to Ragu, after being notified of the government's acquisition plans, one of the influential landlords in the village sought to facilitate land transfers and the evacuation of the villagers. Among the 447 acres of land targeted for acquisition, 130 acres was owned by a family called the Āgalu guttu. Though the Āgalu and Kavaramane guttus had originally composed a matrilineal joint family, the family split into two groups four generations ago. As already seen, according to the deity's oracle which was closely related to their land, the Kavaramane guttu decided not to hand over their land to the company. Contrary to this, the Āgalu guttu not only transferred their land to the company and received compensation, but urged other villagers to hand over their land to the company also.

Deeply concerned that the transfer of land in the village would advance quickly with the assistance of some of the guttus and villagers, Ragu and other activists began going door to door to inform villagers of the negative outcomes that would result from giving up their land. After this steady campaign, Ragu and other core members held a meeting in a public hall in Tenka Yekkar to organise a united protest movement with three other villages. More than 2,000 people, most of them poor landholders and former tenants, attended the meeting and decided to protest against the MSEZ. Next, they organised the Krishi Bhumi Sanrakshan Samiti, and Ragu became its president. Upon establishing this committee, they held a press conference and released a statement that they would firmly oppose the second phase of the MSEZ and refuse to transfer their land. They soon started to cooperate with various groups such as environmental activists, religious communities, and student associations.

As the movement became more influential, more conflicts occurred between the Samiti and the MSEZ, including both physical fights and lawsuits.

Ragu and others asked for further support from Parliament and Legislative Assembly politicians, but few responded. Consequently, members of the Samiti, women in particular, showed their anger towards these politicians in unique ways; for example, when one of these politicians visited Bajpe, women aggregated and raised their sandals in unison to demonstrate their discontent. In January 2008, people in opposition to the land acquisition plans held a large-scale demonstration attended by more than 6,000 people. On this occasion, representatives of several political parties, such as the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Samajwadi Party (SP), and Communist Party of India (CPI), expressed their support for the antidevelopment movement.³ In addition, even among the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), some politicians conveyed their support for the movement (see *The Hindu* 2008).⁴ Due to the ceaseless effort of farmers within and beyond the Samiti, in August 2010 the government finally cancelled its land acquisition plan for the second phase of the MSEZ.

While from the perspective of the Kavaramane guttu, traditional authority and the unity of village society were most important, Ragu's story illustrates a different dimension of the antidevelopment movement. Namely, the people's movement against land acquisition did not necessarily depend on the leadership of the top guttu family. Rather, it was the protest by villagers against the large enterprise and the objections of small farmers to some landlords who promoted land transference that led to the movement's success.

For the landlords, such as the Āgalu guttu, who live in urban areas while owning many acres in a rural area, it is an attractive option to transfer the land to the company and receive compensation. Still, there are some landlords who have great affection for the land and nature and decide to protect it. Even among the landlords who hold a vast amount of land, attitudes and decisions regarding development projects are not uniform. Meanwhile, for the small farmers who have long made their living through cultivation and have no property other than land, the protection of their land is vital because it is very difficult for them to maintain their livelihoods only through the company's compensation.⁵

The actions of the farmer-led Samiti aimed to stop the landlord who collaborated with the company and promoted land transference. In the process, their movement gained support beyond the local community, and by linking various actors and organisations, they successfully created a groundswell of opposition to development. It is also noteworthy that Dalit activists such as Ragu played a central role in the movement. In fact, engagement in the antidevelopment movement formed a turning point in his life. Thanks to his contributions to the Samiti, in 2009 he was selected as the president of the village panchayat, which is in charge of both Tenka Yekkar and Badaga Yekkar.

As seen above, a movement that arose against land acquisition has since brought broader changes in social relations and the villagers' lives, although they had initially longed for constancy in their lives. Through this

movement, differences between landlords' and small farmers' stances towards the development project have surfaced. The new situation also seems to upturn the existing power relations in this rural community—i.e. a movement led by small farmers, especially Dalits and women, won out over a large enterprise and allied landlords.

The above investigation reveals multiple aspects of the movement that brought about the cancellation of the second phase of the MSEZ. The movement was based on the solidarity of landlords and other villagers who were closely related to the land, nature, and deities in the area; and the deities' oracle functioned as the driving force for the people's movement. Another aspect of the movement was that it represented the objections of small farmers against the landlord who promoted land transference. Moreover, as we will see later, this movement developed in the midst of disputes and negotiations concerning a place called Kuḍubi Padavu among various actors, including landlords, former tenants, company executives, politicians, social activists, and a religious leader.

As shown in this section, in the encroachment of the development project and the subsequent expansion of the antidevelopment movement in response, the deities' orders to protect the land, nature, and shrine have played a vital role in directing people's actions and decision-making. The deities' guidance, however, can never guarantee the success of people's movements against land acquisition. The force of the deities often binds people to their land, and conflicting divine forces move disputes in unexpected directions. Focusing on on-going disputes and movements over land acquisition in the following sections, I will further investigate the discord and turmoil that the development project has created, and how people strain to create new relationships with land, nature, and deities.

Obeying the deity and protesting against land acquisition

As seen in the last section, in 2008 in the Bajpe area, a large-scale antidevelopment movement emerged and grew. As a result, in August 2010 the chief minister of the state of Karnataka gave the order not to expropriate the land for the second phase of the MSEZ; and in July 2011, land acquisition notifications for most of the area were finally withdrawn. In reality, however, the land struggles of the villagers did not end with this order, because the land exempted from acquisition only accounted for 1,998 acres of the total 2,035 acres of the planned second-phase construction site. Construction work never stopped on the remaining 37 acres of land or on the first-phase site, which the company had already expropriated. Therefore, as we will see below, the villagers who lived on these sites have continued fighting to reclaim their land.

Focusing on the Nellidādi guttu family in Bajpe, I will examine below how the deity they worship forms the basis for their decision-making and protests against land acquisition. I will also investigate what role the deity plays in negotiation between the guttu family and the company. In the next section, I will clarify how the problem before the Nellidādi guttu has not

simply been brought by the development project, but is also rooted in a long-term conflict between the Nellidādi and another guttu family over būta worship. In these investigations, the ambivalent attitude of the landlords towards the development project once again comes to the fore; at the same time, it becomes clear that the deity, who orders the guttu family to protect their land, ironically drives them into a difficult situation.

Violent land acquisition and Jumādi's agency

The Nellidādi guttu premises are on a hill set far back from the main road. Most of the woods around the house have already been cleared; several dump trucks come and go, raising clouds of dust. The hilltop overlooks a chemical factory owned by American capital as well as labourers' lodgings at the foot of the hill. Pointing at a rice field filled with mud, Kishore, a member of the Nellidādi guttu, said, 'That was also our field. They came with heavy machines and dumped mud onto it'.⁶

In the early stage of the development project, the land of the Nellidādi guttu family became the object of land acquisition as the construction site for the first phase of the MSEZ. As of 2015, despite most of their farmland having already been acquired by the company and construction work on it already underway, the family steadfastly opposes the company and seeks to protect their house and the būta shrine.

According to Lakshman Chowta, the head of the Nellidādi guttu family, the Nellidādi is one of the 16 manor houses in the village and has a history of 800 years. The family has been responsible for the rituals for a būta called Jumādi, who is worshipped by the entire village. Jumādi's shrine is on the Nellidādi guttu's premises, and water from a sacred well for the deity is believed to be holy water efficacious against snakebites.

Similar to most farmers in this area, the Nellidādi family members have made their living mainly through rice cultivation. It was not until 2005, when the company started to survey their land, that the Nellidādīs noticed that a project was even going on in this area. 'At that time, we didn't know what they were going to do', said Lakshman. In 2007, the guttu family received notification from the government that 35 acres of their land was to be acquired by the company. Despite the family's protests, 3 acres of their land was forcibly acquired in 2011, and several houses, including Kishore's, were demolished.⁷ In May 2012, some 300 workers, including hired thugs, came to the family's land with heavy machines, dumped tons of mud onto their fields, and destroyed their farm products. Lakshman and some other family members, who tried to stop them, were injured by the thugs. One of the thugs spoke violently to Lakshman:

You got money from the government and yet you're still here. If you're not leaving, then how about we just kill you and bury you under the mud?

Upon receiving a telephone call from Lakshman, the aforementioned social activist Vidya hurried there with a TV camera crew and captured the scene of bulldozers destroying the farmland while the women and children of the guttu family looked on, sobbing. In front of the TV camera crew, Lakshman depicted the current predicament of the historic Nellidādi guttu family as being caused by the company. Through the help of Vidya, the incident was broadcast on local TV and online and attracted popular attention. In June 2012, the family filed a case against the company with the high court of Karnataka, and this issue is still in dispute.

With the help of social activists, the Nellidādi guttu family has thus strived to protest against the company that has used violent means to acquire land. In their mass media representation, they are the victims of a cruel development project and idealised peasant-subjects protesting exploitation. The reason they accept neither evacuation nor compensation, however, is not simply their affection for the land and their dignity as farmers. The biggest factor in why they cannot leave their land is the powerful deity Jumādi. As we will see below, protests against land acquisition were actually imposed on the guttu family by the supreme order of Jumādi.

The deity as the supreme commander

This case reveals not only the physical and legal conflicts between the company and the guttu family but also their spiritual battle. As described, the Nellidādi guttu worships the powerful būta Jumādi, and just after their conflict with the company, they held a yearly ritual (nēma) for this deity. At the ritual, the deity—incarnated in a medium—gave them an oracle:

I'm not leaving here. I want this house. This is my house. Let them [the MSEZL officers] touch the threshold of my shrine; then I will show them who I am!

For the members of the Nellidādi guttu, the oracle was received as a strict order to prevent the company from invading their land. For them, not to obey the deity's order would mean to accept the danger of receiving her curse. As already seen, a village deity like Jumādi is thought to embody the realm of the wild, and thus to have power to decide the fate of the whole village. Only worshipping the village deity and receiving her blessing can promise the peace and prosperity of the guttu family and the whole village, while her anger and curse may endanger their continued existence. At odds with the mass media's image of the deity as a positive and static icon of the villagers' identity, the family's obedience to the deity is rooted in their desire for protection from her and their fear of her curse (cf. Shah 2010, p. 117).

In the case of the Nellidādi guttu's struggle against the company, Lakshman and his family members have acted as political subjects, filing a case against

the company and using the mass media to draw public attention. At the same time, they have maintained an intimate relationship with Jumādi and have continued to obey her supreme orders. Following Jumādi's orders, they have made desperate efforts to hold onto their ancestral land and būta shrine, long after most villagers have migrated to other places. Regarding Jumādi's power against company pressure, Lakshman said:

Thanks to the daiva, we are still here. Without daiva's power, they would have demolished this house a long time ago.

(Lakshman Chowta, 1 September 2012)

As this statement shows, for them, it is by the deity's mercy that they still remain on their own land. At the same time, it should not be overlooked that the reason they cannot leave the land is because of the deity's order. Their actions and decisions concerning the land acquisition plan depend on Jumādi, who is their supreme commander.

Next, I will examine an annual ritual in the Nellidādi guttu house, in which the company officers and Jumādi incarnated in a medium interacted with each other, and the deity's oracle influenced their decision-making.

Officers in ritual and Jumādi's agency

The participants in the nēma held at the Nellidādi guttu house in 2012 were not limited to the Nellidādi family and other villagers. Interestingly, several MSEZL officers also attended the ritual with the intention of asking the deity's permission to relocate her shrine. In the ritual, the conversation between the deity and the officers went this way:

JUMĀDI: This is my land. I won't leave it.

MSEZL OFFICER: We will arrange everything for you. We will construct a new shrine for you.

JUMĀDI: You can do anything with my shrine, but will you be able to set the foundation stone of my well in another place? Can you move my well?

MSEZL OFFICER: Then we will have to take this issue to the centre [central government].

JUMĀDI: I am the centre!

After this ritual, the officers discussed this issue and decided to suspend the acquisition of the Nellidādi guttu's land, including the būta shrine and its well. This case shows that the guttu's land was saved thanks to the deity's orders, even if only temporarily. As seen in this case, the agency of the būtas has had a great effect on the people involved in the conflict over the development project, even on the company's side. Before considering this point more deeply, next I will investigate the relationship between the development project, local politics in the village, and būta worship.

Conflict between guttu families and the politics of land acquisition

It bears repeating that būta worship has often been described by the mass media and social activists as being the basis of the local people's identity and their protests against the development project. The villagers facing pressure regarding land acquisition, however, do not always share this view or share an identity based on būta worship; while būta worship has the power to bring people together, it has also caused conflicts and splits in village communities. In particular, as seen in the previous section, most landlords see an opportunity to gain large profits by transferring their land to the company, but their duty is to protect the village land, nature, and būta worship. Their ambivalent position leads to differences among landlords' attitudes and decision-making concerning the development project.

As I will examine in this section, the development project's advancement has created new disputes among the people in the Bajpe area, but an analysis of antecedent disputes at the village community level is necessary to understand the structure of these new disputes.

Prelude to the division of the village: a lawsuit over the būta shrine

As seen in the last section, the Nellidādi guttu has found itself in the predicament of having their farmland destroyed and facing continued pressure of company acquisition regarding the land that has thus far narrowly escaped destruction. Most of the villagers have already migrated to other areas, so the Nellidādi guttu house remains like a solitary island in the midst of the construction site. Why have the Nellidādi family been put in such a difficult situation despite their status and prestige in the village as a historic guttu house? To understand the reasons for this, it is necessary to consider the long-lasting dispute between the Nellidādi guttu and the first-ranked guttu in Bajpe.

There are 16 guttu houses in Bajpe, which are ordered hierarchically from the first to the sixteenth. Like in other villages in this area, the ranking of the guttu houses in Bajpe is inseparable from būta worship. The rank of each house is believed to have been decided by the deity in the mythical past. In addition, in the yearly ritual, these ranks are manifested and approved when the deity gives blessings to the head of each guttu house according to its rank. Among the several guttu houses in a given village, the head of the first-ranked guttu usually takes charge of the būta worship at the village level. In the case of Bajpe, however, the Nellidādi guttu, which is the fourth-ranked guttu, has played the central role in the worship of Jumādi. The shrine of Jumādi is on the estate of the Nellidādi guttu house, and only male members of this family are selected for the role of the gaḍipatināṛu.

The status of the Nellidādi guttu family based on their role in Jumādi worship became especially salient when the Suṅḍoṭṭu guttu, the first-ranked

guttu in Bajpe, started to claim its own trustee rights of the Jumādi shrine. I will next examine the process of this dispute by focusing on a lawsuit between the Nellidādi guttu head Lakshman as the plaintiff and State of Karnataka, the Deputy Commissioner for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments, the Assistant Commissioner for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments, the Sunḍoṭṭu guttu head D. Rai, and seven other villagers as defendants.

First it is helpful to have a brief outline of the background of this lawsuit. According to a document submitted by D. Rai on 23 May 2001 to the Assistant Commissioner, D. Rai and other devotees of Jumādi held a meeting on 13 May and decided to found a management committee for the Jumādi shrine. Nine villagers were selected as committee members with five-year terms, while D. Rai was selected as trustee for life. According to D. Rai, Lakshman Chowta from the Nellidādi guttu was selected as one of the committee members. However, Lakshman insisted in his own letter to the Assistant Commissioner on 21 May 2001 that he had already been selected as trustee of the Jumādi shrine in a meeting held on 11 May at the Nellidādi guttu house. To look into this issue, the Assistant Commissioner sent an investigator to Bajpe to interview both parties. As a result, the Assistant Commissioner questioned the legitimacy of the meeting held at the Nellidādi guttu house and approved instead the decision of the newly established management committee led by D. Rai. The lawsuit examined below was filed as a complaint from the Nellidādi guttu regarding the Assistant Commissioner's decision.

According to the judicial record (Writ Petition No. 40504 of 2001) of the High Court of Karnataka, D. Rai and other eight members were appointed by the Assistant Commissioner as the managers of Sri Kanthanadhikari Daivasthana (i.e. the Jumādi shrine) in Bajpe on 29 September 2001. Lakshman, however, filed a case insisting that the Nellidādi guttu had always been the hereditary trustee of the shrine and thus that the Assistant Commissioner's appointments were invalid. Lakshman's advocate argued that although the Assistant Commissioner's appointment of the trustee was based on sections 39–42 of the Madras Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act, 1951, these sections had been nullified by the High Court, as affirmed by the Supreme Court. Therefore, the Assistant Commissioner had no jurisdiction to appoint the trustee.

The following judgement was pronounced on this case in February 2002: the plaintiff insisted that he was the hereditary trustee of the shrine, but did not submit any documents which could prove his status. Because the plaintiff continued as a trustee based only on the wishes of the deity and astrology, he should be regarded not as the hereditary trustee but as the person appointed by the devotees of the deity. Therefore, he had no authority to take exception to the decision of the Assistant Commissioner. In addition, the appointment by the Assistant Commissioner was not based on sections 39–42 of the Madras Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act. Rather,

the Assistant Commissioner only approved the selection of the trustee by the devotees of the deity (i.e. D. Rai and other villagers). Therefore, the plaintiff's claim that the appointment by the Assistant Commissioner had been unjust was invalid. As a result, the appeal by Lakshman was dismissed.

The dispute between the Nellidādi guttu and the Suṇḍoṭṭu guttu, however, was still not settled. Even after this judgement, the Nellidādi guttu continuously insisted on their rights as hereditary trustee as ordered by the deity, while the Suṇḍoṭṭu guttu insisted on their rights as official trustee as authorised by the government. Regarding this, I will next examine the lawsuit (Writ Petition No. 18958 of 2007) filed by Lakshman at the High Court of Karnataka against the Deputy Commissioner for Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments in Dakshina Kannada and D. Rai.

In 2007, Lakshman filed a case against the Deputy Commissioner's order appointing D. Rai as the trustee of the Jumādi shrine and rejecting Lakshman as the hereditary trustee. In the January 2009 judgement of the case, the judge listed the people appointed as trustees of the Jumādi shrine and pointed out that there was no document that could prove the relationship between the previous trustees and Lakshman; moreover, he emphasised that they had not been appointed as hereditary trustees. While the judge admitted that the Nellidādi guttu family had contributed to the management of the Jumādi shrine, he pointed out that the shrine (referred to in the court record as 'temple') was not a private religious institution belonging to a particular family, but a 'public temple under the control of the Muzarai Department in the State of Karnataka'. The judge thus decided that the order by the Deputy Commissioner was valid, and hence the appeal by Lakshman was dismissed again.

As seen above, through a series of disputes over the trusteeship of the Jumādi shrine, the Suṇḍoṭṭu guttu achieved legal status as the trustee, while the Nellidādi guttu, who had been the hereditary trustee appointed by the deity, was disregarded. In addition to the legal disputes, before 2010 D. Rai and other members of the Suṇḍoṭṭu guttu published a pamphlet on the Jumādi shrine, which contained their history of the shrine with photos of the core members of the Suṇḍoṭṭu guttu as the trustees. In this pamphlet, the Nellidādi guttu house was referred to as the 'treasure house' to store the paraphernalia for the būta ritual, and there was no account of the role of the Nellidādi guttu as the main patron of the ritual. The pamphlet thus promoted the centrality of the Suṇḍoṭṭu guttu in Jumādi worship, while the role of the Nellidādi guttu was intentionally marginalised.

The disputes between the two houses have influenced relationships among the villagers as well as the būta ritual in the village. For instance, although the paraphernalia kept in the Nellidādi guttu house used to be circulated among several guttu houses during the nēma, since the dispute this practice has stopped. Among the villagers, the difference of opinion between the Nellidādi side and the Suṇḍoṭṭu side became obvious. The disputes over the trusteeship of the būta shrine have thus caused discord among the villagers and created a schism.

The landlord as broker for the development project

When looking at the disputes over the Jumādi shrine, we can see a clear contrast in the arguments of the two parties. Namely, the Suṇḍoṭṭu guttu planned to achieve and justify their rights in the shrine by modern and official means, such as the foundation of a management committee and the appointment of trustees by the government. Meanwhile, based on the deity's oracle and oral epics, the Nellidādi guttu has strived to keep their conventional rights and status as the main patron of the shrine. The assertion of the Nellidādi guttu based on the deity's order, however, did not lend itself well to litigation in the modern courts, and the appeals of Lakshman were dismissed twice (it is also worth noting that a similar contrast can be observed in the dispute examined in Chapter 8 between the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu and the management committee).

This contrast between the approaches of the two guttus is even more obvious in their attitudes towards the development project. Near the end of the first decade of the 2000s, when the land acquisition plan was raised, D. Rai of the Suṇḍoṭṭu guttu came to play the role of broker, mediating between the villagers and the company. Most of the villagers, excluding the Nellidādi guttu and several other families, followed his advice and handed over their land to the company and migrated to the rehabilitation area. The Suṇḍoṭṭu guttu family, who worshipped a deity called Tappaidi in their house, also left their land. They brought along this deity's paraphernalia after performing a ritual to temporarily extract the deity's power (*ākaraṣaṇē*) from these items.

The situation of the higher-ranked guttu family deciding to transfer their land to the company and persuading other villagers to transfer their land is similar to the case seen in Tenka Yekkar. In Tenka Yekkar, however, the Āgalu guttu who promoted land transfer was an absentee landlord, while the Kavaramane guttu living in the village decided to protect the land based on their close relationships with the other villagers. In addition, there were some people like Ragu who could organise small farmers against land acquisition without needing to depend on the landlords. For these reasons, the villagers in Tenka Yekkar were successful in advancing the antidevelopment movement.

In Bajpe, meanwhile, in addition to the villagers being split due to the dispute between the major guttu families, land transfer here was promoted by the Suṇḍoṭṭu guttu, who had occupied the central position in the village as the first guttu as well as the trustee of the village būta shrine. Under these conditions, it was quite difficult for the villagers in Bajpe to organise a protest movement against land acquisition. Indeed, most villagers relinquished their land and left the village, leaving only the Nellidādi guttu and a few families behind with the Jumādi shrine.

In Bajpe, the intrusion of the development project thus revealed discord and fissures among the villagers, which had grown slowly over a long period of time. Here, Jumādi's orders to protect the land, nature, and the village

shrine spurred the Nellidādi guttu, the de facto trustee, to protest against land acquisition and stay on their land. Meanwhile, for the Suṇḍoṭṭu guttu, the development project offered them the chance to gain compensation both for their own land transfer and for their services as a broker. Moreover, it gave them the opportunity to demonstrate their status and power as the first-rank guttu family in the village.

As already seen, D. Rai and other members of the Suṇḍoṭṭu guttu family had taken various measures to obtain and justify trusteeship of the Jumādi shrine. Their attitude towards cooperating with the company for land acquisition, while seeking trusteeship of the village būta shrine based on land and nature, seems inconsistent. When we consider, however, that Jumādi is the village deity whose worship is closely linked to prestige, power, and honour in the village community, the Suṇḍoṭṭu guttu's strategy makes more sense. Through lawsuits over the trusteeship of the shrine, they were seeking authority and prestige as representatives of the village. Their goal was to acquire officially the position of magnate of the village, i.e. the top guttu and trustee of the village shrine. With this aim, they contacted the company and led negotiations regarding land acquisition and villager migration.

Unlike the Nellidādi guttu, who decided to remain in the village with Jumādi, the Suṇḍoṭṭu guttu decided to take responsibility for moving their deity and fellow villagers to another area. Migration is, of course, one possible option for landlords facing advancing development projects that are seeking to acquire land. Contrary to their expectations, however, this migration of people and deities is not always successful, but can cause various problems regarding their resettlement. Focusing on a place called Kuḍubi Padavū in Permude village, I will next examine disputes caused by the migration of newcomers—along with their deities.

Disputes over land, rivalries over deities

As seen in Chapter 11, in the disputes over landownership between landlords and tenants, the deities worshipped on the land in question often contributed to maintaining the original land rights by deterring tenants, who feared the deity's curse, from applying for land transfers. Although the case examined in this section is also a dispute between a landlord family and former tenants, the structure of the dispute is more complex due to its relation to the development project. In this case in Kuḍubi Padavū, the landlord family had immigrated to the area, while the tenants were the original inhabitants. As we will see, the entanglement of relations between the original inhabitants, newcomers, land, and deities created new disputes over land rights and the authority of the deities. Among them, one of the main disputes concerning būta worship became the rivalry between the royal būtas worshipped by the landlord and the lower-ranked būtas worshipped by the former tenants, and there was disagreement over where and by whom the village deity should be worshipped.

Below, I will first briefly overview the characteristics of the lower-ranked būtas who are mainly worshipped by the former tenants and day workers in this area. These būtas are different in many ways from the rājanu daivas or royal būtas examined in Part One. Next, focusing on Permude village, which had been partly acquired by the MSEZ, I will examine the conflict between the Baṅṭa landlords, who transferred their land to the company and migrated to Kuḍubi Padavu, and the Kuḍubis already there.

The worship of wild būtas

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the people in South Kanara worship not only the royal būtas who occupy higher positions in the hierarchy of deities, but also lower-ranked būtas called 'kāṭu (wild, undomesticated) būta'. In Bajpe and neighbouring villages including Permude and Perar, there are numerous small shrines for these būtas. Unlike the royal būtas whose worship is organised mainly by the guttus, the worship of these lower-ranked būtas such as Kallurṭi, Satyadēvate, Mantradēvate, and Guliga is conducted by the head of one family. Among them, in addition to the land būtas who are inseparable from particular lands, there are būtas who are believed to 'come into (*baidena*)' the house for various reasons. For instance, a family might begin worshipping Mantradēvate when one of the family members experiences some misfortune and receives advice from an astrologer to worship the būta that may have caused the problem.⁸ These būtas occupy a more marginal position compared to the royal būtas, and they are worshipped mostly not by landlords but by former tenants and agricultural workers. I will now present some typical cases that illustrate how people start worshipping kāṭu būtas.⁹

Case 1 Sudden possession by Mantradēvate

Kuḍubi, a former tenant family. Pande (31) and Vedapati (30) were married in 2006. Soon afterwards, Vedapati started suffering seizures of trembling, which was thought to be a sign of spirit possession. Once a seizure started, nobody could stop her strange behaviour such as trying to throw herself into a well or suddenly running to her mother's house. Pande first consulted with a Brahman priest at Katir Temple in Mangaluru, who advised him not to believe in evil spirits. The condition of his wife, however, was growing worse. Then suddenly a deity possessed Vedapati and requested that they conduct a ritual. This time, Pande consulted an astrologer about the problem. The astrologer told him that it was Mantradēvate who had possessed his wife, and then he performed a ritual to transfer the deity's power from Vedapati to a statue (*pāpe*). After this, the couple has made daily offerings of flowers and a glass of water to the statue and has conducted a yearly ritual for Mantradēvate.

Case 2 Mantradēvate's arrival through illness

Belcade, a family of former agricultural workers. In 2001, Laita (48) became ill. When she consulted an astrologer about her illness, she was advised to worship Mantradēvate. At that time, however, she could not set up

an altar for the deity because she was living in a rented room. Additionally, Mamata (28), the daughter of Laita, developed a gynaecological disorder after she and her mother moved to one of the 5-cent plots prepared by the government. When they consulted a priest (māni) of Mantradēvate, they were told that the deity had come from Laita's mother's house. In the ritual performed by the priest, the two women made an oath in front of a coconut, the incarnation of the deity's power, that they would worship Mantradēvate if she [the deity] would cure Mamata's illness. After that, they asked a Brahman priest to perform a ritual to transfer the deity's power from the coconut to a statue, and they washed the coconut down the river.

Case 3 The spell of jāgeda daiva (land būtas)

Pūjāri, a family of former agricultural workers. This family worships two land būtas, Kallurṭi Pañjūrli and Satyadēvate, as well as Mantradēvate. According to Sarasvati (38), the land būtas bind her family to their current residence. Once the family of her late husband had performed a ritual to move these būtas to their ancestral home, but it was not successful. Though Sarasvati bought a 5-cent plot, she is still hesitant to leave these deities behind and move to the new place, for fear of their curse.

As seen in these cases, lower-ranked būtas often have dangerous features related to curses, misfortune, and sorcery. It can also be observed that worship of these būtas is not systematic and formal, but personal and informal. As seen in Chapter 6, the royal būtas also embody dangerous wild śakti, and their worship is also based on devotees' fear of the deities' curses, which are inseparable from their blessings. However, while the worship of royal būtas is the core of the local political economy, such as reinforcing land tenure and the hierarchy of houses, relations between the lower-ranked būtas and their devotees are rather more private and accidental.

Keeping the difference between royal būtas and kāṭu būtas in mind, next I will examine a dispute between a landlord family and a former tenant family in Permude, a dispute caused by the development project.

The immigration of a landlord family and pressure on former tenants

The Tōdu guttu is the top manor family in Permude. According to B. Shetty, one of the family elders, the Tōdu guttu has a history of about thousand years. This family has a Hindu temple called the Sōmanāthēśvara temple and a būta shrine in which Koḍamaṇittāya and four other būtas are enshrined. The yearly ritual for these būtas has long been held in Permude and four adjacent villages in turn.

In 2006, when the MSEZ expanded into Permude, the estate of the Tōdu guttu also became a target of land acquisition. The family decided to hand over their land to the company and migrate with other villagers to the rehabilitation area, which was also part of Permude. Regarding this, B. Shetty proudly told me that all the temples and shrines in the village had been moved to a new place in the most respectful way, performing every necessary

ritual process. He named the rehabilitation area ‘Sri Sōmanāthādama’ after the name of their temple.¹⁰

However, their new residential site, Kuḍubi Padavū, was of course not a no-man’s land, but was an area already inhabited by a local community of people called the Kuḍubi. According to Giriya Gauda, one of the elders of the main Kuḍubi family in this area, their family is composed of four branches that are traced back to four male ancestors.¹¹ In addition to village deities including Nāgabramma and Pañjūrli, they worship several būtas such as Kallurṭi Pañjūrli and Satyadēvate. According to him, this area was originally the property of Pējāvāra Mutt, a famous Hindu mutt in Udupi, and the Kuḍubis were the tenants of the land. When land reform legislation was implemented in 1974, they applied for land rights and received 16 acres from the government. Since then, they have made their living by farming this land.

However, in 2008, in the middle of the night, a group of thugs hired by the company attacked their paddy fields. They dumped mud everywhere and destroyed all of the farm products. After this, the company forcefully filled in the Kuḍubis’ fields and turned them into a new residential site. It was the Tōdu guttu family who came to this new site.

Today, Kuḍubi Padavū is starkly divided into two areas: one is the so-called rehabilitation area, where new residences have been built, and the other is the colony of the original inhabitants. In the rehabilitation area, the Tōdu guttu built a magnificent shrine to Kodamanittāya. In the original colony meanwhile, one can find empty shrines from which villagers took their būta statues when they left due to company pressure. Unsurprisingly, relations between the newcomers and the original inhabitants have become very strained. A Kuḍubi woman told me that she had stopped going out after dark, because she came to feel that she would be putting herself in danger.

As seen above, the situation in Permude village is more complex than in the usual MSEZL land acquisition process. In this case, the guttu family who acquired compensation and left their land migrated to a new area, from which they consequently forced the original inhabitants to evacuate. When we focus on the class of these two parties, this situation can be analysed as a conflict over land rights between landlords and former tenants. Meanwhile, if we focus on būta worship, it can be analysed as a process in which the new būta shrine built by the newcomer guttu family became more and more influential in this area, while the local deities worshipped by the original inhabitants came to be marginalised. Among the deities worshipped by the Kuḍubis, however, there remain several powerful land būtas. As seen in the previous section, a būta deeply connected to particular land often binds the devotees to the land and demands persistent protests against land acquisition. This is also the case in Kuḍubi Padavū.

In addition to the ordinal būta shrines and altars, the Kuḍubis worship a big stone called the ‘deity’s stone (*būta kallū*)’. The officers of the company, who promoted land acquisition in Kuḍubi Padavū and developing the

land as a rehabilitation area, have requested that the Kuḍubis take the stone away. According to Giriya Gauḍa, the officers offered to bear the cost of constructing a new būta shrine in another place. The Kuḍubis rejected this offer because, as Giriya said, ‘The daiva is tied to this land’.

Regarding this event, Mārappa Gauḍa, a relative of Giriya, told me: ‘They stole our land and destroyed our farm products, but they could not remove the deity’s stone’. According to him, the officers did not have the courage to remove the stone by themselves, fearing the deity’s curse, and therefore asked the Kuḍubis to take it away.

As seen in the previous section, while the company officers promote land acquisition and the destruction of villages and their būta shrines, on occasions such as rituals or face-to-face negotiations with villagers, they often express awe of the deities and behave like ordinary devotees. When focusing on people’s relationships with deities, both the villagers and the company officers share the position of recipient of the deities’ overwhelming agency.

In Permude, the lives of the Kuḍubis were threatened due to the migration of the landlord family and other villagers. Meanwhile, thanks to the power of the lower-ranked, wild būtas, the original inhabitants managed to keep their ties to the land. As we will see in the next section, however, the situation of Kuḍubi Padavū changed when it became a centre of the antidevelopment movement that resulted in the retraction of the second phase of the MSEZ.

A religious leader fasting against the development project

As seen above, relying on the power of wild būtas, the Kuḍubis have protested against the harassment they have received from the company and the powerful guttu family. Beginning in 2008, their antidevelopment movement gradually attracted the attention of the mass media and gained support from social activists. Moreover, Kuḍubi Padavū moved into the limelight when a famous guru declared his support for the Kuḍubis. The guru, named Vishweshā Teerthā Swamiji, was born in 1931 and served as an adviser to Vishwa Hindu Parisad (VHP), also known as the World Hindu Association. He was also a religious leader of the Pējāvāra Mutt, the former landlord of Kuḍubi Padavū.

Swamiji first became involved in the antidevelopment movement after he was eagerly approached by social activists. The activists, who assisted farmers facing eviction from their land, were searching for religious leaders who would support their movement. For them, Swamiji was a very important figure because he had great influence within the BJP, the then ruling party of the state government (see Gowda 2011; *The New Indian Express* 2011; *Daijiworld* 2014).¹² Regarding this, Vidya Dinker, who has supported the antidevelopment movement in this area since 2007, told me,

He [Swamiji] has great power as one of the leaders of the VHP. We knew that the state government couldn’t ignore him if he performed a fast.

(Vidya Dinker, 17 August 2015)

Though the social activists attempted to use him strategically, soon they realised that the influence of Swamiji exceeded their expectations. He built up a strong protest movement against the development project using various means such as doing interviews with the press, talking with the then chief minister, and, above all, fasting. He not only criticised the development project in general, but also expressed his concern about the predicament of the small farmers in Kuḍubi Padavū. He also questioned the Tōdu guttu's plan to establish their right to occupation through the use of rituals.

As mentioned, the Tōdu guttu had moved the statues of deities from their original shrine and had started to build a new shrine in Kuḍubi Padavū. In May 2008, just before their migration, they performed a ritual at the original shrine in which several MSEZ officers participated. By attending the ritual organised by the guttu family, the officers intended to show the villagers the appropriateness of their land acquisition and the relocation of the shrine. This event, however, was regarded as proof of a conspiracy between the company and the guttu family who promoted land transfer, and thus fed the accusations of social activists and inhabitants of Kuḍubi Padavū.

In the ensuing tense situation, the Tōdu guttu advanced the construction of the new shrine, and in April 2009, they planned to organise a grand ritual ceremony made up of *punarū pratiṣṭhe* (ritual of rebuilding) and *brahmakalāśa* (ritual of purification).¹³ These rituals would symbolise the completion of the settlement of both the guttu people and their deities on the land. As soon as he heard about this plan, Swamiji decided to launch a protest against the rituals, which were being conducted against the will of the original inhabitants. He started fasting at Pējāvāra Mutt on the day before the rituals, and he continued to fast for the whole day at Permude village on the very day of the rituals. Many locals joined him to protest against the rituals and also urged the government to give the Kuḍubis back their land. At a press conference, Swamiji told reporters that he would not lead the agitation, but that he would be on the side of the victims. He also said he would speak to the chief minister and explain the plight of the displaced.

These efforts by Swamiji not only encouraged the Kuḍubis, but also led to repercussions among the members of the BJP, since they were very concerned with keeping the political support of Pējāvāra Mutt. Under pressure from both inside and outside the party, in August 2010 the chief minister ordered the suspension of the planned second phase. After this order, Swamiji continued to urge the government to halt the further acquisition of land. On 12 July 2011, he declared that if the government did not immediately suspend their plan to acquire 2,035 acres of land for the site of the second phase, he would go on fasting for an indefinite period, starting the next day. After hearing this final plea from Swamiji, the chief minister finally ordered a halt to all further notices, and the expansion plan was revoked completely.

As seen above, the antidevelopment movement's success in causing the total retraction of the second phase of the MSEZ was brought about by the activity of a religious leader supported by social activists as well as by

the expansion of small farmers' protest movements. In the entanglements of the intensions and power of various actors such as the guttu family, former tenants, company officers, social activists, religious leader, and politicians, Kuḍubi Padavū became the crucial place for questioning the propriety of the entire development project. Ironically, however, the situation of the Kuḍubi people remained totally unchanged, even after the withdrawal of the land acquisition plan. This was because Kuḍubi Padavū was regarded by the state government as a place where land expropriation had already been completed, and thus was excluded from any cancellation. As a result, the Kuḍubis could neither fulfil their long-felt wish to take their land back nor settle their dispute with the guttu family; they remained in the same predicament as before. As we will see next, in these conditions, the relations among people concerning Kuḍubi Padavū can move in unexpected directions due to the agency of the village deity manifested through astrology.

Regaining the village deity

After migrating to Kuḍubi Padavū, the Tōdu guttu built a new shrine on their new estate. Pilicāmuṇḍi, the royal būta worshipped by the villagers, was one of the deities enshrined there. While B. Shetty, the head of the Tōdu guttu, emphasised to me that the replacement of the būta shrine had been smooth, Giriya Gauda and the priest of a Shiva temple in Permude named R. Rao told me another story about the migration of the deity.¹⁴

According to them, before the villagers were forced to leave their land, the shrine of Pilicāmuṇḍi had been located at a place in Permude called Mukkodī. The shrine was worshipped as the village shrine believed to bring prosperity to villagers, and the entire village participated in the yearly ritual. When the Tōdu guttu decided to migrate from Mukkodī to Kuḍubi Padavū, however, they regarded the shrine as their private property and took the deity's statue with them without seeking or obtaining the other villagers' agreement. After migrating, the guttu family enshrined Pilicāmuṇḍi in the new shrine and then monopolised its management.

Meanwhile, in a grove near Kuḍubi Padavū, there was a small old shrine to Brama, Raktēśvari, and Nāga. In 2013, a mutt called Taulava, which had been managing this small shrine, organised a ritual in which a new 'fact' regarding this shrine was revealed through astrology. According to the oracle, in addition to Brama and Raktēśvari, Pilicāmuṇḍi had originally been enshrined there. Although some years ago Pilicāmuṇḍi had left the other deities behind and moved to the shrine at Mukkodī, the deity's power still filled the old shrine. The oracle also said that, contrary to the Tōdu guttu's claim, Pilicāmuṇḍi had not actually shifted to the new shrine at Kuḍubi Padavū along with the guttu family, but had refused to move and so still remained at the ruin of the shrine at Mukkodī, which had already become a construction site. Receiving this oracle with astonishment, the villagers in Permude decided to refurbish the old shrine in the grove to re-enshrine Pilicāmuṇḍi. In May 2013, the reconstruction of the old shrine

was completed, and most of the villagers in Permude, excluding the Tōdu guttu, attended its inauguration ceremony.

This case shows the complex relations between the people, land, and deities, complicated by the migration of people and the shifting of deities. This complexity stems significantly from the protean characteristics of the būtas themselves: a deity is mobile, yet it is often tied to particular land; and the power of particular deity is regarded as one and the same, yet it can be enshrined in many places.

In the case of Permude, the power of Pilicāmuṇḍi that had filled the original shrine was believed to have moved to the one in Mukkodi, while also retaining a strong connection to its origins. Then its statue was again shifted by the Tōdu guttu to a new shrine in Kuḍubi Padavu. From the Tōdu guttu's perspective, the deity was properly enshrined in the new shrine, and this one must be the only shrine for Pilicāmuṇḍi. According to the oracle, however, the power of the deity had never moved to the new shrine, but had remained in both the shrine at Mukkodi and the old shrine in the grove. If this is true, then for the villagers, the old shrine would now be the only place for worshipping Pilicāmuṇḍi, since the shrine at Mukkodi has already been ruined by the company. By participating in the refurbishing work of the old shrine, and by attending the inauguration ceremony, not only the Kuḍubis who had been in conflict with the Tōdu guttu, but also the other villagers expressed their support for the astrological oracle and acted on its suggestion.

This case presents an alternative to the conventional view that būta worship is a means of justifying the authority of landlords in a rural community (e.g. Gowda 2005). As this case shows, even the royal būtas, who are closely related to guttu families in a village, do not always take their side. Rather, if the guttus lose an appropriate relationship with the land and nature for which they have responsibility, they may also lose the protection and blessings of the deities. In Permude, the astrological oracle suggested that the relationship between the Tōdu guttu and the village deity had been destroyed because the guttu family had abandoned their land. Eventually, the villagers who received the oracle fell away from the guttu family.

As seen in Chapter 8, in Perar, the response of the villagers to astrological oracles brought about a new development in the dispute over the management of the village būta shrine. Similarly, in Permude, the villagers' decisions and actions based on astrological oracles, which represented the deity's agency, resulted in the isolation of the top guttu family and the recovery of the worship of the village deity for all of the ordinary villagers.

These results brought Giriya, Mārappa, and other Kuḍubis feelings of great relief and exaltation, since not only the lower-ranked būtas but also the village deity was on their side. Vidya Dinker, who had long supported the Kuḍubis, conveyed their feelings this way:

I remember when Giriya told me that Pilicāmuṇḍi would come here [the old shrine in the grove]. They were all surprised and very excited ... he told me, 'We could not achieve justice in court. Though politicians always

give us their word, they never give us justice. But now, Pilicāmuṇḍi is here, and we can worship her by our hands. This is a form of justice’.

(Vidya Dinker, 14 March 2014)

As we have seen, in the wide-ranging activism against the development project, the Kuḍubis came to play an important role through their protests, which many regarded as a symbol of farmers’ rights to their land. When the plan for the second phase of the MSEZ was withdrawn, however, their land was excluded from the revocation of land acquisition. This fact also shocked them and aroused their anger against the government.

The Kuḍubis have thus not only been jostled by the decisions and intentions of landlords and politicians, but have also faced difficulties in relation to modern law. As seen in previous chapters, since the colonial period, the people in South Kanara have rearranged their relations with others, land, and nature in between customary law and modern law, which are heterogeneous but overlapping. Here, while modern law has pushed people to reorganise their conventional social relations, it has also offered them a way to flee from the hardships and restrictions of customary law, such as the hierarchy and land tenure system in rural communities.

For the Kuḍubis, however, it was quite difficult to regain their land rights through the modern legal system because they had very limited knowledge and resources to appropriately utilise modern law. In this situation, for the Kuḍubis, the experience of the village deity accepting their worship, while refusing the guttu family’s, was thought of as achieving justice, but in a different sense from modern politics and law. Moreover, the ordinary villagers’ decision to leave the guttu family who had abandoned the land and lost the deity’s mercy, and these villagers’ reconstruction of the village shrine on their own, changed the conventional power relations in the village; no longer did the guttu family control the land and occupy the highest rank for būta worship.

People, deities, and the realm of the wild in the development project

In this chapter, I examined the influence of, and people’s various responses to, the massive development project promoted in the Bajpe area, focusing on būta worship. As land acquisition has advanced, būta worship has taken on a new role as an icon of the antidevelopment movement. When we look closely at people’s decisions and actions concerning the development project, however, the ambivalent aspects of būta worship become clear. For most villagers, their protests against land acquisition spring from the deities’ commands that they protect the land, nature, and būta shrines. At the same time, as seen in the case of the Nellidādi guttu, these orders can work as a compelling force to bind the people responsible for būta worship to their land.

It is also clear that landlords and small farmers have quite different positions towards the development project. The landlords who hold vast estates often take an ambivalent position towards land acquisition, though

in a different sense from the ambivalence of deities. First, the development project offers them a chance to gain a large amount of compensation for the transference of their land. Second, due to their status and influence in their village community, they have the opportunity to obtain even more profit as brokers who mediate between villagers and the company to promote land transfer.

The landlords are thus in a position to profit greatly from land transference at the initial stages; at the same time, they have a duty to organise *būta* rituals and protect the land, nature, and the whole village. Therefore, some *guttus* have decided not to transfer their land to the company and have instead supported protest movements against land acquisition. For instance, even when most villagers had left the village, the Nelliḍādi *guttu* family decided to stay on their land and live in the difficult conditions of a construction site.

Landlords such as Āgalu, Suṇḍoṭṭu, and Tōḍu who decided to transfer their land to the company, however, are also not totally indifferent to the dissolution of the village and discontinuance of *būta* worship. For instance, both the Suṇḍoṭṭu and Tōḍu *guttus* planned to take other villagers as well as deities along with them when they migrated to the rehabilitation area. This fact suggests that they did not intend to destroy the village community with the land transfers and migration, but rather planned to re-establish the same social organisation and *būta* worship in their new dwelling place. For them, the re-establishment of the village community would enable them to maintain their status and authority.

In reality, however, even the head of a *guttu* family cannot easily move the village *būta*, which is closely tied with the land and nature in the area and forms the basis of village social relations. Therefore, the Suṇḍoṭṭu *guttu* was obliged to leave the village deity in the original shrine, while the Tōḍu *guttu* tried the strategy of regarding the village shrine as their private property and moved the statue enshrined within it. In both cases, village social relations, being based on *būta* worship, have inevitably undergone great changes.

Meanwhile, for the small farmers making their living by cultivating small plots of land, land acquisition drastically changed their way of life. Following the landlords' advice or expecting MSEZ employment, some of them left their land and migrated to the rehabilitation area. Most of them, however, have protested against land acquisition in order to protect their lives and farmlands. Supported by social activists and religious leaders, they have developed an antidevelopment movement which succeeded in linking villagers and supporters from various places. They have gradually attracted the attention of the mass media and have gained influence over company officers and politicians. Moreover, being resonant with the deities' agency expressed in oracles, their activities directed towards maintaining the ties between farmers, their land, and deities have brought about changes in the power relations in the village community.

In the case of Permude, the Tōdu guttu regarded the development project as a chance to obtain new profits and saw the village deity as an obstacle to their migration plan, despite būta worship forming the basis for their authority in the village community. As such, by constructing a magnificent shrine and performing grand rituals, they tried to portray the change caused by migration not as a rupture of the normal relationship between the villagers and the deity, but as its renewal and evolution. Their plan, however, was disturbed by people's criticism of the construction of the new shrine, and it finally dissolved when the villagers instead followed an oracle that rejected the deity's migration and started worshipping the village deity by themselves. Meanwhile, in their struggle to protect their land and būta worship, the Kuḍubis brought about a change in village social relations and also created a new form of būta worship independent of the guttu family.

These cases show that the deities, even including royal būtas, do not always support the rights and authority of the higher-ranked guttus, but are above all concerned with the relationship between the realms of humans and the wild. The deities always ask the people to be appropriate for undertaking adikāra to take charge of the būta rituals; and appropriateness here entails the skill to maintain the flow of wild śakti between the realms of humans and the wild by taking care of the land and the deities' shrines.

As seen in this chapter, when the village, land, and nature are in danger of destruction and the existing relationship between people and their umwelt is unsettled, it is necessary for the people to reorganise their social relations in the realm of jōga, thus preserving their relationship with the deities and the realm of the wild. Otherwise, as we will see in the next chapter, people who find themselves in a new relationship with deities in novel situations must instead inevitably transform *themselves* into appropriate bearers of the adikāra given by the deities.

Notes

- 1 MSEZL is a combination of both central and state government institutions and a private financial company. It currently consists of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd (ONGCL), the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB), Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services (IL&FS), and the Kanara Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI). The New Mangalore Port Trust (NMPT) is also an equity partner of MSEZL (Dhakai 2009, p. 3).
- 2 The information below is based on interviews with Nitin Hegde and his relatives on 7 September 2012 and 16 August 2015 at his house in Tenka Yekkar, as well as an interview with Ragu and other members of the Krishi Bhumi Sanrakshan Samiti on 17 March 2015 at the Yekkar village panchayat office.
- 3 The BSP, formed in 1984, is mainly supported by the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and other religious minorities. The SP, formed in 1992, is mainly supported by Other Backward Classes. The CPI was formed in 1925, but split into the Communist Party of India-Marxist and the current CPI in 1964.

- 4 The BJP is the most significant Hindu nationalist political party and was formed in 1980. Its power base is Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Indian right-wing Hindu nationalist volunteer organisation. Along with the BJP and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the RSS forms the Sangh Parivar, the family of Hindu nationalist organisations.
- 5 If a family evacuate their land, one of the family members can be employed by MSEZL, in addition to the fixed amount of compensation and a residential site which is of the size from 7 to 23.5 cents. In the early 1990s, when the MRPL first started land acquisition in this area, the amount of compensation was 50,000 rupees per acre. As of 2013, the amount has been raised to one and a half million rupees per acre. Most small farmers, however, are facing difficulty after land transference which means the loss of their permanent livelihood.
- 6 The information in this section, including the narratives of Kishore and Lakshman Chowta, is based on interviews with them conducted on 1 and 3 September 2012 and 7 March 2013 at their house in Bajpe.
- 7 This land acquisition was executed based on the Land Acquisition Act, 1894, which had been effective until a new law called the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, was enforced in January 2014.
- 8 Mantradēvate is also believed to fly into one's house through sorcery or to be brought in along with particular objects such as prasāda or accessories.
- 9 These cases were collected from July to August 2008 in Mudu Perar. The ages of informants in these cases are as of 2008.
- 10 The information is based on the interview with B. Shetty conducted on 1 September 2012.
- 11 The description below is based on fieldwork and interviews conducted on 9 September 2012 and 14 March 2014 at Kuḍubi Padavu.
- 12 In the Karnataka Assembly election in 2008, the BJP held the state government. B. S. Yeddyurappa held the position of chief minister of the state of Karnataka until he resigned at the end of July 2011. As we will see below, the antidevelopment movement led by Swamiji developed dramatically when the BJP held power; the land acquisition plan for the second phase of the MSEZ was withdrawn just before Yeddyurappa's resignation. As political background for the success of this antidevelopment movement, it has been pointed out that Yeddyurappa had close links with the religious leaders of several mutts in Karnataka (see Gowda 2011).
- 13 Punaru pratiṣṭhe is a ritual conducted for the opening of a reconstructed shrine; brahmakalaśa is a ritual for when a deity's statue is enshrined in a shrine.
- 14 The information below is based on interviews with Giriya Gowda, R. Rao, Vidya Dinker, and two other villagers in Permude conducted on 14 March 2014.

13 The new umwelt in the industrial plant

As seen in the previous chapter, the development project that developed rapidly in the 2000s has greatly affected the lives of villagers in the Bajpe area. With its close connection to land and nature, *būta* worship has also entered a new phase. The deities' oracles have had ambivalent effects, strongly supporting the antidevelopment movements by ordering a 'desperate defence of land and shrines' and, at the same time, binding people to their land. It has also become clear that villagers' endeavours to maintain their intimate relationships with the land, nature, and deities have partly transformed the existing power relations in the village community.

The power of the deities, although it would seem to contradict the development project, actually has great significance for the people promoting the project; as we will examine below, *būta* worship is flourishing anew among the people working in the MSEZ. As already seen, the MSEZL destroyed forests and farmlands in the expropriated areas and constructed industrial plants on the bare land. The company executives often stress that they have carefully separated the industrial plants from the natural environment and that they strictly control the borders. In reality, however, the industrial plants are inseparably entangled with the nature outside the complex.¹ Therefore, in the same way that the industrial plants affect their surroundings through, for instance, the effluence of waste, these plants are also affected by the land and nature comprising their environment.

Regarding this, I will investigate in this chapter the encounters between humans and deities in the industrial zone, and also the effects of *būta śakti*, which fills the realm of the wild and flows into the realm of humans, on the activities of the people in the MSEZ. I will first examine the background of a grand ritual organised by the company managers after a tragic accident occurred in the MSEZ. Next, I will describe the attempt of a company executive to recover the ties between humans and the land, nature, and deities in the industrial zone. I will then investigate how unexpected events in an industrial unit are often interpreted as the manifestation of a *būta*'s agency, and also how the *būta* ritual works to negotiate between the contradictory forces of technology and deities. Finally, I will show the endeavours of the company executives to create a transactional network between the deities

and industrial workers through ritual practices, and to learn to behave appropriately as devotees of the deities. Through these investigations, I will consider how the newly formed transactions between the deities and the people in the MSEZ constitute the emergence of a new umwelt.

An explosion on the path of a būta

On 26 May 2011, an explosion rocked an Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL) plant within the MSEZ. According to news sources, a 1.5 million metric ton underground crude oil storage facility was being constructed using the drill-and-blast method. Construction work was being undertaken by SKEC-KCT, a Korean-Indian joint venture (Shenoy 2011). The Mangalore police commissioner, S. K. Singh, reported, ‘The blast occurred at the tunnelling area of the site where big machines were being operated. A part of the machinery that supplies power to the tunnelling equipment might have blasted, resulting in the mishap’ (*Daily News & Analysis* 2011). Three people, including one Korean engineer, died. The engineer was an employee of the Korean company SK, which had received a contract from ISPRL.

The accident attracted attention both because of its tragic consequences and because it induced the management to take spiritual measures. According to Vādirāja Bhat, a Brahman astrologer, several ISPRL officers visited him just after the accident. As per their request, he conducted an inquiry ritual and found that originally there was a shrine for Pilicāmuṇḍi at the site. It was also revealed that the explosion inside the plant was caused by the ire of the būta at the destruction of the shrine in the course of the construction work.

Following this revelation, the managers of SK and ISPRL organised a large-scale ritual for saving lives (*mṛtyuñjayahōmo*) inside the plant, in which Indian employees as well as Korean managers and engineers participated. They dedicated offerings to the deity and received prasāda from the Brahman priests. Afterwards, they decided to build a new shrine for Pilicāmuṇḍi inside the plant and to worship it incessantly.² In explaining the cause of the tragedy, Vādirāja Bhat described the spiritual landscape of the site:

There was originally *rājanu daiva savāri* at the site. That was a path, or route, through which the deity used to pass and roam about. They constructed a building on that route ... Properly, they should have asked an astrologer where they should, or should not, construct. Because they didn’t do that, the accident happened ... they [the Korean managers] realised the importance of the ritual after losing their colleagues’ lives.

(Vādirāja Bhat, 1 February 2013)

It is noteworthy that the site of the original Pilicāmuṇḍi shrine is described as a ‘*path* for the deity’. This means that it was not just a solitary religious structure for the local people’s worship, but also a route through which būta śakti flowed, connecting human territories to those of the divinities. The accident

thus occurred at an intersection, the exact point where the tunnel, through which industrial substances flow, connected to the flow of śakti. Bhat's narrative thus pointed to the overlap of the pathways for different forces and substances. Underground, the original Pilicāmuṇḍi shrine and the newly built industrial infrastructure became linked to one another, with catastrophic consequences (see also Ishii 2017). The ritual conducted by Bhat was a means of negotiating these contradictory forces to avoid more unanticipated events.

As shown in this case, for most people working in the industrial zone, unanticipated accidents are often interpreted as the manifestation of the deities' agency. Facing a tragic accident or problem in industry, they strive to solve the problem not only by technical measures but also by spiritual means such as astrology and ritual. Through their efforts to uncover and respond to the deities' agency behind the matter, they consequently create new ritual practices. I will investigate below the practices of company executives who increase the fear of, and concern for, the deities inside the industrial plants.

Recovering intimacy with the land and deities in the MSEZ

I will first consider the daily practice of caring for būtas inside the MSEZ in the chemical company called CS, which was established in Mangalore in 2013. CS is a multinational company based in the USA, Belgium, China, and India. Its main product is synthetic resin. The factory's surroundings are newly developed, and several families protesting against their displacement still remain in a corner of the industrial zone. The factory is right next to the estate of the Nellidādi guttu; in fact, because of the construction of this factory, the Nellidādi guttu's farmland was destroyed.

A wall surrounds the CS premises and guards check all visitors at the main gate. Entering the office requires an electronic key. In vivid contrast to the modern appearance of the office, green paddies wave in the wind in a small nearby field. According to D. Kadri, manager of human resources and administration at CS, planting a paddy in the factory compound is part of an attempt to unite industry and agriculture. He had worked as a politician in the Congress Party, serving as the mayor of Mangaluru city in 2003, and he had acquired this position in the MSEZ after retiring from politics. According to him, he and other engineers often visit the nearby Jumādi shrine.

Daivas are like elders for us. A child goes to his parents; similarly, we visit daiva's shrine. We pray to daiva only for good things, and thus good things happen to us. Nearby, there is the Nellidādi Jumādi shrine ... We pray to her [Jumādi] daily for the safety of the industry. If an accident is about to happen, it is always suddenly avoided. So, we realized that even though there had been the chance of a calamity, it didn't happen ... We treat Jumādi as our mother. Whenever we visit her shrine and pray, a sense of responsibility—what we should and should not do—arises in us. We feel ourselves being saved by her.

(D. Kadri, 10 March 2014)

He also explained the ritual called *kesarukallu pāduni* (a ceremony of laying a foundation stone) conducted by the company when they built the factory and office.

We conducted a great ritual. We dug the soil, laid two stones, and placed precious stones between them. We placed five metals (*pañcalōha*) and nine precious gems (*navaratna*), and then a Brahman priest poured milk on them and conducted *pūjā* ... in the ritual, we prayed to nature (*prakṛti*) this way: 'We are going to move your stones and disturb you, so we offer these precious gems and milk to you.' Also, we prayed to all creatures there: 'Please leave this place. Now we are going to acquire the land temporarily to construct buildings.' By doing this, we apologized to nature ... when we finished the construction, we again conducted a grand ritual.

(10 March 2014)

Finally, he expressed his view about the relocation of *būta* shrines following the construction of the industrial plants, and about the fear of the deities' curses spreading among workers in the industrial zone.

Several rituals are needed to relocate a *daiva* shrine, and you should not forcefully remove it. Only after consulting with *daiva* through astrology and getting her agreement, can you take her to a new place. In such a case, there is no worry of a curse. If, however, we force to progress something compulsorily, it [the curse] can occur. Indeed, so many people have such experiences ... If you imagine how a problem happens, you know, the MSEZ is a very big project. People from various places come to this limited space, and we are trying to create a new world. There are various ways of thinking, and also various ways of rituals. Some people do not mind local matters ... I myself, however, strongly believe in *daivas* and their great power.

(10 March 2014)

These narratives vividly exemplify a widely shared mixture of fear and affection, and of devotion to both deities and nature. Indeed, most executives like D. Kadri, who strongly support and promote developmental projects, also fear the *būtas* dwelling in the site and long for their blessings. By making offerings, conducting rituals to the land, and asking for permission, they try to gain temporary rights and responsibilities (*adikāra*) for the land and nature. Here, the role of the executives corresponds to that of the *gaḍipatināru*, the village representative and primary caretaker of the *būtas* and agricultural lands. Regarding this, D. Kadri's efforts to plant paddy and other agricultural plants within the factory compound can be understood as an attempt to recover, even partially, the intimate relationship with land and nature in the inorganic industrial zone.

It is not easy, however, for the people working in the MSEZ to gain protection and blessings from the deities; rather, they often become the victims

of deities' curses. I will next examine the case of how a mishap and unanticipated event in the industrial zone brought about awareness and fear of a bŭta's agency and resulted in the emergence of new ritual practices.

The threatening industrial plant

P. Naik, an MRPL executive officer, lives with his family in a residential zone called the 'colony' inside the MRPL precinct. The colony is a quiet and green residential area for white-collar employees, and it contains modern facilities such as a shopping complex, swimming pool, recreation club, public school, hospital, and bank branch. In Naik's neighbourhood, beautiful two-storey houses line both sides of well-maintained road. Though Naik seems to enjoy a comfortable life as one of the executives of a big company, in his interview with me, he expressed irritation over the corruption within the company and the stresses of daily life in the closed community.³ In addition, unlike D. Kadri, who emphasised the harmonious co-existence of industry and traditional bŭta worship, Naik narrated his experience of the bŭtas' curse in the industrial zone. According to him, numerous cobras, which are believed to embody Nāga, had been killed during the construction process of the MRPL, and this has cast a dark shadow over the lives of the people in the industrial zone.

Nāga is believed to be supreme in this area. During the construction of the industry, however, many cobras were killed ... There are suicides in the colony every year, due to the curse of Nāga. People within management also have had various problems such as trouble over money and disputes ... When I and other managers consulted an astrologer to solve these problems, he advised us to conduct a ritual for Nāga (*nāgamaṇḍala*). In the ritual, the person taken by Nāga [the medium possessed by the deity] told us: 'This ritual was received [by the deity]. For you, however, there is no permanent solution. You have to pray to Nāga forever'.

(P. Naik, 4 March 2012)

As shown in this narrative, the people living in the industrial community often suspect a bŭta's curse behind the troubles and misfortunes around them, and they attempt to solve the problem through ritual practices. The problem, however, cannot be solved completely by a single ritual, and thus they have to start worshipping the deity continuously. They become aware of the bŭta's agency through a difficulty in their daily life, start communicating with the deity through ritual practice, and come to worship the deity at the bŭta shrine. Through this process, the people involved in the industry become involved in a relationship with the deities, and they performatively create a transactional network. Those who take part in this process are not only workers from South Kanara, but also foreign engineers and company managers. Based on Naik's narrative, I will next investigate the involvement

of foreign engineers in the ritual that developed after one accident inside the MRPL precinct.

The malfunction of a machine and a ritual organised by Japanese engineers

In the late 1990s, during the construction of the MRPL plants, numerous, but not all, religious structures were demolished. One of the structures that remain is a *būta* shrine called the Raktēśvari *sāna* (shrine). It is said that when the company was about to demolish this shrine, they received an oracle from an astrologer saying that they should not demolish it. As a result, it was saved and is now a site of worship for workers inside the plant.

According to P. Naik, a compressor broke down in 1999 at a site near the Raktēśvari shrine. Japanese engineers, who were posted at the MRPL site for technology transfer, checked the machine, which had been manufactured in Japan. Try as they might, they could not find the cause of the malfunction. They checked the machine and soil again and again, but were unable to solve the problem. Finally, they agreed to consult an astrologer. Following the oracle's prescription, the engineers performed a ritual at Katir temple near Mangaluru city. They offered a sacred *tolasi* tree (*Ocimum sanctum*) to the Raktēśvari shrine and then constructed a place of worship at the site also. After the ritual, the machine worked again. Since then, the MRPL employees offer prayers at the shrine every morning before they start working.

Similar to the aforementioned Korean managers working in the MSEZ, the Japanese engineers were involved in a transaction with the deities, which was regarded as a part of the solution for the malfunctioning machine. Consequently, the Japanese engineers played a significant role as the organisers of the ritual. At first glance, it seems strange that not only the Indian employees but also foreign engineers participated in ritual transaction with the local deities. In practice, however, it was not necessarily a matter of whether these foreigners shared a *belief* in the *būtas* with the locals. Rather, their *participation* in the collaborative ritual practices such as offering prayers and receiving blessings from deities was regarded as most important. Through their participation in the ritual, people of various origins performatively affirm *būta śakti* and position themselves as recipients of the *būta's* agency.⁴ As we will see later in more detail, through repetitive ritual practices, one can transform oneself into a person who is part of the transactional network in which both humans and deities act towards each other. Before considering this issue, however, I will next examine another case of the problematic connection of *būta śakti* and modern technology.

The connection of a pipeline with a banyan tree

In 1999, an incident occurred when the MRPL workers and engineers, including P. Naik, were constructing a crude oil pipeline. When they began

construction at the ‘lower plateau’ site, where the Raktēśvari shrine is located, they found a large banyan tree along the planned route.

There were the shrine and a banyan tree at the site. The workers said that the banyan tree that stood in the pipeline’s route had caused strange things around the lower plateau ... The excavator we used for levelling hit one spot of the tree, and the machine malfunctioned. Also, when a contractor was operating the tipcart, its tires started puncturing, *tup—tup—tup*. Then, a Muslim fellow came and said, ‘I’ll take care of it.’ At the moment he started the machine, it completely broke down. We loaded it onto a truck and took it away ... Finally, we changed the pipeline alignment. While the old alignment remains, nobody touches it.

(P. Naik, 4 March 2012)

In Naik’s description, a banyan tree, generally worshipped and feared as a sacred plant, is a focal point of the encounter or interference between *būta śakti* and the new industrial infrastructure. To avoid the dangerous effects of *būta śakti* and keep the pipeline safe, people tried to cope with the way in which the roots of the banyan tree interfered with the route of the pipeline. Yet they could not technically control the flow of *śakti* through the tree into the construction site, not least because it was invisible and unmeasurable. Accordingly, they were obliged to instead modify the alignment of the new infrastructure.

This is similar to what we saw in relation to the fatal accident in the MSEZ. Similar to the banyan tree, the original Pilicāmuṇḍi shrine and the newly built industrial infrastructure connected disparate underground flows. Thus, the new shrine was built as a device through which people could contact *būtas* and nature in order to deal with the dangerous flux. Engaged in this process, both Indians and Koreans became bearers of *adikāra*, caretakers of both the industrial machinery and the shrine *at once*. Each executive was obliged to take the role of the *gaḍipatināru*, who is responsible for the relations among artefacts, nature, and deities. P. Naik describes the hidden linkage of *śakti* and technology, and a possible solution within the industry, in the following way:

The force of the deity (*daivaśakti*) definitely connects to modern technology somewhere ... You should believe in these ancient deities while working in modern industry. If you don’t believe, you cannot succeed. Rather, you will face more problems for which you need more explanations. In the modern style of management, if anything goes wrong, you make a committee to find out [what happened] and prevent [the problem]. The next time you will confront another problem. Again prevention, again a problem, and the cycle continues ... But then if you find a connection, it will go smoother.

(4 March 2012)

As examined above, when encountering critical events in the industry, company managers and other workers often suspect a *būta*'s agency as the ultimate cause. Following oracles, they not only organise a ritual to appease the deity but also construct a shrine for permanent worship. Through the repetition of the reciprocal process of presenting offerings and receiving blessings, they create, and are also involved in, a transactional network with the deities, which has long been maintained by villagers in this area (see also Ishii 2015b). Based on the exploration above, I will next elaborate the relation between *būta* worship and people's practices in industry.

Undertaking *adikāra* in industry

As already seen, the MSEZ is an enclave with a free-market orientation governed by legal and tax environments that transcend regular national laws. By inviting multinational companies, building infrastructure, and constructing a modern residential area, the MSEZ forms a unique community totally different from the surrounding villages. At the same time, *būta* worship still maintains great significance inside the industrial zone. For instance, the deity *Jumādi* worshipped in *Bajpe* interfered in the negotiation between the *Nellidādi guttu* and company officers, and due to the deity's superior agency, the opposing relation between the villagers and the company officers was subsumed under the relation between the supreme deity and the humans affected by her. Similarly, accidents and troubles that occurred in industry were recognised as risks that should be technically avoided, but at the same time, they were regarded as the manifestation of a *būta*'s agency and as a spiritual threat beyond human abilities.

Here, people's fear and sense of human passivity when encountering *būta śakti* does not necessarily contradict their attitude of taking technical measures against problems in the industry. In the technical aspect, they are still actors who make decisions and tackle problems in a responsible way. At the same time, as shown in *P. Naik's* narrative, it is often imagined that the unknowable *śakti* in the realm of *māya* is behind each problem and that it creates linkages between technical and spiritual elements.

In these situations, people come to position themselves as recipients of the *būta*'s agency, and they learn how to respond to, and act towards, the deities. Such a reciprocal relationship between humans and deities has been the core of the transactional network in village society; in a person's relationship with a deity, one is a recipient of the deity's agency, but one is also an actor who affects his/her nonhuman partner. In the ritual process, by enticing the deity to the edge of their experiential *umwelt*, and acting as the recipients of *būta śakti*, people not only relate with the deity who temporarily manifests itself, but also act towards the realm of *māya* beyond the edge. Through this, they transform themselves into devotees of the deities.

As seen in this chapter, through the repetition of ritual practices, the company managers interacting with the deities create a transactional

network inside the industry, and they learn to behave appropriately as patrons of būta worship. Here, it is worth considering why it is not the ordinary workers but the managers who undertake this primary role. This is a question of where adikāra is in the relationship between humans, deities, and land and nature. As shown in the cases examined above, the company managers do not organise those grand rituals just to placate the local workers who worship būtas.⁵ Rather, the būta rituals should be conducted not by ordinary workers but by executives, because the latter are the representatives of the industry. As those who are responsible for the lives and safety of the workers in the industry, the executives pray to, and interact with, the deities who are the ultimate ‘owners of the land’ to which the executives are newly related. Moreover, in the rituals, the executives leave to the deities the judgement of whether they are suitable for undertaking adikāra as caretakers. At the same time, they substantialise their privileged position as representatives, just as the guttu people authorise their status through their relations with būtas. In other words, to be an executive is to undertake the role of the prime caretaker, as well as to accept the risk of becoming the object of the būta’s curse.

As seen in Chapter 7, through mutual interaction in the village būta shrine, the head of the guttu and the incarnate deity embody the ideal behaviours of *a person in relation to būtas* and as *a deity in relation to humans*, respectively. Meanwhile, it is uncommon for the incarnate deity to appear in the new ritual in the industry; rather, a priest conducting the ritual mediates the relation between the people and the invisible deities. Moreover, neither oral epics (pāḍḍana) nor customary law (kaṭṭu) authorises the būta worship in the industry. The būta worship in the industrial zone is thus fundamentally different from traditional būta worship; yet still, by imitating the behaviour of the gaḍipatināru—the traditional patron and caretaker—each executive strives to undertake the perspective of *the person in relation to the deities*.

Meanwhile, through their involvement in the transaction with deities, a sense of unity arises, even if only temporarily, among the participants in the ritual. Namely, the būta worship in the industry performatively creates a ritual community, by forming a transactional network which links various people such as priests, company managers, foreign engineers, and other employees with their nonhuman counterparts.

Through the reiteration of ritual practices, company executives come to behave as the bearers of adikāra for būtas, and other participants learn how to behave as members of the ritual community, or devotees of būtas. Linking various actors inside and beyond the industrial zone, and entailing the transformation of people’s behaviour, the transactional network is performatively formed and activated in the MSEZ. As I will consider in the next section, this is understood as the emergence of a new umwelt interrelated with the realm of the wild, even inside the industrial zone, which seems to infinitely expand in connection with the outer world.

Towards the new umwelt

In South Kanara, *būtas*, which are tied to particular lands while travelling across regions, are regarded as wild *śakti* itself. Through the transaction of offerings and blessings, *būta* worship has mediated the relationship between people and nature/deities, and has made visible the flow of *śakti* between the realm of humans and the realm of the wild. Considering the situation in the MSEZ, such as the eviction of villagers, the demolition of shrines and farmlands, and the collapse of village communities, this transactional network linking people to the realm of the wild has been cut in the expropriated land.

As seen in Chapter 12, however, even in critical situations, people's endeavours to maintain their ties with the land, nature, and deities have led to the reorganisation of the transactional network in various ways. In Kuḍubi Padavū, for instance, the movement led by villagers longing for the protection of the land and *būta* worship has brought about change in the power relations in the village community, and has created a new *būta* worship independent from the authority of the top guttu.

Meanwhile, as I examined in this chapter, the practices of the people who were newly related to the Bajpe area through their involvement in the development project also engendered change. Since most of the people involved in the industry are strangers in this area, theirs is not a project of attempting to regain an erstwhile intimate relationship with the land, nature, and deities that support their lives. Rather, they have striven to negotiate the force of technology that emerges from their activities in the industry and the wild *śakti* that lies under the expropriated land and often manifests itself through unanticipated events. For the people in the MSEZ, the extensive zone that consists of the industrial plants and the manmade colony is their experiential *umwelt*, and tragic accidents and troubles within it are perceived as the unsettling of their relation with this *umwelt*. Such fluctuation brings crises into their daily lives, and at the same time, it suggests new encounters with an unknown other.

The people in the industry perceive the deity's agency through unanticipated events, and they gradually learn how to interact with the extraordinary other in order to adjust their unsettled relation with the world. Through participating in rituals and acting as devotees, they create a reciprocal relationship with the deities inside the industry. For them, this process contains the transformation of their *umwelt*, as well as the transformation of their ways of being.

Through astrology and ritual practices following on tragic accidents, the major components of the industrial plants, such as machines, facilities, and infrastructure, are recognised as things linked to the surrounding land and nature, or the unknown realm of the wild. At the same time, the things marginalised in the industry, such as *būta* shrines and sacred flora, come to the surface, and thus the *umwelt* for the people takes on a new aspect. While the *umwelt* for the people is gradually transformed by their ritual practice, the new transactional

network which links things, humans, land, and deities creates a ritual space that performatively marks off a boundary inside the industrial zone.

It helps to imagine this situation from two shifting aerial views: if we see the MSEZ as a whole as the *ground*, it looks as though the ritual spaces are the heterogeneous *figures* that appear here and there on this ground covered by artefacts. On the contrary, if we see the surrounding land and nature as the *ground*, the MSEZ becomes the *figure*, a gigantic but fragile construction, while from the depths, numerous channels connecting the surface and the realm of the wild spread like a network, wild śakti flowing through these channels and overflowing from multiple ritual spaces.

Here, the new development of the būta worship in the industrial zone cannot be understood just as the capturing and taming of a traditional ritual by the modern system. The people organising the būta ritual inside the industry do not merely aim to placate the ordinary workers and facilitate their management by using rituals. Rather, they long to acquire the practical skills to deal with the wild śakti that is under the surface and occasionally overflows into the industrial zone. For them, conducting the būta ritual is to learn the possible ways of handling or responding to divine nature, while being keenly aware of the fragility and danger of their artificial space connected to the realm of the wild.⁶

In these situations, by superimposing their role in the industry upon that of the gaḍipatināru in a village community, the company executives attempt to become the appropriate persons for encountering the deities. Similar to the gaḍipatināru, who cares for the village shrine and conducts būta rituals to maintain the proper relationship with the deities, the company executives prepare a suitable environment for interacting with the deities, and they take responsibility for its continual care and management. Moreover, by responding to the būtas' agency manifested in rituals, they learn how to act as the partners of deities. In other words, each executive learns a way of being as a person who is not only active but also *passive* in the realm of jōga, as it is connected to the unknown realm of māya.

As seen above, while being in a position that endangers the village communities and būta worship through their promotion of the development project, the people living in the industrial zone—especially the company executives—endeavour to create a new relationship with their surroundings through interaction with deities. In this sense, similar to the villagers who struggle betwixt and between modern law and būta śakti, the inhabitants in the industrial community also live *pathisch* lives, being both autonomous and heteronomous, in the midst of the entanglements of modern technology and wild śakti emerging in the MSEZ.

Notes

- 1 Regarding the connection of modern technologies with nature, see de Laet and Mol (2000), Carse (2012), Parry (2015), and Ishii (2017).
- 2 Interview with Vādirāja Bhat on 1 February 2013.

- 3 The interview with P. Naik was conducted on 4 March 2012.
- 4 For more on the relation between ritual and performativity, see Ishii (2012).
- 5 Previous studies on rituals or exorcism in modern factories have often interpreted these rituals as a strategy by the management to placate ordinary workers (e.g. Ong 1988). Regarding this issue, see also Ishii (2017).
- 6 Regarding this, see Kimura (2016), who describes the conflicts and negotiations between locals in the Tohoku region of Japan, who recognise the danger of earthquakes and tsunamis and still long for an intimate relationship with sea, and the state, which aims to build a gigantic seawall.

14 Conclusion

Being, pathos, and the umwelt

In this book, I have investigated the lives of people in relation to bŭta worship, both through their daily social relations with each other and through their relationships with the realm of the wild, which is actualised through their interactions with deities. Throughout this investigation, I have sought to answer this book's central question: how can a person create and recreate one's umwelt and one's form of life within it through one's encounters and interactions with others, including with nonhuman beings? This question entails several key ideas that are foundational to my argument: the contingency and limitedness of every being, the inconceivability of a person's life and life-world, and the phase of *life itself* in the depths of an individual life. Before considering these issues, I will first review the theoretical perspective presented in this book.

On magical-religious practices, modernity, and beings

As seen in Chapter 1, magical-religious practice in non-Western societies has been an important theme in anthropology, and scholars have produced various studies on them. Among these studies, those focusing on the relations between modernity and the occult in non-Western societies have been especially prevalent since the 1980s (e.g. Taussig 1980; Geschiere 1997; Comaroff & Comaroff 1999; Masquelier 2002; see Boddy 1994). Most of these studies seem to share the idea that magical-religious practices in non-Western societies are incompatible with modern rational values and logics, and yet/therefore they function as criticisms of the systems and institutions that originated in the modern West. From this perspective, magical-religious practices such as magic, witchcraft, and spirit possession are inseparably linked with modern phenomena such as the penetration of capitalism, globalisation, and the intensification of neoliberalism. These practices are imagined both as symbolic protests against this modernity and as imitations of its power. At the same time, they are also imagined as somehow escaping the control and scrutiny of modern rational systems and discourses.

Meanwhile, proponents of ontological anthropology present an alternative perspective on magical-religious practices in non-Western societies (e.g. Viveiros

de Castro 2003, 2011a; Henare, Holbraad & Wastell 2007; Holbraad 2009; Pedersen 2011). These proponents first point out the necessity for anthropologists to take things in the field as they are. They emphasise the importance of people's magical-religious practices and narratives, which they believe indicate the radical alterity of others' ontological worlds. At the same time, they criticise the functionalistic view of previous studies that have analysed these phenomena as merely people's responses to, or resistance against, modernity. Rather, their aim is to describe the ontological worlds of the people in the field as they are, as radically different from the ontological world of the modern West, while maintaining these worlds as indeterminate and virtual. These ideas are resonant with the animating ideal of ontological anthropology, namely, the ontological self-determination of people in the world.

If we compare the theoretical perspectives of ontological anthropology and the antecedent studies on magical-religious phenomena in non-Western societies, we find some similarities in their arguments, though each of them certainly has a different view on these phenomena. For most of the antecedent studies, magical-religious phenomena in non-Western societies are collectively regarded as a reference point both to make suppositions about what the 'modern West' is and to illuminate its problems and faults through contrast with these phenomena. Meanwhile, in ontological anthropology, the ontological world of the people in a non-Western society is imagined as/through difference from the modern West. Their theoretical frames are dissimilar to each other in what is regarded as the basis of differentiation, whether the basis is the modern West or non-Western societies. At the same time, they are alike in that both of them link the binary of the West and the rest through their difference with each other. In addition, both of them regard the magical-religious practices in non-Western societies as incompatible with modern rationality and therefore ungraspable by modern rational thought, discourses, or systems.

The proponents of ontological anthropology, however, distinguish themselves from their antecedents by criticising the previous scholars' reductionistic analyses of magical-religious practices in non-Western societies. They refuse to interpret these phenomena only in relation to modernity, attempting instead to describe their radical alterity as it is. Taken with the accumulation and circulation of studies that take a similar theoretical stance to ontological anthropology, various effects and problems seem to have emerged. Regarding this issue, I will not repeat the critical arguments of the several anthropologists examined in Chapter 1, but will review instead just two key questions that I raised before: the question regarding the relations between modernity and people living in non-Western societies, and the question regarding the centrality of *beingexistence*.

Let us consider the first question first. Proponents of ontological anthropology have described the lives of people in non-Western societies as being in unique ontological worlds, which are radically different from the Western ontological world based on modern rationality. In doing so, they have

tended to regard magical-religious practices and narratives as indications of these societies' radical alterity. They thereby seem to preclude concrete investigation of the roles and meanings that systems and orders characteristic of the modern West might have in someone's life in a non-Western society, and how these systems and orders relate to his/her everyday activities, including magical-religious practices.

However, what most anthropologists encounter in the field today is not an ontological world that is fundamentally different from that of the modern West, but a situation in which multiple values, orders, and ways of being—with different origins, histories, and trajectories—are intertwined and affect one another, and constitute the essential part of people's lives. As seen in this book, throughout historical transitions such as colonisation and decolonisation, enactments of modern law, and shifts in policy, people in South Kanara have lived in, made use of, and even produced systems, modes of life, and social relations that exemplify values and logics with some affinity to modern rationality. At the same time, they have still lived in, used, and continuously created and recreated systems, modes of life, and social relations, such as *būta* worship and the *kuṭuma*, that embody values and logics dissimilar to those of the modern West.

These multiple systems and forces also encounter each other, contending and intertwining with one another in certain spaces and phenomena, such as *būta* shrines, law courts, matrilineal families, agricultural fields, and industrial plants. In the midst of these entanglements, people have strived to find their particular ways of life by using or following each system and force, and also by coordinating their relationships with various others. Hence, their ways of being are limited by multiple systems and orders with diverse values, logics, histories, and directions. At the same time, possibilities open in unexpected directions through their complex relationships with others. This awareness that people's lives are always limited and contingent raises the second question regarding the centrality of being/existence.

As mentioned above, proponents of ontological anthropology have insisted that we should maintain the ontological worlds of the people in the field as indeterminate and virtual, yet still consider them as real. These proponents also propose, as key ideals of anthropology, the ontological self-determination of the people in the field and the radical essentialism of taking things (or things as concepts) in the field as they are. In these propositions and the permeation of these ideas in arguments concerning the ontological turn, an interesting effect seems to have emerged. Namely, it has become apparent that phenomena in people's narratives and practices which seem irrational and imaginary from a modern-rationalistic viewpoint become substantialised as the objective reality for *them*, while being virtual for *us* in the modern West. Here, magical-religious narratives, and the phenomena expressed therein, are given the position of ontic beings/existence that indicate as well as exemplify the radical alterity of the ontological world of the Other.

As *būtas* and their *śakti* in South Kanara suggest, however, a magical-religious phenomenon is not something that is assumed to *exist* in the same way as the presence of an ontic object. Rather, it is a mode of being that is just momentarily actualised in between *not yet* and *no longer* (see von Weizsäcker 1946, p. 11; Kimura 2000, pp. 70–73). As we have seen in this book, the life-world of the people concerning *būta* worship has been formed around social relationships and institutions that form the basis of the rituals, families, and village, but this life-world is also based on concrete interactions with the deities who manifest themselves through spirit possession. In this sense, the *būtas* are certainly *real* beings for them.

This does not, however, mean that the *būtas* can exist in the same way as ontic objects. They are intangible forces that fill the unknown realm of *māya*, while linking to the realm of *jōga*, and are transitorily actualised in between these two realms. It is likely that it is precisely because these forces are so inscrutable and contingent, their forms so easily fading away (*māyaka*), that people created such magnificent rituals and sophisticated systems of worship to keep communicating with the *būta śakti*.

What we should consider further is that this inscrutability and contingency is not unique to magical-religious phenomena, but is common to any being. The forms of both human and nonhuman beings are multiply limited by various orders and forces, which they cannot foresee or determine for themselves, but at the same time, they are always open to novel transformations. Each of these forms shows a contingent mode of being that can be temporarily actualised in between *not yet* and *no longer*. When apprehend the unknowability and contingency concomitant with every being, and we try to understand people's lives in this way, it becomes necessary to consider a phase different from that of ontic being/existence. I have attempted in this book to think through how each being can be interrelated with such a phase, particularly through reference to the Gestaltkreis theory.

Pathos and the *umwelt*

Responding to von Uexküll's theoretical description of a mutually determined relationship between an organism and its *umwelt*, von Weizsäcker focused on a more unstable organism–*umwelt* relationship with his Gestaltkreis theory. This theory illuminates the duplexity and intertwining of passivity and activity. It also reveals the limitedness and transformability of the life of an organism, which is indicated in the process of the life-form of an organism as a *subject* becoming endangered by novel events and sublated into another form. He also presented the important notion of *Pathisches*, contrasted with *Onthishes* as pure life-form that appears from time to time in its relationship with the *umwelt*. *Pathisches* was conceptualised here as the primordial relationship of an organism with the *life itself* in its depths.

In contrast to the ontological anthropological perspective that tends to subsume everything into the realm of being/existence, the ideas of von

Weizsäcker suggest that one can only think of being/existence through its relationship with virtual *life itself*, which is never objectified. Through reference to these ideas, I have investigated in this book how people in rural South Kanara have created and recreated their forms of life and their relationships with their umwelt through their encounters and interactions with various others. Through this investigation, I have attempted to describe the lives of people under multiple limitations from different orders and forces, yet still open to the variability in their relationships with the *virtual*, namely, the fundamental contingency and unknowability of life, and their pathisch relationship with the realm of māya.

In between virtual and actual

The relationships between the people in rural South Kanara and the realm of the wild, relationships which form the basis of their lives, have been created and maintained by their relations with the land and nature through daily activities such as farming, hunting and gathering, and, especially, būta worship. As examined in Chapter 5, through the manifestation of būtas in the ritual and the mutual gifting of offerings and blessings between the people and the deities, the fertile and dangerous būta śakti can be actualised.

In village society, the ranks and ritual roles of families concerning the būta ritual are determined by the oral epics and customary law. At the same time, through direct interactions with the būtas who authorise these ranks and roles, the mutual rights and duties, or adikāra, of both the villagers and the deities are renewed. Moreover, through these interactions, it is confirmed that the villagers' rights and statuses are transient and depend on the approval and protection of the deities. The interactions between the villagers and the būtas in the ritual thus reveal the people's pathisch relationship with the realm of the wild, which is filled with būta śakti.

As we have seen in Chapter 6, through the mutual gifting relationship between the people and the deities, transactional networks involving various actors are created in time and space beyond that of a single būta ritual. As observed in the kambuḷa ritual in Perar, the būta śakti performatively marks geographical and social boundaries by circulating between, while also linking, the realm of the wild and the realm of humans, transferring itself in various substance-codes such as the būta in the forest, the paddy in the fields, offerings, and prasāda. By participating in the transactional network as a dividual person who receives and absorbs the būta śakti and transfers it to others, one becomes a *person* in relation to a particular family and farmland and to the forest and sacred wildness.

In Chapter 7, we investigated people's interactions with būtas and their becoming as *persons* in the exchange of, or playing with, perspectives, focusing on the experiences of spirit mediums and the gaḍipatināru. The spirit-medium, who becomes the deity in the būta ritual, modulates his body in relation to others in the realm of jōga, and learns the appropriate

behaviour of the deity through multiple mimesis. At the same time, he receives the *būta śakti* in his body as a divine grace that can be abruptly brought from the realm of *māya*. The skill of the spirit-medium is thus the art of maintaining his reflexive perspective while transforming himself into the deity. It is also the art of letting multiple perspectives play inside his body, blending autonomy and heteronomy, or activity and passivity. Again, through their interactions with the spirit medium who manifests the *būta śakti* while remaining on the border of actuality and virtuality, the *gaḍipat-ināru* and other ritual participants learn the behaviours and perspectives of *persons* intimately related with the realm of *māya*.

As we saw in Part One, *būta* worship in South Kanara is inseparably interrelated with the customary law and social relations concerning ranks, ritual roles, matriliney, and land tenure in village society. The continuation of the *būta* ritual is based on the maintenance and renovation of these systems and social relations. At the same time, through their perception of *būta śakti* and their pathisch relationship with the realm of *māya*, people's social relations and forms of life in the realm of *jōga* are formed, modulated, and transformed. Therefore, one's life-form and relationship with others in the realm of *jōga*, or a person's experiential *umwelt*, can emerge and be continuously recreated as that which is inseparable from *būta śakti* and the realm of *māya*, which is beyond the fluid verges of the realm of *jōga*.

At the same time, the relations among various actors in the realm of *jōga* are never stable. The life-forms of people and their *umwelts* are incessantly transformed through their encounters with novel events and actors, as we examined in Part Two.

Modernity, wildness, and *būta* worship

The introduction of the centralised administration of religious institutions, the modernisation of customary law, the execution of censuses and land reforms, and the advance of massive developmental projects represent the major social and institutional changes that rural societies in South Kanara have experienced since the colonial period. These changes are, in a sense, the processes through which the values and logics that comprise modernity have been realised in the lives of ordinary people.

For instance, policies such as the enforcement of modern law, the execution of censuses, and the registration of landowners enabled the state to manage and govern local communities and populations more efficiently. At the same time, by elucidating the particular ways and conditions regarding how and when the state and the courts would grant rights, these projects encouraged people to actively participate in the modern system of governance.

These social and institutional changes enabled new ideas and norms, such as legal rights and duties, management and accountability, rationalisation, and democratisation, to come to the fore in every aspect of people's daily lives, as they encountered novel agents such as government officials, judges

in courts, land tribunals, and so forth. Moreover, recent developmental projects have led to changes in, and even the dissolution of, existing systems and relationships in rural societies; they have cut vital linkages between villagers and the land, and they have occasioned new ways of life that are not directly related to land and nature, let alone dependent on them. In Part Two, we investigated multiple aspects of people's practices and actions under these comprehensive social changes, focusing on the relationships between people, land and nature, and *būtas*.

As seen in Chapter 8, with the development of the centralised administration of religious institutions beginning in the nineteenth century, the village *būta* shrine in Perar became subject to governance and management by the state and modern law. In this process, some people involved with the *būta* ritual tried to expand their rights and interests by using modern law and systems. Meanwhile, the higher-ranked *guttus*, who had previously been in charge of shrine management based on promises with the *būtas*, were urged to legitimise these management rights and duties according to the logic and framework of modern law and systems. Moreover, some villagers have recently started to demand the democratisation of shrine management based on modern law. In these circumstances, people have pursued new ways and roles in relationship with others, following both the orders of the law courts that embody modern law and logics and the wishes of the *būtas*, who regulate people's relations under the *kaṭṭu* and manifest themselves as the supreme *persons* in the ritual.

The disputes between the *guttu* family and the management committee concerning the village *būta* shrine in Perar provide a clear illustration both of the turmoil and conflicts among the villagers, which unfolded under multiple restrictions, and of the process of the reorganisation of their social relations. As we saw in Chapter 8, in the practices of the people dealing with multiple forces and logics, the relations between the plaintiffs and defendants determined by the law court could be transformed into a relationship among devotees who share the *adikāra* towards the *būtas*. It was also observed that the legal disputes and negotiations among the people were often directed by the *būtas*' agency. After the significant struggles and efforts of the villagers who used modern law while also being directed by the *būta śakti*, it was finally decided that they would establish a new organisation for *būta* worship, one based on the *kaṭṭu*, deities' order, and modern law.

In South Kanara, both the land and the *kuṭuma* have been places in/over which the *kaṭṭu* and modern law have interfered with each other, becoming intertwined and entangled. As we have seen in Chapter 10, the stipulation and legalisation of matriliney in South Kanara, which developed from the colonial period to the 1960s, urged the *guttus* in rural areas to reorganise their relations with the land and *kuṭuma*. These changes initiated a process in which the *kuṭuma*, which had been a part of the transactional network of people, land and nature, and deities as a *dividual person*, was redefined as an

‘indivisible community of property’ and cut off from the transactional network. Moreover, this was a process that led to the dissolution of the kuṭuma and the dispersion of family land by defining the subject with the right to the kuṭuma’s property as an *individual*.

For a guttu family who had managed vast lands based on the kuṭuma, to cope with these demands from modern law meant to reorganise and redefine the kuṭuma, which had originally been a complex community related to the guttu house, land and nature, and deities, as an economic unit constituted by several sub-groups as the aggregates of individuals. It became inevitable for the guttu family to use legal means to secure family members’ rights to the kuṭuma land in order to maintain the resources necessary for the continuation of the kuṭuma and būta ritual as well, even though it entailed the risk of the family land being dispersed.

For instance, in his plan proposed around 1950, Muttaya Shetty attempted to divide and inherit the family land to each kabaru headed by a female elder. This plan was in conformity with the then law, and at the same time, it enabled the kuṭuma to keep the land in accordance with the customary matriliney. As this case shows, due to social and institutional changes, it became necessary for the guttu people to use modern law and systems appropriately in order to retain the kuṭuma land, continue the būta ritual, and maintain their vital relationship with the realm of the wild.

However, if we look back further in history, we see that the Aliyasantana law was also formed through the encounter of modern law with the aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu practised in South Kanara and by the accumulation of precedents in the courts. Beginning with the codification of the legend of Būtura Pandya, the aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu transformed from the prohibition of kuṭumba property partitioning to the approval of individual rights to divided property. This was the process by which ordinary people came to use and obey modern law, and, at the same time, was the process that the people concerned in the judicature and lawsuits reconstructed the aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu reflexively by referring to precedents and acquiring knowledge about concrete cases in the courts.

Meanwhile, as seen in Chapter 11, the enactment of land reforms was an event that surfaced the inconsistencies and tensions within social relations based on customary law, particularly through people’s encounters and negotiations with modern law and systems. It was mainly the tension between the duties of the kuṭuma to maintain family land and the desire of individuals to establish their own land rights. In order to resolve this tension, people tried one way after another to maintain their existing relationships with family, land, and deities, while also using modern law. When the Karnataka Land Reforms (Amendment) Act was enacted, some of the guttu members planned to establish their land rights while trying to prevent tenants from acquiring rights to parts of their kuṭuma land. By applying for rights to the ‘grandfather’s land’ belonging to a kabaru, they strived to reconcile their duty to save the kuṭuma land with their pursuit of individual rights.

Contrary to the expectations of the government, land reform did not just mean the transition of land rights from landowners to tenants. Rather, it became a critical event for villagers in which the continuance of the vital relationships between the people and būtas on particular lands was at stake. Therefore, some tenants withdrew their applications for land rights for fear of the būtas' curse, and others who had newly acquired land rights begged the būtas for permission and approval for undertaking the adikāra towards the land and deities.

As seen in Chapters 12 and 13, the advance of massive developmental projects was another critical event that shook the existing relationships between the people, land and nature, and deities. At the same time, it was an event that revealed in various ways how people and the realm of the wild are interrelated.

In rural societies in South Kanara, the advance of the developmental projects and land acquisition unsettled existing systems and complex relations, such as matriliney, land tenure, būta worship, and the ranks and duties of families. In the critical situation of the dissolution of a village community, some of the guttus sought new interests and endeavoured to rebuild the community in a new place, while other guttus and villagers opposed the land acquisition and strived to maintain their ties with the land and deities. In any case, people struggled to search for new ways of life and novel relationships with their umwelt.

In the Kuḍubi plateau in Permude village, for instance, people with various interests and backgrounds struggled for land rights and rights to the būta ritual. Through tensions and turmoil between the immigrants and original inhabitants instigated by the developmental project, villagers eventually created a new form of the būta ritual that ordinary villagers, instead of the powerful guttu family, took charge of the ritual for royal būtas in the village. This case shows the process of how encounters and interactions among various actors, including guttus, former tenants, company managers, politicians, social activists, and religious leaders, created a novel relationship of the people with their umwelt, all the while being partially directed by the būtas' agency.

In critical situations such as the intrusion of massive developmental projects, būta worship has thus played a vital role for the people in village societies to maintain and recreate their relationships with the land, nature, and the realm of the wild. As seen in Chapter 13, this is even true for the people promoting the developmental project too.

In South Kanara, land has long been the site of encounters and struggles among different orders and forces. Industrial plants, meanwhile, are places where different forces can come into contact and interfere with each other more directly, as shown in the case of a space that had originally been regarded as a pathway for būtas became a distribution channel for manmade materials and forces. Confronting various critical accidents and problems, some of the workers in the industrial plant grew aware of the būta śakti in

the depths of the industrial zone, and they decided to conduct rituals as a measure to mediate between the *būta śakti* and artificial forces. Through their endeavours to interact with the surrounding land, nature, and deities in the ritual, those responsible for the management of the industrial plant came to learn the appropriate behaviours of devotees or patrons undertaking the *adikāra* towards the land and *būtas*. Likewise involved in the transfer of offerings and blessings in the *būta* ritual, ordinary employees also took part in the formation of the transactional network linking the industrial plant, land and nature, and the realm of the wild, and thus learned the behaviours of *būta* devotees.

The investigation in Chapter 13 showed that novel ritual practices, which seem to imitate village *būta* rituals, have developed in industrial plants. However, this does not mean that the special economic zone regulated by a modern system and technology has subsumed the wild *būtas* and tamed their power.

As we have seen, in village society, the *pathisch* relationship of villagers with the realm of the wild is confirmed and revitalised through their direct interactions with *būtas* in the ritual. Similarly, in industrial plants too, the frailty contained in manmade structures linked to nature and the realm of the wild has been brought to the fore, and the practice of the *būta* ritual has illuminated the contingency and uncertainty of the workers' lives there. The ritual practices of the people in the industrial plants thus suggest their awareness of the inscrutability of their life-world and the *pathisch* aspects of their lives and reveal part of their ventures to form and modulate their relationship with nature and wild *śakti*, which could variously affect the vicissitudes of their lives.

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As seen in this book, for people living in rural South Kanara, the *būta* ritual, which is inseparably related to social relations, land and nature, and customary law and systems, has been what mediates as well as embodies the vital relationship between humans and the realm of the wild. The relationship of people with their *umwelt* has been formed and continuously transformed both by their daily social relations in the realm of *jōga* and by their relationship with the realm of *māya*, the latter of which can be actualised through the *būta* ritual.

At the same time, from the colonial period onwards, rural societies in South Kanara have experienced various changes and transformations that can generically be called 'modernisation'. These processes of transformation have compelled villagers to reorganise and modify their existing social relations and modes of life by introducing novel systems and manners that exemplify different values and logics, and by making all of these function within concrete social relations. People have experienced these transformations and novel encounters with others as a crisis that has unsettled the

existing social relations and modes of being. At the same time, they have perceived these changes as opportunities, through renegotiations and conjunctions of customary systems and social relations, for fresh relationships with others in the realm of *jōga*, or their everyday life-world.

Under multiple orders and forces that have directed as well as restricted their acts and practices, people have mediated their relationships with various others and re-formed their ways of life, and this has often involved dispute and conflict. Simultaneously, they have strived to maintain and recreate their vital relationship with the deities and the realm of the wild. Through their autonomous as well as heteronomous practices which contain the potential for transformation while remaining under multiple limitations, people's relationship with the realm of the wild has directed their modes of life. This is the relationship from which the life-form of each being can emerge, and it is the relationship which enables the continuance of the *Lebenskreis*, or circle of life, beyond individuals.

Waiting for deities

The practices of people concerning *būta* worship contain a seemingly contradictory duality as a fundamental entanglement. In the realm of *jōga*, in which various beings are intermingled and multiple orders and forces are entangled, people's activities and decision-making in forming their ways of life always occur within the duality of autonomy and heteronomy, or activity and passivity. Indeed, the life of a person who pursues a way of being in the realm of *jōga*, while deferring to his/her relationship with the realm of *māya* for how his/her life will be formed and transformed, exists in the duality of *Ontisches* and *Pathisches* from the very beginning. This suggests not only that the world around people that is never fully comprehensible contains both the phase of actuality and the phase of virtuality, but also that these phases have already been embraced in the life of each person.

In seeing the deity and being seen by her, and in transferring the *būta śakti* flowing in the transactional network, one becomes aware that the vague verges of the realm of *jōga* is not the end of the world, but one that leads into the unknown realm of *māya*. With a sense of such a *pathisch* contact with sacred wildness, one may become aware of also embracing the unknown realm within oneself, which is interrelated to *life itself* and therefore cannot be fully understood.

If the above is the case, then the experience of the *būta* medium, who transforms himself into the deity by receiving the *būta śakti* while keeping his own perspective, does not just indicate a very special way of encountering or confronting the self and the other. Rather, it dramatically shows the very *ordinary* way of a person's transformation through his/her entanglement with *life itself*.

Through this transformation, a person gradually weakens the intensity of his/her self as subject, and, at the same time, leaves him/herself open to the

forces coming from the realm of the virtual inside as well as outside him/herself by disclosing the pathisch aspect in his/her body. Still, this transformation does not proceed in total disorder, but is directed by the existing form of one's self, one's relationships with intimate others, and the anticipation of the becoming through transformation. These may well be the elements that help a person to remain on the verge of the actual and the virtual without completely losing his/her reflexive self, even in the midst of a transformation filled with pathos.

The transformation from the ontisch mode to the pathisch mode of life, just in between the realms of *jōga* and *māya*, is not only experienced by a medium at the moment of spirit possession, but can be sensed in the subtler, more indeterminate attitudes or postures of ordinary people. For the last episode in this book, I will introduce one of my own small experiences that suggest the subtle, quiet transformation of a person.

On 24 February 2016, the last day of the *nēma* in Perar, I awoke at 1 am to wait for a car to take me to the ritual for *Pilicāmuṇḍi*, which would be starting before dawn. Though it had seemed at first that nobody would take me to the shrine so early, one of the *gaḍipatināru*'s grandsons had offered to drive me to the shrine along with his grandfather. At around 2 am, I finally heard the sound of a car come from the end of an agricultural field and stop in front of the house. I walked into the front yard, which was illuminated by the full moon. The tall and thin figure of the *gaḍipatināru*, who stayed over at the *Muṇḍabettu guttu*'s house during the *nēma*, appeared from the shadows of the old house to take his seat in the car. I got in after the *gaḍipatināru*, and his grandson began driving us to the village *būta* shrine. There were no other cars on the street and only the wind resounded in my ears.

After a while, the village *būta* shrine, decorated with colourful illuminations, appeared out of the dark of the night. The inside of the shrine precincts were brightly lit, but the surroundings were cast in darkness. The precincts were deserted when we arrived. The *gaḍipatināru* then sat on one of the chairs for the *guttu* heads, which were set in front of an altar decorated gorgeously with flowers and illuminations. I sat on a stone step on the corner, put on a cardigan to ward off the chill of the night air of the dry season, and looked around the precinct. I saw the *gaḍipatināru*, in only a loincloth with a white cloth over his bare shoulders, sitting still.

During the *nēma*, the *gaḍipatināru* is expected to stay at the shrine the entire time and to wait for the start of a ritual for several hours, thus preventing him from getting enough food and sleep. Once a ritual starts, he should then accompany the deities, respond to their every word and action, evoke and appease the powers of possession, and listen to oracles lasting for hours.

With this in mind, I marvelled at the fact that the *gaḍipatināru* is already over 80.

Looking at the back of his head, which was covered with the white cloth, I noted how his back remained straight and he did not stir an inch. I, meanwhile, repeatedly dozed off and awoke as I waited. Time was passing slowly.

Eventually, another human figure appeared in the precinct. I saw Jayānanda sit cross-legged in a corner and start preparing himself to become Pilicāmuṇḍi in the upcoming ritual. He offered a brief prayer at the altar, lit a small light, and made up his face using a small hand-mirror. After a while, one of the ritual workers walked up to the altar to add oil to the votive light and exchanged a couple words with the gaḍipatināru. The sky was still dark, the precinct was still silent, and each person there was silently pursuing his duties while awaiting what was approaching.

What were they waiting for?

The start of the ritual. The coming of the deities.

The encounter of humans and deities, the verges of the umwelt, and the boundary between the realms of jōga and māya—when I think about the *between* of the actual and the virtual, which I have named in various ways in this book, I always recall not only the manifestation of deities from the realm of māya in the realm of jōga, but also the ways in which people quietly transfer themselves from the realm of jōga to its verges.

Inside the precinct that night, the gaḍipatināru was sitting still in front of the altar. Jayānanda was peering at his mirror, concentrating on making up his face to become a deity. They were present in the same time and space, not exchanging a word, suspending all the disputes and troubles in their daily lives. Both of them were just waiting for the coming of the deity. It was not yet coming, but they anticipated it would be soon, and they knew that the deity would need their help to manifest itself.

In this way, encounters of humans and deities occur not only as deities' visits from the realm of māya, but also as people's approaches to the verges of the realm of jōga. The *between* of the actual and the virtual gradually appears from within, or soaks through, their serene works of preparation and attitudes of waiting. It is like a slight scent or a vague atmosphere, something too subtle to call *radical alterity* or to name *being/existence*.

As we have seen in this book, the certainty of the deity's manifestation in spirit possession and the power of divine orders have been able to actualise būta śakti before people's eyes, and thus to show them the pathisch aspects of their lives in relation to the realm of the wild. At the same time, the attitudes of the people who concentrate on something yet to come and just tranquilly sink into the realm of māya seem to better illustrate the pathisch relationship between humans, deities, and the realm of the wild. The figures of Jayānanda and the gaḍipatināru simply waiting for the coming of the deities in the quiet precinct are especially suggestive of one's experience of being in between the realms of jōga and māya. They show the experience

of temporarily leaving one's ordinary *self* in the realm of *jōga*, approaching the realm of *māya* by giving over oneself to pathos, yet still keeping oneself to the realm of *jōga* by being a *person* in relationship with intimate others.

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The life-world of the villagers and land and nature, *būta śakti* and the realm of the wild, and the orders and forces of modernity: I have attempted in this book to describe the relationships between the lives of the people in rural South Kanara and their *umwelt* as the dynamic and ever-changing interactions of humans and nonhumans in the entanglement of such elements. This attempt shows that investigating the relationships between people and their *umwelt* is nothing but the turning of our eyes to the limit, or critical phase, of the *umwelt*. In other words, our endeavour is not only to understand how the world in which people live their everyday lives with various beings *is*, but also to come close to the vague verges of the world and look into the depths with the people longing to interact with the *śakti* that fills the unknown realm of *māya*.

Therefore, the ethnography of the *umwelt* is also the ethnography of the virtual beyond its borders. The forms of people's lives and their *umwelts* do not just exist there, but are always becoming. They are transformed together again and again through momentary encounters and interactions between actors in the realm of *jōga* and virtue or *śakti* in the realm of *māya*, encounters and interactions occurring at the obscure and transforming verges of the *umwelt*.



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Glossary

Abbreviations of languages: Ka.—Kannaḍa; Ma.—Malayālam; Skt.—Sanskrit (other unmarked local terms are from Tuḷu)

Ācāri caste group whose members follow a patrilineal system and have traditionally made their living as carpenters.

adikāra (Skt. adhikāra) authority, power; rank, post, office; administration, governing; responsibility.

Ādi Draviḍa original Dravidian.

Āgalu guttu name of a guttu family belonging to Tenka Yekkar village.

āja an oath; swearing; curse.

ajjererūḍu baidena property inherited from grandfather (maternal ancestral property).

ākaraṣaṇe attraction; a ritual to invoke a spirit.

Alake guttu the fifth-ranked guttu family in Perar.

aḷiya nephew; son-in-law.

aḷiyasantāna kaṭṭu (aḷiyakaṭṭu) matrilineal system of inheritance.

Āḷupa (Āḷuva) name of the royal family in South Kanara in the early Āḷupa period.

Āḷuvarasa name of a ruler in South Kanara in the early Āḷupa period.

ame period of ceremonial impurity after child birth, usually spanning three, seven, ten, sixteen, forty-one, or forty-eight days.

aṇi a kind of ornamental halo-like adornment made of areca spathes, cloth, tender coconut leaves, or metal materials, and worn on the back by a būta dancer.

aramanege saluva bhaṇḍāra-sṭhaḷa villages and cultivable land owned by the state in the Vijayanagara period.

Arasu (Īstadēvate, uḷḷākḷu) one of the primary būtas in the village būta shrine in Perar.

aruḍala a lace-like design painted on the face of a būta dancer-medium.

asrāṇṇa a Brahman priest serving at the shrine to Bramma in Perar.

aṣṭamaṅgala praśne an astrological method of asking questions, involving the placement of eight kinds of auspicious things, such as a lamp, mirror, gold, milk, curds, fruits, etc.

- asudda (Skt. *aśuddha*)** ritual pollution, ceremonial impurity.
- āti** the period from mid-July to mid-August in the Tuḷu calendar.
- āvēśa** possession by spirits or other supernatural powers; subservience; zeal, enthusiasm; happiness.
- baccire** the betel leave, *Piper betle*.
- bagayat** land suitable for cultivation of areca nuts and coconuts.
- bailu (bayilu)** a plain, a region with a multitude of rice fields, a wet land; fertile fields situated on a low land.
- bakimāru** a large open field at the doorstep; field in front of a house, usually growing one crop.
- Balavāṇḍi** one of the primary būtas of the village būta shrine in Perar.
- bālu** life, subsistence; land wealth in the Āḷupa period.
- baṇḍārada koṭya** the house where the sacred ornaments and other ritual objects of the būtas are kept.
- Baṇḍāri** caste group whose members have traditionally made their living as barbers.
- Baṇṭa (Baṇṭeru, Okkelakuḷu)** one of the dominant caste groups in South Kanara.
- Baṇṭakamba** the holy place at which Balavāṇḍi, the primary deity in Perar, is believed to have appeared.
- Bārakūru rājya** one of the two parts of South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period.
- bari** descent, clan, lineage, race, family, kith, and kin.
- bārne** a ritual in which food and drink are offered to the deity.
- basava** white cow.
- baṭṭalu kāṇike kambuḷa** one of the kambuḷa rituals dedicated to the būtas and organised by the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu in Perar.
- Baṭṭru/Brahman** caste group.
- Belcaḍe** caste group.
- beśa** the period from mid-May to mid-June in the Tuḷu calendar.
- bhaṇḍāra-sthaḷa** villages and cultivable land owned by the state in the Vijayanagara period; land which was not tax-free in Kanara in the medieval period.
- bharti** one of the holdings classified by the collector H. Viveash in 1834, on which it was possible to pay all the tax levied by the fixed assessment.
- bhukti (Skt. *bhukti*)** enjoyment, pleasure, ownership.
- birāvu** a silver stick.
- boḷgoḍe** a small decorated umbrella used in temple processions.
- Bolinji Guḍḍe** Bolinji Mountain.
- bōntelu** the period from mid-October to mid-November in the Tuḷu calendar.
- boṭṭu (beṭṭu)** land located at a higher level than bailu, and dry except for during the rainy season, which is suitable for single cropping.
- brahmakalaśa** a purification ritual undertaken when a deity's statue is enshrined.

- Bramma (Bermeru, Brammabermeru, Brammadēvaru, Nāgabramma)** the deity regarded as the highest-ranked būta in the village būta shrine in Perar; the deity is often identified with the Hindu god Brahma.
- brammaliṅga** a stone statue enshrined in the Bramma shrine in Perar.
- brammerē guṇḍa (Bramma guṇḍa)** a shrine to Bramma in the village shrine in Perar.
- Brāṇabeṭṭu guttu (Bernotte guttu)** the second-ranked guttu family in Perar.
- būta** apotheosised local heroes or heroines, or the spirits of wild animals dwelling in forests, which are generally regarded as deities.
- būta kallu** a būta's stone.
- būta pattuṇḍu** attraction of or possession by a būta.
- būta śakti** a būta's power.
- būtoda upadro** misfortunes caused by būtas.
- cākiridakulu** workers serving the village būta shrine in Perar.
- cāla gēṇi** tenants employed on the basis of annual or seasonal contracts.
- carva** pedestal used in the būta ritual.
- cāvaḍi** open hall in a traditional manor house in South Kanara; an administrative unit in South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period.
- Chandrashekara** the name of a king who appears in the oral epic of Perar.
- daiva** an honorific for a būta.
- daivada jāḡu** the land believed to belong to a būta dwelling in the land.
- daivaśakti** a deity's power.
- Dakṣiṇa Kannaḍa** South Kanara.
- darśana (Skt.)** a particular type of blessing from the deity, conveyed through the eyes.
- darśana** vision, sight; trembling due to possession by deities.
- dēśa** the largest administrative unit in South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period.
- dēva paṭṭe** land transfer made in a deity's name, in which the deity held proprietary rights.
- dharma (Skt. dhārma)** ordinance, law; usage, practice, duty; virtue, morality.
- dōlu** double-headed drum.
- Durgā** one of the Hindu goddesses, who is believed to be the wife of the god Shiva.
- enelu** the first crop planted in the month of beśa.
- enne detonuni** the ritual in which Balavāṇḍi receives sacred oil.
- gaḍi** boundary, limit, frontier; authority, ownership, headship, responsibility.
- gaḍipatināru** the person who takes authority/responsibility (*gaḍi*); the primary patron of the village būta shrine in Perar.
- gaggara** sacred anklets worn by a būta dancer-medium.
- gaggara decci** the initial dance of a būta dancer-medium wearing sacred anklets.

- gaggara dīpuni** the dance of a būta dancer-medium as a part of the yearly ritual.
- gandha** the sandalwood tree; the scent of flowers and sandalwood paste.
- gēṇi** the share of agricultural produce or amount paid by tenants or cultivators to land owners; land tenancy or rent paid to landholders by tenants in South Kanara in the Āḷupa period.
- gēṇi okkelu** a tenant.
- grāma** a village; an administrative unit in South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period.
- grāmada daiva** a village deity.
- grāmani** a title for village administrative officers in the Vijayanagara period.
- guḍḍe** a small hill, forest.
- Guliga** name of a būta.
- guttu** a manor house, the family responsible for organising the rituals in a village; an administrative unit in a village in South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period.
- inām (ināmu)** a gift, presentation; tax-free land.
- innūrāla arasu** king over two hundred people.
- jaḡattu** one of the village administrative organisations in South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period.
- jāgeda daiva** land būtas thought to dwell in the land.
- Jain** followers of Jainism. Jain landlords exercised power in administrative districts called māgaṇe in South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period.
- jakkelāṇi** a crescent-shaped flat decoration made of coconut leaves, worn across the waist of a būta dancer-medium.
- janasaṅkyepālu** division of property on the basis of population.
- jāruḍe** the period from mid-November to mid-December in the Tuḷu calendar.
- jāti** caste group.
- jōga** physical world, human form, existence, reality; ecstasy, possession by spirits or gods.
- jōga āpini** manifestation of būtas in spirit possession.
- Jōgile Bailu** Jōgi's Plain.
- Jumādi** one of the powerful būtas in South Kanara.
- kabarū (Ka. kavalu)** a sub-group of the matrilineal joint family called kuṭuma.
- kabarūpālu** division of property on the basis of kabarū.
- kadar mudi** a long board which is a part of the costume of Arasu.
- kaddatams** 'black books' with revenue reports over several centuries, which Thomas Munro insisted be maintained in Kanara.
- kaḍsale** a silver sword used by the mukkāldi in the būta ritual.
- kalaśanīru** sacred water in a pot.
- kalaśasnāna (kalaśasuddhi)** purification ritual for būta priests and dancer-mediums conducted by a Brahman priest.
- kaḷase** a local measure of volume of grain equal to ten or fourteen sēru.

- kāli okkelu** domestic labourers who lived on landlords' estates and performed a variety of tasks.
- kallāla** an interim priest for the kambuḷa ritual in Perar.
- Kallurṭi** name of a lower-ranked (kāṭu) būta.
- Kallurṭi Pañjūrli** name of a būta.
- kambharti** one of the holdings classified by the collector H. Viveash in 1834, on which it was not possible to pay all the tax levied by the fixed assessment.
- kambuḷa (kambaḷa)** a buffalo race in a paddy field or river canal; a field in which the buffalo race takes place; a ritual performed in the rice field for fertility.
- kañciḷ bali** a ritual held for children's health and for the resolution of family problems.
- Kandettāya** one of the five būtas standing one rank below the three royal būtas.
- kānike** tax paid by buyers of land to the state treasury in the Keladi Nāyaka period.
- Kāntiri Jumādi** name of a būta.
- kāraṇikeru** a man with supernatural powers.
- kaṭṭale** custom, practice; order, rule, commandment, regulation; habit, convention.
- katterimane** a wooden couch used in the būta ritual.
- kaṭṭu** custom, heritage, observance; law, rule, regulation; traditional, customary.
- kaṭṭu kaṭṭale** customs and traditions.
- kaṭṭu-kaṭṭuleda āvāra** a ritual of offering food to a deity according to custom.
- kāṭu** wild, rough, rude; uncultured; untamed.
- kāṭu būta** the wild, untamed būtas.
- Kavaramane guttu** the highest-ranked guttu family in Tenka Yekkar village.
- kēpla** a flowering plant, *Ixora coccinea*.
- kesaruḷkallu pāḍuni** a ceremony of laying a foundation stone.
- Kinnimajāḷu** the general name of the place consisting of the Baṅṭakamba, village būta shrine, and treasury in Perar.
- Koḍamaṇittāya** name of a būta.
- koḍi jāpuni** a ritual involving taking down a flag held on the final night of the nēma.
- koḍiyaḍi** an altar on the premises of a būta shrine.
- kola** būta ritual.
- kolake** the third crop planted in the month of puyintelu.
- kōlu** a stick.
- koṃbu** a wind instrument.
- Koratāi Balardi** a Jain woman who was said to be the head of the Muṇḍabeṭṭu guttu.

- Kuḍubi (Kuḍubi-Gauḍa)** caste group whose members follow the patrilineal system and whose ancestors are said to have come from Goa.
- kudure** a wooden horse used in the būta ritual.
- kumeru** high and dry land where several kinds of vegetables suitable for arid land are cultivated.
- kumki** a portion of forest or uncultivated land from which the cultivator or owner of nearby land has the privilege of using wood as well as leaves and twigs for manure, fodder, etc.
- kuṭuma (Ka. kuṭumba)** a matrilineal joint family, a lineage; a group of relatives who practise the customary observances related to births and deaths in a family.
- kuṭumada būmi** traditional family land.
- kuṭumada daiva** būtas worshipped by the members of a joint family.
- Lingayat** one of the dominant landlord castes in Karnataka.
- māḍa** a shrine for Arasu in the village būta shrine in Perar; a bell used by the mukkāldi in the būta ritual.
- maḍalu muḍepuni** ritual ornaments made from coconut fronds that symbolise farmland greenery.
- Maḍḍyeḷe (Maḍivāḷa)** caste group whose members follow a matrilineal system and traditionally have been engaged in washing clothes.
- madhyastha** a title for village administrative officers in the Vijayanagara period.
- maḍi** cleanliness, purity; ritual purity.
- madumālū** a bride; a pubescent female.
- madyaste** the head of the second manor or guttu family in Perar.
- māgaṇe** a medium-sized administrative unit in South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period.
- mahālaya** the offerings and obsequies made to ancestors during the second fortnight of the sixth lunar month.
- mahālaya amāse** the new moon day of the mahālaya fortnight.
- majalu** land suitable for double cropping.
- makkaḷa kaṭṭu** patrilineal system of inheritance.
- makkaḷa santāna** inheritance from father to son.
- malpāvunāye** the manager of the būta ritual at the family level.
- mañcāvu** a cot; a būta altar.
- maṇḍala** the largest administrative unit in South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period.
- mane daiva** būtas worshipped by the members of a household.
- Maṅgalūru (Mangaluru)** the town of Mangalore; one of the capitals of South Kanara.
- Maṅgalūru rājya** one of the two parts of South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period.
- Maṅgāra** the old name of Mangaluru.
- māni** a būta medium.
- Manibottu Brammēru** name of the deity enshrined in a shrine in Kaje.

- manjotti** a place near the kambuḷa field.
- Manṣa** caste group.
- Mantradēvate** one of the būtas categorised as kāṭṭu būta, or the wild, un-tamed būta.
- Māri** village goddess considered to be the presiding deity of epidemic diseases; small pox.
- marumakkattāyam** the form of matriliney that prevailed among the Nayars in Kerala.
- māya** mystery, disappearance.
- māya āpuni** vanishing of deities.
- māyagarlu** intangible entities.
- māyaka** vanishing, fleeting, passing away, disappearing.
- māya maḷpuni** making someone disappear.
- māyi** the period from mid-February to mid-March in the Tuḷu calendar.
- mayilige** ritual pollution, ceremonial impurity.
- mittakare** highland; the elevated area of a village or plain.
- moktēsare** a trustee, manager of a temple; a principal resident of a village.
- Moyli (Sapalya, Sērigāre, Dēvaḍige)** caste group whose members follow a matrilineal system.
- mṛtyuñjayahōmo** a ritual for saving lives.
- muḍi** a measure of grain, etc., amounting to about 39 kilograms or 42 seers.
- muḍi gēṇi** a unit of weight of paddy paid as rent.
- muga** a mask made of metal or areca-palm spathe.
- muga pattuni (muga dīpuni)** a ritual in which a Maḍḍyeḷe worker ties the mask of Pilicāmuḍi onto the centre of aṇi.
- mukkāldi** a būta medium-priest; one of the village administrative organisations in the Vijayanagara period.
- mukkālḷu mūji gaḷige** a period of time lasting for three seconds.
- mūla** a root, origin; family; main, principal, original; hereditary, customary.
- mūla gēṇi** families of tenants working on a particular piece of land over several generations.
- mūla hakkḷu** ownership of land.
- mūla stāna** a place of origin.
- mūlawargdār** original or hereditary holder of an estate or warg.
- mūliga** farmers who permanently borrowed cultivable land from land owners in the Āḷupa period.
- Muṇḍabeṭṭu (Muṇḍoṭṭu) guttu** the highest-ranked guttu family in Perar.
- mūve rullākulu oṇji mañcāvuḍu ullerḷu** three uḷḷākḷu on one couch.
- mūverullākule cāvaḍi** hall for the three kings.
- Nādu** the name of an earlier avatar of Balavāṇḍi.
- naḍu cōrṇa** a red banner used in the būta ritual.
- nāḍu** one of the administrative units in South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period.

- nāga (Nāga)** snake, cobra; deity in the form of a serpent.
- nāgabana** a grove reserved for Nāga shrines.
- nāgamañḍala** a night-long ritual dedicated to the Nāgas.
- nāgarapañcami** a ritual to the Nāgas performed by a Brahman priest in the month of āti.
- Nalike** caste group whose members have played the role of būta dancer-mediums in South Kanara.
- navaratna** nine precious gems.
- nēji** young rice plants.
- Nellidādi guttu** the fourth-ranked guttu family in Bajpe village.
- nēma** the annual festival of a būta shrine, conducted with great pomp.
- nēma decci** a part of the performance of dancer-mediums in the nēma; shivering of the būta dancer-medium's body during the nēma.
- nirnāla** the period from mid-September to mid-October in the Tuḷu calendar.
- nissaṃtati (Ka.)** childless.
- nissaṃtati kavalu (Ka.)** a kavalu that has no female member under the age of 50 years and is hence regarded as having no possibility of maintaining the matrilineal line.
- niṣṭe** firmness, devotion, being devout.
- niyama (Skt. niyama)** rules and regulations, system, order; religious observance; a rule, law.
- niyama niṣṭe** devoting oneself to the rule.
- nuḍi korpuni** blessings.
- nuḍikaṭṭu** prophecy uttered by the būta incarnated in a medium; words of judgement and instruction; reply given to the devotee's problems, complaints, etc.
- nuga** a yoke.
- okkalu** the smallest administrative unit in South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period.
- okkelu** tenancy; agricultural tenancy; a tenant.
- oñjappa jōkulu** the children of one mother.
- pāḍdana** oral epic.
- padiari pattuni** the ritual held in the evening of the day prior to the nēma.
- paggu** the period from mid-April to mid-May in the Tuḷu calendar.
- Pambada** caste group whose members follow a matrilineal system and have played the roles of dancers as well as mediums of the higher-ranked būtas in South Kanara.
- Pañbaderē Kōdi** Pambada's Hilltop.
- pañcalōha** an alloy of five metals, such as copper, brass, tin, lead, and iron.
- pañcāmṛta abhiṣeka** five kinds of liquids poured onto the stone of Nāga during nāgarapañcami.
- paniku kulluni** a ritual held during the kambuḷa ritual in Perar.
- Pañjūrli** name of a būta.
- pāpe** a statue.

- parake** a vow made to perform certain rituals or to offer gifts to deities.
- Parava** caste group whose members have played the role of būta dancer-mediums in South Kanara.
- parva** auspicious day on which festivals and rituals are held.
- pātri (māni)** a būta medium.
- paṭṭa** royal jurisdiction; land deed.
- paṭṭadār** landholder; holder of land deed.
- paṭṭadārti** female landholder; holder of land deed.
- patteru** honourable members or elders of a village; head of a village.
- paṭṭe** record of right to landed property; registered document.
- paṭṭi** land donated to religious institutions in South Kanara in the Keladi Nāyaka period.
- Pejattāya** a Brahman family that occupies the highest position in the hierarchy regarding būta worship in Perar.
- perārde** the period from mid-December to mid-January in the Tuḷu calendar.
- pergaḍe** chieftain, headman; an honorific title.
- Pēriru** the lowest-ranked guttu family in Perar.
- Perra** the old name of Perar.
- Pilicāmuṇḍi** tiger būta, one of the main būtas in the village būta shrine in Perar.
- Poduvāl** caste group. People in South Kanara often invite astrologers from Kerala who belong to this community.
- prabāvali** a golden halo of the stone statue of Brahma.
- prakṛti (Skt. prakṛiti)** nature, the natural state of anything, the root, cause, and origin.
- prasāda** food, flower, sandal, etc. offered to deities and given to devotees as blessings of the deity; blessings.
- pūjā (pūjana)** worship, service, offering.
- Pūjāri (Billava, Bayidya)** caste group whose members follow a matrilineal system, who have traditionally made their living as toddy tappers, and have played an important role in būta worship as priests called pātri or māni.
- pūkare** an ornamental post decorated with flowers, set with specific rituals in particular paddy fields and the kambuḷa fields to ward off evil spirits.
- punaru pratiṣṭhe** a ritual conducted for the opening of a reconstructed shrine.
- puṇṇame** rituals for Arasu and Balavāṇḍi held from the first night to the next morning of the nēma.
- Puruṣa (Jōgi)** caste group whose members follow a patrilineal system and have traditionally made their living as musicians.
- pūve** a flag-hoisting ritual held from the previous night to the morning of the first day of the nēma.
- puyiṅṭelu** the period from mid-January to mid-February in the Tuḷu calendar.

- raiṃyatwārī (ryotwari)** the land tenure and tax system promoted by Thomas Munro in Kanara.
- rājanu daiva** royal būta.
- rājanu daiva savāri** a path of the royal deity.
- rājya** the largest administrative unit in South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period.
- Raktēśvari** name of a female būta, believed to be the incarnation of the mother goddess.
- rasa** sentiment.
- rūpa** form, shape; beauty; figure; garments of a būta dancer.
- śakti** the divine power of deities; the power, potency, or activating energy incarnated in goddesses.
- saṃtati** family, progeny, offspring; lineage, race.
- saṃtati kavalu** a kavalu that contains at least one female member who is not yet 50 years old and, hence, has a possibility of maintaining the matrilineal line.
- samudāya** collective tax or contribution in the Āḷupa period.
- sāna** shrine.
- saṅgīta** a kind of music that is usually sung or performed vocally.
- saṅkrānti** the passage of the sun from one sign of the zodiac to another; transition period.
- śānta** calmness; tranquillity.
- śānta svabhāva** the calm state of mind of the būta dancer-medium during the possession ritual.
- santāna** lineage, family.
- Śāstāvu** the name of a place, and the 13th-ranked guttu family in Perar.
- Śāstāvu Bramma** a Hindu shrine worshipped by Kuḍubis in Mudu Perar.
- sattige** umbrellas used in the būta ritual.
- Satyadēvate** name of a būta.
- savāri** riding; going out of doors or abroad, journey; arrival, coming; roaming, wandering.
- sāvirāla arasu** king over one thousand people.
- sēru** a measure of grain or liquid (about a kilogram).
- sīme** an administrative unit in South Kanara in the Vijayanagara period.
- sōṇa** the fifth solar month; a month considered to be auspicious.
- stāna** a place, location; dwelling place; position; shrine of gods and būtas.
- sudda (Skt. śuddha)** ceremonial purification, cleanliness.
- suggi** the period from mid-March to mid-April in the Tuḷu calendar; the second crop planted in the month of bōṅtelu.
- Suṅḍoṭṭu guttu** the first-ranked guttu family in Bajpe village.
- suriya pāḍonuni** a ritual performed at Baṅṭakamba as a part of the yearly ritual in Perar.
- sūtaka** ritual impurity from the death of kinsmen; ritual impurity from childbirth in the family; pollution due to menstruation.
- svabhāva** one's natural temper, disposition, nature, natural behaviour.

- taravāṭṭu (Ma.)** the joint family in the matrilineal society among the Naryars in Kerala.
- tastiku** the allowance granted by the government to a religious institution.
- Tidyamuṇḍoṭṭu guttu** the third-ranked guttu family in Perar.
- tiri** a skirt made of torn coconut leaves and worn by a būta dancer-medium.
- tirtakare** lowland.
- Tōdu guttu** the highest-ranked guttu family in Permude village.
- toḷasi** a sacred basil, holy basil, *Ocimum sanctum*.
- tuḍara bali** a ritual held prior to the yearly ritual in Perar.
- Tuḷunāḍu** the Tuḷu country; South Kanara.
- tūvonunaye** the manager of the būta ritual at the village level.
- ujjālu** a swing.
- ulaguttu** sub-guttu.
- ula kabaru** sub-kabaru.
- ulamūlagēni** subtenant.
- Uliya** the 12th-ranked guttu family in Perar.
- uḷḷākḷu** the honorific title of a person of high rank.
- umbali** land without rent granted for the performance of certain services in temples or other public services; tax-free land granted to cākiridakulu families in Perar; land required for the purpose of self-sufficiency in the Keḷadi Nāyaka period.
- ūru** an inhabited place, village, town; one's native place; people of a locality.
- uttāra** land as a source of income for special use, such as for ritual purposes, in the Keḷadi Nāyaka period.
- vāḍya** musical instrument.
- vāku piripuni** a ritual to abrogate a vow in front of deity and reconstruct the relationship between relatives; the ritual of the būtas' judgment.
- varaha** the standard 3.4-gram gold coin used in the Vijayanagara period.
- Vokkaliga** one of the dominant landlord castes in Karnataka.
- warg (varga)** estate; tenure of land, proprietary right, proprietary land.
- wargdār (vargadār)** holder of a warg.
- yajamāne (Ka. yajamāna)** master, lord, head of a house, the senior member of a family.
- yajamāni (Ka. yajamāni)** mistress, landlady; wife.



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