

C.1

"KANNI-MANGALA": A MICROCOSM OF COORG IDENTITY  
Toward an alternative Interpretation and Analysis of the Coorg  
Marriage Ceremony

by

Peter Franz Owsanecki

B.A., The University of British Columbia, 1982

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Anthropology)

We accept, this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

February 1984

© Peter Franz Owsanecki, 1984

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Peter F. Owsanecki )

Department of ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY

The University of British Columbia  
1956 Main Mall  
Vancouver, Canada  
V6T 1Y3

Date March 5th, 1984

A B S T R A C T

Srinivas, who has written the only anthropological monograph on the Coorgs of South India, proposes that they are "sanskritized", that is, that they adopted Hindu concepts and beliefs in order to raise their religious and social status to that of the Kshatriya-Varna. Conceptualizing the marriage ceremony as a "microcosm" of Coorg identity, this thesis argues for their "multiple" reality in which aspects of a distinct ethnic identity are combined with a limited set of adopted ideological notions from Hinduism.

Based on the structurally opposed concepts of "Sanskritization" and "ethnic identity" the Coorg marriage ceremony is analyzed according to four "symbolic complexes" (cosmic connections, warrior/ruler attitudes, farmer/householder symbolism and expressions of kin-relations) which, in turn, are seen as replications of the make-up of Coorg social structure.

It is argued that Coorg religious symbolism displays a mix between two abstract notions of order: that of "respect", defining culture-specific expressions of socio-religious actions and that of "purity", used as a means to visualize ritual and with it, societal status with respect to outside Hindu communities. Further, this thesis argues that symbolic representations of power and authority outweigh those which deal with religious notions, thus emphasizing the specific "character" of Coorg social identity as a group of warriors and landowners who attach more importance to the maintenance and perpetuation of their intra-cultural ritual and social solidarity than to aspects of integration within the Hindu

fold. However, the Coorgs adopted a limited number of Hindu concepts and beliefs in order to enhance their politico-economic possibilities with regard to socio-religious status and material wealth. As a consequence, they developed a "dualistic" identity which allows them to operate on an extended, bilateral level of understanding.

The thesis concludes with some remarks on the applicability of interpreting the socio-cultural reality of Coorgs from a "Hindu-centric" point of view and argues for the necessity of alternative approaches toward the study of non-mainstream Hindu societies.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vii
INTRODUCTION: A. Foreword.....	1
B. Methodological Remarks.....	4
C. The Ethnographic Data.....	9
D. "Sanskritization" Reviewed.....	14
E. The "Kanni-Mangala": An Overview.....	26
CHAPTER I: THE COSMIC CONNECTION.	
A. Prologue.....	39
B. Cosmic Connections Reflected in the "K-M"...	40
C. Summary.....	58
CHAPTER II: WARRIOR/RULER ATTITUDES.	
A. Prologue.....	60
B. Coorg Notions of Power Reflected.....	62
C. Summary.....	81
CHAPTER III: FARMER/HOUSEHOLDER SYMBOLISM.	
A. Prologue.....	83
B. Aspects of Growth and Prosperity.....	86
C. Summary.....	94
CHAPTER IV: THE KINSMAN	
A. Prologue.....	96
B. Kin-Symbolism within the "Kanni-Mangala"....	99
C. Summary.....	110
CHAPTER V: COMPARATIVE IMPLICATIONS	
A. Prologue.....	112
B. The Karnataka Brahmin Marriage Ceremony.....	114
C. Comparative Analysis.....	130
Ci. Resemblances.....	133
Cii. Differences.....	137
Ciii. Discussion.....	141
CONCLUSION.....	148
FOOTNOTES.....	150
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	160

L I S T O F T A B L E S

TABLE A - Methodological Flow-Chart.....	7
TABLE B - Symbolic Complexes within the "Kanni-Mangala".....	33
TABLE C - Cosmic Connections Magnified.....	42
TABLE D - Extension of MURTA.....	52
TABLE E - Coorg Power Expressions.....	63
TABLE F - Growth/Prosperity Symbolism.....	87
TABLE G - Kin-Symbolism.....	101
TABLE H - Symbolic Codes within the Karnataka Brahmin wedding	120
TABLE I - Correlation of "segments of examination".....	132

L I S T O F F I G U R E S

FIGURE 1: The Structural Make-Up of the "Kanni-Mangala".....	37
FIGURE 2: Cosmic Connection through MURTA.....	46
FIGURE 3: The Structural Make-Up of the Brahmanic wedding...	129
FIGURE 4: Aspects of "Sanskritization" vs "Ethnic Identity".	142
FIGURE 5: Coorg "Multiple Reality"; A Scheme.....	147

## A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

I wish to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Ken Burridge, Dr. Elvi Whittaker and Dr. Judy Pugh for their guidance and support during the writing of my thesis. I am grateful to Dr. Brenda Beck for her help in the initial period of conceptualizing and explicating this work.

I also would like to thank my colleagues and friends for their interest, empathy and patience.

I want to acknowledge the assistance of Maureen Braam, who was kind enough to type much of the final copy of this thesis.

Dr. I.M. Muthanna was instrumental in providing me with valuable information on the Coorgs; my thanks to him.

Finally and most importantly, I would like to thank my parents: without their love and support I would not have been able to do this work.

## INTRODUCTION

-1-

### A. FOREWORD:

The topic of this thesis reflects a problem that I was forced to consider in the course of my library research on the Coorgs of South India: it was the problem of understanding their socio-cultural reality both in terms of their identity as an ethnic group, and in terms of their affiliation with the Hindu caste system. The objective of my research derived from yet another problem that I encountered when studying the ethnographic material on the Coorgs: although there are some data describing their recorded history, social organization, economy, and religion, only M.N. Srinivas attempted to determine their socio-cultural position within the wider Hindu context. In his monograph Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India (1952), he proposed that the Coorgs can be considered as caste Hindus and that they, in fact, claim to be Kshatriyas. Although originally outside the Hindu fold, the Coorgs "adopted" Hindu culture and religion in order to raise their social and political status to the present position.

The older sources, however, do not mention this fact. Moreover, they state that Coorg culture and society was very different from that of their neighbours and that they had formed a closed cultural unit that stressed the maintenance of their own socio-cultural reality as well as their religion despite the influence of outside forces (see: Connor 1870,

Rice 1878, and Richter 1870). After checking the more recent sources (Census of India 1901, 1931, 1941, 1971; Mysore State Gazetteer 1965; Iyer 1948; Muthanna 1953, 1974, 1982 (private interviews); Subbayya 1978; and several articles in the "Indian Antiquity"), I found that the Coorgs were never directly classified as a caste, but frequently references were made as to their cultural distinctness.

It seems that Srinivas' interpretation was influenced by his subjective epistemology (he is a Brahmin himself), and, to some extent, coloured by his attempt to superimpose the (Radcliffe-Brownian) functional paradigm onto Coorg data. Resulting from his analysis of Coorg religion and society, he introduced, besides other things, the concept of "Sanskritization". He proposed that the Coorgs were a typical example of this process and stated that their reality resembled, to a great extent, "sanskritic Hindu" cultural and religious conceptions.

Concentrating my own research on the re-study of the ethnographic material on the Coorgs, I discovered several weaknesses in Srinivas' approach. This led me to attempt a new formulation of Coorg reality in order to avoid "Hindu-centric" notions when trying to understand this society. For me, the Coorgs are not necessarily a typical example of a "sanskritized" society; instead, they seem to display clear tendencies of ethnic behavior, and to base their socio-cultural reality more on aspects of their own traditional cosmology and socio-political independence than on aspects of Hindu world-view. Moreover, when they did adopt Hindu concepts, a modification of these concepts allowed them to maintain their own societal norms as well, and to thus broaden their cultural and ritual position within the South Indian context.

As a first step toward an alternative interpretation of Coorg reality I chose to take their marriage ceremony under close scrutiny. It can be argued to reflect Coorg world-view in the form of a symbolic "microcosm". In all the ethnographic accounts that I have studied, the so-called "Kanni-Mangala" (Virgin Marriage) is the most frequently mentioned cultural institution within Coorg society. Yet, this ceremony has never been interpreted or analysed by an anthropologist to any considerable degree.

This thesis investigates the Coorg marriage ceremony in detail and provides a quasi "microscopic view" as to how the Coorgs symbolically express their reality in terms of their affiliation to a distinct set of cultural norms and how these norms reflect their ethnic identity as well as Hindu cosmology at large.

The interpretation and analysis of the Coorg marriage ceremony should generate inferences about the underlying structure and the symbolic expressions contained in this "microcosm". This, in turn, will lead to new deductions as to where the Coorgs are positioned within the South Indian cultural mosaic. In addition, this approach avoids the superimposition of a pre-fabricated theoretical and conceptual framework. It uses all available data which reflect the specific ways in which the Coorgs express their own socio-cultural position by reference to the symbolic representations encoded in their marriage ceremony.

B. METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS:

The theoretical framework of this thesis is based on two competing propositions, (a) Srinivas', who argues for the "Sanskritization" of the Coorgs, and (b) my own, stressing that the Coorgs maintained and extended their ethnic identity through the adoption of "useful" Hindu concepts, but transformed them in order to ensure their own politico-economic superiority in Coorg district. The interpretation and analysis of the Coorg marriage ceremony viewed as a cultural "microcosm" should yield results which can be used to determine the relative validity of both propositions.

"Sanskritization" is defined, according to Srinivas (1952: 30) as the attempt of ritually inferior groups inside (and/or outside) Hinduism to raise their status by becoming higher castes, through the adoption of "Sanskritic Hindu concepts".

"Ethnic identity" is defined as a term which refers to the notion of maintaining culture-specific emblems, such as religion, social organization, customs, and language in order to ensure distinct cultural boundaries with neighbouring communities. In this context, then, the concepts of "Sanskritization" and "Ethnic Identity" are seen as structural oppositions based on the dichotomy of "ritual status" (the adoption of Brahman rituals -- and with it, Brahman cosmology and world-view -- without modification), and "non-religious (secular) power" (through the conscious refusal to adopt Brahman rituals, or their adoption with obvious modifications).



The distinction between "sanskritic" and "ethnic" processes which operate on a bilateral, intercultural level displays its contrastive expressions through the proposition which defines "sanskritic behaviour" as the shared inter and intra-caste identity within Hindu ideology (generally based on the notion of hierarchy encompassed by the purity/pollution concept) and which sees "ethnic behaviour" as displaying a distinct group identity in relation to the surrounding (encompassing) identities and values of the neighbouring culture. Ethnic behaviour is seen here as a response to the cultural standards of the macro (Hindu) culture which are not (or only partially) appreciated in a particular sub-milieu.

In this sense, the term "transformation" becomes crucial to my analysis, for it determines the categorization of Coorg marriage rites to either the "sanskritic", or to the "ethnic" complex: the higher the degree of modification and transformation of a given "examination unit" (= a recognized ritual segment of the marriage ceremony) in respect to a Hindu "control unit", the better the evidence for proposition (b) (= "Ethnic Identity") and vice versa.

At this point, I would like to introduce a number of control-variables, which will help to clarify my discussion in the forthcoming data-chapters, as well as outline the qualitative testing procedure which I conduct in Chapter V.

Conceptualizing the "Kanni-Mangala" as being the carrier of culture-specific statements which serve to reinforce traditionally approved manifestations of reality, it should be possible to make it the subject of a "micro-ethnography" of Coorg culture. Since it is my objective

ultimately to deduce patterns of Coorg identity which are encoded in the "Kanni-Mangala", it seems to be a sensible task to organize the investigation according to "symbolic complexes" which replicate the basic make-up of Coorg social structure. Consequently, I selected four such "complexes" from the ethnographic material available, and deal with each one in a different chapter. The four complexes are defined as follows:

- (1) THE COSMIC CONNECTION (Chapter I); deals with ceremonial references to vital forces and essences, aspects of refinement and purification, the separation of the mundane from the cosmic, and all other philosophical matters concerning the relation of man to external forces.
- (2) WARRIOR/RULER ATTITUDES (Chapter II); deals with references to the concept of power (fighting ability, territorial dominance), and the general social status and other matters related to the Coorg's political and hierarchical role in the district.
- (3) FARMER/HOUSEHOLDER SYMBOLISM (Chapter III); relates to aspects of prosperity, abundance, growth, and productivity. It deals with references to agricultural activities and references to the household unit, household space and other associated roles.
- (4) THE KINSMAN (Chapter IV); refers to kin-territories, kin-groups, descent, and the need to share or help persons in such categories.

After relating each of the ceremonial actions, events, and objects, etc. (the "ritual segments" i.e. "segments of examination") to one (or more) of the "symbolic complexes" as defined above, I create a data-base sufficient for detailed interpretation and analysis. The results will then be compared with a typical brahmanic marriage ceremony (that of the Karnataka Brahmins) in order to underline resemblances (adoption without modification = evidence for the "Sanskritization" of these aspects of Coorg marriage), differences (adoption with obvious modifications or refusal to adopt certain Brahman rituals altogether

= evidence for culture-specific expressions in the "Kanni-Mangala"), and, finally, to discuss possible transformations which determine the degree of ethnic identity vis-a-vis the brahmanic model.

For the purpose of testing the variability of the "segments of examination" within the Coorg marriage ceremony in relation to the marriage ceremony of the Karnataka Brahmins, I assume that the results of this analysis can be defined as being symptomatic, that is, normative, for other high-caste Hindu communities in South India. In other words, any deviation from the "cultural (Hindu) norm" can be interpreted as the "ratio of digression from the Hindu idiom". Srinivas' proposition of the "Sanskritization" of the Coorgs suggests, in this context, that their "ratio of digression" is low. This means that he asserts that the Coorgs adopted high-caste Hindu cosmology and ideology to a considerable extent. My proposition of Coorg cultural distinctiveness, on the other hand, favors a "high digression ratio", that is, if the Coorg adopted brahmanic (or generally Hindu) concepts, they modified and transformed them in order to "fit" into their distinct reality.

The testing of both propositions against the results of the data-chapters should provide us with a "probability-ratio" of their relative "fit" with regard to the "normative" Hindu model. Table A provides a "flow chart" of the development, discussion, and testing of both propositions on the example of the "Kanni-Mangala":

TABLE A.: Methodological "Flow-chart"

STEP I: Srinivas' proposition of "Sanskritization" (put foreword in his Coorg book) is contested by my proposition of Coorg "ethnic identity" (formulated from additional evidence found in the ethnographic material). SELECTION OF ETHNOGRAPHIC DATA-BASE FOR DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS, AND TEST OF BOTH PROPOSITIONS.

STEP II: The Coorg "Kanni-Mangala" is chosen for qualitative analysis. A number of ritual segments of the larger wedding proceedings ("segments of examination") are used as the units of analysis. For comparative purposes a randomly selected sample of a high-caste Hindu marriage ceremony (that of the neighbouring Karnataka Brahmins) is analysed simultaneously (in Chapter V). CONTROLLED UNDER THE FOUR "SYMBOLIC COMPLEXES", THE "SEGMENTS OF EXAMINATION" ARE QUALITATIVELY ANALYSED (CHAPTER I - IV).

STEP III: The results of the analysis (conducted in chapters I through IV) are correlated with the comparative material and tested against both propositions.

Example: a) The Karnataka Brahmin ceremony contains the use of the "sacred fire".

- b) The Coorg ceremony contains the use of the "sacred fire" (which it doesn't). Given that it does = support for "Sanskritization" (adoption/shared usage without modification).
- bi) The Coorg ceremony contains the use of "sacred lamps" (which it does). = support for the "ethnic" proposition i.e. difference is stressed (adoption/usage with modification).
- bii) Coorg ceremony contains no reference to the "sacred fire" etc. (which it doesn't). = no support for "sanskritic" or "ethnic" proposition (unless evidence can be found for the refusal of this whole complex, suggesting a third kind of relationship = political ethnicity (political confrontation stressed)).

THE RESULTING CORRELATIONS AND ANALOGIES SERVE AS A BASIS FOR THE DETERMINATION OF THE "RELATIVE VALIDITY" OF BOTH PROPOSITIONS.

STEP IV: Deduction of final results followed by a summary of their implications on the alternative understanding of Coorg reality.

The results of this inquiry should provide useful indications about how the Coorgs symbolically express their socio-cultural reality, and should give new answers to the questions: are the Coorgs "sanskritized" Hindus, is "Sanskritization" a useful concept with which to explain marginal Hindu realities? If the Coorgs are "sanskritized", or have emulated certain Hindu customs and beliefs (a) to what extent did they emulate them?, (b) what are possible motivations for this emulation?, (c) how did they emulate them? Further, can the Coorgs be considered to be an "ethnic group"?, and, if yes, to what extent is this ethnicity replicated in their reality?, or, finally, can we see the Coorgs as a group with "multiple realities", that is, do they display aspects of ethnicity as well as aspects of emulation of Hindu concepts?

Srinivas did not answer these questions (he did not even pose some of them -- nor did anybody else, for that matter). If it is possible to answer these questions, or to give indications that can lead to possible answers, and if the shortcomings of my exposition do not outweigh the positive attributes, I can be satisfied.

#### C. THE ETHNOGRAPHIC DATA: A BRIEF SYNOPSIS:

Coorg is a tiny, mountainous province in South India. It shares borders with Karnataka (formerly Mysore), South Canara and Malabar. Its length in the north-south direction is about 60 miles and its width in the east-west direction is close to 40 miles. The total area covers 1,593 square miles, of which one third constitutes reserve-forest. The Western Ghat Mountains pass through Coorg and reach peak heights of

5,300 feet. The central part of Coorg forms a wide plateau with an average elevation of 3,500 feet. However, until very recently, the district was quite isolated from its surrounding areas. Srinivas notes that:

....The inaccessability of Coorg, with its steep mountains, dense forests, and heavy rainfall, contributed to the maintenance and elaboration of the distinctive mode of life and culture of Coorgs. The Lingayat Rajas, who saw certain political and military advantages in the natural isolation of Coorg tried to increase it (....). They closed down certain roads leading to Mercara (the main city in Coorg), and prohibited travelling by them (Srinivas 1952: 6).

Although its geographical isolation was not absolute, it helped the Coorgs to maintain their separateness vis-a-vis their Hindu neighbours.

It is not clear where the Coorgs originate. The earliest reference to Coorg by name is in a document dating from the year 1174 A.D. which praises the military abilities of the "Kodavas" (the original name of the Coorgs), for fighting against an intruding force (Srinivas 1952: 10). The literature on the Coorgs offers several views as to where they might have come from, or whether they can be considered indigenous to the area. But there is no proof provided for any of these ideas. It is possible that the Coorgs had settled in the area before 1000 A.D. and that they had brought certain cultural traits from outside South India. According to Dr. Muthanna<sup>(1)</sup>, the Coorgs share some social and cultural traits with the ancient Arabs and Persians.

However, it is equally possible that the Coorgs were not immigrants to the area, and were probably a part of a larger relatively indigenous population of South India in the distant past. As a particular segment

of this local population came to dominate the territory called Coorg, they also began to restrict their marriage alliances to those who were in the same economic and social stratum.

Since it is not the objective of this thesis to determine the origins of the Coorgs in historical and developmental terms, but rather to investigate how the Coorgs express their identity, this brief historical description should suffice, as it is merely presented to introduce some of the background information necessary to understand the following problem-exposition which forms the core of this research.

Focusing again on the synoptic presentation of Coorg history, we arrive at the 16th century, when the Coorgs, for the first time, came in close contact with the Lingayat sect (a religious off-shoot of Hinduism). One particular Lingayat priest-politician<sup>(2)</sup> managed to bring the Coorg chiefs under his authority on the condition that he allowed them to keep most of their political and economic autonomy (Srinivas 1952: 12). Under the subsequent rule of the Lingayats the Coorgs established themselves as the aristocracy, monopolizing the army and intermarrying with the royal family in order to maintain and strengthen their status in the area. In the late 18th century, during the invasion and brief reign of the Muslims, the Coorgs earned high recognition for their fearless way of fighting. During that period, they adopted some Islamic customs as well.<sup>(3)</sup>

It is not surprising that the British, upon their arrival in the area in 1843, considered the Coorgs as being members of the Kshatriya caste. Although the introduction of British rule changed the character of Coorg (the British valued the area for coffee plantations), the Coorg people were able to

maintain their social structure as well as their ritual idiom in its basic forms.

Politically, by the time of the Lingayat reign we find the Coorgs ruling themselves through "Nayaks" (= ruler of people), as well as acknowledging the supremacy of the Lingayat Rajas. The approximately 30,000 members of Coorg society were organized into twelve "Kombus" (= sub-regions) each one headed by a Nayak. A Kombu consisted of a number of "Nads" (= villages - clusters), and each village(Ur) headed by a village headman. Each Ur, in turn, was composed of numerous "Okkas" headed by a patriarch. These Okkas, or patrilineal joint family estates, represented the nucleus of the social structure for the Coorgs. The law of inheritance was patrilineal, and only men could function as heads of these Okkas. Marriage was Okka-exogamous, and endogamous with respect to Coorg society. The Coorg kinship system was typified by Prof. Emeneau<sup>(4)</sup> as being of the Dakota-Iroquois kind.

Every Okka had an ancestral house built on the commonly owned ancestral estate. All the members of an Okka were descended from a common ancestor and had an Okka-specific name. Their major life-cycle rituals included birth, initiation rites, marriage (being the by far most important one), and funeral rites. The Coorgs were ancestor worshippers, had snake-deities, but worshipped some Hindu deities as well. Their religion centered on the ancestor cult, which can be paralleled with the family cult, and the community cult, which includes the worship of snake deities and some Hindu deities.

The Coorgs were the dominant group in the district, owning most of the land. They were mainly rice cultivators and fruit, vegetable and



coffee growers.

For centuries, the Coorgs did not allow Brahmins in their district, and since they were powerful and violent, no other Hindu caste was able to establish itself among the Coorgs. Until the British rule, the Coorgs had slaves ("Untouchable jungle tribes"), which were, for the longest time, the only significant group of non-Coorgs in the district.

The ethnographic material suggests that the Coorgs were never really concerned with Hinduism (or any other ideology) and did not consider ritual status as being superior to socio-economic power. In addition, they were warriors and thus in a position of power (and status) in relation to their Hindu neighbours. Besides, in their (more or less) egalitarian political, ritual and social structure, the Coorgs displayed numerous other non-Hindu attributes, which outweigh the borrowings from Hinduism. Dr. Muthanna, a Coorg himself, makes it clear that the Coorgs were never incorporated in the Hindu caste system. In his opinion, the Brahmins made the term (caste) "big" in order to exploit the other, ritually lower, castes.

To Coorgs, I emphasize, caste does not have any meaning at all. I consider them as a group with tribal origins, that lived in their hilly region by their own laws. The Lingayats, of course, influenced us. But we adopted only what we found to be helpful for us...We did not discard or change our customs; we incorporated some customs from the Hindus, the Persians, the Arabs. We are not concerned with "Sanskritic Hinduism", as you call it, we had no need to do that. We ruled our own country, and when the British came, we invited them to help us to modernize our economy. (5)

To my question, whether the Coorgs consider themselves as Kshatriyas, Dr. Muthanna replied:

Kshatriya means "Martial-Race". No doubt, in the times of the Rajas, the Coorgs were the predominant community there (in Coorg district) when the Rajas mastered their services and the Coorgs joined the army(...); you know, in those days they fought for their country, and automatically they became "Martials". I don't hold the Coorgs are Kshatriyas. These characteristics came according to the need of the rulers. When the rulers wanted people to fight, even Brahmins were recruited. In Mysore Haider Ali and his son Tippu Sultan asked the Brahmins to get into the army, you know, and they did (...). Later, the British made the Coorgs big, as they made the Sikhs big in order to help them to fight the forces that opposed British rule. The Coorgs looked like Kshatriyas to others.... and they did not object. But this does not make them Hindus, except in the political sense where we have to consider them as Indians who have a religion that is - in some respects - close to the Hindu religion....<sup>(6)</sup>

How could M.N. Srinivas, who spent apparently four years doing field-work among the Coorgs, be able to draw a picture of the Coorgs that led to the genesis of the concept of "Sanskritization"? A brief look at his book on the Coorgs and the concept of "Sanskritization" should clarify the question.

D. "SANSKRITIZATION" REVIEWED:

At the time when M.N. Srinivas was a graduate student at the University of Bombay, the division of labour between Indological studies of Hindu society by sociologists and fieldwork based studies of tribal societies by anthropologists which had generally characterized the work of the earlier generation of scholars, was declining.<sup>(7)</sup> Srinivas' advisor, Prof. G.S. Ghurye, suggested fieldwork among the Coorgs, in order to study their religion and social organization. Srinivas agreed

and started to collect data among the Coorgs in 1940. Because of ill-health, however, he needed four years to complete his fieldwork, and during that time he had to resort to short "hit-and-run" trips to collect his data (Madan 1978: 3). In 1944, Srinivas presented his "rather massive (900 typed pages) Ph.D. Dissertation at the University of Bombay" (ibid: 2). Since Srinivas was "essentially interested in the reconstruction of the traditional culture of the Coorgs" (Srinivas 1966: 149), we can assume that his Thesis was essentially a description of their cultural and social reality. Later, when he came to Oxford, where.... "Prof. Radcliffe-Brown's teaching greatly modified (his) approach to the study of human society,... (he) started to apply some of his ideas regarding the interrelation of religion and society to the material (he) had already gathered" (Srinivas 1952: xiii). Radcliffe-Brown's theoretical framework transformed the Coorg material and "brought sense to it" (ibid 1966: 149), giving rise to two major theoretical propositions: the spread of "Sanskritic Hinduism" horizontally as well as vertically, and the concept of "Sanskritization". How Srinivas was able to deduce general theoretical and conceptual propositions from only one corpus of data is puzzling; however, his concepts gained popularity in anthropological circles and influenced the understanding of Coorg reality considerably.

As might be expected, Srinivas stressed the similarities between Coorg religion and society and that of "Sanskritic Hindu" communities, and explained them through the Hindu idiom. But he failed to examine those aspects which are distinctly different from Hindu world-view. As a Hindu, and especially, as a Brahmin, Srinivas interpreted Coorg

reality as an emulation of Brahmanic world-view. As Pocock says rightly, in the Coorg book.... "the inadequacy of rigid functionalism is underlined by a 'Hindu-centric' attitude towards the treatment of ethnographic data..." (1978: 60).

Events, social action and social change can be studied from quite different points of view, and any given reality can be recounted differently by different investigators. In the case of the Coorgs, Srinivas conceptualized and described their reality through a "Brahmanical" paradigm. C. Parvathamma criticizes his treatment of the Coorg data severely: "(Srinivas) gives a detailed account of traditional Hinduism, its values and impact, and discusses an old and widespread social process, christening it "Sanskritization", which is a concept loaded with brahmanical values .... Srinivas' major concern in the Coorg book is to bring to light how a forest tribal group came under the impact of Hindus and Hinduism. He highlights his own interpretation of Coorg society", (1978: 91) ....and, I might add, generalized the results without further proof.

One more point should be stressed here: "After incorporating the functionalist paradigm into a corpus of data that was collected almost eight years earlier and under a different frame of reference, Srinivas analyzed it yet under another one" (Mayer 1978: 42).

These difficulties seem to boil down to the problem of objectivity. Srinivas tells us that his being a Brahmin did influence his observations and understanding of the Coorgs in several ways... "but what follows this promising confession, is in effect devoted to a self defensive reaction to it" (Pocock 1978: 61).

The value of the concept of "Sanskritization" - to quote Mayer again - lies in what it produced (and not what it represents):....

"Through it, Srinivas was able to focus the attention of his colleagues on three major aspects of society: the flexibility of caste ranking and grouping through emulation .... ; the diversity of what Srinivas calls "multiple cultures" (1966: 14) in any local situation; and yet, running through these variations, the existence of certain common values" (ibid: 41). It is unfortunate that Srinivas did not see Coorg culture as "multiple", when he wrote his book. One reason for this lies probably in the trend of Indian Anthropology around the middle of the century to explain multi-cultural traditions of India in terms of qualitative studies of caste groups, caste mobility, and social change within the caste system. Non-mainstream Hindu groups were studied with reference to Hindu concepts such as social hierarchy and ritual status. Regardless of the character of the examination-unit, it depends mainly on the researcher's views on how a particular community could and should be viewed. Dumont (1970: 211) notes that.... "non-Hindus, who function within the parameters of Hindu .... social order, have acquired the basic 'psychological dispositions' of Hindus: Hindu world-view permeates and encompasses everyone who participates in Hindu civilization to the extent that the ideology of non-Hindu groups functions only in a modified form". However, ...

"it is not only misleading, but erroneous to infer that an understanding of the institutions or principles of caste enables us to understand how non-Hindu groups in India organize themselves internally and

externally" (Jacob-Pandian 1979: 142).

Many of these (non-Hindu) groups are not homogeneous; historically and culturally they are diverse, having established distinctive adaptations to different politico-economic environments, and the kinds of relationships that exist between Hindus and non-Hindus (and marginal Hindus) vary greatly. Jacob-Pandian goes on to say that two features of caste -- endogamy and hierarchical ranking -- that are found among non and marginal Hindu groups may result from the use of the caste principles derived from the Hindu hierarchical scheme and the ideology of purity and pollution. On the other hand, internal endogamy and hierarchical ranking among non and marginal Hindus in India may have their loci in reference to alien or indigenous origins, and in class with reference to socio-economic status rather than ritual status (ibid: 242). Hindus and non-Hindus (and marginal Hindus) "know how to function" in the Hindu social environment, which is not to say that they share each other's worldviews and ethos (ibid: 243).

I. Ahmad (1972: 172-77) stresses that "scholars have seldom investigated in detail the non-Hindu (marginal-Hindu) traditions of India", and points out "that there is a pronounced tendency among sociologists to equate Hindu society with Indian society". Jacob-Pandian supports this view when he postulates that "Hindu-centrism stems from a fallacious assumption that in order for the socio-cultural system to persist, the component parts must have shared values and/or normative consensus (.....). From this point of view,

it is logical to infer that in order for Hindu or Indian society to persist, the social groups which are covered by the societal blanket must themselves be composed of threads which ultimately make up the blanket" (ibid: 143).

In other words, because the identification is made that there exists a single entity called "Hindu society", it becomes necessary to explain how it exists, and the explanation is that Hindu and non-Hindu (marginal Hindu) groups believe in and are motivated by the principles, patterns, worldview, ethos, etc. of Hindu society. And then Jacob-Pandian suggests a very sensible "way out" of this apparent dilemma:

....When one looks deeply enough, one can always see the operation of these "movers" in Hindu society (....). I suggest (...) that, although the grand theories of caste, Hindu social order, or "society in India" may provide intellectual satisfaction that the essence of Hindu or Indian mind has been captured in a single formula, such theories are not sufficient to explain the multifacious conceptual and behavioural systems that co-exist within the politico-geographical boundary of India (....). We must look closely to the distinctive cultural traditions that emerge and function in different politico-environments, we must examine how these traditions enable their users to co-exist in a poly-cultural social context (....) A civilizational complex which we identify as "Hindu" or "Indian" is composed of multiple linguistic and religious cultural traditions, and the similarities in the organization of groups occur as a product of the universally applicable principles of boundary maintenance, or as Barth (1969) puts it "the social organization of cultural differences", rather than as a result of a uniquely Hindu paradigm operating at micro and macro levels... (ibid: 145).

Srinivas is doing only the latter. He attempts a "textual-contextual" analysis of Hinduism, using the Coorg religious and social structure as an example; however, he does not define their locus inside the Indian cultural context, but only - and that rather implicitly - their relative position "inside" the Hindu worldview. "Coorgs formed a compact unit in relation to other castes. They possessed wealth and power, they liked dancing, competitive games, involving the exercise of skill and strength, hunting, and soldiering" (Srinivas 1952: 33). Interpreting these features through the Hindu paradigm he states:

....In the Vedic or classical caste system these virtues are attributed to Kshatriyas, the caste of warriors and kings, who are next only to the Brahmins in the hierarchy. The resemblances between the Vedic Kshatriyas and the Coorgs are striking indeed in the matter of values, and it is understandable that Coorgs should regard themselves as Kshatriyas. But the classical Kshatriyas, as one of the "twice-born" castes, were entitled to perform certain rituals at which sacred verses-mantras-from the Vedas were recited by the priests. Coorgs do not perform any of these rituals and Vedic mantras are not recited when a Coorg is given a name, or marries, or dies (ibid: 33).

Here he stops his interpretation without any further mention as to why the Coorgs: 1. "regard themselves as Kshatriyas"<sup>(8)</sup>, 2. "do not recite mantras".<sup>(9)</sup> A simple answer to this would be that the Coorgs cannot be regarded as "sanskritized Hindus" because they did not adopt these crucial Hindu concepts. But again, Srinivas prefers to omit this part of Coorg reality and concentrates on the elaboration of his theoretical propositions of the spread of "sanskritic Hinduism".



The Coorg discussion is reduced to highlighting his conceptual assumptions with material that almost exclusively deals with aspects of Coorg reality that could be seen as adoptions from Hinduism. Moreover, Srinivas took pains to stress the similarities between Coorg religion and society and "Sanskritic Hinduism", tried to find those aspects which could be "sanskritized" and absorbed into Hinduism, and thus was preoccupied with the replication of Hindu reality into Coorg worldview.

"Sanskritization" per se, being the vehicle of Srinivas' main argument in his Coorg book, deserves some attention. Let me recall his definition once more:

The caste system is far from a rigid system in which the position of each component caste is fixed for all time. Movement has always been possible, and especially so in the middle ranges of the hierarchy. A low caste was able, in a generation or two, to rise to a higher position in the hierarchy by adopting vegetarianism and teetotalism, by Sanskritizing its ritual and pantheon. In short, it took over, as far as possible, the customs, rites, and beliefs of the Brahmins (....). This process has been called "Sanskritization" (1952: 30).

Later, in 1955, he adds more brahmanic undercurrents to the initial concept:

As this process (of "Sanskritization") was common to all castes except the highest, it meant that the brahmanical customs and ways of life spread among all Hindus....

The entire way of life of the top castes seeps down the hierarchy (...). The language, cooking, clothing, jewellery, and way of life of the Brahmins spread eventually to the entire society....

The non-brahmanical castes adopt not only brahmanical ritual, but also certain brahmanical institutions and values (1956: 482-84).

Lucy Carroll stresses the contradictions and ambiguities of Srinivas' concept when she states that "Sanskritization" is equivalent to social, cultural and ritual emulation of Brahmins (1977: 357). She goes on to say that "in an attempt to re-define his definition in order to take into account (a) the factor of the dominant caste; and (b) the criticism that "Sanskritization" emphasizes a brahmanical model, while, in fact, a Rajput or Kshatriya or Vaishya model might be emulated in many circumstances; and (c) to subsume under one concept the process that had led to the coming of such terms as "Rajputization", "Tribalization", and so forth (.....), Srinivas defines "Sanskritization" now simply as a process, without any reference to the values that may be transmitted through that process and without any distinction between ritual and secular values" (ibid: 358). According to later versions of Srinivas' concept, the "pace-setting" groups do not have to be Brahmins, or even "twice-born" castes, but any group inside or proximal to Hindu ideology. "Since the reference group need not be ritually high, it would appear, that "high" in the definitional statement refers to political and/or economic power, i.e. that the group being emulated is a secular elite which may or may not be of high or even respectable ritual status" (ibid: 358).

Could one, then, term the influence Coorg social and ritual concepts had on neighbouring Hindu caste and untouchable groups as "Sanskritization"?

Srinivas writes in his Coorg book that..."All the other castes in Coorg proximity except the Brahmins, Komti, and Lingayats acknowledged the dominance of the Coorgs by taking over their customs and manners and in some cases even their speech" (1952: 32). He also mentions that Kannada Okkaligas and Tulu Gaudas tried to pass for Coorgs.

It appears that the trend of "lower" groups to adopt the customs and concepts of "higher" groups, is a general phenomenon, but Srinivas sticks to his Brahmanic "Hindu-centrism" when he states that "(the other) models are indeed important but not as influential as the Brahmanical as a few Kshatriyas and almost all Vaishyas follow the Brahmanical model regarding diet, ritual, and certain important religious ideas" (1966: 25). "Sanskritization", then, represents an attempt to acquire the traditional symbols of (Hindu) high status, namely the customs, ritual, ideas, beliefs, and life style of the locally highest caste" (ibid: 28). Upon reflection, we have to ask ourselves if "Sanskritization" is really nothing but "that phenomenon common to all societies where to a greater or lesser degree the plebians follow the social and cultural lead of the elite, emulating the latter to the extent that their own financial resources and the presence and absence of social sanctions supporting elitist prerogatives permit" (Carroll 1977: 359).

Srinivas, then, is really talking about a social and ritual process that represents both the desire for and the achievement of a general mobility upwards, and, depending on the referent of this

mobility (the group that is emulated), this process can display ritual or politico-economic tendencies. Thus, the concept of "Sanskritization" as used by Srinivas is too vague and ambiguous and too onesided for interpretative and analytical utility in contemporary anthropological research. One possible explanation for its popularity in anthropological circles in the last thirty years may well be found in the relationship between the concept of "Sanskritization" and the anthropological model of Indian society.

"This model, modified and refined though it has been, nonetheless basically derives from the classical Brahmanical texts. Its central component and chief referent is caste; it stresses harmony, order, co-operation, integration and stability; it stresses the importance of ritual values (....). The "Sanskritization" complex defines, limits, and places a particular interpretation on social change in India. It over-emphasizes ritual factors and sustains the view of social change in India as unique and that culturally bound terms like "Sanskritization" are necessary to describe it because of (....) "the important fact that the social hierarchy is also the hierarchy of ritual purity and pollution" (Singer 1968: xi). Carroll, however, contends that "social and ritual hierarchy are not necessarily, or even usually, coincident" (1977: 367).

At this point it seems safe to say that the concept of "Sanskritization" as developed from the Coorg data shows several weaknesses: first, it displays ideological onesidedness on the part of Srinivas which led to the creation of a "Hindu-centric" (and more so "Brahmanical")

conceptualization of the dynamics of social change among the Coorgs (and in India generally); second, the concept is speculative and therefore becomes less a research hypothesis and more an ideological position; and third, the culture-specific terminology and conceptualization of the phenomenon inhibits cross cultural comparison and analysis by implying that social change (a la "Sanskritization") is uniquely and solely Hindu (Carroll 1977: 369).

I propose, therefore, as a working hypothesis, to view the Coorgs as an independent socio-cultural unit displaying a specific ethnicity that serves as a primary "emblem" internally and externally. Instead of emulating Hindu concepts, I propose that the Coorgs "modified" and "transformed" adopted customs and concepts to fit their culture-specific mould. Their distinct social structure, religion, language, and separateness, however, operate as emblems of their identity, and their politico-economical power allowed them to maintain this identity, regardless of the degree and kind of their involvement with other cultural and ideological models.

Thus, the ethnicity of the Coorgs, which separated them from any other community in the area might be explained as the product of the association between their relative geographical isolation, their politico-economic dominance, and their flexible cosmology. This would allow us to see the Coorgs as being independent from Hindu ideology, ritually and culturally, and their status as being not validated by any other authority but their own; this status, however, is tolerated -- if not accepted -- by Hindus and non-Hindus alike.

Returning to the main task of this thesis, I shall now concentrate on the interpretation and analysis of the Coorg marriage ceremony viewed as a "crystalization" (a miniature, as it were) of the socio-religious symbolic "landscape" of Coorg culture and society.

E. THE "KANNI-MANGALA": AN OVERVIEW.

Marriage, for Coorgs (as well as for most other South Indian societies) represents the most important ceremony in any person's life. Traditionally, the Coorg marriage ceremony had a predominantly communal character.<sup>(10)</sup> Later, the so-called "cloth-marriages" were practiced in Coorg. Kittel writes:

....a man gave a cloth to a girl, and she, accepting it, became his wife without further ceremonies. He might dismiss her at any time without being under the least obligation of providing either for her or for the children born during their connection.

(Kittel, in Iyer 1848: 41).

According to Dr. Muthanna<sup>(11)</sup>, by the time of the Lingayat Rajas, the Coorgs had refined their marriage ceremony to that of a civil contract ceremony with some religious symbolism, mainly that of ritual expressions of solidarity and respect. It became classified as one of the many Mangalas, or "auspicious ceremonies". Subsequently, different types of marriage developed, of which the first, and most important one is the "Kanni-Mangala" or (Virgin-Marriage). Other types are the "widow-remarriage", and the "divorce-remarriage".

The "Kanni-Mangala" usually takes place soon after the couple

has reached early adulthood. This first marriage (= "Virgin Marriage") brings together not only two persons, but - and this is more important - also two kin-groups. Both come together through the acquisition of two common objects of interest. "When a marriage takes place, there is a change in the social personalities of the bride and the groom. It gives them new rights and obligations. Some of this is symbolized in the marriage ritual: for instance, the bride (almost) loses her rights to her natal Okka and acquires them, instead (fully) in her conjugal Okka" (Srinivas 1952: 92). The tie between the two Okkas is ritualized in a special ceremony and emphasizes the political, economic, and personal obligations which result from the new bond.

....Activities for the "Kanni-Mangala" begin when a young man expresses his desire to marry. Then, his father or elder brother together with a special family friend, called Aruva<sup>(12)</sup>, goes to the Okka of the young woman where the arrival is expected. A simple ceremony, called Mangala Kuripa is conducted as a sign of an irreversible contract between the two families.

Soon after this initial step, the local astrologer selects an auspicious day for the performance of Mangala, and an even more auspicious part of the day for the performance of Murta, which constitutes the ritually most important part of Mangala. The house(s) in which the Mangala takes place is cleaned, and a decorated pavillion of five pillars, one of which is the branch of a milk-exuding tree, is erected in front of the house, very close to the front veranda. The invited guests often help with the construction of this marriage pavillion.

In the evening of the first day (called Uru Kuduve), before taking meals, folksongs connected with the wedding are chanted by elders in honour of the bride and groom. A similar program takes place in both Okkas almost simultaneously.

In the bride-groom's house, (the same takes place in the bride's house) the wedding party in the company of the groom proceeds from the central hall, where the groom worshipped the sacred lamp (Nelluki Boluk), to the Kaimata, or place where the ancestors are worshipped, carrying a light which had been kindled with the flame of the sacred lamp. The groom ignites an earthen lamp there and invokes the blessing of the ancestors.

The groom is dressed in the traditional Coorg costume, a black knee-<sup>length</sup> cotton dressing gown that is secured at the waist with a tasselled red silk sash. A kerchief, also red, is tied around his head. The bride wears a red saree and a red kerchief.

Low caste musicians beat tom-toms and play pipes in front of the house, and young people dance to their music.

When the groom takes his food, two or three close friends, including his best man, join him and eat together. The bride, in her home, is accompanied by her bride's maid and friends. The food (different types of rice puddings and rice-meat curry) is served with water, milk, or alcohol.

The next morning (still considered the first day of the wedding), the groom is shaved ritually by the barber. This time only, he is shaved with milk instead of with water. The bride, in her natal home, undergoes a similar ceremony called "the wearing of bangles". Later, both prepare to take a ritual bath seconded by the best man or the bride's maid, who are generally brother and sister-in-law. Three married women initiate the bath in both cases by pouring three vessels each on the heads of the groom and the bride. Widows have no access to any of these rites. Later, the groom is dressed in his full Coorg costume (the same as the evening before plus jewellery, ornaments, his traditional Coorg dagger and sword, and his turban). The bride wears a red silk saree, a red kerchief, red veil, jewellery for hair, neck, hands, feet, and toes.



The groom, then, is conducted to the place where Murta is to be held. The party is accompanied by the band, and two earthen lamps on copper plates are carried by two girls walking on either side of the groom. The Batte-Pat<sup>(13)</sup> or wedding song is sung by Coorg men, giving an account of the immediate happenings. The best man directs the groom to the center of the pavillion where the three-legged Coorg stool is positioned (flanked by two earthen lamps) and walks him around the stool and the lamps three times clock-wise. Then the groom sits down on the stool. Three married women step forward and perform a set of solitary rites (= Murta) first. Later, the rest of the assembled guests follow.

Murta consists of the following rites: first, each performer worships the lamps on either side of the groom (by bending over and touching his/her feet three times with folded hands), then he/she worships the sun; after that, he/she picks up some rice from a copper plate with both hands and finally sprinkles the rice on the head of the groom. Then milk is offered to the groom from a cup which he sips through a spout, a few drops at a time. Before he/she turns away, the groom prostrates three times if he/she happens to be an elder. Then the groom is blessed by each of them.

After Murta is over, the guests are taken to eat lunch. They leave the house in the afternoon, and will not return until the next day.

That night, shortly after midnight, the groom ceremoniously sets off to the Okka of the bride. He is accompanied by his wedding party, including friends, relatives of both sexes, and his Aruva. The party is expected to reach the bride's house by dawn. After a ritual greeting, some plantain stumps in front of the girl's house are cut in two by one blow of the Coorg war-sword. Either the groom himself or a member of his family performs this rite, symbolizing the physical strength of the groom's

Okka. Then, one married woman (preferably the sister of the groom) hands over a small basket full of edibles to the bride's party. After some more formalities, the groom and the bride are conducted to the place where Murta is held.

This Damphati-Murta (the second Murta) is performed almost at dawn and has both the bride and the groom as its objects. Later, the groom himself performs yet another Murta on his future wife, and offers her a few gold rings and coins which were given to him earlier by his mother. After offering this gift, the groom raises the bride off the stool and leads her into a room nearby. With this, the religious part of the Mangala is over.

The actual legalization of the marriage is symbolized through the Sammanda ceremony. Before this ceremony, the bride is not yet married; after it, she is a member of her husband's Okka, even if her husband should die before the physical consummation of the marriage. During the Sammanda ceremony, elders from the two Okkas stand in two rows facing each other. Confirmation of oaths, the pledge of possession of the husband's house by the bride and other rights are affirmed by the two Aruvas (or family friends). It is the Sammanda that defines and clarifies the new structural situation which has come into existence through the wedding. "It brings home to the participants that a new legal situation has arisen, that an individual has been transferred from one Okka to another" (Srinivas 1952: 129). This is symbolized by the transfer of pebbles by the bride's Aruva to the groom's Aruva. The pebbles represent 'pieces of gold' through which the bride buys herself membership in the husband's Okka. Handing over the pebbles to the groom's Aruva by the bride's Aruva symbolizes the typical pledge of possession. It is a token for sealing the bride's rights in the husband's property. Out of twelve pebbles, one is retained to indicate the bride's remaining connection with her natal family. In fact, if the

bride happens to be divorced later, she has the right to return to her natal home. The eleven pebbles are later tied to the frontal breast-knot of the bride's saree.

In the meantime her boxes, bed vessels etc. are carried from her room into the main hall.

After the Sammanda ceremony is over, the groom stretches his right hand through a gap in the door and takes the bride out of the room where he had remained for the duration of Sammanda. The entire party then moves out of the main hall amidst cheers, applause, and music. Whenever the couple crosses a threshold, they are reminded to put their right foot first. At the threshold of the veranda, the brother of the bride's mother detains her for a moment. The bride is allowed to proceed, only if he is offered a sovereign by the groom's party. This coin he ties later to a corner of her saree. This ritual indicates the moral right he has on the girl.

But now, the bride leaves her natal home as a new member of her husband's family. Some time after the arrival of the bride in her husband's Okka a series of rites are performed in order to show that she now shares certain responsibilities in her new home. She carries a basket full of manure to the nearest field and on her return fetches a pot of water from the well after she has performed Ganga Puja. Upon her return to the house the guests depart slowly.

After the first meal with her husband the last ritual of the "Kanni-Mangala" takes place: it is the naming of the bride by the elders of her new Okka. Shortly thereafter the bridal couple leaves for the nuptials. With this, the wedding is over.

Some time after the wedding, the young couple formally pays a visit to all its close relatives. It is also usual to undertake a pilgrimage to the holy river Kaveri during the first Sankramana month of October after the wedding. Here the creation of the new bond is recognized by the young couple through the

expression of their solidarity. With this pilgrimage the new ritual, social, and individual bond has found its full manifestation.<sup>(14)</sup>

For the sake of clarity I devised the following Table (Table B), in order to allot to each of the actions and events (that happen chronologically during the two days of the "Kanni-Mangala"), one (or more) symbolic references that coincide with the "symbolic complexes " as laid out earlier (on page 6). The objective of this procedure is to establish the data-base for each of the consecutive chapters, that is, to locate ceremonial references that point towards religious attitudes ("cosmic connections" in Chapter I), others that point towards warrior attitudes (in Chapter II), and so forth.

I am aware that my subjective view is, to some extent, reflected in the choice of the methodology, the definition of the four symbolic complexes, and the selection of the various ceremonial references within these four complexes; however, I have tried to reduce my interpretational freedom to the most obvious relationships between those symbolic expressions and their corresponding symbolic complexes which "make sense".

TABLE B: The Symbolic Complexes Encoded in the "Kani-Mangala"

	CHRONOLOGY	CEREMONIAL REFERENCES	SYMBOLIC COMPLEXES			
			(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
PREPARATORY ACTIONS:	sometime before the wedding	<u>Mangala Kuripa</u>			*	*
	ditto	astrologer selects auspicious time	*			*
	one day before the <u>Mangala</u>	cleaning of the house; erection of marriage pandal	*		*	*
<u>THE WEDDING DAY I:</u>	early evening	traditional dress		*		
		worship of sacred lamp by groom/bride	*			*
		worship of ancestors at the <u>Kaimata</u>	*	*		*
		first meal of groom/bride (separately)			*	*
	mid-night to next morning rest					
	morning	ritual shaving; "wearing of bangles"	*	*		
		ritual bath	*			
		dressing		*		
		<u>Murta</u> # 1	*	*	*	*
	noon	common lunch			*	*

TABLE B cont'd:

	CHRONOLOGY	CEREMONIAL REFERENCES	SYMBOLIC COMPLEXES			
			(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<u>DAY II:</u>	shortly after mid-night	groom travels to bride's Okka				*
	dawn	reception of groom's party: a. gift of food b. war-sword rite		*	*	*
	early morning	<u>Murta # 2</u>	*	*	*	*
		<u>Murta # 3</u>	*	*	*	*
		<u>Cheela Pana</u> (money gift to bride)				*
		groom takes possession of bride				*
		<u>Sammanda</u>		*	*	*
	noon	bride leaves natal home: mother's brother symbolism crossing of threshold with right foot first	*			*
	early evening	arrival at husband's Okka: concluding rites a. bride carries manure b. performs <u>Ganga Puja</u> c. fetches water	*		*	*
		naming of the bride				*
	evening	consummation of marriage				
SOME TIME AFTER:		couple visits relatives Kaveri pilgrimage	*			*

(See Legend - page 35)

Legend: (1) = the "COSMIC" complex: includes all references to (a) vital forces and essences, (b) purification, (c) separation of the mundane from the cosmic, (d) other philosophical matters.  
(2) = the "RULER" complex: references to (a) power, (b) dominance, (c) fighting ability, (d) general social status.  
(3) = the "FARMER" complex: references to (a) prosperity, abundance, growth; (b) household unit/space, etc.  
(4) - the "KINSMAN" complex: reference to (a) kin-territories, kin-groups, descent; (b) roles related to (a).

Before continuing further, it will be helpful to point out that the function of the "Kanni-Mangala" is clearly replicated in its structure. Its function is to secure the perpetuation of the society through the creation of the new personal bond (between the groom and the bride) as well as of the social bond (between the Okkas) on a culture-specific ceremonial level. The most obvious structural feature of the Coorg marriage ceremony, then, highlights this duality between male and female, the two different kin-groups, the religious and politico-economic symbolism, and finally, displays the transformation from the duality to a (temporary) manifestation of some kind of unity.

As noted earlier, the "Kanni-Mangala" lasts usually for two days. On the first day, the cult of the Okka is the focal point of the ritual activities. Each family -- separately -- gathers with relatives and friends and worships the person that is about to marry. The second day brings the merging of the two social units (Okkas) through the combined worship of the bride and the groom by both families. In

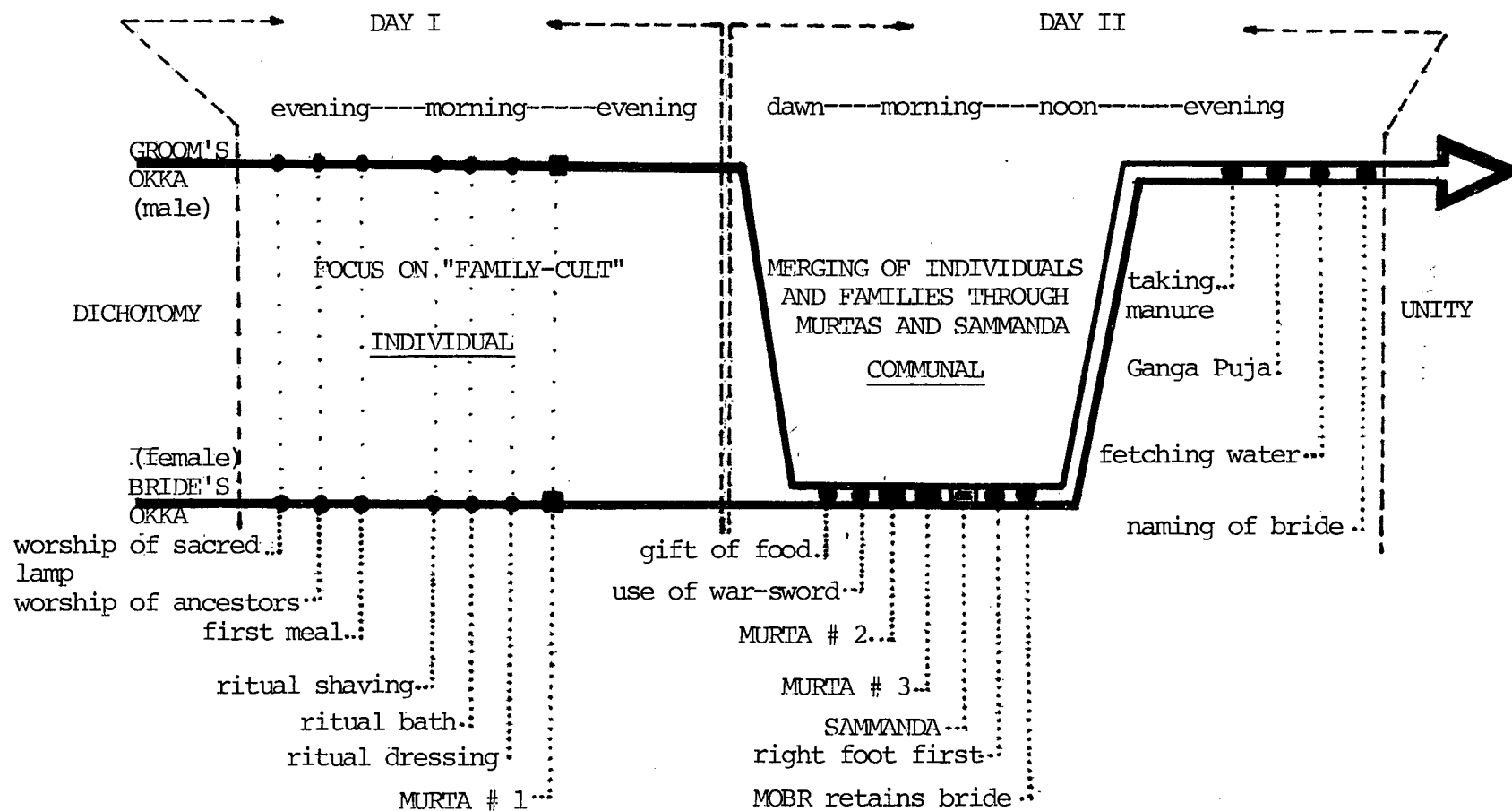
the Sammanda ceremony, the new bond is legalized. This is a necessary practice, since the bond is not irrevocable. The two Aruvas, or family friends,<sup>(15)</sup> officiate the Sammanda ceremony. They are members of "friendly" Okkas and fulfill numerous ritual and social functions within the Coorg family and community cult. As far as their role in the wedding ceremony is concerned, it is they who initiate and conclude the legal aspects (the Mangala Kuripa and the Sammanda) of it. Interestingly enough, the Aruvas conduct only the contractual ceremonies in the "Kanni-Mangala", those which ultimately make the wedding legal.

The general structure of the Coorg wedding ceremony, then, is a re-enactment of the social order, symbolized through a specific set of rites and ceremonies that show partly religious overtones and that is partly a dramatized form of profane (socio-political) ends (see the diagrammatic representation in Figure 1 - on page 37).

The structure of the "Kanni-Mangala" emphasizes -- more than anything -- the function of marriage as an important link in the societal make-up of Coorg: it prepares the individuals and their respective families for the new personal and kin-bond through marriage. The first day features preparatory activities which are designed to enable the bride and groom to carry out the major rituals which will follow on the next day. In the presence of their family and close friends the bride and groom (separately) confirm their religious affiliation by worshipping the sacred lamp, and their ancestors; by taking a meal with special friends they share once more



FIGURE 1: The structural make-up of the "Kanni-Mangala".



(and for the last time as unmarried individuals) the security of their own kin and reference group, and finally, by shaving, bathing, and dressing, they reach a position - ritually and socially - that enables them to be the object of worship in the first Murta ceremony.

The next day, however, brings the joining of the two young people (and the two families) which is first symbolized by the groom and his party travelling to the bride's house. After presenting the gift of food to a member of the bride's party, the groom displays his (and his family's) martial quality by cutting the plantain stumps with one blow of his war-knife. After these expressions of goodwill and strength, the merging of the two kin-groups through their representative (the bride and groom) is visualized in the second Murta ceremony where, for the first and only time, the couple is worshipped by both families. Then the groom worships his future wife in the third Murta, signifying his devotion. With this, the unity is established on a religious plane. The legalization of this unity, however, is confirmed through the Sammanda ceremony (the most important ceremony of the entire wedding) where the co-rights to the property of the groom's Okka are given to the bride (now being his young wife) and to the groom (now being the husband). The unity is legal, the unity of the couple and of the kin-groups. The societal conditions are re-enacted and satisfied.

C H A P T E R   I

T H E   C O S M I C   C O N N E C T I O N

A. PROLOGUE:

When human beings develop a sense of order they create a powerful device for the organization and maintenance of the social and religious structure in which they live. This sense of order becomes institutionalized in various ways: be it on the social and political level as "law", "custom", and "appropriate behaviour", or on the religious-philosophical level where we encounter it as that which one might call "ultimate truth" that signifies and prescribes the correct and ordered way of the interactions with the divine powers and the moral conduct of man (Douglas 1966: 7).

For a culture to have a recognizable character, a process of discrimination and evaluation must have taken place. This works through a hierarchy of goals and values which the community can apply as a general guide to action in a wide variety of contexts. Cultural intolerance is expressed by avoidance, discrimination, and pressure to conform. In the context of Coorg society these goals and values display a mix of culture-specific (indigenous) and borrowed socio-religious conceptions.

In this chapter, I am concerned with the importance the Coorgs assign to their religio-philosophical notion of order as expressed in their marriage ceremony. I want to identify those symbolic references which reflect concern with (either group-specific or shared) notions about such things as the importance of auspicious times and

places, the worship of abstract forces (as seen in the sun, sacred lamps, a flame, etc.), and concepts about purification and refinement. Finally, I want to determine to what extent the Coorgs share general Hindu cosmological symbolism and refer to it in their own religious reality.

#### B. COSMIC CONNECTIONS REFLECTED IN THE "KANNI-MANGALA"

As laid out in Table B, a number of ritual actions and events in the marriage ceremony concentrate on the re-enactment of religious-philosophical themes that relate in some way or another to the Coorg notion that there exists a superior abstract plane, some kind of a "grand order of things" that has to be followed in order to make society work.

The term Mangala, for instance, points to this very notion. It means "auspicious ceremony" (formerly, a ceremony of any kind that increased the ritual and social status of its objects) which signifies the importance of a superior reality and its link to desirable societal patterns of behaviour. People are the objects of Mangala, and it is the Mangala that changes the social status of the persons on which it is performed, increasing the respect given to them. For instance, a man who killed a tiger singlehandedly was entitled to a special Mangala, as was a woman who had given birth to ten children, all of whom lived (Srinivas 1952:71). Although there were many kinds of Mangala, it is, nowadays, solely associated with marriage.

When a virgin girl is married to an unwed man she is entitled (as is the groom) to a Mangala, an "auspicious ceremony", that marks the increase in her (and his) ritual and social status. Mangala per se, then, is the only type of "auspicious ceremony" performed by the Coorgs.

Using Table C as a matrix for the following discussion, I now want to concentrate on those specific ceremonial references within the "Kanni-Mangala", which deal exclusively with Coorg concerns regarding philosophy and cosmology.

Generally speaking, the "Kanni-Mangala" is a highly ritualized visualization of two central themes: the bringing together of two persons (and two kin-groups) on a religious level (through the three Murtas and their related rites), and on a politico-economic level through the Sammanda ceremony. Srinivas calls the Sammanda-part the "non-Mangala part" (1952: 72); I however, do not agree with this distinction. Mangala stands for the entire marriage ceremony, and not only - as Srinivas would have it - for that what he calls the "ritually important (Mangala) part" (ibid: 72). As we will see later, this dichotomy between religious and contractual aspects of the "Kanni-Mangala" serves as a major distinction between Coorg and Brahmanic cosmological ideas. For now, I want to concentrate on the Murta ceremony, which is the central ritual of the religious part of Mangala. It is this Murta ceremony, that necessitates the enactment of certain preliminary rites. If we conceive the ancestral estate as a replication of the cosmic order, then the preparation of the parti-

TABLE C: Cosmic connections magnified.

Philosophical and Cosmological Concerns	Ceremonial Actions and References
(a) Replication of the cosmic order in human reality:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the role of astrology in determining "auspicious" time for the wedding...</li> <li>- worship of the sun, fire (lamps etc. as representations of cosmic forces...</li> <li>- construction of "sacred spaces" as loci of "auspicious" ceremonies...</li> <li>- the role of the ancestral estate as a sacred location per se...</li> </ul>
(b) Connection between purity and personal order:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- purifications of house...</li> <li>- purification of participants: ritual shaving, ritual bath, ritual dressing...</li> <li>- the use of rice, milk, materials and colours, as well as gestures which convey purity/respect...</li> <li>- <u>Murta</u> symbolism...</li> <li>- <u>Ganga Puja</u> and Kaveri Pilgrimage</li> </ul>

cipants for the performance of Murta, and the location in which it is performed, are important. Purity of body and clothes is a prerequisite for the participation of all objects as well as subjects in the coming events. Inauspiciousness (which is not necessarily equalled with impurity) of persons and things, as well as times, endangers the success of the entire wedding. Moreover, the ancestral estate, and especially the ancestral house (the "stage" of the wedding "performance", as it were) is considered "sacred" (auspicious):

Certain parts of the house are more sacred than the others. The central hall is very sacred. In the western wall of the central hall is a niche in which burns an earthen or metal lamp (...). The lamp burns with the lip facing east, the sacred direction. This lamp is called Nelluki Boluk. It is lit every morning and evening by a woman of the house who salutes it after lighting it (...). The Tug Boluk, or hanging lamp, is hung from the ceiling of the central hall, and is saluted on all ritual occasions (Srinivas 1952: 76).

Usually, the central hall is the location for the Murta ceremony. However, in recent times, a marriage pandal is erected in front of the main veranda of the house, to accommodate all the participants and guests. Nevertheless, the place where Murta is performed lies in the center of the ancestral estate and is considered the most sacred part of the entire property.

Before Murta can take place the entire house is cleaned and its walls are colour-washed. This can be seen as a restoration of the



general order of things. Further, before Murta (and for that matter, Mangala in general) can take place, an auspicious time should be selected by the local astrologer. Srinivas states that the Coorgs use Kaniyas, astrologers and magicians from Malabar who have been settled in Coorg for a long time. The Coorg believe that:

...every important task must be begun in an auspicious moment or it will fail. Only the Kaniya knows the auspicious and inauspicious moments, and this is revealed to him by his knowledge of astrology...A wedding has to be performed on an auspicious day at an auspicious hour, and if there are horoscopes for the boy and the girl, they are examined to find out if they are mutually compatible (1952: 39).

The Coorgs, then, believe, that there is a "right" time in which the forces of the universe - which are replicated in the force created through the union of two persons in marriage - are positive. This means that the choice of an auspicious time for the "Kanni-Mangala" and its Murtas is regarded as being of considerable importance for the ability to regenerate and perpetuate human life and prosperity. The connection between boy and girl (and their respective families) is apt to regenerate the belief in the inseparability between the supernatural power of the universe and the ordinary life-force of man.

Finally, before Murta can take place, the participants have to be in a certain state of ritual purity. The groom is ritually shaved (whereas the girl goes through a rite called "the wearing of bangles"), both receive a ritual bath, and both are dressed in ritually clean clothes.

Before shaving, the groom salutes the sacred wall-lamp and then sits down on the tripod stool which is placed on a mat:

Near the mat is a dining dish containing milk, and a harvest basket containing some rice, a coconut, a bunch of plantains, and betel leaves and areca-nuts. Water may not be used for shaving on this occasion. Milk is used instead. The shavings are put into the dining dish, and later, the barber empties the dish at the foot of a milk-exuding tree.

A distinctive form of shaving prevails at marriage (...). The front of the head is shaved in such a manner that it leaves two 'horns' above the temples, formed by the shaved patches. This form of shaving is called 'Kombanjavara', which means 'horn-shave'. (...) The harvest-basket containing rice, etc., and the bell-metal dining-dish, and the scarf at the groom's waist, are given as gifts to the barber. (ibid: 80).

While the groom is being shaved, the bride (in her natal home) undergoes a similar ritual. The bride's brother's wife removes a thin wisp of hair from the bride's head, and pares her nails. These are put into a dining-dish and mixed with milk. Later, the dining-dish is emptied at the foot of a milk-exuding tree.

Shortly after this rite of shaving the groom and paring the nails of the bride, both are ready to take the purifying bath:

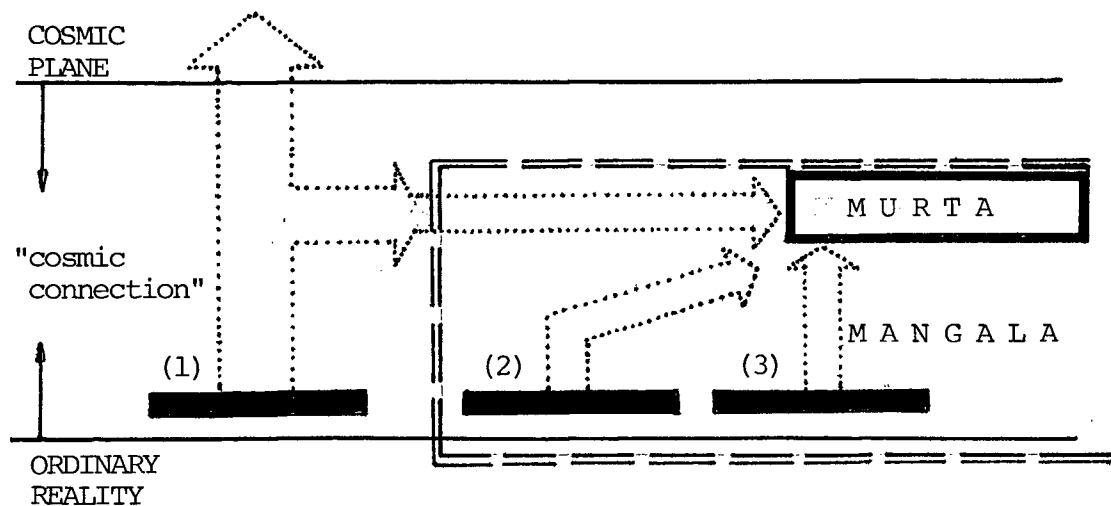
The best man or the bride's maid, as the case may be, (...) conduct the bath. Three married women initiate it by pouring three vessels each on the heads of bride and groom. (...) Widows have no access to any of these rites (Muthanna 1953: 324).

Immediately after the bath, the bride and groom are ritually dressed in their traditional Coorg costume; now they are fit to act

as the objects of Murta, where they are worshipped by their respective families and close friends.

These three sets of preparatory rites and activities mark the departure from the ordinary day-to-day reality towards a ritually higher (cosmic) plane on which the Murta is conceptualized and performed. Here the connection between religious ideas and the social reality is visualized. As Figure II shows, it is the ritual specificity of the three preparatory activities that defines the elevated locus of the Murta ceremony:

FIGURE II: Realization of the "cosmic connection" between the "ultimate order" and the "day-to-day reality" through Murta.



- (1)...astrologer coordinates "auspicious time" for the performance of Mangala and Murta.
- (2)...purification of locale in which Mangala and Murta take place.
- (3)...purification of participants.

Murta starts when the groom or the bride proceeds to the central hall (or the marriage pandal). There, a three-legged stool is situated, flanked by two bell-metal lamps.

The groom (bride) thrice walks around the tripod stool and (the) lamps before sitting down (on the stool). Circumambulation is clockwise (...). In front of the sitting groom is another such stool covered with a red silk cloth. An earthen lamp burns in a metal dining-dish which is kept on the stool before the groom. The lamp rests on a third bed of rice spread inside the dish.

(Besides) the earthen lamp, a Kindi full of milk is kept (within easy reach). A Kindi is a bell-metal vessel with a long spout at the side.

Each of the assembled relatives singly performs Murta on the groom (bride). Three married women, close relatives of the (object of Murta), are required to perform it before anyone else (...).

The mother, or (a) senior married woman, begins by sprinkling rice on the two bell-metal lamps on either side of the groom (bride), and then salutes them. The sun-god is saluted after throwing some rice backwards, over the shoulders. Then, (the woman) deposits some rice successively at the joints of knees and elbows, shoulders, and on the head of the groom. The (woman) then holds the spouted vessel before the groom and he sucks in a little milk through the spout. After this, she presents the (groom) with a gold or silver coin. The groom salutes her by touching her feet with both his hands and carrying the latter back to his fore-head. This is done thrice. The woman then blesses him by touching his head and saying, 'may you live long', or 'may you live happily'. After the woman is finished, the rest of the assembled guests follow her example (Muthanna 1953: 325; Srinivas 1952: 74).

After the "individual" Murta (performed separately on the groom and the bride), the exact ritual is repeated on the couple (second Murta) and, finally, on the bride by the groom (third Murta). Each Murta marks the attainment of a successively higher ritual and social position.

The object(s) of Murta are - at this particular moment in their life - in close proximity with the "ultimate powers" of the universe and become, in turn, supernatural themselves. Surrounded by the sacred lamps which represent cosmic forces, as well as by the life-giving powers of rice and milk, they are replications of the cosmic body "en miniature"; this is symbolized by touching the knee, hip, and shoulder-joints of the groom's (and the bride's) body.

It is interesting to note that the Coorgs do not use priests for the religious part of their marriage. Usually, the priest (or any other type of religious specialist) functions as the mediator between the supernatural realm and the ordinary human reality and his actions are regarded as manifestations of these connections. In the Coorg case, the family members and close friends of the bridal couple perform the ritual actions that are designed to add to, and underline, the auspiciousness of the particular ceremony in question. They act out this role communally, thus stressing the importance of the family (and to some extent, the community) cult, which represents a major part of Coorg religious practices.

To return once more to the priest-issue: it appears, that this term is not easily applicable with respect to Coorg religious reality. In contrast to the Hindu conception of priests, as being teachers and religious specialists who play a paramount role as guardians of Hindu ideology, thus occupying the top position in the social hierarchy of caste, the -- more or less -- egalitarian structure of Coorg society appears to work through a set of solidarity rules that reinforces the religious notions of the connection between real worlds and non-matter world through the continuous demonstration of multilateral expressions of respect. Respect is given to all persons and objects which command respect, that is, which are considered to be either auspicious (through Mangala), or conversely, respect is withheld from those being inauspicious (not in the position to have a Mangala performed on them, i.e. all persons (and their spirits) or objects which, by definition, do not deserve respect). And, finally, respect is given by all members of the community, thus, reinforcing the more tangible character of Coorg cosmological ideas. The only ritual specialists (but not necessarily being of the religious sort, as, for instance, the Brahmin priests) are the Aruvas, who deal with organizational and contractual matters of Coorg inter-clan relations.

On the whole, the only marked "cosmic connection" in the "Kanni-Mangala" is established through the Murta ceremony and its connected rites. However, the entire religious symbolism is restricted to the re-enactment of the social order on a religious plane. Srinivas calls

them "solidarity rites", and the entire religious idiom of the family cult centers around them. However, these solidarity rites display some religious overtones. For instance, the lamp is a symbol of solidarity, as well as "auspiciousness" (positive life-giving force) and "sacredness" (which I see here as an adoption from Hinduism):

...(it symbolizes) the strength of the Okka, and its sudden extinction refers to the decay and extinction of the Okka (=sign of "in-auspiciousness"). It also refers to the withdrawal of the protective power of the ancestors, and to the cosmic forces (= sign of "sacredness") who are invoked while saluting the lamp. (...). The domestic lamp, as long as it is burning, stands for unity, strength, and protective power (Srinivas 1952: 88).

This symbolism, according to Srinivas, can be extended to fire in general and explains the "auspiciousness" and "sacredness" of the kitchen stove and -- to some extent --, the sun.

All other solidarity rites (the sprinkling of rice, the use of milk, the money gift, generally, the salutation in front of the object(s) of Murta) will be discussed extensively in Chapter IV ("The Kinsman"); for now it suffices that there is a connection between the "auspiciousness" and the "sacredness" of Coorg solidarity rites.

Assuming that what we call "Coorg religion" is basically a system of solidarity rites that concentrate on ancestor-worship and on the maintenance of the social order between the members of the community, the inference would hold that those religious activities, which go

beyond this limited belief-system are adoptions from a more complex outside cosmology. The inclusion of concrete philosophical notions about the make-up of a supernatural ultimate reality, which -- to some extent -- serves as an explanatory principle" as to how human reality should be perceived, as well as notions of purity and pollution viewed as a societal imposition of order by way of religiously defined separation-rules, point toward the mixed religious ideology of the Coorg people.

The Coorg notion of respect, so important in terms of their religious and social reality, appears on a different level, to be similar to the Hindu notion of purity. Purity is order, and the members of any given society within the Hindu fold are expected and obligated to respect this order. However, respect is not necessarily a religious notion, while purity is clearly religiously defined. Respect points towards a socio-political (profane) notion of hierarchy (status), while purity refers to religious hierarchy (ritual status). The superimposition of the notion of ritual status onto the notion of respect in the Coorg case is an amplification of Coorg possibilities to interact with outside (Hindu) groups, for whom ritual status is "encompassing" (to use Dumont's term) and thus superior (to) social status.

The examination of the religious part of the "Kanni-Mangala" supports my assumption that the Coorgs incorporated Hindu cosmology in a limited fashion, and extended its symbolism to arrive at a more complex level of interpretative possibilities which do not necessarily



contradict Hindu expectations while at the same time satisfying those of their own society. Table D highlights these facts:

TABLE D: Extension of Murta ceremony through adoption of Hindu cosmological ideas.

MURTA RITUALS	HINDU COSMOLOGICAL IDEAS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- worship of sacred lamps</li> <li>- worship of ancestors</li> <li>- ritual dressing in traditional costume <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- worship of the sun</li> <li>- use of rice and milk</li> </ul> </li> <li>- salutation and blessing</li> <li>- performance of 3 <u>Murtas</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- use of astrology to determine "auspicious" time (optional)</li> <li>- purification of house (prescribed)</li> <li>- erection of marriage pandal (optional)</li> <li>- ritual shaving (essential)</li> <li>- ritual bath (essential)</li> <li>- the three circumambulations (essential)</li> <li>- touching the body-joints with rice (essential)</li> <li>- crossing the threshold with right foot first (optional)</li> <li>- <u>Ganga Puja</u> (optional)</li> </ul>

It is interesting to see that the four essential rites (which are often used in high-caste Hindu marriage ceremonies, but are not frequently evidenced in marginal or non-Hindu communities), concentrate on the notion of visualizing ritual purity in the Hindu sense, and, consequently, point to the Coorg notion to see themselves as being of

high status as well.

The adoption of the purity-status related rites (ritual shaving, ritual bath) probably served as a vehicle to minimize the conceptual gap between those outside groups (in this case, the Lingayats) with whom the Coorgs intermarried.

I, therefore, tend to believe, that the Coorgs were -- more than anything -- politically motivated when they adopted these Hindu rites. First, ritual purity and religio-philosophical symbolism helped them to attain the status of aristocrats and second, it helped them to separate themselves from all those caste-groups that were, by definition, ritually inferior. According to historical data<sup>(16)</sup> they maintained their status by underlining the difference between themselves and all outsiders, by imposing order externally through their superior (ritual and political) status. It is possible that the Coorgs protected their ritual status from the profanation through inferior influence; if this was the case one could argue that this protection expressed the structural distance in the form of separation in two ways: power was established through the affinity with ritual purity, and power was maintained through distance from the source of impurity. The Coorgs, then, practiced these purity rites mainly in the context of warding off any ambiguity at their external boundaries. Internally, their notion of respect took on religious character through the superimposition of the purity/pollution concept which led to an expansion of the ritual idiom of the family cult. The whole society

came to share a religious and politico-economic identity in relation to the outside world, thus defining the actions and non-actions of the internal and external sphere of Coorg life.

Let us take another look at Table C: asserting that the entries under "Murta rituals" represent the basic markers of Coorg traditional religious symbolism within their marriage ceremony, then only two sets of references express concern with "cosmic" relationships: the worship of the sacred lamp and the sun on the one hand, and that of the objects of Murta (the bride and the groom) and the ancestors on the other hand. While the worship of the lamp and the sun denotes some kind of respect for an impersonal life-giving force, the worship of the bride/groom as well as the ancestors displays a kind of personal respect that is directed toward their supernatural position within the realm of the day-to-day reality. In Coorg reality, the flame of the sacred lamp stands for the unity and solidarity of the household-unit, while the sun symbolizes the grand life-giving force. The worship of the objects of Murta, however, is based on the belief that ordered relations with family and community require concrete and abstract forms of respect depending on the particular position of each person in the community, as well as whether the person in question is the object of Murta or not. On a slightly more abstract level, the Coorgs believe that the worship (= display of respect) of the ancestors will keep the evil forces of the spirits of the dead in check.

It appears that the Coorg notion of respect (and I see it here as being the major carrier of religious and philosophical ideas) is maintained and re-inforced by the conscious knowledge of its polar opposition: disrespect. Disrespect is misconduct and implies the dread of societal and religious repercussions. But dread is like fear, which implies, in turn, the awareness of the possibility of negative experience. If negative experience is equalled with suffering, it can be seen as being the price one has to pay for the violation of order. The Coorg family cult, then, defines and expresses a system of values that is based on the notion of respect, which is seen as a powerful societal mode of evaluation which transcends human reality with abstract cosmological ideas.

This Coorg notion of respect can be linked to what Srinivas calls "auspiciousness" in his Coorg book (Srinivas 1952: 70ff). Generally, the term Mangala means "auspicious ceremony": people are its objects, and they undergo a change in social and ritual status. Its performance increases their relative position within the community. Although marriage is the only Mangala that is still performed, in olden times the various kinds of Mangala (the ear-boring, house-building, pregnancy, tiger, etc.) always had something to do with life-related actions or events. This life-relatedness was seen as being "auspicious". On the other hand, death and any form of deviance, was perceived as being "inauspicious". The relation between life (prosperity, health, success, etc.) and "auspiciousness" vs. death (sickness, deviance, etc.) and "inauspicious-

ness", is well defined in the Coorg case.

Respect, then, being the referent for some kind of order, is Coorg-specific, and has to be divorced from the notion of purity/pollution in Dumont's terms.

Superimposed on this Coorg-specific system of order we find cosmological adoptions from Hinduism which seem to have been integrated into Coorg world-view as a reponse to inter-cultural relations with Hindu communities in the province.

The Coorgs use astrology to determine the time when the "auspicious" Mangala ceremony should take place. Thus, they acknowledge the fact that the movement of planetary bodies influences human actions in one way or another, and that what is "sacred" is a representation of the supernatural powers with human reality. Nevertheless, "...not all Coorgs have horoscopes, and marriages are frequently arranged without resorting to the (...) astrologer" (Srinivas 1952: 39). One may infer, therefore, that the Coorgs use astrology as a "back-up" system and they resort to it only when in doubt. A similar attitude is displayed towards the use of the marriage pavilion. As my informant assured me, the Coorgs are aware that the marriage pavilion represents a sacred space for Hindus. The Coorgs, however, use it mainly for matters of convenience, when the central hall of the house is too small for the performance of Murta. It is not the Mandappa -- the replication of the cosmic space -- that makes the location "sacred", it is the presence of the various lamps and the three-legged stool (which are symbolic representations of the

Coorg family cult) that makes the pavilion (and for that matter, any space in which these items are located) auspicious.

The Coorgs also use aspects of the Hindu purity/pollution concept in their marriage ceremony (and in their cosmology). They believe in the concepts of Karma and Dharma, thus do not encourage relations between themselves and "...other castes" (Muthanna 1953: 316). They believe in rebirth, "...but discourage the idea of getting reborn in the world" (ibid: 318). In addition, they perform Pujas, do not kill cows, and face the east when worshipping the sun-god.

In Coorg world-view, the application of the purity/pollution concept is besides other things necessary to clarify their relation to the outside (Hindu) world.

For the Coorgs, mild impurity is their natural ritual status. According to Srinivas (1952: 108), Pole (pollution) and Madi (purity) are ritual oppositions and differ from the normal ritual status. Death pollution is the highest form of ritual pollution, followed by birth pollution.

Madi can be achieved through a simple bath (the washing of hands and face) and the change of clothes. If a Coorg gets defiled by the touch of a low-caste person, by contact with impure matter<sup>(17)</sup> etc., he loses his temporary ritual status, but only for as long as he does not conduct a purification bath. It is interesting to note, that a Coorg will never get irreversibly defiled.

The purity/pollution rules, it seems, are de-ritualized to some degree. The cult of the Okka holds together the family and its

political and economic unity through the notion of respect as one system of order, and the observance of avoidance rules in inter-caste relationships points to the use of another system of order, that of purity/pollution with its implications on hierarchy and social distance.

C. SUMMARY:

In this part of the thesis I have argued that the religious symbolism displayed in the Coorg "Kanni-Mangala" shows a mix between two abstract notions of general order: the notion of respect which determines the internal mode of actions and non-actions within the family cult; which further defines "auspiciousness" as a life-related abstract force and "inauspiciousness" as its death-related opposition; and which makes up the basic form of the Mangala. The second one is the emphasis on purity as a means to visualize ritual -- and with it -- societal superiority. In the Coorg case this works mainly externally, that is, in relation to outside (Hindu) communities.

As references of these two notions of abstract order I identified the worship of the sacred lamps (representing the unity and prosperity of the family unit), of the sun (the ultimate life-giving force), the worship of the ancestors (respect of the negative forces of death-related influences), and the importance of salutation and blessing (respect for the intra-Okka manifestations of order) on the

one hand, and the ritual implications of the adopted aspects of the purity/pollution concept (ritual shaving, ritual bath; clockwise circumambulations, touching the body-joints) on the other hand. I asserted that purity is equalled with socio-political notions of superiority; I also asserted that the use of the purity/pollution concept assists the Coorgs to define their relative socio-cultural position within the wider South-Indian cultural context.



CHAPTER II

WARRIOR/RULER ATTITUDES

A. PROLOGUE:

I shall proceed now with my investigation of those symbolic expressions within the Coorg marriage ceremony which stress the non-religious aspects of order, those aspects which have to do with their notions of power and dominance, and their general social status in the district.

One of the problems which arises in dealing with the concept of power is that it is an abstraction and therefore somewhat elusive. Nonetheless, it is based on real and concrete circumstances which are symptomatic for any given social system. Power does not exist in itself and of itself, but is based on an empirical reality and must be considered in this way. Another point in case is that power has to be seen in relational terms. This is to say that an individual or a group can only be regarded as powerful to those with less or no power at all.

Power, in this context, is defined as the ability to command resources, both human and material, and is derived from conventionally sanctioned rights over territory, and includes (in this case) the ability to display force in order to maintain a certain position within a social sphere. Power, and with it, dominance, translates into a certain ascribed status which is symbolically expressed in emblematic form.

In the Coorg case, power is seen as the referent that combines aspects of ownership of land and commodities with expressions of authority visualized through a set of culture-specific emblems which refer to their martial qualities. These synonymous manifestations of politico-economic power (dominance and authority) result in a superior status vis-a-vis non-Coorgs.

I tend to believe that the Coorg notions of power serve as primary emblems of their ethnic identity and have to be distinguished from Hindu notions of power as understood by Dumont (1970) and Marriott (1976). Dumont has conceptualized power in terms of a politico-economic secular realm but sees it encompassed by a larger moral-religious realm, in which the opposition of the pure and the impure is of fundamental importance.<sup>(18)</sup> Marriott and others<sup>(19)</sup> have argued for a monistic concept of power in which "all beings are gradable by power (sakti), and power is understood to be synonymous with both religious virtue and worldly dominance" (Marriott 1976: 113).

I contend that the Coorgs express their notion of power in yet another way: it is true, their notion of "respect" can be defined religiously as well as socially, but it does not necessarily derive from, coincide with, or encompassed by a religious ideology. For Coorgs, it seems, power is strictly confined to the "secular" realm, to that which defines their status in relation to outside groups and which finds its expressions in symbolic (and actual) representations of their dominant role as wealthy landowners and military specialists, which

established their territorial and political dominance in the first place.

In this chapter I take a close look at symbolic representations of Coorg power and dominance which define and express those aspects of their identity, and which are displayed in the "Kanni-Mangala".

#### B. COORG NOTIONS OF POWER EXPRESSED IN THE "KANNI-MANGALA"

Table B (on page 33-34) displays numerous ceremonial references under the "symbolic complex # 2" which can be organized into three categories: first, those references which deal with power in relation to their fighting ability, second those which show their socio-economic dominance through descriptions of property ownership and family wealth, and third references to their social status and political role in the district with respect to the non-Coorg members of the community. The discussion is organized in accordance with Table E on page 63.

The Coorgs have a colourful and well-defined military tradition. During the course of their recorded history there are numerous references that give evidence of their martial qualities. In the times which preceeded the Lingayat rule, the patrilineal joint family units (Okkas) frequently fought against each other in order to secure their local superiority, or to settle inter-family feuds. After the Lingayat Rajas had managed to centralize the political and economic segments of Coorg society under their reign, the Coorgs more

TABLE E: Aspects of Coorg power expressions.

ASPECTS OF POWER	SYMBOLIC REFERENCES
1) FIGHTING ABILITY:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- traditional Coorg dress: dagger, sword</li> <li>- <u>Murta</u> symbolism: taking possession of the bride</li> <li>- Ritual of "cutting the plantain-stumps" with the Coorg sword.</li> </ul>
2) TERRITORIAL DOMINANCE: AND FAMILY WEALTH:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ritual shaving: the "horn-style" of shaving the groom's forehead.</li> <li>- traditional Coorg dress: turban, cloth-materials (silk, wool, cotton) jewellery and ornaments.</li> <li>- <u>Murta</u> symbolism: money gifts.</li> <li>- <u>Sammanda</u> symbolism: the transfer of ownership rights in property and commodities.</li> </ul>
3) SOCIO-POLITICAL STATUS EXPRESSIONS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- traditional Coorg dress: the overall appearance (aristocratic symbolism). exclusion of high-caste Hindu emblems such as "talis", "sacred threads", "sacred ashes", "oils",</li> <li>- exclusion of priests, the "sacred fire", etc.</li> <li>- <u>Murta</u> symbolism: marriage pandal, purity/pollution</li> <li>- <u>Sammanda</u> symbolism: contractual character; descrip- tion of wealth and ownership.</li> </ul>

or less united and fought in the Rajas' armies against outside aggressors (especially the Muslims). Later, under British Rule, they became famous for their fearless and cruel way of fighting. Lewis Rice tells us:

....these mountaineers had a considerable share of intrepidity and perseverance; stratagem entered largely into their system of tactics, in war they were remarkable for their predatory habits, and their neighbours accused them on those occasions to add cruelty to pillage. Like the modern guerilla, though they were unable to contend openly with regular troupes, they intercepted their supplies, cut off their communications, and harrassed them by surprises, a species of warfare admirably adapted to second the natural difficulties that a hilly country must present. An intimate knowledge of it, a strict obedience, and a singular devotion to their chief (Raja) accompanied by a remarkable attachment to their wilds and an equal gallantry in defending them, may in some measure perhaps have compensated the want of military skills (Rice in Srinivas 1952: 15).

Up to the introduction of firearms, the Coorg war-sword (Vodikathi), an approximately three foot long and slightly curved broad-bladed weapon, which represented an excellent instrument for man-to-man combat, was the primary symbol of their martial tradition. It was used together with the short dagger and a round, medium-sized shield. The Coorgs had a certain style of fighting and its routine is still re-enacted in various war-dances, which Dr. Muthanna calls "the military drill of the Coorgs" (Muthanna 1953: 270).

Between 1860 and 1940<sup>(20)</sup> the Coorgs formed the majority of the manpower of British Army Units which were stationed in Coorg district. After India's Independence, many Coorgs enlisted in the

newly formed Indian Army and a considerable number of them became officers and diplomats. Two Coorg officers, however, became famous, and made Coorg and its people widely known within and outside India's borders.

One of these two individuals was General Cariappa, who assumed the charge of Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army in 1949; the other was Lt. General Thimmayya, the Army Commander (Western Command) and appointed chairman to a number of international military commissions between 1949 and 1954 (Muthanna 1953: 286).

According to Srinivas, a distinct system of land tenure devised by the Lingayat Rajas was the basis of their military tradition. The so-called "jamma system" gave all Coorg Okkas birth-rights, that is, hereditary ownership of the ancestral land in return for their military services. Srinivas writes:

The "jamma" tenure was very light in terms of (obligations), being only five rupees or a hundred "bhattis" of wet land. A hundred "bhattis" of wet land means an area of land producing a hundred "bhattis" of paddy.... The area of land granted varied according to the fertility of the soil....

Along with the assessed rice-fields went two unassessed stretches of land: one was bane, the highland adjacent to the rice fields and clothed with jungle from which the cultivator's joint family obtained its supply of fuel, timber, and forest produce; and the other was barlike, a low-lying pasture for the cultivator's cattle.

Legally, "jamma" land was impartiable, inalienable, and could not be sublet without the permission of the Raja, and most important, people holding land on the "jamma" tenure were liable to be called up for military service.

"Jamma" tenure conferred a double prestige on the holder in addition to the undoubted economic advantage<sup>(21)</sup>. It signified that the holder had his roots in Coorg, and the duty of rendering military service to the state in times of emergency conferred on him the second type of prestige (Srinivas 1952: 17).

It is not surprising, that the Coorgs were considered the most powerful community in the district as they had been able to (a) establish themselves as the military specialists in the area, (b) had been able to market their skills, thus obtaining hereditary ownership rights in the land on which -- and off which -- they lived, and (c) by making themselves indispensable for the maintenance and perpetuation of the state politically as well as economically, they formed by far the most influential and dominant community in Coorg. Under the Lingayats, the Coorgs were the aristocracy, on which the Raja depended almost entirely. Later, when the British took over, the Coorgs became even more powerful, as they were the first who adopted modern technology while maintaining their traditional dominant role.

Reflections of these warrior/ruler attitudes, therefore, are much more frequent than those which bear religious symbolism. Right from the beginning of the actual marriage ceremony, the groom and the bride are dressed in their traditional Coorg costume, resembling "aristocratic" attributes.<sup>(22)</sup> The groom's uniform-like dress is made of cotton, wool, and silk, while the bride's Coorg-styled saree is made of pure silk. In addition to this, both wear



jewellery and ornaments of gold, silver, ivory, and precious stones. The traditional Coorg dress gives ample evidence of their wealth and status, forming a distinct emblematic expression of their identity. A brief description of the particulars of the groom's and the bride's full traditional costume will underline the above statements:

The principal dress of the Coorg man consists of a long coat of dark coloured cotton, open in front and reaching below the knees. The sleeves end below the elbow and show the arms of a white shirt (...). (The coat) is folded across and confined at the waist by a red or blue silk sash wound several times around the waist, and knotted at the left front. On the right front, the Coorg short knife is stuck to the sash having an ivory or silver handle, and fastened with silver chains. The large broad-bladed (war) knife is placed at the back, where it is carried in a brass clasp with its point directed towards the left shoulder. Like the Kukri of the Gurkhas, it is a formidable weapon for hand-to-hand fighting. (...). The head dress is a red (silk) kerchief and the beautifully fashioned turban, rather flat and large at the top and covering a portion of the back of the neck... (Iyer 1948: 60-61).

The bride wears a uniform of red silk: a red silk saree, a red silk full sleeved Coorg blouse, and a red silk scarf which is tied around her head. She wears bangles, necklaces, ear-rings, and also ornaments on her ankles, feet, and toes. (Srinivas 1952: 86).

As mentioned earlier, the Coorgs constituted the aristocracy under the Lingayats (Srinivas 1952: 18). It is, therefore not surprising that their traditional costume bears emblems of this superior social status. A somewhat similar symbolism (where the bride and groom are compared with a royal or kingly couple) can also be

observed within Hindu reality. Hocart (1927: 100) has pointed out that there is a similarity between royal consecrations and wedding ceremonies. Dumont and Pocock (1959: 33) state that "sometimes the bridegroom is compared to the king, sometimes the bridal pair is identified with a divine couple." Apffel Marglin (1978:15) notes that in Puri certain articles are particularly associated with kingship..." among these are the white and black umbrella...."

However, here religious notions are emphasized in order to separate the bridal couple from the realm of the day-to-day reality. In the Coorg case, I tend to believe that the "aristocratic" symbolism is an expression of their subjective "self-description" as a socio-politically superior group. This is why the groom has the dagger, the sword and the white umbrella held over him. The bride wears red silk and cotton and has a white umbrella held over her as well. Together, they share the most basic and symbolically expressive colours: red, white, and black.

The groom concentrates all the visible symbols of power on his person. He, indeed, looks like a strong and dominant person commanding respect from anybody in his community. This attitude is underlined through the ritual of cutting the plantain stumps at the bride's house. This ritual is called "Bale Birudu" (Muthanna 1953: 327) and gives the groom the possibility of exhibiting his determination and physical strength. With one blow of his war-sword, he cuts the plantain stumps in half. Dr. Muthanna cites an anecdote from Coorg folklore which explains the ritual:

Manmatha, god of beauty and love, wanted to marry Rathi, the then most beautiful princess who had been betrothed to another prince. Their marriage had already been arranged and therefore Manmatha went (dressed) as a bridegroom to Rathi's house and challenged his rival suitor. In the fight that ensued, Manmatha killed his opponent and married Rathi, the queen of his choice (Muthanna 1953: 327).

It is obvious that the Coorgs assign great importance to their ability to influence reality through conscious actions of aggression. Rather than submitting to a pre-given order of things, the hero of this anecdote (and the groom re-enacts this in the "Kanni-Mangala") takes his own actions which are designed to change the outcome of the plot to his advantage. The plantain stumps symbolize opposing forces, and when the groom cuts them in half, he destroys them and is free to take possession of the bride. He does this after the third Murta, when he lifts her off the three-legged stool and leads her to the kitchen in which she has to wait until the Sammanda ceremony is over. Again, the groom leads her out of the kitchen and away from her natal home to his Okka. As mentioned earlier, this act of taking possession of the bride (rather than receiving the "gift of the bride" as is customary in Hindu weddings) together with the display of his martial abilities suggests that power is synonymous to physical and military strength and is expressed through the wearing of "signs of aggression" (the sword and dagger) and through the symbolic re-enactment of an "aggressive" rite.

Thus, I propose that the above mentioned aspects of power correlate with Coorg socio-political manifestations of authority (through military "physical" strength) and manifestations of aggression (through an ideology based on this authority), and are confined to the male actor. Nevertheless, it is the bride who is the object of all these symbolic enactments of power, and it is the bride, who ultimately is an integral part of this power. Without a wife, the Coorg man is neither in the position to obtain authority, nor able to exercise it.

Power, as I have defined it, also means control. It transcends several aspects of the reality of the Coorgs and operates on an individual and communal level. As mentioned earlier, the Coorgs were able to secure birth rights on the land on which (and off which) they lived. It is asserted <sup>(23)</sup>, that the Coorgs as a society own over 85% of the available territory in the district which makes them the overwhelmingly dominant group in the area. Dominance in this context is seen as the result of ownership of a high percentage of the available territory and the control of movable and immobile property by one group. By owning the means of production and the working force (they had slaves), the Coorgs managed to accumulate considerable wealth, which in turn served as a primary emblem of their superior social status vis-a-vis all outsiders. In order to appreciate the fundamental differences between Coorg and non-Coorg social realities, it is necessary to take a quick look at the village

situation in a Hindu community vs that in a Coorg "Ur".

Usually, a system of multilateral exchange which cuts across sub-caste lines and that allows the establishment and the maintenance of relations between hierarchically different jatis (the "jajmani-system") prevails in Hindu communities.<sup>(24)</sup> The Coorgs, however, did not use this kind of social regulant. They were the owners and operators of their family estates and used slaves as their work force. According to Srinivas, these slaves were divided into two classes, one praedial and the other personal:

....The (praedial) slaves could not be sold apart from the land on which they worked, and when land was sold, they went with it automatically. The personal slaves, on the other hand, could be sold or mortgaged, and had to move with their masters wherever the latter went. They were, in fact, the movable property of their masters (Srinivas 1952: 21).

Interestingly enough, the relations between Coorgs and their slaves is said to have been close, and although they were considered to be of lower status, they were members of the household, and thus incorporated in the Coorg Okka. In opposition to Hindu communities, there was no question who was in charge in Coorg. After the British had abolished slavery, the Coorgs quickly changed from their traditional "feudal" mode of production to the newly imported Western style which forced them to pay wages to their former slaves. Although the change from the traditional mode of production to the "westernized" one triggered a number of socio-economic and political developments regarding communal ownership of land, wealth distribution, and political influence within Coorg

district, the Coorgs managed to remain the dominant group for most of the 19th and well into the 20th century.

It is not surprising that symbolic references to this dominance are frequent in the Coorg marriage ceremony.

The first reference to Coorg notions of territorial affinity is expressed during the religious part of the wedding. When the groom is ritually shaved,

....the front of the head is shaved in such a manner that it leaves two "horns" above the temples, formed by the shaved patches. This mode of shaving is called "Kombanjavara" which means "horn shave" (Srinivas 1952: 80).

The term Kombu, according to Dr. Muthanna<sup>(25)</sup>, has several meanings: it refers to "extension", "horn", but is also the name for a trumpet-like musical instrument that the Coorgs used for communications. Watchmen would sound this trumpet whenever the Raja visited the area, and the region in which the sound of the Kombu would be heard was later also called Kombu. Incidentally, a Kombu (one of originally five) constituted the largest individually recognized political unit (consisting of several "Nads", which, in turn, consisted of several "Ur's", or villages) within the Coorg district. Although there is no reference in the literature which suggests a connection between the territorial Kombu and the style of shaving (Kombanjavara), it is possible to see the symbolic "horns" as expressions of territorial power, or power in general.

The traditional Coorg costume, however, gives more ample evidence of their power and wealth. The groom wears a fine cotton shirt, a woolen coat, a silk sash, and a turban. The bride is dressed in pure silk. In addition, both wear jewellery on the head, around the neck, the wrists, and ankles, as well as on their fingers and toes. This jewellery is made of gold, silver, and precious stones. The sheath of the groom's dagger is decorated with gems, and even the clasp which secures the war-sword on the groom's back is made of brass. Dr. Muthanna showed me his wedding costume and I have to admit that I was impressed by the fine quality and style of it. The ornaments and jewellery of the bride (I had the chance to see some of Mrs. Muthanna's jewellery as well) are colourful and expertly crafted, and definitely different from high-caste Hindu counterparts. (26)

The turban, being rather flat on the top and pre-modelled (that is, it is permanent, not freshly wound) looks like a crown-like hat of white and gold silk. The red kerchiefs of the groom and the bride are made of silk and when worn over the turban and the veil add to the "aristocratic" appearance of the bridal couple.

Similar to Hindu weddings, the custom of giving money gifts to the bridal couple prevails in Coorg:

Everyone who performs Murta to the (bride and groom) should give a money-gift, and the three married women (who initiate the Murta) are expected to give a gold coin each...

At the wedding the mother of the bride (or groom), and the groom while performing Murta to the bride, have to give a purse containing several coins, one of which should be a gold coin...

On the second day of marriage, when the bride visits the groom's house, she gives a money gift to every infant in her conjugal Okka. Later, the groom does the same in her natal Okka....  
(Srinivas 1952: 95-6).

Besides the fact that the money gift constitutes a solidarity rite and, on some occasions, may be given in return for services (as in the case of the Aruva), or may be used for sealing a contract,<sup>(27)</sup> it is the emphasis on the gold that is intended to symbolize wealth and not necessarily a "satisfactory spiritual and ritual condition" (Srinivas 1952: 96).

Returning to symbolic references to property ownership and material wealth, the Sammanda ceremony gives evidence of how important these aspects of power are for Coorgs. The Sammanda ceremony, which constitutes the profane legitimization of the new kin-bond as well as the establishment (or strengthening) of politico-economic ties between the two Okkas, confers membership rights to the bride.

Elders from the two Okkas stand in two rows facing each other. The confirmation of oaths, the pledge of possession of the husband's house by the bride and other rights are affirmed by the two Aruvas, or family friends:

Bride's Aruva: "The people of both Nads, men of the house, relatives and family members, are they all standing in two rows?"

Groom's Aruva: "They stand."



Bride's Aruva" "To the maid ...A... of the Alpha Okka whom we are about to give in marriage to the youth ...B... of the Beta Okka, will you give the girl Sammanda in the property of the groom's Okka? Will you give her rights in the Beta Okka's land which yields 1,000 Butties of paddy, in the ten plots of pasture, in the cattle shed, ten pairs of bullocks, the house, garden, ten milk cows, milking receptacles of bamboo, the paddy flat, in the bell-metal dish that leans against the wall, in the wall-lamp, in the load of salt, in the kitchen stove, in the buried treasures, in thread, pieces of cloth, needles, and in everything from one to one hundred, will you give her all these rights?"

Groom's Aruva: "We give."

Bride's Aruva: "On the marriage of our child servants will carry goods on their heads worth a 1,000 Birans or coins in a box worth 500 Birans. If this is lost who is responsible?"

Groom's Aruva: "I am."

Bride's Aruva: "Who are you?"

Groom's Aruva" "I belong to the Gamma Okka and I am the family friend of the Beta Okka."

Bride's Aruva: "Are you the family friend attached to their land (Mannaruva), or have you been contracted with money for the occasion (Ponnaruva)?"

Groom's Aruva: "I am both."

Bride's Aruva: "Here take these twelve pieces of gold." (He offers him twelve pebbles but retains one for himself.)

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

Bride's Aruva: "I am."

Groom's Aruva: "Who are you?"

Bride's Aruva: "I belong to the Delta Okka and I am the family friend of the Alpha Okka."

Groom's Aruva: "Are you the family friend attached to their land, or have you been contracted with money for the occasion?"

Bride's Aruva: "I am both."

Groom's Aruva: "Here take this witness money." (He pays three coins to the bride's Aruva.)

Bride's Aruva: "If our young girl comes to some misfortune, who is the family friend to be held responsible for sending her to her natal Okka with servants for company and torches for the road?"

Groom's Aruva: "I am."

Bride's Aruva: "Here take this witness money." (He hands one coin to the groom's Aruva.) ...

Handing over the symbolic pebbles to the bride's Aruva signifies the typical pledge of possession. It is a token for seal-

ing the bride's rights for the husband's property. Out of the twelve pebbles one is retained to indicate the bride's connection with her natal Okka. In fact, if the bride happens to be divorced later, she has the right to return to her natal home. The eleven pebbles are later tied to the frontal breast-knot of her saree. (Srinivas 1952: 136-8; Muthanna 1953: 323-4).

Although the Sammanda ceremony focuses on the transference of ownership-rights to the bride, and concentrates on the contractual character of the Coorg marriage ceremony, the stress on references to territory and material ownership is apparent. Rather than depending on the moral code of a religiously sanctioned unity with her husband, the bride acquires legal rights in the common property of her husband's family. She shares with him what seems to be of ultimate importance for any adult Coorg: the defined and acknowledged rights in all fixed and movable property of the Okka which includes wet-land, pastures, cattle, the ancestral house and its garden, the agricultural equipment, house-hold utensils, all sacred objects, and the entire family "treasure". In opposition to the Hindu couple, the Coorg husband and wife share equal power positions with respect to ownership rights, which has important implications on their marital relations. The personal ties are strengthened through this internal dependency, for, if the marriage does not last, both loose these co-rights simultaneously.

On a different level, the very fact that there is territory and familial wealth to share, and, that this wealth is considerable

in comparison to neighbouring communities, gives ample indication about the socio-political status the Coorgs ascribe to themselves and convey to all outsiders.

It is not surprising that the "Kanni-Mangala" displays numerous symbolic references to Coorg notions of power (authority and dominance) and that the Sammanda ceremony regulates the material aspects of power distribution internally as well as externally. As mentioned before, the social organization of Coorg society is based on the Okka. In historical times the numerous Okkas frequently fought against each other, destroyed each others fields, and killed off entire families. In order to avert external aggression, it was wise to establish friendly and, if possible, close relations with as many neighbouring Okkas as possible. The establishment of "unions" of Okkas through intermarriage secured the peace and prosperity internally and increased the political and economic, as well as the military potential of these "unions" externally. It is possible to see the Sammanda ceremony as a ritualization of these notions.

Dr. Burridge<sup>(28)</sup> suggested that Coorg looked very much like the Scottish Highlands might have looked in the Middle Ages with numerous fortresses scattered in a hilly area with aristocrats fighting for their king as well as against each other. Distinct costumes, shields and swords exhibiting their superior status as a class of landed aristocrats that did not mix with anybody but themselves. Marriage,

for this matter, was the only link that provided a more or less secure and positive bilateral connection between two family units.

For Coorgs, it seems, political and economic aspects are of more importance than religious orthodoxy. Since they did not have to have contact with outside communities (other than with those low caste and tribal groups that were their slaves), their focus was on the maintenance and expansion of their power through the establishment of a close network of intra-societal kin-ties, which were achieved mainly through marriage. And, since religious values were never highly stressed, the contractual part of the marriage ceremony gained more importance. The "Kanni-Mangala" thus, combines the notions of religious and daily life, the sacred and the profane in the Murta and Sammanda rituals.

The overall appearance of the bridal couple during the two days of the marriage ceremony, and the distinct structure of the wedding procedures are symptomatic of the cultural identity of Coorgs. The symbolic expressions in their dress (the "aristocratic" symbolism; the martial emblems), the frequent references to their authority and dominance, give a symbolic "self-description" of what the Coorgs consider to be of greatest importance in their social reality.

Based on their territorial dominance and their fighting ability, the Coorgs had not to be concerned with the question of status per se as long as they were able to avoid ideological influences from Hindu-

ism. However, once the Brahmins were able to infiltrate, and more and more Hindu sub-castes had settled in the vicinity, the Coorgs were forced to adjust to this new situation.

According to Srinivas, the Coorgs were a tribe that got "sanskritized", and, thus, came to share common beliefs and values with their Hindu neighbours. But Coorg accounts<sup>(29)</sup> do not agree with this assertion. Moreover, they state that the Brahmins attempted to "sanskritize" them by trying to establish Hindu religious consciousness in Coorg district; by "creating" myths and folktales in order to account for Coorg "Hindu background", by placing them within the Kshatriya Varna on grounds of their warrior tradition; and, finally, by stressing that their ritual complexes coincide with those of "Sanskritic Hinduism".

Be that as it may, with the emergence of Hindu immigrants in the area, the Coorgs seemed to have become more status conscious thus forming a stronger sense of community identity. Rather than adopting Hindu ideas (as could be expected in the case of their "Sanskritization"), they used their culture-specific emblems to set themselves apart from the outsiders. There are, of course, certain customs and beliefs which support Srinivas' postulations, but when one looks closer at the way in which the Coorgs use them, one is hard-pressed to assess them as "emulations".

For instance, the status-emblems on their wedding dress (which is their traditional costume as well) is not necessarily an adoption

from high caste Hindu marriage dress-codes. It is, rather, a visualization of their socio-cultural (and politico-economic) position, which is superior, thus "aristocratic".

Although the Coorgs assign some importance to their religious status, it did not lead them to adopt such high caste Hindu status emblems as "talis" (marriage necklaces symbolizing the unity between two mortal persons and the male/female cosmic unit), or the wearing of "sacred threads" (which is instrumental for expressing the membership to the "twice-born castes"). They also exclude priests from their wedding (and any other religious rituals).

The absence of these imperative cosmological and ideological Hindu "markers" and the stress on culture-specific aspects of "profane", materialistic notions of power and dominance leads me to believe that the Coorgs, while tolerating the co-existence of a different world-view, emphasize their own "sense of reality" through contrastive, but not entirely different symbolic measures.

#### C. SUMMARY

The thrust of my argument in this part of the thesis comes mainly from my conviction that the symbolic representations of power and authority outweigh those which deal with religion and philosophy, thus underlining a specific "characteristic" of Coorg social identity: it is their pre-occupation with the martial way of life which transcends their belief, ritual, and myth (Srinivas

1952: 240), and which did form the base of all their power. The Coorgs managed to add territorial dominance to their military authority and thus were able to control the area politically and economically. Their superior status vis-a-vis neighbouring Hindu communities was determined by this politico-economic power situation, and not, as it would have been if the Coorgs were to be considered a caste, through ritually defined hierarchical ranking.

The symbolic references in the "Kanni-Mangala" underline this fact. In terms of status representations, the Coorgs highlight the importance of their politico-economic dominance-emblems, while their concern with religiously defined status references is much less obvious. Politico-economic power is not "encompassed" by cosmology; it is a result of purely "secular" circumstances. On the basis of this proposition it would be difficult indeed to incorporate the Coorgs into the traditional caste system, or even, as Srinivas does, attribute to them "sanskritic" behavior.



CHAPTER III

FARMER/HOUSEHOLD SYMBOLISM

A. PROLOGUE

The Coorgs were and still are primarily agriculturalists and consequently depend directly on their land. The cultivation and exploitation of the ancestral rice fields is their prime concern, for it is the basis of their material wealth.

Rice is essential to the Coorg's survival and formerly it was also the chief source of wealth. Its cultivation is the most important activity in which the Okka, the nuclear unit of Coorg society, is engaged, and the axis round which revolve (all) other activities. A long drought as well as excess of rain is likely to ruin the crop (...). Proper rain in sufficient quantities means a good crop, and abundance of rice means food, wealth, and the ability to make sacrifices to ancestors and festivals in honour of deities. It gives one the means with which one can get one's sons and daughters married, to keep one's servants, to give the feasts which have to be given, and to perform other obligations. (Srinivas 1952: 233)

The paramount importance of rice as a food source and means of material and socio-cultural prosperity is reflected in Coorg day-to-day life. While the male members are entirely preoccupied with the cultivation of the fields and the supervision of the servants who do much of the manual work, the women of the Okka concentrate their activities around the ancestral house and the many household duties connected with it. Usually the year begins in April or May, when it is time for the first plowing of the rice fields. Between May and

January Coorg men are preoccupied with plowing, sowing, transplanting, and other necessary activities that are designed to yield a rich crop. The harvesting season starts in January and marks the end of the working cycle and the beginning of the festival, hunting, and marriage season. Srinivas notes that the surplus rice was sold in Malabar every summer..." and this necessitated the organization of the annual caravan in which every Okka in the village participated" (1952: 229).

While the men are out in the fields or away with the caravan, the women of the Okka conduct household chores, rear children, and tend the vegetable garden and the poultry sheds. Under the supervision of the most senior married female (usually the wife of the patriarch) the younger women of the Okka clean the ancestral house, wash clothes, prepare the daily meals, and feed the domestic animals. They are assisted by the female servants who are the wives of the agricultural workers. In pre-British times, these servants were actually slaves representing a part of the "movable property" of the Coorgs. They lived in the vicinity of the ancestral house in their own dwellings but were considered part of the joint family.

The ancestral house is usually an imposing structure of stone and mortar, with solid, carved woodwork.

....Carpenters from Malabar build them, and Coorg ancestral houses consequently resemble greatly the houses of well-to-do Nayars. The house is usually situated on an elevation, and a narrow, high-walled and winding lane leads up to it. From

the windows in the upper story one usually obtains a fine view of the surrounding country. Formerly, in the days when feuds between joint families were common, and a surprise raid from a hostile Okka was always a possibility, anyone coming with unfriendly intentions exposed himself to view from the windows of the ancestral house(...). Therefore the house was built like a fortress and was able to stand a siege for several days...

There is a kitchen-garden near the main building and a well or pond provides water for domestic purposes....(ibid: 49-50).

This ancestral house, together with the communally owned ancestral land is considered "sacred" and holds the members of the Okka together, gives them a strong sense of familial identity. It is also the chief emblem of status and familial wealth. A well-maintained house, productive fields, and internal strength secure the ability to impress other Okkas and to exercise influence within the village context. Moreover, high productivity secures material wealth, which, in turn can be used as generous contributions to festivals, and -- most importantly -- to put on elaborate weddings. In this context, references to prosperity, growth, productivity and abundance within the marriage ceremony give evidence of their subjective "self-estimation" through a symbolic "self-description", as it were, and more general, can serve as the index of their material tendencies which, together with a strong family-cult, constitute their powerful group identity.

This chapter, then, deals with references to agricultural activities, with those which concentrate on the household unit, the household space, and roles associated with both; it also focusses on

symbolic expressions of growth and abundance within the wedding proceedings.

B. ASPECTS OF GROWTH AND PROSPERITY SYMBOLIZED IN THE "KANNI-MANGALA"

The Coorgs, as do many societies in India and elsewhere, use the marriage ceremony to demonstrate that the creation of a new bond will bring new growth, and with it, prosperity to the family. In addition, the wedding provides a welcome possibility to give evidence of Coorg wealth and status expressions. Organized by their respective Okkas (and assisted by neighbours) the bridal couple can expect a two-day affair which transforms the ancestral house into a palace-like building in which the numerous family members, friends and neighbours, and other invited guests enjoy conversations, culinary extravagances, the recital of ballads and folksongs, and dancing. For these two most important days in the young people's lives, they are the center of ritual and communal attention.

Usually, preparatory activities for the wedding begin after the two Aruvas concluded the Mangala Kuripa, a short ritual which contractually secures the engagement of the two young people in question. Both houses are cleaned and colour-washed for the occasion. Since the ancestral estate stands for the matrix of any Coorg's social and religious identity, and since the ancestral house, which symbolizes the

center of the estate, is the locus of the wedding procedures, the marriage ceremony can be seen as a dramatized re-enactment of the apex of the Coorg life-cycle. Marriage signifies the union of two individuals and with it, two kin-groups; it also signified the creation of a new and fertile bond, in which new life is created, a new link is added to the chain of continuity within the Okka and within the entire society. Marriage is "sacred" and the bridal couple is treated with the highest form of respect possible in Coorg society, for it is apt to generate familial growth and prosperity.

As done earlier, let us take another look at Table B in order to locate those ceremonial references in the "Kanni-Mangala" which have to do with aspects of growth and prosperity and which deal with references that connect these aspects with agricultural and household activities. (see Table F for a short synopsis.)

TABLE F: Symbolic references to growth and prosperity encoded in the Farmer/Householder complex:

a) Concern with agricultural and household topics:	-1- cleaning and preparation of the house as the "stage" for the wedding. -2- the common meals. -3- <u>Murta</u> symbolism (use of rice). -4- the "gift of food" to the bride's party. -5- <u>Sammanda</u> symbolism.
b) References to growth and prosperity:	see:-2- for abundance and productivity; -3- for growth, fertility; -4- for prosperity; -5- for productivity.

As noted earlier, the ancestral house is the "stage" on which the marriage ceremony is performed. As the center of the entire estate it focuses all that, for what the Coorgs live and work for, into one defined spatial structure; the ancestral house is the place where one is born, marries, and dies; it also is the place where one sets out in the morning to do the daily work and where one comes back at night to eat and rest. The house is a fortress, a shelter, an emblem of the strength and prosperity of the Okka. It is "sacred".

Besides other things, the ancestral house is divided into several spaces with different degrees of "sacredness". The two places in which the crucial rites of the marriage ceremony are performed are both "very sacred", according to Srinivas (1952: 76-77). They are the central hall (usually the locus of Murta), and the kitchen, that is, the entrance to the kitchen (always the locus of Sammanda).

The central hall gets its "sacredness" from the fact that it contains the "sacred" wall lamp and the "sacred" hanging lamp. These lamps stand for the unity of the Okka. The kitchen, however, is considered "sacred" because food is cooked in it. Food maintains life and with it secures the continuation of the Okka. It is interesting to note, that during the Sammanda ceremony only the bride is in the kitchen while the groom, together with both Aruvas and other family members stand outside the kitchen. There is no reference in the literature as to why the girl remains alone in the kitchen; I

assume that the kitchen is considered to be the place in which the girl spends much of her time and that, when the young husband grabs her hand and leads her away from her natal home, one could argue that he symbolically transfers her to the kitchen of his own home where she, from now on, will contribute to the maintenance and continuation of the daily life. The rites performed by the freshly arrived new wife include, besides other things, to carry water from the well to the kitchen.

Be that as it may, the cleaning and preparation of the ancestral house gives evidence of the concern the Coorgs give to the household unit, and certain aspects of household space.

Another obvious reference to the farmer/household symbolism is given in the description of the meals which are consumed during the wedding proceedings. Three major meals are prepared during the two days of the wedding: the first is served in the evening of the first day shortly after the groom (and the bride) finish their ancestral propitiation. The groom (bride) eat separately from the invited guests, joined only by two or three close friends and the best man. This meal consists of a variety of rice curries, meat, and rice-puddings; with it, the participants drink water, milk, and alcohol (Muthanna 1982: interview 1). As my informant <sup>(30)</sup> told me, this meal is significant, for it marks the change in social status of the groom and the bride. It is the last meal they share with their friends before returning as husband and wife. This meal is usually a quite emotional affair, and displays, at times, characteristics of



a feast. It also signifies abundance and wealth.

The second meal is served to members of both families shortly after the arrival of the groom's party at the bride's Okka. However, this meal has more the character of a snack, for only rice-puffs and rice-chips are served with drinks. But this meal is significant on a different level: for the first time it brings together both kin-groups, and commensality can be interpreted in this case as a first statement of unity between the two Okkas. The simplicity of the meal seems to correlate with the flair of the occasion: two separate kin-groups are about to connect interests through the marriage of one of their members. This is the time where sobriety and care seems in place, since it just precedes the performance of the last Murta and the most important ceremony of all: the Sammanda.

The third meal, and in my opinion the most important one, is consumed after the young couple has returned to the groom's Okka. It is the first common meal of the young couple and it precedes the last significant ceremony of the wedding, which is the naming of the bride. One more word about this first common meal. It highlights the unity of husband and wife and underlines the membership of the girl in her husband's family. From now on, the couple will eat together every day except on those ritual occasions where the men eat together, be it after the hunt, or during certain festivals.<sup>(31)</sup>

Generally speaking, the symbolism expressed in these meals is that of the solidarity of the Okka internally, or bilaterally, and at

the occasion of the lunch that the guests take after the first Murta (without the bride and the groom's presence), which displays multi-lateral solidarity through commensality. The food of the earth on which they live is eaten together; this is a fact that signifies the tie between the source of livelihood and social reality.

As mentioned before, rice was and still is the chief food source for the Coorgs and it is associated with life, growth, and prosperity. An abundance of rice allows the Coorgs to eat "well", to invite guests, and to display their economic independence.

On a different level, this symbolism takes on religious connotations: rice is used -- together with milk, water, different nuts, and betel -- to worship the objects of Murta. In this respect, rice stands for the life-giving and life-maintaining force, and when the worshipper touches the body-joints of the bride and groom with rice, he/she associates the human body with that of the great cosmic body, and also transfers the powers of growth and productivity (which are inherent in rice) to the human body.

The ritual sprinkling of rice on objects and persons is usually accompanied by salutation. This signifies the bond between the ancestral land on which the rice is grown and the objects of Murta with all those who perform it; in other words a connection is made between the food source and the food consumer.

On the second day of marriage, shortly after the arrival of the groom's party at the bride's home, a married woman presents the "gift of food" to a member of the bride's party. Richter (1870: 137) tells

us that this gift represents a sample of the groom's economic prosperity and is designed to convince the bridal Okka that the girl will not suffer when living away from home. This gift of food also symbolizes the creation of an economic tie between the two Okkas.

It is interesting to note, that the groom's party carries its own rice and milk to the bride's house where it is used in the Murta ceremonies. (Srinivas 1952: 93).

In the Sammanda ceremony, where membership rights to the entire property of the groom's Okka are conferred on the bride, we find numerous references to the importance of the Coorg mode of subsistence, to the household unit as being the center of the day-to-day reality of its members, and to aspects of family growth, economic prosperity, and unity. It is a contractual agreement between the two Aruvas (or family friends), that focuses on the necessity to secure a successful marriage. The young husband gets special co-rights in his natal home which are designed to provide the material and economic basis for a new family, while the young wife shares co-rights which allow her to function in her new environment. Her main task as a wife is to bear children and to assist her husband within the household unit to gain respect and status. As a member of a large joint family, the wife is sharing the responsibility to keep the household functioning, while the husband engages in the management and supervision of the ancestral fields and pastures.

The sexes are generally segregated. Srinivas notes that there is a distinct organization of household space of which some is reserved solely for men:

...The outer veranda serves as a club for the men, and they sit down on the benches there, drinking, chewing betel, and talking. The woman rarely visit the veranda (frequently a Coorg house has a separate entrance which enables the women to move in and out of the house without being seen by the men who are gathered in the veranda). Similarly, men rarely join women who are presumably sitting in the kitchen, or in one of the inner rooms...

...When relatives visit a Coorg house, the men guests join the men hosts in the veranda, whereas the women guests join the women hosts in the inner part of the house...  
(Srinivas 1952: 46).

From this, it could be argued that the women's domain is the center of the house, the kitchen, and those inner rooms which they frequent in the course of the household duties. The men's domain is everything outside: the outer veranda, the adjacent land, the fields and pastures. The domains coincide largely with the work-places. However, both, the men and the women of the Okka, work (although separated) toward the common goal which is to maintain the life and prosperity of the Okka.

Food brings them all together in the evening. It is the time, when the unity of the Okka is displayed, when both -- agricultural and domestic specialists -- settle down to rest. (32)

C. SUMMARY

I have argued in this chapter that the Coorg's major symbolic reference to growth, prosperity, and abundance is reflected in their use of rice (and other food-stuff). Rice is mainly used in connection with religious themes and forms the core symbolism in the three Murta rituals. Rice stands for life per se, but also for growth, prosperity, and wealth. I have related this symbolism to the overall marriage ceremony, in which constant references are made as to the creation of new life through the unity between bride and groom; as to the different roles of the man (the provider, the defender of peace and external unity, the master of the house) and the woman (the domestic specialist, the mother, the guard of internal unity), but -- and this is important -- that both roles complement each other to insure the maintenance and perpetuation of the entire Okka.

On a different level I dealt with symbolic references to productivity and abundance within the "Kanni-Mangala". Rice, again, is the central symbol: it provides the wealth that makes it possible for the Coorgs to display "arsitocratic" attributes. It is the main part of any meal that is served on the occasion. It finally serves as the carrier of supernatural powers which are apt to influence the success of the marriage.

Although there is a clear religious character to much of the "growth and prosperity" symbolism, it connects even more strongly with tangible, material and social norms in day-to-day life. Coorgs are wealthy agriculturalists with a keen sense of profit. The internal unity and the close relationship to their ancestral lands provides them with a strong basis for a well-organized domestic life in which clear division of labour and sex segregation coincide. The land and the house is the core of Coorg realty, it is owned communally, maintained communally, and enjoyed and loved communally.

CHAPTER IV

THE KINSMAN

A. PROLOGUE:

Coorg society is strictly endogamous. It consists of about 500 patrilineal joint family groups (Okkas) which are politically organized in villages (usually three to four Okkas constitute an "Ur"), Nads, (a cluster of villages), and Kombus (two or more Nads). Coorg Okkas are exogamous.

Ideally, all the members of an Okka are descended from one common ancestor. Srinivas writes that "the Okkas seems to be stronger and more sharply structured than the joint family elsewhere in South India, with the possible exception of the matrilineal "Tarwad" of the Nayars, and the patrilineal "Illam" of the Nambudris" (1952: 49). It is said<sup>(33)</sup> that the Coorg Okka is a continuum;

at any given moment of time the Okka is made up of a group of agnatically related males, and their wives and children. When the older members of the Okka die the younger members take their place. The dynamic element in the Okka consists in the younger members succeeding to the positions left vacant by the deaths of the older members.(...) The generation-depth of an Okka might expand by a birth, or contract by a death, a segment may cling on or split off, but in the main there is a certain constancy of configuration which makes it an Okka. The members of an Okka come and go, but the Okka goes on forever. The members are like people on an escalator, those on the bottom stairs moving gradually up to the top and finally disappearing.

An Okka not only looks foreward to the future but also stretches back into the past. Each Okka has a distinct tradition with which its living members



are acquainted. The 'house-song' sung (...) at ancestor propitiations enables the younger members to learn the history of the Okka.  
(ibid: 159)

All the members of the Okka live together in the ancestral house and share common rights in the entire ancestral estate. In the times of pre-British Coorg, it was not unusual that up to 200 people would live under one roof (Muthanna 1974: 245). Since residence is patrilineal, girls leave their natal homes upon marriage and become members of the conjugal Okka by contract. Traditional restrictions on marriage among Coorgs require that a man must not marry outside the limits of his society and the bride and groom must not belong to the same Okka. In addition, marriage is forbidden to couples who are related by descent from a common female ancestor through females only (Emeneau 1938: 336). It also is prohibited between any two persons who apply to one another brother-sister terms or terms denoting relationships between different generations (ibid: 336). On the other hand, widow and divorce re-marriage is permitted and practiced.

If a woman loses her first husband she remains a member of her husband's family and cannot lose her rights in that family's property except by re-marriage. If her second husband should be a member of her first husband's family (and often enough it is his brother), representatives of her natal family are sent for and they and the representatives of her husband's family perform a new Sammanda (but no Murta) ceremony. Through this new marriage (which has less ritual value than the "Kanni-Mangala") she loses the rights she had enjoyed from her first marriage in exchange for the same rights she gets through her

second marriage. According to Prof. Emeneau's informant, this new Sammanda ceremony is necessary, "...since her rights in her husband's sib are essentially co-rights with her husband" (ibid: 335).

If a widow marries a man of a different sib from that of her first husband, her rights in her first husband's sib are extinguished, and in her father's house she is given to her new husband with the Sammanda ceremony. A woman gains a permanent place in her original sib only by divorce (...). In such cases the Aruvas of the two families negotiate between the two parties and if both families agree to divorce, the woman relinquishes all claims to a place in her husband's sib and may never regain it by another marriage into the sib. She regains her place in her father's sib and keeps it, unless, as rarely happens, she should be sought in marriage by another man from another sib (ibid: 335).

In all the above mentioned cases the children remain in the husband's family. If they should be too young to be able to fend for themselves, the mother may retain in charge of them until they attain an age when they can care for themselves, upon which they return to their own family (ibid: 336).

Marriage, then, is the one institution which facilitates the perpetuation of the Okka in its traditional form by producing continuously new male descendents who keep the family line intact, and by marrying off the female descendents, who, in turn, are instrumental in the continuation of the family line into which they marry.

On a different level, the kin-network that is created through marriage with a number of Okkas is apt to strengthen social and economic relations between them, and serves as one basic foundation for

a more general group-identity.

Although there are numerous important socio-cultural and religious aspects connected with this particular kinship-system, I want to confine my discussion to those ceremonial references to kin-groups, descent, kin-territory, and intra and inter-Okka relations which are symbolically expressed in the "Kanni-Mangala". For a more extensive treatment of the mechanics of the Coorg kinship system and its implications on the wider social reality of this society, I refer to the writings of Srinivas (1952), Emeneau (1938), Muthanna (1953, 1974), and in the Bibliography listed Census and Gazetteer material.

B. KIN-SYMBOLISM WITHIN THE "KANNI-MANGALA":

It is not surprising that references to the kin-organization of Coorgs are frequent and are found throughout the marriage symbolism. "It is impossible", writes Srinivas, "to imagine a Coorg apart from the kin-group of which he is a member"; and,

... (his membership) affects his life at every point and colours his relations with the outside world. People who do not belong to an Okka have no social existence at all... (...). Membership of an Okka is acquired by birth, and the outside world always identifies a man with his Okka. His association with his Okka does not cease even after death, because then he becomes one of a body of apotheosized ancestors who are believed to look after the Okka of which they were members when alive (1952: 124).

It is this strong association between aspects of religion and society which characterizes the specific structure of kin-related cultural statements. Coorg identity is continuously re-defined and re-affirmed on three distinct levels: one that refers to descent, dealing with ancestor worship and the dynamics of Okka perpetuation; a second relating to one's own kin-group and those kin-groups that are agnatically related (through marriage); and a third, dealing with references to the commonly owned kin-territories.

The following discussion focuses on those aspects of kin-symbolism which are symbolically expressed in the "Kanni-Mangala" and which can be classified within the above mentioned three levels of identity expressions. (see Table G for further details.)

In the evening of the first day of the wedding the groom (and the bride) begin the prescribed marriage rituals by worshipping the sacred lamps in the central hall of the ancestral house. According to Srinivas, this is the first of a number of solidarity rites which symbolizes the strength and unity of the groom's kin-group. Since the sacred lamps are located in the central hall, which is the core of the entire ancestral estate, and since the flame of the lamps stand for life and unity of the Okka, this rite is performed first in order to secure the success of the wedding.

The Nelluki Boluk (domestic lamp) is the most important symbol of kin-solidarity for the Coorgs, it is worshipped daily by the women of the house. It is also the responsibility of the women to

TABLE G: Kin-symbolism reflected in the "Kanni-Mangala".

Symbolic Levels	Ceremonial References
Level I: DESCENT:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- worship of ancestors by bride and groom.</li> <li>- worship of sacred lamps as expression of kin-solidarity.</li> <li>- Murta # 1: affirmation of kin-solidarity.</li> <li>- Murta # 2, # 3: new kin-link created.</li> <li>- ritual cutting of plantain stumps (display of strength of kin-group)</li> <li>- first meal (commensality).</li> </ul>
Level II: KIN-GROUPS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mangala Kuripa symbolism (the indication of the merging of two kin-groups).</li> <li>- astrologer checks horoscopes of bride and groom (compatibility).</li> <li>- groom's party travels to bride's Okka.</li> <li>- first common lunch.</li> <li>- Murta # 2, # 3: (ritual union of two persons and kin-groups).</li> <li>- groom takes possession of bride.</li> <li>- Sammanda symbolism (contractual union of two persons and kin-groups).</li> <li>- bride's journey to groom's Okka.</li> <li>- inauguration of bride in conjugal Okka (carrying of manure; Puja).</li> <li>- naming of the bride.</li> <li>- couple visits relatives.</li> </ul>
Level III: KIN-TERRITORIES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- cleaning and preparation of house.</li> <li>- groom's party travels to bride's Okka.</li> <li>- Sammanda (membership rights are conferred to the bride).</li> <li>- bride travels to groom's Okka.</li> </ul>

keep the lamp burning, for its extinction would mean the withdrawal of its protective power.

After the bridegroom (and the bride) has given reverence to the domestic lamp, he kindles a light with the flame of the Nelluki Boluk, and carries it to the Kaimata (the place outside the house where the ancestors are worshipped). He is accompanied by the entire wedding party. After his arrival, he ignites an earthen lamp there and invokes the blessing of the ancestors.

This second solidarity rite is necessitated by the belief that ordered relations with the ancestors will keep possible evil influences in check. Although the ancestors are respected members of the Okka who are generally interested in the peace and prosperity of their descendants, when dissatisfied, they are a source of fear. Iyer writes:

....(The Coorgs believe) that the spirits of the ancestors hover inside and outside the house and cause endless trouble in the absence of adequate propitiation (...). Sometimes the Coorgs became possessed by these spirits of the dead and they express their desires when they are sumptuously fed and given drink (...). Especially the female spirits are inclined to smite children with sickness and sometimes even adult males and females of the house. In fact, they are always inclined to do harm. With a view to appease their wrath rice, arrack, milk, and other delicacies are offered on various occasions during the year to them (Iyer 1948: 51).

After the groom (and the bride) has returned to the house he retires with a small number of close friends and family members and takes the last common meal as a bachelor with them. Once more he renews his kin-ties with them when they share food.

Later, when the first Murta is performed on the groom (and the bride), the religious, social, and economic solidarity of the own kin-group is symbolically expressed once more: every member of the Okka performs a series of rites which reaffirm his membership to the kin-group and visualize the respect that this occasion requires. The performance of Murta on the groom (and the bride) also provides him with the necessary status required for the participation in those rituals that symbolize the merging of his and his bride's family through the personal bond with her.

All the Okka-internal rites mentioned so far have religious overtones, pointing to the close connection between the social structure of the Okka and the family cult. The only clear reference to the martial character of Coorg kin-groups which finds ritual expression is the cutting of the plantain stumps by the groom (or another member of the groom's party); it symbolizes the physical strength and determination of the groom's Okka.

On a more general level we can interpret this stress of Okka-internal solidarity as constituting one of the governing principles of Coorg reality: as a distinct cultural unit which is based on the Okka, the Coorgs have to be able to rely on the strength of the kin-group in order to maintain their fundamental identity. Ties with other Okkas are established mainly through marriage, but also through the cultivation of friendship bonds, especially between Okkas in close geographical proximity. Srinivas explains:

The institution of family friendship (Aruvame) was formerly far more important among Coorgs than it is today. In a Coorg village houses are scattered over a wide area; (in addition to the hilly country and dense jungles) there were no good roads, which increased the difficulties of communication between neighbours. Besides, feuds were common, and hostile raids from unfriendly villages or Nads were always a possibility. Coorgs sometimes had to go get up in the middle of the night and fight for their lives.

Two Okkas usually (...) stood in the relation of family friendship to each other, and were frequently related by marriage.

The relationship of family friendship was between two Okkas and not between two individuals. (However), the headman of a friendly Okka was not usually the master of ceremonies on ritual occasions. In the marriage rites, the Aruva, or head of the friendly Okka (conducts the 'Mangala Kuripa' and the Sammanda ceremony, and is, in general, responsible for the success of the wedding (Muthanna 1953: 322))....  
(Srinivas 1952: 56).

Marriage and family-friendship, then, are the two institutions that serve as links between the different Okkas. Both display considerable "functional" characteristics. Marriage is contractual and designed to secure the continuation of the descent-line, while family-friendship is an arrangement that secures bilateral ritual, social, and military assistance.

The first reference to kin-group relations within the "Kanni-Mangala" is expressed in the Mangala Kuripa. The two Aruvas meet for the first time and negotiate the particulars of the wedding in question. After making sure that all the demands of the two Okkas are met they shake hands and thus conclude the preliminary contractual ceremony which symbolizes the "engagement" of the bride and groom-to-



be, as well as the irreversibility of the decisions made on the side of the two kin-groups. From now on the two Aruvas are responsible for the execution of the marriage ceremony.

Srinivas mentions that the Coorgs are concerned with astrology as a means to fore-tell the compatibility of the bridal couple and to determine an auspicious day for the performance of the "Kanni-Mangala".<sup>(34)</sup> It is interesting to note, that compatibility plays a role in Coorg consciousness and I think it is not wrong to assume that the reason for this concern stems from their pre-occupation with domestic unity and the ability to produce "martial" off-spring.

The merging of the two persons and kin-groups finds clear expression when the groom's party sets out and travels to the bride's Okka. Dr. Muthanna told me that the reason for the party to travel at night comes from the belief that "competing bridegrooms" might have more trouble to detect the "legitimate" groom and endanger the wedding.<sup>(35)</sup> Be that as it may, with the journey to the bride's Okka the distance between the two persons and kin-groups decreases until they "connect", as it were, at dawn. With the performance of the second and third Murta, both kin-group worship the young couple simultaneously: the unity of two individuals is affirmed by the two kin-groups which, through the acknowledgement of this fact, unite (at least symbolically) as well. The Sammanda ceremony, which represents the "profane" legalization of the marriage, stresses the contractual character of Coorg marriages. Through Sammanda the girl loses almost

all her rights in her father's Okka and gains them, instead, in the Okka of her husband. She is transferred from one kin-group to another. Although a full member of her new Okka, she has the option to go back ("transfer") to her natal Okka in case of physical and mental abuse by members of the conjugal kin-group, in case of impotence on the side of her husband, or in case of his death (if she decides not to re-marry within the conjugal Okka). On the other hand, the husband has the right to divorce her in case of infertility, sexual promiscuity, and other reasons.

Interestingly enough, it is the responsibility of the Aurvas to act as intermediaries and to settle disputes between the two individuals as well as between the Okkas involved. Since they do not belong to the kin-groups connected by marriage, but are members of "friendly" Okkas, they can judge more objectively, and if not that, then with more emotional distance.

When the groom takes possession of the bride (by taking her hand and leading her away from her natal home), he physically displays her "transfer" in membership. From the twelve pebbles which stand for ownership in her natal home, she takes eleven (stored in the frontal breast-knot of her saree) to her husband's home, while one remains in the possession of her Aruva, indicating the unsevered connection to her natal home.

Together the young people travel back to the husband's Okka where the fresh wife is welcomed as a new member, a potential mother,

and the newest addition to the husband's family. To symbolize that she attains not only membership rights but also responsibilities, she performs a few rites which relate to aspects of domestic activities and status definitions. She has to carry a basket of manure to her husband's rice field, and on her way back is supposed to pick up some water from the well and carry it to the kitchen. These activities coincide with those duties she has to fulfill as a new member of the conjugal Okka. Once she has become a mother, she rises in the domestic hierarchy and concentrates on the rearing of her children and other supervisory duties.

The full integration into the husband's family marks a drastic change in the social personality of the young wife. This is symbolized through the "naming ceremony" in which the girl loses her old name and is given a new Okka-specific name by senior women members of the conjugal family. Prof. Emeneau writes:

...A woman upon marriage renounces her sib-name and her claim to maintenance by her father's sib, and acquires her husband's father-sib name and a claim to the maintenance by the latter. Her membership in the new sib is of such a sweeping character that she may even lose her personal name and be called after marriage by the personal name of her husband's mother, in cases where either of these is dead, and it is desired to preserve the use of the name in the family, if it is not used by some other female sib-member whose intercourse with a new family would be so intimate as to cause confusion (1938: 334).

If a woman should get divorced later, or returns to her natal Okka as a widow, she loses her membership rights to the conjugal Okka as well as her name. In that case, she is referred to by her initial name.

Good relations between the young wife and her mother-in-law are highly stressed in Coorg society:

...In the first years of marriage (the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law) is even more important than the husband-wife relationship...

The daughter-in-law must try to please her mother-in-law (as well as the father-in-law); this is one of the main aims of her life. She must do her share in the domestic work under the close supervision of the former. The ideal mother-in-law is one who is 'like a mother' to her daughter-in-law. She is expected to be kind and protective, and she is usually sensitive to what her neighbours and others say about the way she treats her daughter-in-law (Srinivas 1952: 145).

In this case, the social segregation of the sexes works against a close personal relationship of husband and wife. Both spend their days working apart from each other, and that, under the close supervision of either the father or the mother-in-law. Since it is not considered proper to meet publicly during the day, the young couple has little opportunity to be together until it is time to retire to bed later at night (ibid: 145). Gradually, as they grow older, the two people become more acquainted and develop a stronger personal bond. However, Coorg marriages are not based on the strength of personal relations, but on the ability to successfully integrate and subordinate under the rules of the Okka.

The last reference to kin-group relations within the ritual symbolism of the "Kanni-Mangala" prescribes <sup>that</sup> for the couple to visit all relatives in the conjugal and natal Okka. This is done sometime after the wedding and is designed to re-affirm the inter-families kin-ties.

Generally speaking, for Coorgs kinship defines mainly descent-group and kin-territory affiliation. Usually, this affiliation is much stronger for the man than it is for the woman: while he maintains his Okka membership throughout his life, she changes her's upon marriage. In addition, a woman identifies herself more with the domestic aspects of Okka activities, with the ancestral house, and especially with the kitchen and inner rooms. A man, however, has close ties to both, the house (being the place where he was born and where he lives, and will die), and the ancestral fields (where he works and off which he extracts his livelihood). This close tie of a man with his fields is expressed in a ritual: shortly after he is born, the umbilical cord is buried in his father's rice field, symbolizing the unity between descent group and kin-territory.

References to kin-territory are -- besides in the Sammanda ceremony -- not codified in ritual actions. But they are evident throughout the course of the wedding procedures: the importance of the various parts of the ancestral estate are emphasized in the choice of the central hall (and the kitchen) as the location of Murta and Sammanda. The core rituals of the "Kanni-Mangala" are performed at the center of the ancestral estate.

However, after the groom reaffirmed his solidarity and membership in his own Okka, he leaves his natal territory in order to take possession of the bride. The actual marriage ceremony takes place outside the territorial boundaries of his Okka. There, in the Sammanda ritual, his future wife acquires membership rights in his paternal Okka

along with ownership rights in the territory and property of his father's estate. Only then she can leave her natal territory to live with her husband in his territory. This symbolism underlines the importance the Coorgs assign not only to cosmological and social aspects of the wedding, but also to the political implications the marriage of two individuals brings about. As mentioned earlier, marriage binds together not only two people, but also two Okkas. Friendly relations, then, depend on the clarification and legalization of religious, socio-economic, and political ties within the context of the institution of marriage.

C. SUMMARY:

In this chapter I have argued that ceremonial references to descent, kin-groups, and kin-group relations within the symbolic expressions of the "Kanni-Mangala" point towards the overall importance the Coorgs give to kinship. It is the basis of their social organization, it defines their group and community identity, and it regulates all internal activities ranging from their religious and social, to their economic and political behavior. The patrilineal joint family units, connected through marriage and family friendship, make up the societal network. However, this network is "functional" rather than "organic", for it ties the various Okkas together through contractual arrangements and not through blood-lines. Family friendship can be

destroyed through personal, economic, and political disagreements, and marriages can be nullified through divorce.

Consequently, Coorgs focus much more of their socio-cultural activities on the maintenance and perpetuation of their Okkas than on the intensification of intra-societal relations. Internal solidarity is of primary concern; with it comes external order.

In this context, I have argued that the "Kanni-Mangala" is a symbolic "self-description" of a society that, is, to a great extent, ethnocentric and closed to changes from the outside. It concentrates on the preservation of culture-specific norms which reaffirm its particular world-view and which, despite its ethnic orthodoxy, is flexible enough to survive changes in the larger cultural milieu.

CHAPTER V

COMPARATIVE IMPLICATIONS



A. PROLOGUE:

The independent study of the symbolic expressions within the "Kanni-Mangala" resulted in a basic "understanding" of how central aspects of Coorg reality might be perceived. Thus, the interpretation and analysis of the ethnographic material available on the marriage ceremony enabled us to (subjectively) comprehend how the Coorgs deal with religious, political, economic, and kin-related culture-codes.

If we do not contest the subjectivity of our data-base, we can conceptualize the "Kanni-Mangala" as being a carrier of culture-specific statements which reinforce traditionally approved manifestations of reality. However, to determine the extent of this "cultural specificity", we have to make our interpretation comparative. Therefore, it seems sensible to compare the "Kanni-Mangala" with the marriage ceremony of a high-caste Hindu community in close geographical proximity, in order to identify eventual similarities and differences in the structure and content of both institutions.

Since I am interested in discovering to what extent the Coorgs have emulated brahmanic concepts and beliefs, I chose to select the marriage ceremony of the neighbouring Karnataka Brahmins for direct comparison.

As far as the methodology of this comparison is concerned, I will confine myself to the outline of the basic wedding proceedings of the Karnataka Brahmins<sup>(36)</sup> vis-a-vis that of the Coorg "Kanni-Mangala". After comparing all "segments of examination" (= those ritual actions and events which characterize both marriage ceremonies), I intend to qualitatively validate either Srinivas' proposition which stresses the "Sanskritization"

of the Coorgs, or my contention which emphasizes their "ethnic identity". I will do this in accordance with Table A (pp. 7-8).

As mentioned earlier, I see the marriage ceremony of the (Karnataka) Brahmins as being the "normative Hindu model". Comparing the Coorg wedding with this normative model, I assume that the results will indicate the relative validity of both theoretical propositions. In other words, I want to determine to what extent the "Kanni-Mangala" differs from the brahmanic marriage ceremony.

In this context, I contend that any departure from the cultural Hindu norm can be interpreted as the "ratio of digression from the Hindu idiom". Srinivas' proposition of the "Sanskritization" of the Coorgs suggests that their "ratio of digression" is low. This means that the Coorgs adopted high-caste Hindu ideology and cosmology to a considerable extent. My own proposition of Coorg cultural distinctiveness, on the other hand, would favor a "high digression ratio", that is, if they adopted brahmanic concepts, they modified and/or transformed them in order to place them within their distinct reality.

This chapter, then, deals with the comparative analysis of the relevant "segments of examination" (the symbolic representations within both marriage ceremonies). The resulting correlations and analogies, as well as the differences found, serve as a basis for the determination of the relative validity of both propositions.

B. DESCRIPTION OF THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY OF THE KARNATAKA BRAHMINS:

Generally speaking, the brahmanic marriage ceremony is a highly ritualized visualization of three central religious and philosophical themes:

The first (theme) is the idea that the immensity of the universe is rooted in a ground-principle of male-female duality and inspired from within by the life-force which springs from their union...(....). Secondly, this fundamental life-force is identified with health, fertility, and prosperity and understood that it stands in opposition to all that brings disease, ill-fortune and death... (....). Thirdly, the combination of the couple's association with the great life-force and the fact that they are purified and protected by a special array of supernatural safe-guards makes them more god-like than the ordinary people that surround them.

....The interesting point is that the marriage rituals highlight this inseparability of religious ideas and social reality in the (Hindu) Indian scene...(....). Marriage is a re-enactment of the great cosmic union of male and female which helps to perpetuate the life-force of the universe. But marriage is at the same time the union of an ordinary mortal man and woman which will lead to the regeneration of family and increased material well-being for particular people at a particular moment in human time (Beck 1964: 178-9).

These themes are ritualized in a variety of ceremonies that form, together with the expression of caste-specific variants, the basic structure of any Hindu marriage. Brahmanic marriage ceremonies, however, are the most elaborate performed in South India and ignore none of the details (prescribed in the Grihya Sutras) which are isolated by lower castes. It is therefore that the focus of interest among lower caste-groups concentrates on the emulation of this particular wedding

procedure, for it visualizes the highest possible form of ritual status within the confines of Hinduism.

The marriage ceremony of the Karnataka Brahmins usually lasts for four days. The auspicious day on which the marriage is to begin is fixed by the astrologer. The parents of the bride, who are busy with all the preparations, see that the preparatory rites and Samskaras are gone through before the marriage. If the groom's party belong to a distant place, they arrive generally at the house of the bride-elect on the evening previous to the first day of the wedding. They are well received and properly housed during the days of the wedding. On the morning of the auspicious day, the bride and the groom bathe and dress themselves neatly. The former is adorned in her best, the latter performs Samskaras and formally terminates his bachelorhood.

....He then pretends to go on a pilgrimage to Benares, but when the procession passes through the place appointed for the purpose, he is met by the bride's parents, generally in front of the house. The father of the girl (with a cocoanut in his hands) addresses the young pilgrim, with a request to desist from his further journey, and promises the hand of his daughter in marriage (in token of which he gives the cocoanut to his hands). Then the groom's party is led to the marriage pandal. ("Mock pilgrimage".)

....Before the party reaches the marriage pandal they are stopped and go through a ritual called "formal selection of the bride" (Kanyavara): four Brahmans pretending to choose one bride and repeating some Mantras, thrice announce that for the groom of such and such a name and Gotra, (naming his father, grand-father, and great-grandfather) they choose the bride (naming the Gotra of her father, etc.). Then the father of the girl repeats the same once more, and promises to give her in marriage to the groom.

....Then the bridegroom is worshipped by the bride's mother: he is made to stand facing the east while the woman brings water, milk, a light

and some balls of coloured rice, and walks round the groom spilling the liquid. The light is waved and the balls thrown on different sides to ward off the evil eye. Then the mother of the bride washes his feet with milk and water, and dries them up with the end of her cloth. After waving the lamp (Arati), he is led up to the Mandapam (sacred space within the marriage pandal). Here, behind a screen, the bride has waited for him. The groom stops in front of the screen, takes some rice in his hands (the girl has rice in her hands as well), and waits for the signal: the Brahmans chant, inviting the auspicious time, when suddenly the curtain is dropped, and the conjugal pair throw rice on each other. The bride is lifted up to the level of the groom's head by her mother's brother when they see each other for the first time (the ritual of "seeing each other" (= Mukhadarsanam).

....After this, the groom is seated in the Mandapam facing the east, and his party are seated by him. The bride's father washes his feet, and his wife dries them with the tip of her cloth, and they sprinkle the washed water on their own persons as holy, because the groom is regarded as guest and a representative of Vishnu. Then two vessels of water are placed in front of the groom, one for sipping, and the other for washing his hands. He does this three times. After this rite, the father of the bride places one spoonful of Madhuparka (a tasty mixture of curds, milk, ghee, sugar and honey) into the hand of the groom. After he ate the first spoonful, two more are given to him. Then he sips water and washes his hands.

....Now, the marriage proper can begin:

The groom sits on a heap of grain facing the east, and places a vessel of water before him, in which some grains are thrown in. The vessel is decorated with sandal paste and flower, and covered with Darbha grass. A Mantra is chanted to purify it. The girl is then seated on the western heap of grain, facing the vessel and her husband-to-be. They look at each other when a Mantra is chanted, invoking peace and prosperity. The groom then addresses her, requesting that she may be a proper wife and mother. He takes the Darbha grass

and rubs it between the girl's brows and sips water. Then both wash their hands with milk and throw rice at each other's heads. Now the groom chants another Mantra, telling the girl that he will take care of her. Once more they throw rice at each other.

....After these rites a ring of matted Darbha grass is placed on the head of the girl on which yoke is positioned so that its hole may be directly against the grass ring. Through this hole a piece of gold and water are dropped while a Mantra in honour of Indra is chanted. After this bath, the bride wears new clothes and stands in front of the groom who sits facing the east. The bride's father presents clothes to the groom, taking the hands of the girl, and places them on the groom's palms; while her mother pours water above them all, which falls through three pairs of hands into the vessel placed underneath; while this happens, the father of the bride chants: "I give away my daughter fully decked with gold jewels to Vishnu who is in the form of the groom". He then announces three ancestors of the groom, his name and Gotra and gives him his daughter as Lakshmi, naming her in the same fashion. The groom accepts her while the girl's father presents as many presents as his purse can afford.

....The groom touches the bride's stomach and recites a prayer for the production of off-spring. Then the young couple sprinkles wet rice from their heads on each other, exchange flowers and pray together for prosperity. After that the bride presents turmeric and fruits to auspicious women.

....Now the groom presents some clothes to the bride, and ties a Tali (a golden jewel with a string through it) round her neck which is considered to prolong her husband's life, and hence makes her a "woman with a living husband" (Sumangali). The husband blesses her with a long life and her mother and other women add each a knot, giving their good wishes and blessings with it.

....The young couple make a resolution to take up chastity (Vrata) of marriage for four days. They throw rice at each other and tie a thread round the wrists (the man tying it on the girl's left hand while she

ties it to his right hand). Then a set of Mantras is chanted in honour of Agni, Varuna, Prajapati, and others to secure a long life, domestic peace, and fertility. Then the wife's hands are washed and smeared with ghee and cupping them, she accepts two handfuls of fried paddy from a bamboo plate. The husband drops ghee on it and helps her to make the offering to the fire while chanting another Mantra. Then they walk around the fire, he leading her by the hand ("worship of sacred fire"). They do this three times. On their way around the fire, the girl mounts a stone while her husband chants "mount this stone and be firm as this stone". To the north of the fire are placed seven heaps of rice. On each of these, the husband places her right foot repeating: 1. "May Vishnu cause you to take one step, for the sake of obtaining food; 2....two steps for the sake of gaining strength; 3.....for the sake of solemn acts of religion; 4.....for the sake of obtaining happiness; 5.....for the sake of cattle; 6.....for the increase of wealth; 7.....for the sake of becoming my companion". Then the pair put their heads close and sprinkle water on their heads.

.....In the evening, the pair go to an open place where the husband points out the Great Bear to his wife, and then a small star by the side of them, hinting that that star should be her ideal for constancy and character: she says, "May I get children with the husband living" (breaking her silence since the beginning of the wedding proceedings).

....With this the marriage proper is over in one day; and the husband and his party should take his bride home with the fire used in the wedding. But for convenience and pleasure, the pair and party are detained along with the other guests in the marriage house.

....On the next days processions with the bride and the groom in the lead are made around the village. It is usually a time of fun and games. But in the evening of the fourth day the young couple takes off the wristbands, indicating that chastity is over. They have an oil bath to clean their body after four days without a bath. After the bath, the entire marriage ceremony is brought to a close; the guests and parties depart to their respective homes.

....The bride is taken to her husband's house and she enters it with

her right foot first. Both sit in the best part of the house, and perform Pravesa Homa, the ritual of establishing the domestic fire. They kindle a fire brought from the fire of the marriage ceremony and convert it into the household fire. The husband chants a Mantra and offerings are made to the fire, Ganesha, and other household gods. After purifying two vessels for ghee and rice, it is boiled and ghee is offered to the fire. Taking some rice from the vessel, the husband offers it to Agni. With the remaining rice, sometimes a learned Brahman is fed. With this last ritual the marriage ceremony is over

(Mysore Tribes and Castes, Vol.II, pp. 329-46).

Most of the symbolism within the marriage ceremony of the Karnataka Brahmins focuses on the replication of "sanskritic" modes of conduct into the reality of day-to-day life. Although there are some references that point towards an interest in aspects of kin-relations and socio-economic concerns, the symbolism is clearly expressed through the religious idiom. The ritual complexes that make up the basic structure of this marriage ceremony can be organized in the following way: first, the relation of the wedding proceedings to Hindu cosmological ideas; second, the minute replication of rituals as prescribed in the "sanskritic" texts; third, the association of the wedding events with concepts of purity and auspice; and fourth, the importance of gift exchange (Beck 1964: 4).

In order to extract those symbolic expressions within the Karnataka Brahmin marriage ceremony which correlate more or less with the "units of examination" as deduced from the Coorg "Kanni-Mangala", I devised the following Table (Table H, on page 120) as the matrix for a brief analysis of the comparative Hindu material.



TABLE H : Symbolic references encoded in the Karnataka Brahmin marriage ceremony.

	CHRONOLOGY	CEREMONIAL REFERENCES	SYMBOLIC COMPLEXES			
			(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
PREPARATORY ACTIONS	some time before the wedding...	astrologer selects auspicious time	*		*	
		erection of the marriage pandal (sacred square)	*		*	
		purification of house			*	
DAY I :	morning	ritual bath, shaving, dressing (M) <sup>+</sup>	*	*	*	
		mock pilgrimage		*		
		selection of bride (M), <sup>+</sup>		*		*
		worship of groom by bride's mother	*	*	*	
		"seeing each other"		*		
		<u>Madhuparka</u> (in honor of groom)	*	*	*	
		taking the gift of the bride (M) <sup>+</sup>		*		*
		tying the <u>Tali</u> (M) <sup>+</sup>	*	*		*
		tying the <u>Vrata</u> threads (M) <sup>+</sup>		*	*	
		sacred fire/three circumambulations (M) <sup>+</sup>	*	*	*	
		the "7 steps" (M) <sup>+</sup>	*	*	*	
		the stone and the star	*	*		
	evening	worshipping gods (M) <sup>+</sup>	*	*	*	
DAY II-IV :		common meals, gift exchange fun and games...		*		*
DAY IV :	evening	the domestic fire (M) <sup>+</sup>	*	*	*	

LEGEND: (1)=cosmological ideas; (2)=sanskritic texts; (3)=purity/auspice; (4)=gift-giving. (M)<sup>+</sup>=recital of Mantras

As for many other occasions in the religious and social life of most Hindu cultural groups, the astrologer is responsible for selecting an "auspicious" time for the beginning of the wedding procedures. The Karnataka Brahmins make no exception: they always use astrologers, a fact that, according to Srinivas, underlines their "sanskritic" ideology:

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

....Astrology may be regarded as a "sanskritizing" agent, and the more a tribe, local group, or caste resorts to astrology the more do its beliefs become "sanskritized" (Srinivas 1952: 75).

After the determination of the marriage day, a pavilion is erected in front of the bridal home. The structure serves two purposes: first, it is the locale in which most of the marriage rites are performed and second, it serves to provide shade from the sun during the long ceremony. The marriage pandal represents a "sacred" space and its construction resembles the basic superstructure of a Hindu temple (Dumont 1957: 222). It has a square basis with a varying number of posts which hold up the roof. Often, the pavilion is decorated with red and white ornaments, flowers and leafs. "The bridal couple sit in the center of this (temple-like) structure, which is symbolically understood to encompass the four regions of the universe in the midst of abundant references to cosmic fertility, creation and lush growth (Beck 1964: 57). One of the posts is

the trunk of a milk-exuding tree; it symbolizes fertility and prosperity. Bèck suggests that the milk-post might be a replication of the cosmic tree, which rises up and spreads in all directions giving life wherever its sap appears (1964:65).

Be that as it may, the symbolic connection between the marriage pandal and the grand cosmic order is evident: its structure resembles a temple, its milk-post is equaled with the life-giving and life-maintaining forces of the cosmic tree, and its decoration suggests abundance and wealth. All important rituals are performed here, at this sacred ritually pure place where two ordinary people join together in a holy unity.

The third preparatory activity in the brahmanic marriage ceremony is the elaborate purification of the house, all cooking utensils, the places where the marriage rites will be performed, and finally, the purification of the people involved. For Brahmins, this pre-occupation with bodily and mental purity is symptomatic of their ritual status and instrumental for the maintenance of their overall position within the Hindu cultural context.

The concept of purity and pollution uses body-imagery to visualize moral and philosophical codes of behavior. The Vedic seers, for example, see the entire cosmos as a body which internalizes the sum of philosophical perspectives through the grand conception of Rta (truth). It is used to signify the way of life which is the "correct and ordered way of the cults of the gods and the moral conduct of man" (Saraf 1969: 160). Rta stands for moral and spiritual values, besides conceptualizing the universe as composed of mutually exclusive but polar categories of the pure and impure, where ritual purity becomes synonymous with Rta and ritual pollution

signifies Anrta!

The Upanisadic seers (which concentrate on the metaphysical contemplation of the ultimate reality) acknowledge the significance of physical or bodily purity as the first step towards mental, moral, and spiritual piety.

The Dharmashastras conceptualize the phenomenon of ritual purity and pollution in two distinct ways: (a) beyond the limitations of physical cleanliness and uncleanness into their ritual perspectives, and (b), as a spiritual perspective emerging from certain subtle, metaphysical abstractions. (Saraf 1969: 161).

Ritual purity and pollution, then, each have two forms; the external-physical, and the internal-mental. Bodily, territorial, and material purity signifies external purity which can be attained through the instrumentality of earth and water, among other things. Purity of the mind or cognitive processes, speech and actions or deeds signify internal purity the attainment of which depends on piety and purity of thought (Ibid: 162).

In (high-caste) Hindu every-day life physical and proximal purity is of utmost importance. These types of moral-religious codes determine the character and intensity of social interactions. Impurity, in this sense, results from the physical contact (or the proximity) of impure persons and matter. Fear of impurity limits the social intercourse by imposing taboos on food and water, marriage, and inter-caste relations. The Brahmins, being at the top of the caste-hierarchy (due to their religious status and purity), emphasize this fact more than any other caste-group: almost every marriage rite is preceeded by an act of purification, water is used throughout the ceremony as a purifying agent, and personal purity is maintained through ritual bathing and the wearing of ritually clean clothes.

The "mock pilgrimage" is the symbolic re-enactment of the traditional pilgrimage of a Brahman to Benares. There he is supposed to take a bath in the sacred Ganges, thus undergoing Upanayana (second birth) which gives him the right to wear the "sacred thread". This ritual is considered necessary before marriage can take place (Pandey 1949: 256).

It is interesting to see that most of the brahmanic marriage rites are designed to signify the orthodoxy with which they live out the prescribed traditional sacred rules of conduct. From the thirteen "units of examination" which I extracted from the data on the brahmanic marriage ceremony, I found eight references to cosmological ideas, thirteen references to the sacred text, seven referring explicitly to aspects of purity and auspiciousness, and three dealing with the notion of "giving" (in the sense of "giving the bride").

One of the rites which make reference to the notion of "giving", is what I have called "the selection of the bride"; it takes place shortly after the groom returns from his "mock pilgrimage". The rite dealing with the pretended "selection of the bride" focuses on the fact that the father of the girl gives the promise to present his daughter as a "gift" to the groom, thus initiating the creation of a new link in the descent-line of the groom's family. Here we find some reference to kinship and descent, but it is rather brief and again, deeply embedded in religious symbolism. More central, however, is the indication of the father to "give away the bride", for it leads to the core part of the marriage ceremony: this is a set of three consecutive rites which are prescribed in the Grihya Sutras and which finalize the marital union both, on a religious and societal level. The first of these central rites is the "giving away of

the virgin bride", followed by the "three circumambulations round the sacred fire", and finalized by the ritual of "taking seven steps".

After the mother of the bride has worshipped the groom, and the father has presented Madhuparka to the young man<sup>(37)</sup>, the groom is "fit" to "receive the gift of the bride". This ritual emphasizes the need for continued offspring in the next generation:

In marrying the daughter the father makes a 'gift' because the children born to her will belong to another lineage. 'Giving' away a girl is considered a great sacrifice on his part and religious merit is 'earned' in return. With this added merit the father hopes to obtain 'the heaven of Brahma' and at the same time to gain 'salvation' for his ancestors

(Beck 1964: 85).

When the groom takes the bride by the hand and leads her thrice around the sacred fire, he -- for the first time -- takes full responsibility of her. When both stop and make offerings to the sacred fire, they pray for offspring, health, and prosperity. The three circumambulations are in clockwise direction which indicates auspiciousness, and when the couple hold each other with the right hand, they symbolize the focus on ritual purity.

The third ritual which is instrumental in brahmanic marriage ceremonies is called Saptapadi (the seven steps). This ritual represents the culmination of the wedding, and with the bride's seventh step the union becomes irrevocable (Beck 1964: 102).

According to The Mysore Tribes and Castes, most of the marriage rites are restricted to the cult of Agni, the domestic god, who is believed to be a witness throughout their performance, and in the form

of the domestic fire he is to accompany the young pair through life (1928: 352). The author goes on to say that the principle meanings of the most important rites are focused on the observance of religious acts, the maintenance of the marital union, and the continuation of the family line:

....The bride's hand is grasped in order that she may be delivered in the power of her husband. She steps on the stone to acquire firmness. She takes seven steps with him in order to establish friendship. She eats the sacrificial food with him to create community with him...(....). The husband leads the bride three times round the newly kindled fire, and it is the duty of the couple to maintain it henceforth throughout their lives as their domestic fire...(....). The invocations addressed to gods are mostly in the nature of benedictions...(....). The wedding is followed by three days of abstinence, meant doubtless to exhaust the patience and divert the acts of hostile demons (Ibid: 353).

Generally speaking, the usual brahmanic wedding in Mysore is not a symbolic expression of a particular cultural unit, but rather the replication of a specialized mode of conduct which is almost entirely defined through the religious idiom of Hinduism. Cultural norms are expressed in religious terms and social reality, to use Dumont's phrase, is encompassed by the Hindu cosmology. The overall structure of the wedding proceedings highlight this fact: after the preparatory acts of arranging the marriage, the groom's party arrive at the bride's house the night before the wedding; the actual marriage ceremony begins early next morning when the groom has to go through a series of traditionally prescribed rites which are designed to prepare him for the three crucial rituals of accepting the bride as a "gift", of taking responsibility for her, and of getting acquainted with her. The unity is created through the responsibility to uphold an orthodox set of religious ideas and it is maintained, besides other things, through the knowledge

of its irreversibility. Dumont writes:

Among Brahmans marriage tends to be unique (monogamous) and indissoluble. I say 'it tends' because the duty to have a son makes an infertile union a legitimate ground for exceptions, and the man takes a second wife in such a case. As for indissolubility, it is expressed by the fact that divorce does not exist (at most there can be a separation) and by the prohibition against re-marriage of widows. It is not surprising to see the inferior marriage partner bearing the whole brunt of its indissolubility, and furthermore, the widow leads, or used to lead quite recently, a life of penitence (1970: 110-1).

However, not all Brahmans are as orthodox: those who have interests in more "worldly" aspects of their reality (for instance, non-priestly Jatis), tend to emphasize marriage as the one institution which connects representations of religious status with advantageous kinship-extensions on a social level.

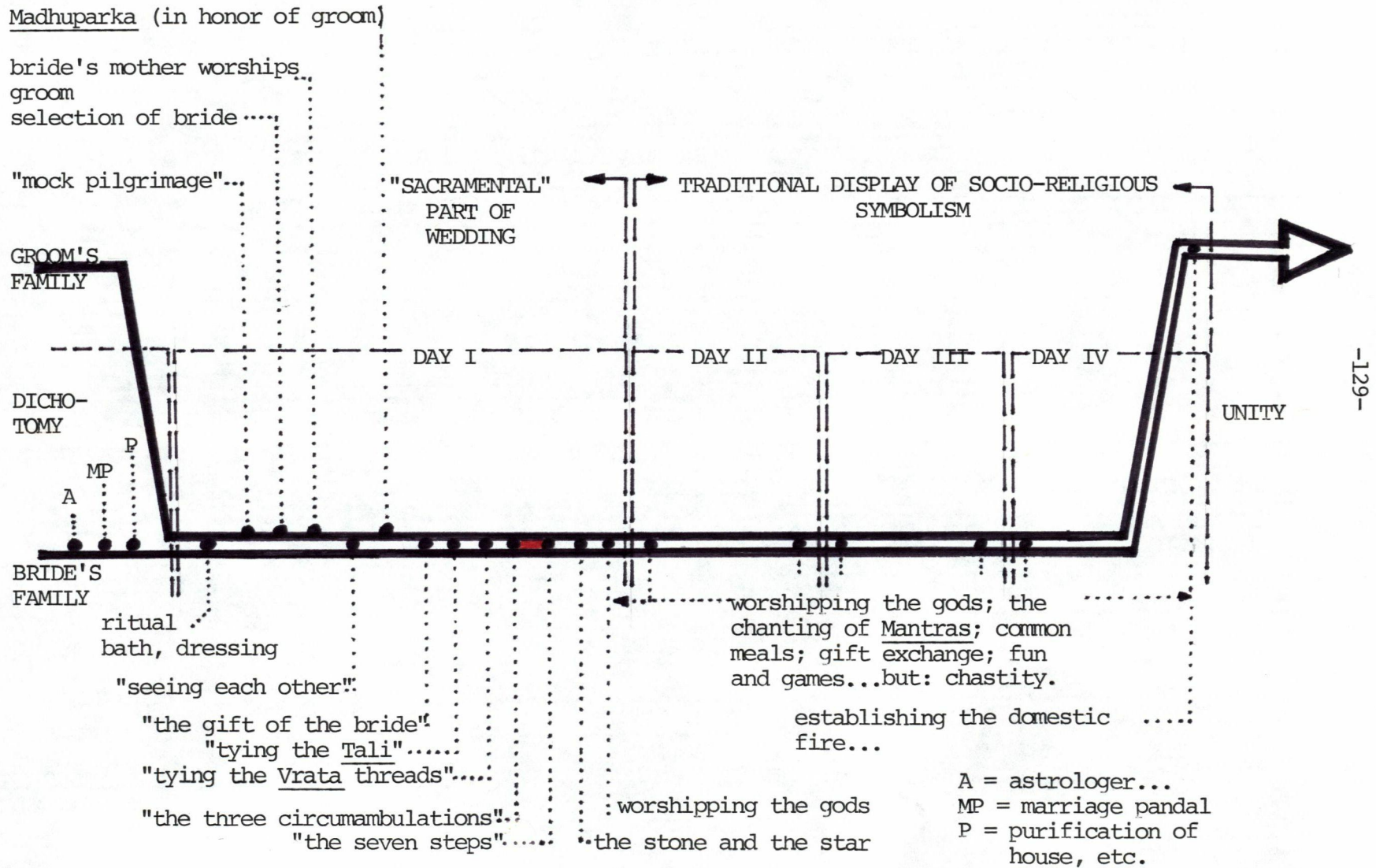
In summary, then, the marriage ceremony of Brahmins in general, and of the Karnataka Brahmins in particular, expresses the focus on a particular set of religiously defined notions that "link the domain of caste with that of kinship" (Dumont 1970: 110). As mentioned earlier, these expressions are codified in ritual actions and events which highlight the connection between the marriage ceremony and Hindu cosmology (the marriage pandal seen as the replication of a Hindu temple; the milk post symbolising the sacred tree; the square representing a sacred space (Mandappa); and the sacred fire which stands for a diety (in this case, for Agni)). Another set of symbolic representations refers to the connections between the marriage ritual and the sanskritic texts (the use of priests officiating the ceremony; the chanting of Mantras; the "mock pilgrimage"; the three prescribed central rites: "giving away the bride",



"the three circumambulations" and "the seven steps"; and the reference to the stone and the stars). Finally, a strong emphasis is given to aspects of purity and auspiciousness ( strict purification rules; the use of a number of emblems and symbols that express a high degree of purity and auspice such as the Tali symbolism, anointment, threads, the use of "sacred grass", water and rice; and the giving of Madhuparka to the groom).

The structure of the brahmanic marriage ceremony visualizes this emphasis on religious ideas which cannot be separated from the social reality. The union of male and female is a symbolic re-enactment of the "great cosmic union of male and female which helps to perpetuate the life-force of the universe" (Beck 1964: 178). In this sense, the marriage is a "sacrament" where religious ideology determines all actions and non-actions implicit in, and following from, this institution. The brahmanic marriage ceremony is, at all times, located within this realm of "sacredness" (see the diagrammatic illustration in Figure 3 - on page 129).

FIGURE 3: The structural make-up of the brahmanic marriage ceremony.



C. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE "KANNI-MANGALA" AND THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY OF THE KARNATAKA BRAHMANS:

It is the objective of this part of my thesis to correlate all significant "segments of examination" within both marriage ceremonies and to determine to what extent Coorg ritual actions and events replicate those found in the Brahmin counterpart. As I have explicated in my "Methodological Remarks" (pp. 4-9), I focus my interest on the assumption that both marriage ceremonies can be seen as "micro-ethnographies" of the wider socio-cultural reality of both "examination-units" (Coorg society and the sub-caste of the Karnataka Brahmins). In order to clarify the principles of my procedure, I control the parameters of this analysis according to the following assertions: first, I assume that the ceremonial references within the Brahmin marriage ceremony represent -- more or less -- the "sanskritic" Hindu norm. Second, I am in accordance with Srinivas' proposition that "Sanskritization" means the emulation of high-caste (in this case brahmanic) Hindu concepts and values in order to raise the ritual and social status of a cultural group to a higher level, preferably to that level that is represented by the highest socio-religious status-group within a particular region. Third, I assert that if the Coorgs emulated high-caste Hindu norms in order to raise their socio-religious status then this emulation has to be recognizable, that is, the resemblances between comparable "segments of examination" has to be obvious. In this case, adoption without modification would give evidence for the "Sanskritization" of the "segments of examination" in question, thus underlining Srinivas' proposition. Fourth, I assert that differences between comparable "segments of examination" (or the non-comparability of thematically

related ceremonial references) within the "Kanni-Mangala" would point toward culture-specific expressions of Coorg reality (at least within the context of the marriage ceremony). This would support my proposition of seeing them as an "ethnic group". Fifth, I assert that transformations of ceremonial references from the normative Hindu model into the symbolic "pool" of the "Kanni-Mangala" assist in the determination of the degree of Coorg "ethnic identity" vis-a-vis the brahmanical model.

As a first step toward this goal, I will correlate the "segments of examination" previously discussed, and will order them according to their temporal chronology. (see Table I on page 132). Following this, I will compare those segments which fall under the heading "Resemblances..." and "Differences", in order to determine the "ratio of digression from the Hindu norm". This ratio should give us a -more or less- accurate characterization of the "Kanni-Mangala" with respect to its Hindu counterpart and should lead us to our final deductions as to the relative location of this "microcosm" of Coorg identity.

TABLE I: Correlation of comparable "segments of examination" selected from the Karnataka Brahmin and the Coorg marriage ceremonies.

CHRONOLOGY	"Segments of examination" KARNATAKA BRAHMINS	"Segments of examination" COORGS
Preliminary Actions and Events:	<p>"engagement"</p> <p>astrologer selects auspicious time (prescribed)</p> <p>cleaning of the house, etc. (prescribed)</p> <p>erection of marriage pandal (prescribed)</p>	<p><u>Mangala Kuripa</u></p> <p>astrologer selects auspicious time (optional)</p> <p>cleaning of the house, etc. (prescribed)</p> <p>erection of marriage pandal (optional)</p>
Central Marriage Rites:	<p>ritual bath, dressing (pr.)</p> <p>"mock pilgrimage" (pr.)</p> <p>selection of bride (pr.)</p> <p>worship of groom (pr.)</p> <p>seeing each other (pr.)</p> <p><u>Madhuparka</u> (pr.)</p> <p>taking the gift of the bride (pr.)</p> <p>tying the Tali (pr.)</p> <p>tying the Vrata threads (pr.)</p> <p>sacred fire/three circumambulations (groom and bride) (pr.)</p> <p>the "7 steps" (non-reversability of marriage) (pr.)</p> <p>stone &amp; star; common meals; fun &amp; games; worship of gods; MOBR; chastity;</p> <p>establishing the domestic fire (pr.)</p>	<p>ritual bath, dressing (Coorg) (pr.)</p> <p>worship of "sacred lamp" (pr.)</p> <p>worship of ancestors (pr.)</p> <p>Murta # 1 (worship of groom and bride)</p> <p>groom travels to bride's Okka</p> <p>gift of food/war-sword (pr.)</p> <p>Murta # 2 &amp; 3: taking possession of the bride (pr.)</p> <p>money gift to bride (pr.)</p> <p></p> <p>sacred lamps/three circumambulations (groom &amp; bride) (pr.)</p> <p>Sammanda (legalisation of marriage) (pr.)</p> <p>threshold symbolism; MOBR; concluding rites for bride; manure, Puja, water...</p> <p>the naming of the bride (pr.)</p>
Post-marriage Rites		<p>couple visits relatives (pr.)</p> <p>Kaveri Pilgrimage (optional)</p>

Ci. Resemblances between the two "units of comparison":

At first glance, a considerable number of Coorg marriage rites and actions seem to correlate with the normative Hindu model. Let us look closer and discuss the possibility of seeing them as "sanskritized", that is, adopted brahmanic prototypes:

1. "engagement" (Brahmanic) vs Mangala Kuripa (Coorg.).
2. use of astrologer (B. and C.).
3. purification of house (B. and C.).
4. erection of marriage pandal (B. and C.).
5. ritual bath (B. and C.).
6. ritual dressing (B. and C.).
7. the "three circumambulations" (B. and C.).
8. the importance of mother's brother (B. and C.).
9. the importance of rice, water, milk, etc. (B. and C.).
10. the worship of gods (B. and C.)
11. the common meals (B. and C.).

ad 1.: In both samples a high degree of superficial correlation is evident. Both social collectives emphasize the necessity to take preliminary actions in order to secure the marriage of one particular man with one particular woman. The Coorgs used to have informal weddings in the past. Under the influence of the Lingayats they refined it to the present state. This leads me to believe that the Mangala Kuripa could be seen as an adoption from the brahmanic model via Lingayatism. However, the ritual has contractual character: it is officiated by the two Aruvas who are responsible for the legal part of the wedding. Since the brahmanic counterpart emphasizes the establishment of a new kin-bond as well as the religious importance of it, I see the Coorg ritual as an adoption in form but not necessarily in content (at least not with regard to the religious symbolism as understood by Brahmins). Consequently, I see it as <sup>5</sup>formal ADOPTION WITHOUT MODIFICATION.

- ad 2.: Srinivas asserts that the use of the astrologer for the determination of an "auspicious" time for the wedding is a sign of "sanskritic behavior". The Coorgs do use astrologers, but it is not a prescribed practice; if a Coorg family wishes to disregard his services, no religious or societal repercussions will follow. For Brahmins, on the other hand, the services of the astrologer are of utmost religious importance. Consequently, he always determines the right time for a Brahman's wedding. But, astrologers are not exclusive to Hindu culture; other cultural groups within the geographical boundaries of India employ them as well. Therefore, I see this ritual action as a possible, but not necessary ADOPTION from Hinduism.
- ad 3.: The adoption of the purity/pollution concept by the Coorgs is clearly evident. Within the context of the "Kanni-Mangala" it is observed with similar care as in the marriage ceremony of the Karnataka (and all other) Brahmins. However, Coorg notions of purity and pollution are limited and somewhat relaxed with respect to their day-to-day reality. Nevertheless, the purification rites are clear ADOPTIONS WITHOUT MODIFICATION from the brahmanic model.
- ad 4.: According to Dr. Muthanna, the religious importance of the marriage pandal is very limited. If it is used, it serves as the location of Murta, the most "auspicious" Coorg ritual, but Hindu cosmological symbolism is not recognized to any considerable extent. I, personally, suspect that the Coorgs adopted the marriage pandal as a symbol of high ritual status, but there is no reference to this in the literature. For me, the use of the pandal is an ADOPTION WITHOUT MODIFICATION.
- ad 5.: The ritual bath is designed to purify the bride and the groom, thus representing another aspect of the Hindu purity/pollution

concept. It is an ADOPTION WITHOUT MODIFICATION.

- ad 6.: After the ritual bath, Brahmins and other high-caste Hindus must wear ritually pure clothes. The Coorgs follow this rule. But while the highest emphasis is given to the purity of the Brahman's wedding dress, the Coorg assigns more importance to the emblematic character of his traditional costume. Nevertheless, the necessity to purify the marriage costume points toward the ADOPTION WITHOUT MODIFICATION of this ritual action.
- ad 7.: As one of the three crucial brahmanic marriage rituals, the three circumambulations are religious "markers" of any caste Hindu marriage. Similarly, the three circumambulations constitute a major part of the Coorg Murta. Without a doubt, this rite is one of the most important adoptions from Hinduism. Therefore, I see it as a definite ADOPTION WITHOUT MODIFICATION.
- ad 8.: In many patrilineal joint family groups the mother's brother enjoys a high degree of respect and is often responsible for the religious and social success of his sister's daughters. In the case of Karnataka Brahmins and Coorgs, the structure of the descent groups is identical. Therefore, I acknowledge the correlation with respect to the ritual importance of the mother's brother in both samples, but hesitate to assume a possible adoption of mother's brother's ritual significance by the Coorgs.
- ad 9.: Again, the ritual emphasis on rice, water and other food-stuffs does not depend on Hindu religious concepts and beliefs. The Coorgs are agriculturalists who depend on rice, water, and other crops; so do many Brahmins. However, the particular symbolism connected with the use of rice, water, milk, etc. within the context of the wedding might represent a possible adoption from the brahmanic model.



ad 10.: The Karnataka Brahmins worship a variety of Hindu gods at the occasion of marriage. The Coorgs recently started to worship some Hindu dieties as well, but as was the case with the astrologer, this practice is not considered a rule. Nevertheless, in this context, I see it as an ADOPTION WITHOUT MODIFICATION.

ad 11.: At the end of the first wedding day the Brahmin groom and his bride are asked once more to sit side by side in the center of the pavilion. This is the time when they eat their first common meal together; "... every other day of their married life the bride will be expected to serve her husband first, and sit down to eat by herself only when he has finished" (Beck 1964: 149). This symbolism underlines the uniqueness of the marriage ceremony as a religious ritual. In the Coorg case, the common meal signifies not only the union between husband and wife (symbolized in what I have called the "third meal" at the end of the second day of the wedding), but is also an act of solidarity between the members of the kin-group ("first meal"), as well as between the two families ("second meal" = common "snack" before the second Murta). Commensality, in this context, symbolizes Coorg notions of kin-solidarity as well as notions of "unity" defined on a religious level. And, since the "third meal" resembles the brahmanic "common meal" to a large degree, I feel safe to see it as an ADOPTION WITHOUT MODIFICATION.

From the eleven "segments of examination" which display recognizable resemblances within both data-sets, eight (# 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11) fit readily under the heading. This means that, within the context of my discussion, evidence of "sanskritic" behavior on the part of the Coorgs could be found with regard to: first, a codified mode of conduct that focuses on a particular type of ritual arrangements (#1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 7, 8, 11); second, the use of the Hindu purity/pollution concept signifying a particular interest in ritual status as defined by Hindu religion (# 3, 5, 6); and third,

the importance the Coorgs assign to Hindu cosmological ideas in general (# 4, 7, 10, 11).

However, the concern over astrology (# 2), the special role of the bride's mother's brother (# 8), the use of rice, water, milk, etc. as ritually important substances (# 9) and -to some extent- the "common meal symbolism" (# 11) do not necessarily indicate an adoption of "sanskritic" Hindu concepts and beliefs.

Cii. Differences between the two "units of comparison":

At this point, I want to deal briefly with the discussion of the implications of my fourth assertion which states that..."differences between comparable "segments of examination" (or the non-comparability of thematically related ceremonial references) within the "Kanni-Mangala" point toward culture-specific expressions of Coorg reality"... "which would support my proposition of seeing them as an 'ethnic group'" (pp. 130-1).

Following the format established for this comparison, I will now list those "segments of examination" which I consider comparable, but contextually different:

- a. worship of "sacred fire" (B.) vs worship of "sacred lamps" (C.).
- b. worship of groom as being god-like (B.) vs worship of groom and bride as objects of respect (C.).
- c. ancestor worship (B. and C.).
- d. taking "the gift of the bride" (religious symbolism for Brahmins) vs taking "possession of the bride" (contractual agreement for Coorgs).
- e. the "7 steps" (non-reversibility of religious unity for B.) vs Sammanda (legalization of marriage contract for C.).
- f. establishing the "domestic fire" (B.) vs "naming of the bride" (C.).

Keeping the above said in mind, I will concentrate on the evidence which, in my opinion, does not support Srinivas' proposition of the emulation of

"sanskritic" concepts by the Coorgs.

ad a.: As I have mentioned earlier, the use of the "sacred fire" is absolutely essential in any Brahmin wedding. It is the witness of all those marriage rites which are considered to seal the union between the couple. It is the object of sacrifices and it symbolizes the connection between human reality and the cosmic energy. The "sacred fire" also represents Agni, the domestic god, who watches over the internal peace of the newly wed couple. The "sacred fire" has a central place in the brahmanic marriage ceremony and is attended to by a Brahmin priest.

The Coorgs, however, do not employ Brahmin priests, nor do they kindle a "sacred fire". They worship the "Nelluki Boluk" (the floor lamp) and the "Tuk Boluk" (the hanging lamp) at any ritual occasion. For them the lamps stand for the unity of the Okka, and respect has to be given to them. It is not surprising that the worship of the lamps plays an important role in the "Kanni-Mangala". With reference to caste-hierarchy, Beck (1964: 74) notes that "...lower castes (who do not have the "sacred fire") frequently use one or more lamps as a reminder of the symbolic importance of fire", but Dr. Muthanna maintains that the lamp-symbolism of Coorgs should not be confused with that of the "sacred fire". With reference to my interpretation of Coorg religious symbolism in Chapter I of this thesis, this statement makes sense: the Coorgs don't seem to be concerned with the possibility of being regarded a lower caste for amply displaying their lamp-worship; on the other hand, they did not adopt the "sacred fire" (as they should have if they wanted to raise their status within Hinduism), but maintained their culture-specific type of fire-symbolism. The general importance of fire as the carrier of religious meaning is recognized cross-culturally; consequently, a conclusive answer to the possibility of the adoption of fire-symbolism within Coorg rituals can not be given.

ad b.: When the parents of the bride honor the groom by washing his feet, bringing him water to drink, and (the father) presenting him Madhuparka, they acknowledge his -- almost -- god-like status. In fact, sometimes the groom is seen as a manifestation of Siva or Vishnu, as the case may be (Beck 1964: 142). However, the worship is focused on the groom alone, and although the couple is sometimes treated as royal or semi-divine, the girl is not the object of individual worship at any given time during the wedding.

This is not the case in Coorg Murtas: first, the groom and the bride are worshipped in the same fashion by their respective families; later, they are worshipped as a couple by representatives of both kin-groups and lastly, the groom worships the bride alone. Second, worship, for Coorgs, means the giving of respect to the two young people since they attain a higher social status within Coorg society. This, however, goes hand in hand with the attainment of an elevated ritual status for the duration of the wedding. Here, the incorporation of Hindu cosmological ideas is apparent: the locus of Murta is "sacred", and the bridal couple (as well as all other participants) are in ritually pure condition. The rise in social status (exemplified through the act of giving respect) is accompanied by the rise in ritual status, thus connecting Coorg-specific rites with Hindu cosmological ideas.

ad c.: Karnataka Brahmins as well as Coorgs worship their ancestors on the occasion of marriage. Both groups stress the importance of continuing their descent-lines through the fertile bond between the young couple and both secure the blessings from the ancestors by presenting gifts to them. However, the Karnataka Brahmins underline the religious character of ancestor procreation, while the Coorgs, again, symbolize the solidarity between the entire family line. Ancestor-worship is cross-culturally practised and thus, cannot be regarded as Hindu and Coorg specific.

- ad d.: One major difference between both marriage ceremonies is manifested in the way in which the bride transfers her kin-membership: the Brahmin father gives "the gift of the bride" to the groom. This means that she loses the membership in her own kin-group entirely. It also means that from now on she depends on her ability to produce male children in order to secure her socio-economic and religious status within her husband's kin-group. As I have mentioned earlier, the father gives up his child (considered to be a big sacrifice) when he marries her off, but in return he gains "religious merit" from it.
- In the Coorg case, marriage is considered to be a contract between two kin-groups. The groom chooses the bride, and if his personal choice is in accordance with the politico-economic objectives of his family, the Aruva conducts the formal procedures necessary to legalize the marriage. On a religious level, the groom "takes possession of the bride", being responsible for only the personal success of the new bond. However, this rite signifies a more profane arrangement than a sacred rule.
- ad e.: For Brahmins, the "seven steps" constitutes "the culmination of the marriage ceremony....and with the bride's last step the union becomes irrevocable" (Beck 1964: 99). This ritual is prescribed in the sacred texts and symbolizes the ideal mode of conduct of the married couple.
- The Sammanda ceremony, on the other hand, bears no religious symbolism. It is the legalization of the personal bond, as well as the formal connection between the two kin-groups. As long as Sam-manda is enforced, the marriage is considered legal and binding.
- ad f.: As said earlier, the final rite performed in the brahmanic wedding is the kindling of the domestic fire. With it, Agni takes residence in the young couple's house. Agni, the domestic god, has to be worshipped regularly in order to secure domestic peace and pros-

perty. With the establishment of the domestic fire, the new bond is fully sanctioned.

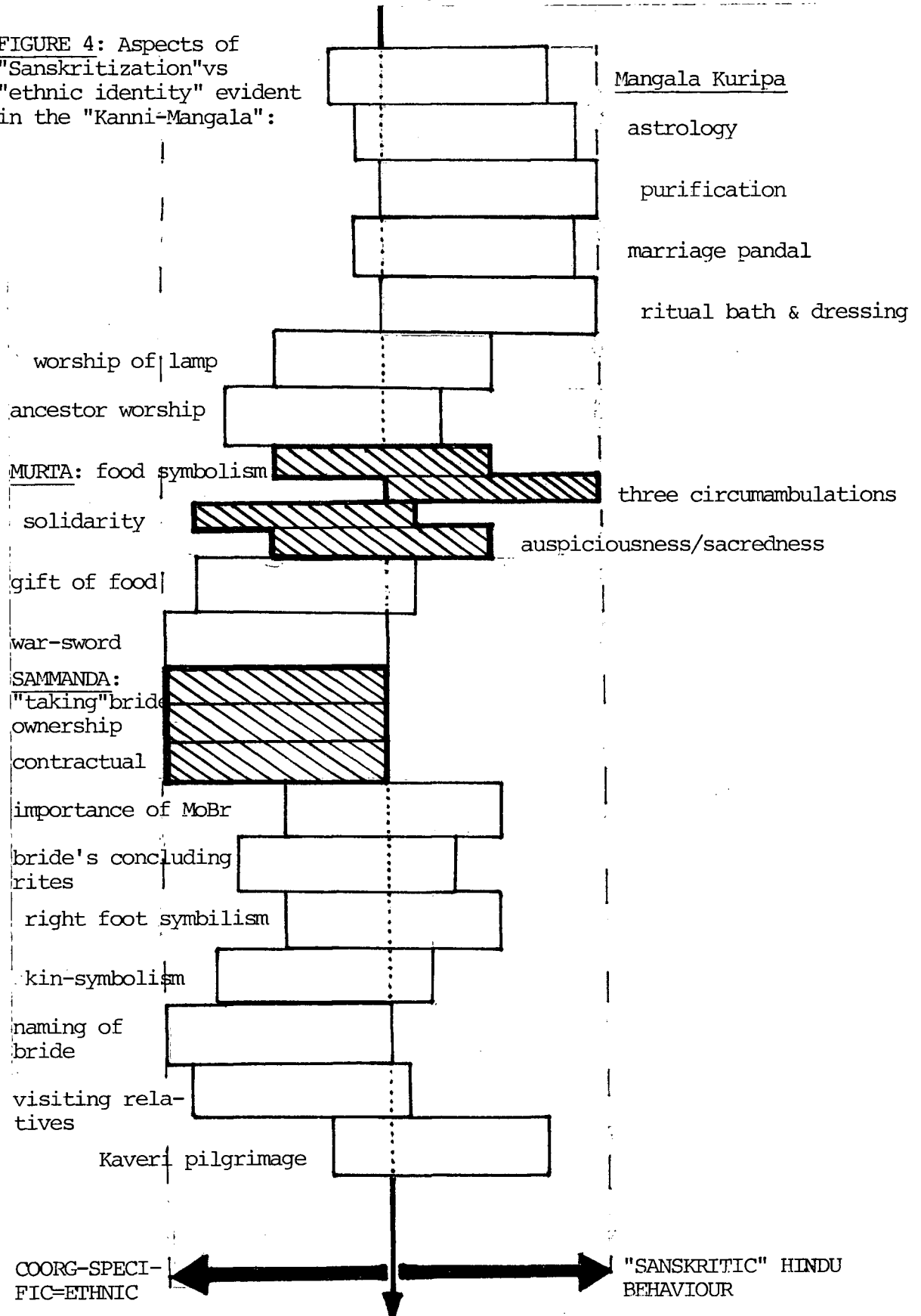
The final ritual action of the "Kanni-Mangala" is the "naming of the bride. With it, the young woman is fully integrated in her conjugal Okka and shares all the responsibilities with the other married female members of her new family. Although dealing with the incorporation of the new couple into the domestic realm, this Coorg ritual stresses kin-related aspects of unity, while the brahmanic rite focuses on religiously defined domestic symbolism.

#### Ciii. Discussion:

From the entire number of "segments of examination" compared above, only two ritual categories correlate in form and context. The first one deals with aspects of ritual purity and auspice and is expressed mainly at the preparatory stage of the wedding proceedings. The second category centers around the replication of Hindu rites which are prescribed in the ritual handbooks. The most important is the ritual of circling the locus of Murta. All the other rites cannot easily be traced to their "sanskritic" origin. This leads me to believe that the Coorgs adopted only those rites which conveyed ritual status while fitting the overall structure of the "Kanni-Mangala". The Coorgs did not have to change their marriage ceremony, they expanded it to the distinct dualistic form which gives justice to their cultural individuality as well as suggesting their affiliation with the rest of Hindu South India.

The Coorgs managed to have a marriage ceremony that "looks" very much like a high-caste Hindu wedding, but that "is" very much culture-specific. As Figure 4 shows, the "Kanni-Mangala" displays connections with the Hindu

FIGURE 4: Aspects of "Sanskritization" vs "ethnic identity" evident in the "Kanni-Mangala":



idiom while, at the same time, remaining firmly grounded within their traditional world-view.

I do not hold that the Coorgs were a cultural group that attempted to "sanskritize" their ritual and social reality. Moreover, I contend that they developed a dualistic reality which allowed them to live according to their own beliefs without alienating themselves from the surrounding socio-religious environment.

The socio-cultural reality of Coorgs, according to the symbolic expressions within the "Kanni-Mangala", centers round the dichotomy of a politico-economic complex with a moral-religious complex. High-caste Hindus (in this context, the Brahmins), by comparison, concentrate on aspects of caste-membership, notions of purity and pollution, and ritual status. Thus, politico-economic notions are subordinant, and conceptually much less important than ritual power.

As mentioned earlier, the social organization of the Coorgs is based on the Okka, or patrilineal joint family estate. It is of utmost importance to maintain its unity and prosperity. Marriage is the one institution which secures this unity through the perpetuation of the descent-line. In a more general sense we can interpret the importance of this unity as being one of the governing principles of Coorg reality: as a distinct cultural unit, they have to rely on the strength of their family and kin-ties in order to keep their relative position in relation to outside groups. As an ethnic unit they share a common awareness of their socio-cultural distinctiveness, and as an economic power they seek to maintain their internal strength and with it their external dominance. Their orthodox, ethnocentric attitude mani-



feats itself clearly in a number of symbolic actions which I have discussed in Chapters II and IV of this thesis.

Symbolic actions with respect to food occupy an important role within the "Kanni-Mangala". But, rather than having religious overtones, food is paralleled with growth and seen as a manifestation of wealth. Being agriculturalists, the Coorgs emphasise the economic significance of food. This is not surprising: with the acquisition of land, combined with the political and social dominance in the district, the Coorgs were bound to specialize in its cultivation and utilization, which, ultimately made them wealthier than most of the other communities in geographical proximity. The maintenance of this economic power, then, is one of the major efforts of Coorg daily life and influences much of their conscious conceptions. In my opinion, this materialistic notion in combination with their warrior tradition, might well have led to a typical moral and religious complex, in which notions of opportunism and aspects of entrepreneurship outweigh such philosophical ideas as asceticism, religious orthodoxy, and the attainment of a religiously defined concept of reality.

Usually, aspects of morality and religion are very closely related to each other. Religious ideology often transcends cultural reality and it is possible to determine the moral attitudes of a society when knowing their religion. In the South Indian context, where many societies use the Hindu idiom in one way or another, we find the Coorgs as being distinctly different.

It is difficult to place the Coorgs within the Hindu fold when looking at their warrior, householder, or kin-symbolism as expressed in the "Kanni-Mangala". The only real support for Srinivas' assertion (of their "Sanskritization") stems from their adoption of the purity/pollution concept (which,

as I have said earlier, is used only in a limited fashion). On a different level, the Coorgs adopted "sanskritic" rites and emblems (such as the marriage pandal, the "three circumabulations", and the worship of Hindu gods) which, indeed point toward their concern with Hinduism. However, they refused to subordinate themselves to Hindu reality, socially and ideologically.

How, then, could one explain the partial adoption of Hindu concepts? One possible answer is based on historical evidence: when the Coorgs came in contact with Lingayatism they intermarried with the royal families and obtained aristocratic status. It seems likely that they extended their ritual idiom then. It is equally possible that missionary actions on the side of neighbouring Brahmins influenced them. Srinivas mentions that the "Amma-Coorgs" (a minority of approximately 600 souls, according to the 1941 Census)... "are highly brahmanized in their customs and rituals. They are vegetarians and teetotallers, and they constitute an endogamous unit. Like the Brahmins they wear the sacred thread and observe annual 'Shraddas' or ancestor-feasts at which only vegetarian food is offered to the dead ancestors" (1952: 34). These "Amma-Coorgs" came to the forefront in the years of the reign of the last Raja of Coorg when they claimed to be "Kaveri Brahmins" and attempted to establish themselves as a "priestly elite" among the main body of their own society (Muthanna 1982: # 2). At about the same time (ca. 1800 A.D.) a number of myths "appeared" in Coorg folklore. The by far best known is the "Kaveri-Purana"; here the Coorgs are classified as "Ugras".<sup>(38)</sup>

...They are the descendents of the marriage of a Kshatriya prince and his Shudra wife. The Kaveri

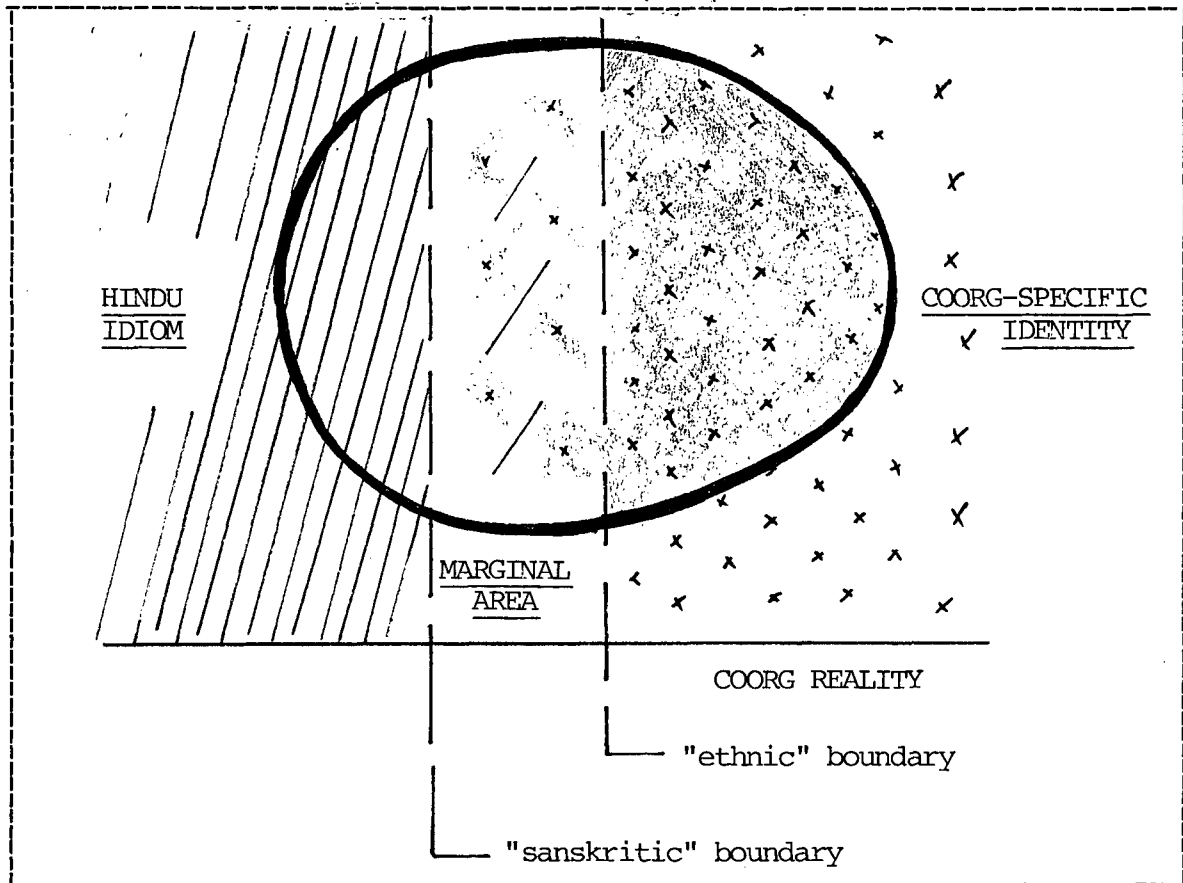
myth thus cleverly reconciles the economic and military power of Coorgs with their lack of certain rituals and their somewhat catholic dietary. It is interesting to note that Shri N. Chinnappa considers the account of the origin of Coorgs given in the Kaveri myth to be a true, historical account (1952: 34).

As for the origin of the "Amma-Coorgs", they maintain to be descendants of a Coorg man and a Brahmin girl ("amma" meaning "mother") (Ibid: 34). Dr. Muthanna puts forward yet another interpretation: he asserts that the Brahmins (and with them, the "Amma-Coorgs") were interested in establishing their ritual superiority in the district. By "fabricating" myths which tell the story of the Coorgs' origin, they wanted to explain that they, in fact, descended from the union of two caste-Hindus, and that they, therefore, have to be considered as Hindus (1982: # 2).

Be that as it may, the symbolic expressions within the "Kanni-Mangala" suggest that Coorgs use at least two realities when dealing on an internal (Coorg specific) and an external (inter-societal) level. This means that Srinivas was not wrong when he asserted that the Coorgs show affiliations with the Hindu norm; one cannot expect that a small society -- however powerful and distinct -- could survive without adopting some aspects of the surrounding macro-culture. Where he was wrong, in my opinion, was the way in which he interpreted his data: he subsumed the entire Coorg religion and society under the Hindu idiom and interpreted it through the Hindu paradigm. I did exactly the opposite: viewing the Coorgs as an "ethnic group", I attempted to give an alternative interpretation of the "Kanni-Mangala" seen as a microcosm of Coorg identity. The resulting implications (see Figure 5 for a diagrammatic representation) give justice to both theoretical propositions as laid out at the beginning of this thesis, but, and this is impor-

tant, they extend the possibility to understand Coorg culture as a mix (rather than a replication of Hindu socio-cultural reality) of two profoundly different concepts of cultural perception.

FIGURE 5: Scheme of "multiple reality" of Coorg identity.



-147a-

## C O N C L U S I O N

In this thesis I have attempted to provide an alternative interpretation and analysis of the Coorg marriage ceremony in order to counter-balance Srinivas' "Hindu-centric" proposition which states that the Coorgs are a "sanskritized" group. Depending on secondary ethnographic material, I was forced to control my inquiry and to limit my data-base to a validated description of this central life-cycle ceremony.

On the basis of a simple theoretical framework (centered on the structurally opposed concepts of "Sanskritization" and "ethnic identity"), I explicated my discussion of the symbolic expressions within the "microcosm" "Kanni-Mangala" according to four "symbolic complexes" which, in turn, can be seen as replications of the general make-up of Coorg social structure.

I have argued that the religious symbolism displayed in this "microcosm" shows a mix between two abstract notions of order: first, the notion of "respect" which determines the internal mode of actions and non-actions within the confines of Coorg culture. This notion of "respect" further defines "auspiciousness" as a life-related abstract force and "inauspiciousness" as its death-related opposition. Second, purity (seen as an adoption from Hinduism) is used as a means to visualize ritual, and with it, societal superiority with respect to outside Hindu communities.

I have asserted that the symbolic representations of power and authority outweigh those which deal with religion and philosophy, thus underlining the specific "character" of Coorg social identity: it is their pre-occupation with the martial way of life which transcends their belief, ritual and myth, and which formed the base of all their power. Their superior status vis-a-vis neighbouring Hindu communities was determined by this politico-economic

power situation as warriors and landowners, and not through ritually defined hierarchical ranking.

I have put forward that rice is used as the major symbolic reference reflecting abundance, wealth and prosperity. It is the basis for all material goods and the object of worship. Rice as a symbol combines Coorg notions of religion and society; it encompasses Coorg consciousness seen as a unity between abstract life-energy and tangible day-to-day reality.

Finally, I have argued that kinship is of utmost importance to Coorgs: it is the basis of their social organization, it defines their group and community identity, and it regulates all internal activities ranging from their religious and social, to their economic and political behaviour. For Coorgs, internal solidarity is of primary importance; with it comes external order.

Nevertheless, the Coorgs adopted Hindu concepts and beliefs in a limited way: it helped them to survive within Hindu South India, it helped them to attain high status with respect to Hindus. The motivation for the adoption of the purity/pollution concept and some philosophical notions regarding Hindu cosmology can be seen as political rather than religious. Partial incorporation of Hindu norms allowed them to blur the ideological boundaries between them and all outsiders and to maintain their traditional identity in structure and content.

As a consequence of this partial adoption of Hinduism, the Coorgs developed a dualistic identity which allows them to operate on an extended, bilateral level of religious, socio-political and economic understanding.

F O O T N O T E S



## INTRODUCTION

- (1) Dr. I.M. Muthanna, a Coorg himself, has lived in Vancouver since the early seventies. He is the author of 44 books, of which 12 are available in English. The rest are published in Kannada language. His publications include two works on Coorg (Coorg - A Tiny Model State in South India (1953), and Coorg Memoirs (1974)), as well as works on the history of Karnataka, an account of the life of Tippu Sultan, Coorg poetry, etc.

I initiated the contact with him in early October 1982 and have met him, since then, on numerous occasions. Dr. Muthanna agreed to be my informant on any Coorg material. He allowed me to tape two ninety-minute interviews which are available upon request.

In his book A Tiny Model State in South India (1953), he states:

...The divorce customs prevail among both the Arabs and the Coorgs. Both used to do the ear-boring of the whole ear, both dress up corpses in the same way and both observe civil contract marriages. Partial Gosha is observed among the Coorgs and foot-jewels are used by both. Therena, Mendi, and such other terms connected to the Coorg customs are all Arabic, it is said. Marrying a brother's wife after his death, objection to marry the daughter of one's sister, using of meat at the occasion of wedding and other functions and the resemblance of Bolakat and other Coorg dances etc. with that of Arabic equivalents take me to believe that there are Arabic influences in the manners of the Coorgs. The traditional costume of the Coorgs, including their hair-dress, are strikingly identical with that of the Arabs. Some Arabic words have crept into Coorg language.... It is asserted that these people might have migrated into the South in the early days when they were traders; and got lost in the mountains. But at the same time I realize that such identical traits are found with some peoples of Northern India who live in the hill-areas of Assam, Nepal, or Rajasthan (1953: 300).

- (2) Srinivas writes:

....The prince of the Bednur dynasty who settled down as a Jangama or Lingayat priest in Haleri in north Coorg was an astute strategist. He was well aware of the fact that a Jangama commanded a great deal of respect from Lingayats who predominated in north Coorg.

He lived in a village council house (Chavadi), teaching children and preaching to adults. People voluntarily gave him uncleaned paddy at harvest. Later, when he was certain of his hold over the people, he changed the voluntary contribution to a compulsory levy of one and a half Bhattis (Bhatti = 80 Seers) of rice, and a sum of nine Annas and eight pies per house per annum. He also called upon his followers to guard his dwelling in turns. The watchmen were called Chavadikaras or 'men of the Chavadi', a name which was later used for the Raja's troops. The priest-politician next declared himself ruler of Haleri and surrounding Nads, and the chiefs ruling over small areas of Coorg Proper submitted to his authority on condition that he allowed them to keep to themselves three quarters of the revenue collected by them from their subjects, and pay only a fourth to him as their overlord. The Raja's authority continued to increase. The troublesome chiefs were gradually eliminated, and only those who did not constitute a threat to his authority were allowed to survive (1952: 12).

- (3) Srinivas gives some hints about Islamic diffusion into Coorg, but avoids any subsequent explications. Dr. Muthanna, however, discusses this assertion in more detail (1953: 300ff).
- (4) According to Emeneau, who did field work among the Coorgs in the early thirties, the kinship system of the "Kodavas" (Coorgs) can be defined as follows:
  - a) There is no self-reciprocating terminology. In Ego's generation his siblings and classificatory parallel cousins on the one hand and his classificatory cross-cousins on the other hand are indicated by terms which denote age older than himself and younger than himself respectively. Consequently, none of the terms used within Ego's generation are self-reciprocals.
  - b) No term is found denoting an individual whose sex is unspecified. But there are some collectives which class the sexes together.
  - c) Siblings and classificatory parallel cousins are classed together in each generation.
  - d) In Ego's generation a dichotomy is made in classification on the basis of age elder or younger than himself. In the first ascending generation, Ego's father's male siblings and parallel cousins are permissively dichotomized on the basis of age elder or younger than the father's, and Ego's mother's female siblings and parallel cousins are permissively dichotomized on the basis of age older or

- e) younger than the mother's.
  - f) The father is distinguished from his brothers, and the mother from her sisters.
  - f) Ego's generation and the first ascending generation shows a use of terms perfectly in accord with a strict system of cross-cousin marriage. Further, no terminological distinction is made between siblings and classificatory parallel cousins of any degree of remoteness. Consequently, in the first ascending generation there is a separate term for the father's sisters and parallel female cousins, and this is used also for the mother's male cross-cousins and her male siblings' and parallel male cousins' wives; similarly, there is a separate term for the mother's brothers and parallel male cousins, and this is used also for the father's male cross-cousins and his female siblings' and parallel female cousins' husbands. In Ego's generation the classification of cross-cousin applies to all the children of those in the first ascending generation who are classed according to the preceeding two sentences. In the first descending generation a distinction is made between two groups, the children of one's siblings or parallel cousins of the same sex as oneself and of one's cross-cousins of the opposite sex as oneself, and the children of one's siblings or parallel cousins of the opposite sex from oneself and of one's cross-cousins of the same sex as oneself. Members of the former are possible mates of members of the latter.
  - g) The terms that would apply to Ego's mate's relatives if the mate were a cross-cousin apply also to those relatives when the mate is not a cross-cousin.
  - h) A step-mother is called by the same term as a sister of the mother, a step-father by the same name as a brother of the father.
  - i) Two classes in the first descending generation yield one class only in the second descending generation; there are two terms, one for each sex, for grandchildren. For these a collective term is found disregarding sex. Similarly, the second ascending generation is divided only on the basis of sex.
  - j) The third ascending generation, like the second, has two terms differentiating sex. For the third descending generation there are no unitary terms, only phrases.
  - k) All the above statements are valid whether Ego is male or female.
  - l) For husband and wife there are separate terms, Odeye and Ponni respectively (Emeneau 1931/1967: 353-6).
- (5) Excerpt from Interview # 2 with Dr. Muthanna (November 1982).
  - (6) Excerpt from Interview # 1 with Dr. Muthanna (October 1982).
  - (7) T.N. Madan, editor of Contributions to Indian Sociology (NS) gives an in-depth recount of Srinivas' academic career and the state of Indian Anthropology and Sociology at the time when the data for the Coorg book were gathered. For further details, see Contributions... (1978: 1ff).
  - (8) My informant suggests that the Coorgs were first called "Kshatriyas"

by the British who wanted their services to fight against rebellious groups on Canara (1837), and who thought that the Coorgs "fitted the description of 'Martial Race' well (Muthanna 1982: Interview # 2).

- (9) ...nor employ Brahmin priests, nor wear the "sacred thread", nor are vegetarians and teetotallers.
- (10) Excerpt from Interview # 2. Richter, Iyer, Srinivas, Subbayya, etc. also mention this fact in passing but I could not find any clear historical reference to back up this assertion.
- (11) Interview # 2.
- (12) See Srinivas (1952: 56) for a description of the general social function of the "family-friend" (Aruva). For this argument it suffices to stress that the Aruva is not a ritual specialist, i.e., a priest....(see also p. 36, Footnote # (15)).
- (13) Richter (1870: 135ff) is the only one who offers a translated version of the Batte-Pat. According to him, this is a "literal" translation from the -- at the time -- unwritten "original":

God Almighty, live and rule,  
Rule as our Lord and God.  
Rule as Sovereign, oh King!  
On the surface of the earth  
Coorg is like a string of pearls,  
Though one of the smallest kingdoms;  
In this land they count twelve valleys,  
And the Nads are thirty-five;  
But in our Nad forever,  
Like a flow'r of paradise,  
Blooms the name of Apparandra.

-

In this Apparandra house  
Lived a man of reputation.  
Mandanna, the mighty hero  
When he offered a petition  
To the ruler of the country,  
For a goodly Jamma-land.  
He received it as a present.  
For his money he now bought  
Holeyas to be his servants,  
And they laboured on his farm.  
Bullocks too, his fields to plough,  
He procured for heavy money,  
And completed all his labours.

-

When he now lived comfortably,  
Mandanna, the mighty hero,

In his mind was meditating,  
And within himself he pondered  
Constantly this one idea:  
'I have rice and costly garments  
but no one to dress and nourish;  
I have precious stones and jewels  
But where is the wife to wear them?  
In a household without children  
Vain is all our toil and trouble.  
No!, there is not here on earth  
Without wife bliss or enjoyment.  
If a task is without water  
Has it not been dug in vain?  
And a garden without flowers,  
Has it not in vain been planted?  
Who would like to eat cold rice,  
Void of curds and void of salt?  
Sons must be in our house,  
And our rooms be full of children'.

-  
So he thought within himself.  
And, one lovely Sunday morning,  
When the silvery dew was sparkling,  
took a meal and dressed himself;  
Joined his hands in adoration  
To the ancestors and God.  
Sent a man to call his Ar'wa,  
To conduct him on the journey,  
Took his stick adorned with silver,  
And then started with his friend,  
Where between the woody mountains  
Thrones the lofty Kuttamale;  
Wandering through the hilly country,  
He went off to seek a wife,  
Till his soles wore off with walking....

For a long time he travels from Okka to Okka in search of a suitable wife. Finally, after much hardship, he arrives at a wealthy house and sees a beautiful young girl. He talks to her father:

...!Those (daughters) that went,  
Let them be happy!  
Give me her, who still remains'.  
Spoke again to him the landlord:  
'Tell me, why you call me father?'  
Then spoke Mandanna, the clever:  
'I have seen your lovely daughter  
That is why I call you father.  
Evermore with admiration  
You behold the stately palm-tree;  
If a tree is poor and crippled,  
You forget to look upon it'.  
Then the father spoke again:

'I will let you have the daughter,  
Give a pledge, that you will take her'.  
'Shake, then, hands with me', replied  
Mandanna, and as a pledge  
Take from me this piece of money'.  
After this the father sent  
For his Ar'wa to assist him  
In the wedding ceremony;  
Women swept the house and chambers,  
filled the store-room with provisions,  
For the merry wedding feast.  
Where the beauty-brazen lamp  
From the ceiling is suspended  
Ar'was and near relatives  
Come together from both houses.  
Stood and settled the engagement  
And the lucky day of wedding.  
Whereupon the happy bridegroom  
gave his bride a golden necklace  
As a pledge; and eight days later,  
Was the wedding celebrated  
(Translation by A. Graeber, ca. 1860).

Dr. Muthanna told me that N. Chinnappa, a police official, who had travelled extensively in Coorg district, published a collection of traditional Coorg folk songs, tales, and proverbs in 1928. His work is called "Pattole Palame" and is written in Kodava-dialect, using Kannada script. Incidentally, Dr. Muthanna is presently working at the translation of the "Pattole Palame" into English.

- (14) The description of the entire "Kanni-Mangala" is based on material collected from Iyer (1948: 41-3), Srinivas (1952: 70-100; 124-76), Muthanna (1953: 323-3), Mysore State Gazetteer (1965: 114-6), and Subbayya (1978: 165-7).
- (15) The two Aruvas officiate two rituals within the realm of the "Kanni-Mangala": one is the Mangala Kuripa (the formal engagement) and the Sammanda (the profane legalization of the marriage).

#### CHAPTER I

- (16) For further details see Iyer (op.cit. 1948), Muthanna (op.cit. 1953, 1974), and Subbayya (op. cit. 1978) under "History of the Coorgs".
- (17) According to Dr. Muthanna, "impure matter", for the Coorgs, entails the following: emissions connected with birth and death; emissions connected with menstruating women. Physical contact with "impure matter" (or its carrier) pollutes a Coorg in different - but limited - ways, and for a limited time (Interview # 2).

CHAPTER II

- (18) Homo Hierarchicus (1970: 65-81).
- (19) McKim Marriott and Ronald B. Inden, "Caste Systems", Encyclopaedia Britannica, 15th ed. (Chicago 1974), Macropaedia III, pp. 981-91. Marriott and Inden, "Toward an Ethnosociology of South Asian Caste Systems" (1973). Paper presented at the IXth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences; (published 1976 in: The New Wind: Changing Identities in South Asia, ed. Kenneth A. David, World Anthropological Series; The Hague: Mouton). Inden, Marriage and Rank in Bengali Culture (1976), Univ. of California Press. (Berkeley).
- (20) For further detail, see Muthanna (1953: "A Race of Fighting Stock", and 1974 "General Cariappa"; "Lt. General Thimmayya").
- (21) Srinivas continues to say that:  
....The other important tenure in Coorg was "Sagu", in which not only was land assessed at ten rupees per hundred "Bhattis" of land, being twice the rate for "Jamma" land, but also the holder was liable to render every type of service to the state except military service. During Richter's time, but for forty Coorgs, all the people holding land on "Sagu" tenure were non-Coorgs (Ibid: 17).
- (22) "Aristocratic", in this context, refers to historical data which were used by Srinivas in his Coorg book. On page 32 he says: "Coorgs constituted the aristocracy under the Lingayat Rajas, holding important positions in the administration and very nearly monopolizing the army"....
- (23) Census of India 1931 (op. cit.).
- (24) The Jajmani system ("jajmani"= the privilege of performing the function of domestic priest, barber, helper on the occasion of a marriage (!)—according to a Hindi dictionary)... "makes use of hereditary personal relationships to express the division of labour: each family has a family of specialists at its disposal for each specialized task. Secondly, it regulates prestations and counter-prestations in a way which accords with custom: for the usual tasks, repayment is in kind: it is not made individually for each particular prestation but is spread over the whole year, as is natural for the permanent relationship in an agricultural setting: a little food may be provided each day, and there is always the right to a fixed quantity of grain at harvest time, and finally there

are obligatory presents (often of money) on the occasion of the main festivals of the year and, above all, at the major family ceremonies, which are advantageous occasions for the "Praja" (= subject) of the house. A fact which underlines the limited but effective solidarity which is thus set up between "Jajman" (= patron) and "Praja" is that in many regions those who are considered the main servants of the village enjoy a gift of land from the communal funds which are at the disposal of their patrons collectively (Dumont 1970: 98-9).

- (25) Dr. Muthanna agreed to translate parts of the "Pattole Palame" for me. Here is one excerpt from the "Old Kodagu Song Dealing With The Divisions Of The Land":

...It is said that long back  
This unit was formed  
By just twelve Kombus.  
What are these Kombus?  
They aren't the branches  
Of teak or banyon trees,  
Neither were those horns  
Of bullocks or deer;  
Nor those are long poles  
Used to carry palanquins.  
  
Listen, oh friends, listen:  
The Kombu is a fine  
Conch made of bronze  
For blowing out in freeze,  
To warm up and alert  
The world that sleeps.  
In the days of yore  
When kings ruled all over,  
With kingdoms numerous  
To see scores of chiefs,  
That Haleri chief of Coorg  
Kodagu - as it was called,  
Got a bronze horn blown  
With a sound clear and stern  
That was heard for miles  
Up to certain limits  
It was marked - a country,  
Or a borough it could be;  
From that point on  
The bronze was again blown  
And that certainly did  
Mark the country - the second;  
Then again the third  
And again the fourth,  
Thus in all formed twelve  
State divisions to serve,



As countries or boroughs  
Which were pieced into Nads,  
Smaller pockets of units  
With thirty-five Nads....

- (26) The entire character of Coorg jewellery underlines their status and wealth. While the average Hindu woman in South India wears few pieces of gold and precious stones (for instance, the Tali is frequently made of string and has a gold pendant or a bead attached (Beck 1964: 114)), the average Coorg woman wears gold/silver ear-rings, gold/silver chains, rings, wristbands, and foot-jewels. Her Tali (which has no ritual importance) is made of pure gold and has a pendant of precious stones. As mentioned earlier, even men wear, by comparison, much jewels and ornaments.
- (27) Interview # 2.
- (28) Talking about the physical differences between Coorgs and the surrounding Dravidian communities, he told me about his experiences with the Coorgs. For him, too, it is not surprising that the Coorgs were considered as members of the Kshatriya caste. They are much taller than the Dravidians, and the differences in dress and manners are striking.
- (29) Muthanna (1953: 13-25), Subbayya (1978: 155-64).

### CHAPTER III

- (30) I was not able to verify this assertion with reference to the literature.
- (31) Dr. Muthanna emphasised that men and women usually eat together. However, if guests are being entertained, men eat first -- due to space-limitations (Interview # 1).
- (32) Interview # 2.

### CHAPTER IV

- (33) Interestingly enough, the notion of a "continuum" in Coorg reality is centered around the Okka per se and not around its members; that is, the Okka has to be maintained through the continuation of the descent-line, and not, as is the case for Hindus, the descent-line has to be maintained in order to secure a meritable afterlife.
- (34) He also mentions that Coorgs do not always use astrologers, moreover, that it is an individual decision if an astrologer should be consulted or not (Srinivas 1952: 39).

- (35) See Muthanna (1953: 327).

CHAPTER V

- (36) Srinivas contends that the Coorgs adopted "high-caste Hindu concepts and values". This would mean that they emulated the Brahmanic model, since no other "high-caste" communities (Kshatriyas or Vaisyas) lived in the area. The Karnataka Brahmins, then, represent an adequate "examination-unit" for comparative analysis; they are the most frequently found "high-caste" group in Southwest Karnataka.
- (37) Madhuparka (madhu = honey) is a very tasty mixture of curds, milk, ghee, sugar, cummin and honey. It is usually served in a brass bowl. To receive Madhuparka is a high honor. It is the gesture traditionally made only to gods and very distinguished men, such as kings (Srinivas: 1942: 72). To give Madhuparka to the groom is not a regional custom, but is clearly mentioned in the Grihya Sutras (Panday 1949: 366).
- (38) "Ugra means 'strong, formidable, terrible, violent, angry, passionate, cruel, fierce, pungent, hot, high, noble. It is also the name of a mixed tribe, descended from a Kshatriya father and Shudra mother, and of Malabar." (Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Oxford, 1899, p. 172; in Srinivas 1952: 33).

B I B L I O G R A P H Y

- Ahmad, Imtiaz  
1972 "For a Sociology of India." In: Contributions to Indian Sociology, 4: 172-7.
- Appfel-Marglin, Frederique  
1978 Concepts of Power in Hindu Thought and Action. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Los Angeles; Nov. 14th-18th 1978 (unpublished).
- Barth, Fredrik (ed.)  
1969 Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.
- Beck, Brenda E.F.  
1964 "The Examination of Marriage Ritual among Selected Groups in South India." Oxford: Unpublished B. Litt. Thesis.
- Carroll, Lucy  
1977 "Sanskritization", "Westernization", and "Social Mobility": A Reappraisal of the Relevance of Anthropological Concepts to the Social Historian of Modern India. In: Journal of Anthropological Research, Vol. 33, 4: 355-69.
- Connor, Lt.  
1870 Memoir of the Codagu Survey. Bangalore: UBC - Micro-fiche.
- Douglas, Mary  
1966 Purity and Danger. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Dumont, Louis  
1970 Homo Hierarchicus. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.
- Dumont, Louis and Pocock, David F.  
1959 "On the Different Aspects or Levels in Hinduism." In: Contributions to Indian Sociology, 3: 40-54.
- Emeneau, M.B.  
1967 Collected Papers. (Dravidian Linguistics, Ethnology and Folk-tales.) Annamalainagar: Annamalai University; (first published 1931).
- Geertz, Clifford  
1973 The Interpretation of Cultures. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers.

Government of India

- 1901 Census of India; Vol. XI. Madras: Government Press.  
1931 Census of India; Vol. XIII. Madras: Government Press.  
1941 Census of India; Vol. XV. Madras: Government Press.  
1971 Census of India. (1974) Mysore: Government Press.

Hocart, A.M.

- 1927 Kingship. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Indian Antiquity (Journal of), Vol. II: 38ff; Vol. IV: 12ff; Vol. X: 363.  
UBC - Micro-fiche.

Iyer, K.L.A.

- 1948 Coorg Tribes and Castes. Madras: Gordon Press.

Jacob-Pandian, G.

- 1978 "The Hindu Caste System and Muslim Ethnicity." In: Ethno-history, Vol. 25, 2: 141-57.

Madan, T.N.

- 1978 "M.N. Srinivas' earlier work and the 'Remembered Village'." In: Contributions to Indian Sociology; (N.S.), 12: 1ff.

Marriott, McKim

- 1976 "Hindu Transactions: Diversity without Dualism." In: Bruce Kapferer (ed.) Transaction and Meaning: Directions in the Anthropology of Exchange and Symbolic Behavior. Philadelphia: ISHI Publications.

Mayer, A.C.

- 1978 "The remembered village: from memory alone?" In: Contributions to Indian Sociology; (N.S.), 12: 40ff.

Muthanna, I.M.

- 1953 Coorg - A Tiny Model State Of South India. Mysore: Usha Press.  
1974 Coorg Memoirs. Mysore: Usha Press.  
1982 On Coorg and Coorgs. (Two tape-recorded interviews.) Vancouver: (tapes available upon request).

Mysore State Gazetteer

- 1965 Coorg District. Bangalore: Government Press.

- Mysore Tribes and Castes  
1928 Volume II. Mysore: Univ. of Mysore Press.
- Panday, R.B.  
1949 Hindu Samskaras: A Socio-Religious Study of the Hindu Sacraments. Banaras: Vikrama Publications.
- Parvathamma, C.  
1978 "The remembered village: a brahmanical odyssey." In: Contributions to Indian Sociology (N.S.), 12: 91ff.
- Rice, L.  
1878 Mysore and Coorg., (3 vols.). Bangalore: UBC Micro-fiche.
- Richter, G.  
1870 Manual of Coorg. Mangalore: UBC Micro-fiche.
- Saraf, S.  
1969 "The Hindu Ritual Purity-Pollution Concept." In: Eastern Anthropologist, Vol. 12, 1: 151-75.
- Singer, M. and Cohn, B. (eds.)  
1968 Structure and Change in Indian Society. Chicago: Asia Publishing House.
- Schutz, Alfred  
1962 Collected Papers., (Vol. 1). The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
- Schweizer, Thomas  
1978 Methodenprobleme des Interkulturellen Vergleiches. Koln: Bohlau Verlag.
- Srinivas, M.N.  
1942 Marriage and Family in Mysore. Bombay: New Books Co.  
1952 Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India. London: Asia Publishing House.  
1956 "A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization." In: Far East Quarterly, 15: 481-96.  
1962 Caste in Modern India and Other Essays. Bombay: Asia Publishing House.  
1966 Social Change in Modern India. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.
- Subbayya, K.K.  
1978 Archeology of Coorg. Mysore: Geetha Publishers.