Sri Lankan, Low-Country, Ritual Drumming: The Raigama Tradition

Sumuditha Suraweera (88054652)

A thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Canterbury

August 2009

Principal Supervisor: Elaine Dobson
Assistant Supervisor: Dr. Roger Buckton
Contents

List of Tables ........................................................................................................ v
List of Figures ......................................................................................................... v
Abstract ................................................................................................................ ix
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................... x
System of Transliteration .................................................................................... xii
Key to Musical Transcriptions .......................................................................... xiii

Introduction ............................................................................................................. 1

Chapter 1
Low-Country Drumming in the Contemporary Context .................................... 20
  1.1 The traditional Sinhala Buddhist pantheon ................................................. 20
  1.2 Ritual in Sinhala Buddhism ........................................................................ 21
  1.3 Bali ............................................................................................................. 23
  1.4 Tovil ......................................................................................................... 27
  1.5 Maḍu ......................................................................................................... 31
    1.5.1 Legends of the supernatural beings ..................................................... 32
    1.5.2 Origin of the devol maḍuva ritual ..................................................... 35
    1.5.3 Ritual preparation .............................................................................. 36
    1.5.4 Ritual structure ................................................................................. 36
  1.6 Buddhist ceremonies .................................................................................. 37
  1.7 Secular performance settings .................................................................... 39
  1.8 Chapter summary ...................................................................................... 42

Chapter 2
The Yak Beraya ................................................................................................... 43
  2.1 Instrument classification ............................................................................ 43
  2.2 Commonly used traditional instruments ................................................... 44
  2.3 The yak beraya ......................................................................................... 49
  2.4 Traditional instrument making practices and attitudes ......................... 51
  2.5 Construction of the yak beraya ................................................................. 54
    2.5.1 Preparing the body of the drum ....................................................... 54
    2.5.2 Preparation of drum skins ............................................................... 56
    2.5.3 Preparation of the hākma (the outer layer of skin) ......................... 58
    2.5.4 Placing the drumheads (bera taṭṭu) ............................................... 60
    2.5.5 Attaching kanvaraya, varapati and the waist-strap ....................... 62
  2.6 Tuning and maintenance of the yak beraya .............................................. 63
  2.7 Chapter summary ...................................................................................... 64

Chapter 3
Theory of Low-Country Drumming ................................................................. 66
  3.1 Drumming Patterns ................................................................................. 67
  3.2 Aksara (drum syllables) .......................................................................... 69
  3.3 Four basic strokes of tat, dit, toṃ, naṃ .................................................... 70
5. 9 Dedication of offerings (pidēni taṭu) for Mahasōna and demons of Three Watches ......................................................... 181
5.10 Dedication of offerings (pidēni taṭu) for Kalu Kumāra demon ................. 181
5.11 Breaking of the clay pot (kalas biṅḍīma).............................................................. 183
5.12 Ritual conclusion .................................................................................................. 184
5.13 Chapter summary .................................................................................................. 184

Chapter 6
The Bali Ritual (Graha Pūjāva) .................................................................................... 186
  6.1 Ritual Space ........................................................................................................ 187
  6.2 Ceremonial drumming (magul bera) and the observance of five precepts........ 187
  6.3 Recitation of verses in salutation to the Three Refuges ....................................... 188
  6.4 Recitation of verses of bali ritual inception ......................................................... 188
  6.5 Placing of ceremonial objects on the patient’s feet ............................................. 205
  6.6 Chanting of the thread with pirit (pirit huyā) ...................................................... 210
  6.7 Unveiling of the curtain to display the altars ....................................................... 211
  6.8 Offerings made to planetary deities ................................................................. 211
  6.9 Singing verses for the planetary deities (graha kavi) ........................................ 212
  6.10 Blessings with oil lamp threads ......................................................................... 213
  6.11 Warding off the malevolent spirits and ritual conclusion .................................. 213
  6.12 Chapter summary ............................................................................................. 214

Chapter 7
The Change in the Ritual and the Future of Low-Country Drumming .................... 216
  7.1 Decline of the traditional ritual ......................................................................... 216
  7.2 Rise of small scaled rituals and spiritual practices ............................................. 219
  7.3 Large scale exhibitive displays .......................................................................... 220
  7.4 Collaboration in Baliphonics ............................................................................. 224
  7.5 Background for collaboration .......................................................................... 226
  7.6 Musicians in the project ..................................................................................... 229
  7.7 The preparation prior to the collaboration .......................................................... 231
  7.8 The collaborative process .................................................................................. 232
    7.8.1 Non-musical and social collaboration ............................................................. 233
    7.8.2 Establishing mutual respect ........................................................................... 233
    7.8.3 The Baliphonics programme ......................................................................... 234
    7.8.4 Rehearsals ..................................................................................................... 238
  7.9 Performances ..................................................................................................... 242
  7.10 Chapter summary ............................................................................................. 244

Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 246

Bibliography .................................................................................................................. 257
Appendix 1: Transcriptions of Drumming Patterns ...................................................... 267
Appendix 2: Glossary of Selected Sinhala Terms ......................................................... 324
Appendix 3: Attaching the Yak Beraya to the Waist ...................................................... 328
Appendix 4: Sandhoris Jayantha’s Letter of Support for the Collaboration ............... 329
Appendix 5: Catalogue of Field Recordings................................................................. 331
Appendix 6: Guide for Supplementary Video Examples of Rituals.......................... 334
Appendix 7: Guide for Supplementary Audio Examples of Rituals.......................... 339
Appendix 8: Letter of Human Ethics Approval.......................................................... 340
Appendix 9: DVD of Baliphonics performance (attached to back cover)
List of Tables

Table 1: Examples of akṣara produced by the four basic strokes ........................................... 77
Table 2: Vocal delivery styles in Low-Country rituals................................................................. 97
Table 3: Pattini saudama .............................................................................................................. 143
Table 4: Akṣara sequences of Prasantha ..................................................................................... 197
Table 5: Akṣara sequences of Prasantha and Daniel ................................................................. 200
Table 6: Akṣara sequences of Prasantha, Daniel and Susanta .................................................. 203
Table 7: Musical segments of Baliphonics programme .............................................................. 237

List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of Sri Lanka and the regions of traditional music ............................................. 2
Figure 2: Gāṭa beraya (representing the Up-Country tradition) .................................................. 45
Figure 3: Davula drums (representing the Šabaragamuwa tradition) ........................................ 46
Figure 4: Tammattama ............................................................................................................... 47
Figure 5: Uḍḍakkiya .................................................................................................................. 48
Figure 6: Mini gediya or small hand-held bell (left), hak gediya or conch (right) ................. 48
Figure 7: Yak beraya (representing the Low-Country tradition) .............................................. 49
Figure 8: Carving the inside of a drum with a long-chisel ....................................................... 55
Figure 9: Prepared bodies of yak beraya drums ....................................................................... 56
Figure 10: Animal skins stretched to be dried ........................................................................ 56
Figure 11: Venivara (thin straps) stretched and smoothed ........................................................ 57
Figure 12: Boruvara ādima (fake strapping) of the yak beraya .................................................... 58
Figure 13: The hākma with excess hide cut off ......................................................................... 59
Figure 14: Illam (sixteen holes around the edge of the hākma) .................................................. 59
Figure 15: Weaving the bera gātiya (rim around the edge of drumhead) ............................... 60
Figure 16: Preparation of the gātiyala ....................................................................................... 61
Figure 17: Fitting the cow-stomach lining on the yak beraya .................................................... 61
Figure 18: Excess skin is cut off (left) and hākma is placed back on (right) ......................... 62
Figure 19: Plastic straps used for varapaṭi ................................................................................ 64
Figure 20: Four basic strokes that produce the four basic akṣara ............................................. 71
Figure 21: Flick-thumb technique ............................................................................................. 72
Figure 22: Advanced technique 1 (finger-flick) ...................................................................... 73
Figure 23: Advanced technique 2 (light stroke on edge of drumhead) ..................................... 74
Figure 24: Advanced technique 3 (pitch bending using one finger) ........................................ 74
Figure 25: Advanced technique 4 (pitch bending using the palm) .......................................... 75
Figure 26: Advanced technique 5 (flick-forefinger) ............................................................... 76
Figure 27: Advanced technique 5 (flick-forefinger) ............................................................... 76
Figure 28: Cell-1 akṣara sequences in simplest form ............................................................... 78
Figure 29: Cell-1 akṣara sequences with akṣara added to the start ........................................ 79
Figure 30: Cell-1 akṣara sequences with akṣara added to the middle ..................................... 79
Figure 31: Cell-1 akṣara sequences with akṣara added to the end ........................................... 80
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Sarala pada-C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Pañdam aḍi vaṭṭam-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>First line of pañdam aḍi vaṭṭam-3 performed slowly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>First line of pañdam aḍi vaṭṭam-3 performed fast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>Kavi tāla-E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>Short bridging phrase for kavi tāla-E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>Vāṇḍum ata-E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>Kavi tāla-A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>(doṁ, ta, ku, dom, ta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>(ku, dom, ta, ga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>(di, ta, ga, ta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>(gu, dāhiṃ, guṃ, dāhiṃ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>(ga, ta, guṃ, dit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>(dā, him)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>Kavi tāla-B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>(ruṃ, ōḍaṇi, gat, tam, gu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>(ōḍi, ta, ku, dom, dom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>(dā, him, gat, dā, him)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>(ga, ta, ga, di, ta)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>(ka, re, gu, ōḍa, ka)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>(dā, him, dā, him, gat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>(dā, him, ga, ta, gu)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>(ōḍa, gu, ōḍa, ga, di)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>(ta, ka, ru, ōḍaṇi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>(gu, ōḍa, ka, dom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>Pattini pada 1 - surala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>Pattini pada 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>Tēvā padā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>Magul bera vaṭṭam 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>Magul bera vaṭṭam 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>Magul bera vaṭṭam 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>Ārambhaka pada-D in Vāhala segment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>Kāṅgul padē (Devol pada movement 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>Devol pada movement 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>Devol pada movement 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>Devol pada movement 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td>Devol vāṇḍum ata (vāṇḍum ata-F) where dancers circle upper body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>The pūjā bera pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>Ritual space of the Kalu Kumāra samayama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117</td>
<td>Vaṭṭam pada-B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td>Tovil pattern-A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>Sarala pada-D embellishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>Improvisation on sarala pada-C in tovil ritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121</td>
<td>Yak panti pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122</td>
<td>Decorative panti pattern with torches (pañdam pada-D) in tovil ritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>Pattern danced with a king-coconut in the hat pada pelapāliya</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

vii
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>Pattern danced with a live rooster in the <em>hat pada pelapaliya</em></td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>Pattern danced with a shawl in the <em>hat pada pelapaliya</em></td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>Pattern featuring hand claps in the <em>hat pada pelapaliya</em></td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127</td>
<td>Prasanthika’s free-embellishment of <em>yadini matriya</em></td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>The main altar of the <em>bali</em> ritual with the planetary deities</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129</td>
<td><em>Bali</em> pattern-A</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>Transcription of <em>bali</em> pattern-A</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131</td>
<td>Transition pattern-A</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>Rhythm of vocal cue for <em>bali</em> pattern-B</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>133</td>
<td><em>Bali</em> pattern-B</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134</td>
<td>Prasanthika <em>bali</em> pattern-B improvisation verse 1</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>Prasanthika <em>bali</em> pattern-B improvisation verse 2</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136</td>
<td>Daniel <em>bali</em> pattern-B improvisation verse 1</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137</td>
<td>Daniel <em>bali</em> pattern-B improvisation verse 2</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>Susantha <em>bali</em> pattern-B improvisation verse 1</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139</td>
<td>Susantha <em>bali</em> pattern-B improvisation verse 2</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>Transition pattern-B</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141</td>
<td>Rhythm of vocal cue for <em>bali</em> pattern-C</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td><em>Bali</em> pattern-C and embellishment</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td><em>Bali</em> pattern-D</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>Transition pattern-C</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145</td>
<td>Relationship of <em>bali</em> patterns E and B</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146</td>
<td>Improvisation in <em>bali</em> pattern-E</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147</td>
<td><em>Bali</em> pattern-H and embellishment</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>148</td>
<td>Stage setup of Baliphonics</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abstract
This thesis provides an in-depth account of the Low-Country, ritual, drumming tradition of Sri Lanka. Low-Country drumming is characterized by its expressive and illusive sense of timing which makes it appear to be free of beat, pulse and metre. This makes it special in respect to other drumming cultures of the world. However, the drumming of the Low-Country is marginalized, unaccepted and unexposed. Drawing on original fieldwork from the Western province of Sri Lanka, this study analyses the drumming of three distinct rituals: devol maḍuva, Kalu Kumāra samayama and graha pūjāva of Raigama, the dominant sub-tradition of the Low-Country. The thesis reveals key features of the drumming tradition, some of which are hidden. These features include the musical structure that is beneath the surface of the drumming, timing, embellishment, improvisation and performance practice. It also documents the Low-Country drum, the yak beraya, its construction and relationship to the musician. The thesis addresses some of the changes that are occurring in the contemporary ritual and argues the need for the drumming to be brought out of its ritual context, for its survival in the future. It also documents a collaborative performance between Low-Country ritual performers and musicians from New Zealand.
Acknowledgements

My interests in Sri Lankan traditional drumming were initially kindled through my studies of jazz drumming. After studying jazz drumming for several years, I naturally developed an interest in the drumming music of my own culture. With little idea of the scope of the research area, I first enrolled in my doctoral programme with an intention to study the three traditions of Sri Lankan drumming. However, soon after, I realized the depth of the Low-Country tradition and I was mesmerized by its characteristics.

I am most deeply grateful for the inspiring musician who guided me and provided me invaluable information to write this thesis: the late Sandhoris Jayantha. In my view, he should be remembered as the father of Sri Lankan Low-Country drumming. Jayantha’s virtuosic skill, humble personality and sheer dedication for drumming were some aspects that inspired me the most. I deeply regret the fact that he did not live to see the completion of this thesis. However, in appreciation for the support he extended, I wish to dedicate this work to him. I am also indebted to his family members, with whom I have established close relationships over the past few years. His wife and his sister never failed to offer me several cups of tea within any given afternoon, during my frequent visits to their residence. Many other musicians in Sri Lanka helped me with this study. Prasantha Rupathilaka, with whom I have established a close friendship, and who has spent several hundreds of hours answering my questions, making sure I have understood the drumming improvisations, and notated the drumming patterns correctly. I am also indebted to Prasantha’s father Daniel and his brother Susantha. In my view, the combination of these three artists currently displays the Low-Country performance to the highest level. I wish
to express my gratitude for their willingness to share their intuitive knowledge of ritual performance and to dedicate many hours for rehearsals during the collaboration project. I am also thankful for the New Zealand musicians Misha Marks, Reuben Derrick and Isaac Smith who took part in the collaboration. Many musicians, whom I wish to thank, allowed me to record their performances during this study. Among others, I would like to thank Piyasara Shilpadhipathi for initially facilitating the meetings with my informants and Gayanath Dahanayaka for extending his support at times I was in Sri Lanka.

The nature of this study demanded a number of trips to Sri Lanka over the past three years. I am grateful for the financial assistance I received through a University of Canterbury Doctoral Scholarship. The travel would have been very difficult without this support. I would also like to acknowledge the Farina Thompson Charitable Trust for their financial assistance, which allowed me to purchase a number of much needed audio and video recording equipment. While in the field, I resided at my family home and I was able to do this because my parents decided to discontinue its lease from its previous tenants. In addition to this, I am always grateful for them for their unwavering support and encouragement. Many close friends, at different stages of this study have provided me with accommodation, meals and extended their supported with proof reading of drafts. I am very thankful for all their support and friendship. Over the past three years, Elaine Dobson, my supervisor, has guided me extensively to convert my genuine interest of Sri Lankan drumming into an academic study. I am deeply grateful for her direction, advice, insights, and useful criticism during the entire period, which has been truly inspirational.
System of Transliteration

Sinhala terms used in this thesis are transliterated using the table given below.¹ Proper nouns, except for gods, mythical cities and people in mythical stories, are spelt as they are in common usage today, i.e., without macrons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sinhala</th>
<th>Roman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ā</td>
<td>ə</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key to Musical Transcriptions

The following transcription key illustrates the system of notation used throughout this thesis.

The stave used for the transcriptions is a single-line percussion stave. The drum syllables (aḵṣara) of the drumming patterns are included in both Sinhala and English characters, on top of the staff. The drumming techniques used to produce each syllable (introduced in Chapter 3), are noted below the staff. The techniques are symbolized by a number of characters. ‘S’ represents a slap stroke, ‘M’ represents a muffled stroke, ‘B’ represents a bass stroke and ‘F T’ represents a series of two strokes identified as the flick-thumb technique. The two membranes of the Low-Country drum are known as the sural taṭṭuva (thinner drumhead) and the hai taṭṭuva (thicker drumhead). Normally, drummers use their natural hand to play the sural taṭṭuva, although, there are no strict rules that mention which hand should be used on each side of the drum. Therefore, the syllables of the drumming patterns are more directly associated with the sides of the drum compared to the musician’s hands. In the transcriptions, the strokes played on the sural taṭṭuva are notated above the line and the strokes played on the hai taṭṭuva are notated below the line.
The technique symbols of *akṣara*, produced with strokes played on both sides of the drum, in unison, will be separated with a “/”. The first character represents the note produced on the *sural taṭṭuva* which is above the line. The second character represents the note produced on the *hai taṭṭuva* which is below the line.

*Akṣara*, consisting of two sounds produced immediately after each other with no significant metrical duration in between, will be represented with a smaller note slurred to a note of normal size.

In the transcriptions, metronomic markings are limited to short repetitive drumming patterns and patterns with a regular beat. Even in these instances, the markings only intend to provide an approximate representation of the speed. Subtle shifts in tempo occur frequently in Low-Country drumming and this makes it difficult to accurately note the tempo. Transcriptions of patterns that include sections played at the slower tempos
(known as the *bara* tempo) and the solo drumming patterns do not include any metronome markings or time signatures. The crotchet beat of *bara* patterns are notated at roughly 40 beats per minute. However, the irregular nature of the beats in *bara* patterns makes these transcriptions extremely difficult to be notated accurately. The bar lines in these transcriptions intend to separate the stronger accentuated beats of the pattern. Some examples of these patterns are *yahan dākma* (section A), *kavi tāla*, *kālapanḍam padē*, *magul bera*, *pūjā bera*, transition pattern-A and transition pattern-B.

Dynamics markings are limited to transcriptions in Chapter 6, since the drumming of the rituals in Chapters 4 and 5 consist of relatively constant dynamics. In Chapter 6, the transcription of *bali* pattern-A uses the following symbol to represent the repeat of two consecutive bars.

![Symbol](image)

Also in Chapter 6, in the analysis of improvisation of *bali* pattern-B, bars which represent the drumming of the basic pattern, are notated as follows.

![Symbol](image)
Introduction

Sri Lanka, an island of 65,610 square kilometres in area and located off the southern tip of India, is home to several music genres and performance practices. The music of the Sinhala people, who constitute roughly 73 percent of the population of around 20 million, includes what is identified as the ‘traditional music’ of Sri Lanka. This traditional music consists of three performance elements: drumming, dancing and singing. Within this traditional music, three distinct traditions are identified as ‘Up-Country’ (Kandyan or uḍa raṭa), ‘Low-Country’ (pahata raṭa) and ‘Sabaragamuwa’, according to their geographical terrains. The Up-Country originates from the central hill areas of Sri Lanka and is recognized as having substantial influence from South India. The Low-Country geographically represents the Southern and Western provinces, and is considered to be highly expressive in nature. This expressive nature often makes Low-Country drumming appear to be free of any pulse, beat or metre for the untrained ear. Sabaragamuwa is named after a province that is in the central region between the Low-Country and Up-Country, and is considered to be the oldest form of drumming. The three traditions have their own identifying instruments: the gāṭa beraya (beraya means drum) which represents the Up-Country tradition, the yak beraya which represents the Low-Country, and the davula which represents the Sabaragamuwa tradition. Another drum called the tammāṭtama is not associated with a particular tradition, and is used commonly in all three regions.

---

3 These instruments are explored in Chapter 2.
This study focuses on the Low-Country tradition, in which three sub-traditions are recognized as hailing from three settlements known as Raigama, Benthara and Mathara (figure 1). The separate sub-traditions of drumming are often indistinguishable for the novice listener. However, subtle, distinctive qualities exist among these schools and this justifies why the practitioners of the Low-Country differentiate each style. The townships of Mathara and Raigama are geographically most distant. Hence, the drumming from these two areas is stylistically most contrasting. The style of the Benthara sub-tradition also reflects the township’s geographical placement between Mathara and Raigama, as it shows influences from both these other sub-traditions. Its proximity to Raigama is reflected in the sounds which are closer to the Raigama drumming. This Raigama style of playing, the focus of this thesis, is currently the most popular among the Low-Country artists. This is both due to the clarity of its drumming techniques and the region bordering the island’s capital Colombo, which is currently home to most of the Low-Country artists.

**Figure 1: Map of Sri Lanka and the regions of traditional music**
It is the highly expressive nature of the Low-Country drumming that gives it its identity. The term ‘expression’ in this study, is interpreted with respect to characteristics of musical performance, rather than conveying emotional qualities, which are more often associated with the term. Wirz’s description of the drumming describes one aspect of its expressive nature: "Quicker and quicker the rolling of the drums sound, announcing the beginning of the dance."  

Samarasinghe describes the loud dynamics of drumming in the ritual: “On certain occasions the hymns could not be heard clearly as the singing is drowned by the drumming.” He further describes the “deep and rhythmic beat of the drum.” The characteristics of Low-Country drumming, which create its expressive nature, will be explored with regards to rhythmic nuances created by both an irregular pulse and irregular beats, often simultaneous, the use of acceleration, dynamics, embellishment and improvisation. In addition to exploring the expressive nature, this study also aims to explore the compositional structures of drumming patterns and reveals the connection between the drumming and the other two performance elements of the tradition i.e., singing and dancing. Other objectives of this study include:

- Elucidating a theory of Low-Country drumming in its own terms.
- Exploring the instrument and the instrument making process.
- Creating a comprehensive collection of patterns in the Low-Country drumming repertoire.
- Revealing any hidden aspects of the Low-Country drumming tradition.
- Identifying the trends in contemporary performance contexts.

---

6 Samarasinghe, 120.
• Ensuring the survival of Low-Country drumming in the future.

The traditional music of Sri Lanka is perceived to be a national heritage. In reality, the music and its musicians are a marginalized sector of society. In the past, the musicians were marginalized under the caste system.\(^7\) As noted by Simpson: “The hereditary occupation of drumming is said by many Sinhalese to be the main reason why the Berava [the caste to which the drummers traditionally belong] have in the past been treated with considerable odium and have been socially and economically marginalised.”\(^8\) Laade also confirms this general low regard in which traditional music is held.\(^9\) Even though the caste system holds little prominence in contemporary society, the free nature of the Low-Country drumming makes it inaccessible for the general public who often regard it as incomprehensible. However, from a musical viewpoint, it is this free, expressive nature which makes the drumming most interesting and hence its need to be studied.

The expressive nature of the drumming has made it difficult to formulate a theory of Low-Country drumming. This also has contributed towards the drumming being unaccepted as a legitimate genre of music. In order to legitimize the drumming, it is necessary to present a theory of the drumming in its own terms. Details on the yak beraya, the tradition’s main instrument, and its construction process will provide valuable background for presenting such a theory. A comprehensive collection of the drumming

\(^{7}\) For a detailed account of the caste system, refer to: Bryce Ryan, *Caste in Modern Ceylon: The Sinhalese System in Transition* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1953).


patterns does not exist as it is primarily an oral tradition. Such a collection would undoubtedly contribute towards the preservation of the music. Also, because Low-Country drumming is an oral tradition, it consists of many characteristics that remain unidentified and hidden. The older, experienced artists of the Low-Country contain a wealth of wisdom and knowledge, as a result of their extensive dedication to learning and performance. Comparatively today, students have considerably less time to dedicate to learning the art form. Therefore, it is imperative that the hidden aspects of the drumming are revealed in order to ensure its survival. Such a study requires both an inside and outside view of the tradition.

The ritual is the original performance context of Low-Country drumming and it is the most suitable context in which to place this study. However, it has been observed that the traditional form of ritual is facing extinction. Although newer adaptations of the traditional ritual are becoming popular, these versions do not accommodate the performance aspects of the Low-Country tradition as effectively as does the traditional ritual. This means that these performance aspects, including the drumming, need to be brought into a contemporary context, outside of the ritual, if they are to survive in the future. Consequently, this thesis is extended to include the documentation of a collaborative performance within such a contemporary context.

Low-Country drumming remains a relatively untouched area of ethnomusicological study. As confirmed by a number of scholars, there is a noticeable lack of previous research carried out in this particular area of Sri Lankan music. As Seneviratna stated,
“the complex, but rhythmic drum beats of the ritual itself speak the rich musical heritage of the country to which little or no attention has hitherto been drawn by the scholar for serious study.”

More recently, Sheeran stated that “Drumming in Sri Lanka also remains a topic of further research.”

Claus-Bachmann’s statement, “there is much valuable work still to be done on … regional forms of expression such as the Sabaragamuwa tradition, or the culture of low-country Sri Lanka” also reconfirms the lack of research carried out, to date, on this area. The original performance context of the drumming (i.e., the Low-Country ritual) has been studied by several scholars writing in English, however all these studies take an anthropological perspective. Similar studies have been carried out by scholars writing in Sinhala. Karunarathna Bandara and Sugathadasa Malalgoda have written on the subject of Low-Country drumming, although these works concerned cannot be considered scholarly research, due to the lack of detail, depth and analytical perspective. Published field recordings in the area of Low-Country rituals also remain minimal. Short segments of ritual drumming appear in

19 Sugathadasa Malalgoda, *Yak Beraya* (Colombo: S. Godage and Brothers, 1998).
20 Two compact discs entitled “Ceylon’s Drum Masters and Healers” and “Sri Lanka: Ceylan [sic]” are the only recent published material sourced by the author.
promotional material and recordings aimed at tourists.\(^\text{18}\) However, these performances of music are condensed drastically and are unsuitable to be considered in this study. One notable recording appears as part of an anthology of South-East Asian Music on *kolam*, a masked play of the Low-Country.\(^\text{19}\)

Currently, the internet serves as a primary medium of communication that facilitates networking between ethnomusicologists around the world. However, due to a number of its drawbacks,\(^\text{20}\) fieldwork remains essential to contemporary ethnomusicological research. Nettl emphasizes that fieldwork in ethnomusicology is essential: “principally ethnomusicology is the study with the use of fieldwork.”\(^\text{21}\) He further mentions why researchers have to rely considerably on their own experiences and instincts to choose the most suitable approaches while in the field: “it is also the most personal part of the job, the part that cannot really be taught, that all of us have had to learn on our own, finding ways of mediation between our own personalities with their strengths and weaknesses and the individuals who’s shared belief we will learn and interpret, using confidence and mastering timidity.”\(^\text{22}\) Fieldwork of this study was undertaken over a period of three years from 2006 to 2009 in Sri Lanka. In the first two years, it was carried out from April to September. In 2008 it was from July to December and in 2009 it was for one month in April. During the fieldwork I resided in my home town of Maharagama, which is located near the outskirts of the capital Colombo. Maharagama is also close to the suburbs of

\(^{18}\) N.a., *Sri Lankan Traditional Drums*. CD. Air Lanka. No number.
\(^{22}\) Nettl, 136.
Pannipitiya and Hokandara, where my informants are based. My fluent speaking and literary skills in Sinhala allowed me to communicate with my informants with ease and explore the Sinhala literature available on the area of Low-Country drumming. The following paragraphs describe the main approaches taken during the three, fieldwork periods.

“Establishing a close relationship with a master musician is a common and successful approach in ethnomusicology”\(^{23}\) therefore this study uses a similar approach. When I first arrived in the field, I only had one close contact in the area of traditional drumming in Sri Lanka, who was Piyasara Shilpadhipathi, a renowned Up-Country drummer and a senior lecturer at the University of Performing Arts in Colombo. From prior association with Shilpadhipathi in both professional and learning environments, it was established that he could direct me to several masters of traditional drumming with whom I could potentially carry out this study. On arriving in the field, I was introduced to two distinguished traditional artists, Sandhoris Jayantha from the Low-Country and M.K Babanis from Sabaragamuwa. My interest in the Low-Country drumming led me to establish a close relationship with Sandhoris Jayantha (1930-2008). Fieldworkers are expected to show respect to the informants and teachers with whom they study, and the teachers sense sharply whether this respect is there.\(^{24}\) During my initial meeting with Jayantha, he recognized my genuine intention to study the drumming. Perhaps being introduced to him through his nephew, Prasantha Rupathileke, whom Jayantha had also considered to be his finest student, further convinced him of my genuine intentions and respect for the art.


\(^{24}\) Myers, 148.
This initial meeting did not include any playing or demonstrations. After some time of casual conversation, which mainly involved us introducing each other, I asked him about the different types of drumming patterns. As he explained a number of different types he sensed that I was able to easily identify the beat cycles of some of the patterns. Towards the end of this discussion, he had grown to appreciate my rhythmic knowledge. As a result of this, he was enthusiastic to share his knowledge of Low-Country drumming. At the time, Jayantha, 76 years of age, had established himself as the most respected senior Low-Country drummer in the field. Having retired from regular performance, he spent most of his time at home and was regularly visited by local students approaching him for lessons and study. At the conclusion of my initial meeting with Sandhoris Jayantha, he agreed to take part as the consultant of my study.

The close association I established with Jayantha proved to be invaluable as he was vastly experienced and had an intimate knowledge of the rituals. Being born into a family lineage of Low-Country artists in Raigama, Jayantha was exposed to ritual performances from an early age. At the age of six, he was placed under the care of his uncle, Nandhoris Fernando, to learn Low-Country drumming. From around the age of fifteen, Jayantha started playing in rituals and quickly established himself as a highly sought-after drummer in the region. Soon his talents were recognized on a national level and in 1964, he was invited to be in the advisory board of the Lanka Kalā Mandalaya (Arts Committee of Sri Lanka) for Low-Country drumming and dance. In the years which followed, from 1965 to 1969, he also participated in cultural performance tours to England, United States, Australia and New Zealand. In 1970, he was employed as a
traditional musician at the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Co-operation (SLBC) and he remained there till he retired in 1990. During his time at the SLBC he met various opportunities to perform and collaborate with visiting musicians outside the ritual context. Undoubtedly his biggest achievement was receiving the *Kalābhūṣana* award in 1988, which is a presidential award given to exceptional traditional artists of Sri Lanka. Generally, most experienced traditional drummers of Jayantha’s caliber do not willingly share the intimate knowledge of their art form with students or researchers. However, Jayantha’s long-sightedness led him to believe that exposure of Low-Country drumming was necessary if it is to survive in the future. Because of this he was most approachable and encouraging during our discussions. He acknowledged my musical background and respect for Low-Country drumming and encouraged me to play a major role in ensuring the survival of Low-Country drumming. “You have the technology, knowledge and skills to find out things about Low-Country drumming that I don’t know about. You also have the musical maturity to ensure the survival of our drumming. So I must help you by telling you all I know.”

A few days prior to my third fieldwork period, I was informed of the sudden death of Sandhoris Jayantha. By this time I had a well established, close relationship with his family thus I was able to share the grieving process of their loved, family member. To overcome the sense of wanting to complete an unfinished task, I had to find a new consultant to carry out the latter stages of my study. On request, Prasantha Rupathilake agreed to be my new consultant. The fact that he had closely studied with Jayantha for over a decade, and he had established himself as the most sought after, traditional

---

drummer in the field, left me little doubt that there would not be any other person who would better suit this role.

Prasantha (born in 1972), is a rare exponent of traditional drumming, as he is equally experienced and established in both the contemporary music scene as well as the rituals. His ritual experience began from the age of fifteen, when he started accompanying his father, which he continues to this date. His experience as a contemporary musician began in 1989 when he worked as an artist for the International Peace Council of Sri Lanka for seven years.26 Like Jayantha, Prasantha has also worked for the SLBC. Prasantha’s collaborative nature is evident throughout his career; he has designed and built a drum which has Sri Lankan and Japanese influences, performed at the WOMAD (World of Music Arts and Dance) Festival in Singapore and Sri Lanka, and conducted a drum orchestra of 350 drummers, which was commissioned by the International Cricket Council. Currently Prasantha is a member of the Sri Lankan State Dance Ensemble and has become a respected teacher with a wide following of students. Through the close association of Prasantha, I also established close associations with his father Daniel Rupathilake and brother Susantha Rupathilake who are equally talented traditional artists.

Daniel currently, 68 years of age, is one of the most respected dancers of the tradition and he continues to actively engage in ritual performances. Being born into a family lineage of traditional Low-Country arts practitioners, Daniel learnt Low-Country drumming, dance, painting, sculpture and astrology from his father Simon Fernando, who was a

26 During these years Prasantha performed extensively in many European countries, throughout Asia, Australasia and the United States.
respected artist during his time. For Daniel, Low-Country performance has become an intuitive art form, as a result of years of experience performing in a countless number of rituals. In recognition of this service to the Low-Country arts, Daniel was awarded a Presidential Award in 1996. Susantha (born in 1970) the elder son of Daniel, is also a well established traditional artist in Sri Lanka. Susantha, too, was exposed to ritual performances at a young age, where most of his learning occurred through his father and grandfather. Like Prasantha, Susatha has also been a member of the State Dance Ensemble and is currently a permanent musician of the SLBC. His collaborative nature is also apparent throughout his career, where he has performed with a number of leading dance ensembles and artists in Sri Lanka.\(^27\) Chithrasena Dance Ensemble, Budhawatta Dance Ensemble, Ravibandu Vidyapathi and Panibaratha.

Following the hands-on approach of the likes of William Malm\(^28\) and Gert-Matthias Wegner,\(^29\) practical, first-hand experience of learning the drumming is used in this study. Immersing oneself in the art form, and letting questions arise as one becomes more familiar with the details, is chosen over carrying out regular structured interviews. At the start of the initial drumming lesson, Jayantha respectfully handed his drum over to me and requested that I wish that the art form I am about to learn may bring me happiness and prosperity. In a normal session, I would spend around 3-4 hours either engaging in

\(^{27}\) With these ensembles Susantha, like his brother, has toured extensively over Europe, Asia, Australasia and North America.


conversation, practising or playing along with Jayantha. During this fieldwork period, I visited him at least 3-4 times a week, depending on his availability. After introducing me to the basic sounds of the drum, Jayantha was happy to go back and forth from teaching me short patterns, rudimentary exercises and longer patterns.\textsuperscript{30} The sessions were mostly individual. However, if other students happened to be around, particularly dancers, he would encourage me to play short patterns to accompany the dance. During the conversations, I was able to discuss a wide range of issues, some of which, rose directly from the lessons I received, and others, as a result of me familiarizing myself with the tradition through observation and reading.

During this stage, I gained an understanding of the drumming which was both that of an outsider and that of an insider. This was justified by Jayantha when he observed that I asked him questions that no one had ever asked him and thus he had rarely contemplated. Another instance, which supports this idea, occurred during my time away from the field, between the first and the second fieldwork periods. Normally, Low-Country drummers use their natural hand to play technical strokes which are more challenging. These technical strokes are predominantly played on the side which has the thinner membrane. Initially, I was unaware of this and Jayantha assumed that I was left-handed, even though I am right-handed. Consequently, I was taught the technical strokes as if I was left-handed. Jayantha soon realised that I was, in fact, right-handed but allowed me to keep using my weaker hand to produce the technical strokes, in order to strengthen its coordination. During my time away from the field, because I was dissatisfied with the

\textsuperscript{30} Introduced in Chapter 3
progress I was making on the *yak beraya*, I experimented with using my right-hand to play the technical strokes. On my return to the field during 2007, Jayantha noticed this change, which resulted in a considerable improvement, and commented that he himself would not have been able to do that. He commented that I had already gained a thorough understanding of the relationship between *akṣara* (drum syllables) and hand techniques, perhaps beyond that of an insider.

The drumming lessons during the second fieldwork period occurred in a similar fashion to the first. As I gained a better understanding of most of the short patterns, I was taught larger compositions and pieces played in the *devol maḍuva* ritual (Chapter 4). An interesting issue surfaced during this fieldwork period as I noticed that I was starting to understand the use of advanced techniques and improvisations which occurred in certain rituals I witnessed. However, I was unable to demonstrate this to Jayantha through playing the drum, and hence unable to successfully communicate these advanced concepts. In the tradition an understanding of this level occurs implicitly through years of playing and participating in ritual performance. As my situation was different, I was forced to come up with a creative method of communicating these aspects through performance. Towards the end of this period, I started to produce the sounds of the drum with conviction and played a number of the common patterns in the Low-Country drumming repertoire. Because of this, Jayantha was becoming confidant that I could participate in rituals and it was discussed that I take part in my first ritual during my next fieldwork period.
The absence of Jayantha during my third fieldwork, somewhat disrupted the flow of my practical playing of the *yak beraya*. However, I was able to convince Prasantha, my new consultant, of my understanding of some of the advanced patterns and improvisations. I did this by demonstrating the patterns on the Western drum set, on which I was performing at a much more advanced level, compared to that on the *yak beraya*. Already at the time, I had attained a Bachelor of Music degree with Honours in jazz drumming, from the University of Canterbury in Christchurch. I also had several years of professional playing experience. The use of the Western drum set was necessary, as I realised that performing advanced patterns on the *yak beraya* required several years of extensive practice. During this period, I focused on the advanced aspects of the drumming related to improvisation and the relationship of the drumming and the dance.

Understating how the Low-Country drumming repertoire is used in performance was primarily gained through attending a number of rituals during the three fieldwork periods. The Low-Country rituals witnessed during the period of this study are listed below.

1 May 2006  –  Kalu Kumāra *samayama* in Pannipitiya at a residence near Vidyala Handiya.
24 Jun 2006  –  *Devol mađuva* in Madiwela organized by Tharindu *kapu mahattaya*.
27 Jun 2006  –  *Graha půjāva* at Jayantha’s neighbor’s residence in Hokandara.
20 Apr 2007  –  *Devol mađuva* at Bellanwilla temple grounds.
21 Jul 2007  –  *Hat ađiya bali* ritual at a residence in Rajagiriya (an inner suburb of Colombo).
28 Jul 2007  –  *Graha půjāva* in Horana
8 Dec 2007  –  Kalu Kumāra *samayama* in Pannipitiya
19 Dec 2007  –  *Devol maḍuva* workshop directed by Sandhoris Jayantha at the local school in Hanwella.


13 Sep 2008  –  *Graha pūjāva* in Pannipitiya near Prasanka’s residence.

25 Oct 2008  –  *Yak maḍuva* in Kadawatha (this was similar to the *devol maḍuva* ritual).

21 Dec 2008  –  *Devol maḍuva* in Arangala, organized by Lasantha kapu mahattaya.

1 Jan 2009  –  *Bera pōya hēvisi*, A Buddhist ceremony held at the Bellanwilla temple grounds.

4 Apr 2009  –  *Mal baliya* ritual, at a residence in Pannipitiya.

10 Apr 2009  –  *Bahirava pūjāva*, at residence in Homagama.

The performances witnessed in the initial fieldwork period in 2006 are recorded using a Canon HV10 Mini DV Camcorder, a Sony Mini disc MZ R35 recorder and a Sony ECMM S907 stereo condenser microphone. The equipment used during this initial fieldwork was reliable, however, reliable power was an issue. The video camera did not have a long battery life so I often had to organize a method of plugging it into a main power source, which was complicated at times when the rituals took place outside. In a number of performances witnessed since the second fieldwork period in 2007, the sound is recorded with a Korg MR 100 Professional mobile recorder using two Oktava MK-012 condenser microphones. The sound quality of the audio recording equipment used was a vast improvement from the first fieldwork period. However, the nature of the equipment meant that the equipment could not be set up where there was a possibility of someone damaging them. Also, in some situations such as private rituals, it was not appropriate to set up this equipment as it was less discrete compared to the mini disc recording device.

The performances witnessed since December 2007 are visually recorded with a Sony HDR-SR5 high definition camcorder. The battery life on this camera was greatly
improved by the use of an additional battery and this overcame all the power issues that occurred in the initial fieldwork periods.

Transcriptions in this study intend to serve a similar purpose to that of most ethnomusicological publications around the 1990s, as they function as an accompaniment to the recordings rather than as a substitution for the recordings. As a strict notational system is not used in this tradition, a notational system based on Western notation, formulated to clearly represent the relationship between the drum syllables and the hand techniques used to produce the sounds, is used. Explanations and suggestions of norms of the tradition accompany the transcriptions when dealing with rhythmic durations that cannot be represented accurately with traditional note values. Initially, the notation did not include the Sinhala characters, however, it was found that by doing so, massively improved the ability of my consultants and other traditional artists to check the notation and ensure that I had recorded the patterns correctly.

Chapter 1 of this thesis provides a background of the contemporary contexts in which Low-Country drumming is performed. Three contexts are identified and explained: rituals, Buddhist ceremonies and secular settings. It is shown why the ritual remains to be the most suitable context in which the drumming should be studied. Chapter 2 introduces the reader to the yak beraya, placing it in the context of other commonly used instruments in traditional music. Special attention is given to the current construction process of the yak beraya, which is an area overlooked in both Sinhala and English literature. Chapter 3

31 Nettl, 77.
presents a theory of Low-Country drumming in its own terms. This chapter addresses the fundamental relationship between *akṣara* (drum syllables) and techniques of drumming, which is an area that is not explicitly recognized in the tradition. Chapters 4-7 detail three rituals chosen for study, *devol maḍuva*, Kalu Kumāra *samayama* and *graha pūjāva* respectively, and present an ethnographic study of the performance aspects, in particular the drumming. The *devol maḍuva*, being the most expansive ritual, provides an opportunity to introduce the Low-Country drumming repertoire and the fundamental characteristics of the drumming that contribute towards its expressive nature. The Kalu Kumāra *samayama*, being a ritual of demonic nature, allows the discussion of how artists enhance this nature of the ritual through music. The *graha pūjāva* is examined in order to reveal the advanced techniques and high level of spontaneity in performance used by the most experienced artists of the tradition. Having revealed extensive insight into Low-Country drumming and performance in rituals, Chapter 7 examines the current trends of the ritual. The decline of the traditional ritual which served as the main context for Low-Country performance is highlighted, and the need to bring forth the performance aspects of the ritual into a contemporary performance setting is addressed. This final chapter includes a collaborative performance project, which was considered to be a successful approach of presenting performance aspects of Low-Country rituals on the concert stage. Chapters 3-6 of this thesis are supplemented with short excerpts of video (Appendix 6) and audio (Appendix 7) examples of the drumming transcriptions (DVD and CD attached to the back cover). These excerpts are compiled from various recordings made during the fieldwork. Throughout this thesis, Sinhala terms will be frequently introduced and referred to. A knowledge of these terms is necessary for a full appreciation of the subject.
and because these terms are in common parlance among the performing community. For the ease of the reader, I include a glossary of Sinhala terms with their English meanings in Appendix 2.
Chapter 1
Low-Country Drumming in the Contemporary Context

Kulatillake emphasized that “the main score in the Sinhala drum music is still preserved in the ritual.”\(^{32}\) Low-Country drumming is currently performed in three main contexts: rituals, religious Buddhist ceremonies and secular performance settings. This chapter analyzes these different performance contexts in order to illustrate that drumming of *yak beraya* in both Buddhist and secular settings by and large duplicate a small component of its use in the rituals. This makes the rituals the most suitable context in which to study Low-Country drumming. In order to appreciate the ritual context, however, it is first necessary to present a brief overview of the religious system of the Sinhala Buddhists.

1.1 The traditional Sinhala Buddhist pantheon

The traditional Sinhala Buddhist pantheon is a hierarchical model and is described in detail in several texts.\(^{33}\) The Buddha occupies the highest position of the hierarchy. The authority of the Buddha remains effective through the delegation by warrants (*varam*) which are given to supernatural beings. Within the hierarchy and immediately below the Buddha, are the Gods of Four Warrants (*hatara varam deviyo*). Under these are positioned a variety of other powerful deities such as the Twelve Gods (*doloha deviyo*) and the planetary deities (*graha deviyo*). Below these are the humans and at the bottom of the hierarchy are the demons (*yakku* or *samayam*) and other malignant spirits.


In understanding Buddhist philosophy it is also necessary to understand the law of karma. This refers to the consequences of past actions, in this life or previous ones, whether good or bad. When humans carry out acts of virtue (pin), Gods share the merit of their actions, and look after humans in return. By collecting merit, or good karma, in this manner, beings come closer to achieving the ultimate state of enlightenment, that is, becoming a Buddha. Gods are closer to enlightenment, whereas for humans, achieving this status is generally considered to be unattainable during their present lifetime. Humans are also subject to malevolent influences (dōsa) from demons and planetary deities whether due to bad karma or unfavourable planetary movements. The Buddha, Dharma (the teachings) and Sangha (the monastic order in which Buddhism is preserved) are recognized collectively as the Three Refuges. In addition, lay priests communicate with the Gods and demons. In rituals these priests are identified as kapu mahattaya (mahattaya means gentleman) and kaṭṭadi mahattaya respectively.

1.2 Ritual in Sinhala Buddhism

Rituals in Sinhala Buddhism require the “worship of gods and propitiation of demons, belief in and attempted manipulation of supernatural powers.” There are different opinions on whether rituals should be considered intrinsic to Sinhala Buddhism or rather, distinguished from the practices directly related to Theravada Buddhism. Sheeran notes a number of different labels given to this component of Sinhala Buddhism: “It has been referred to variously as the ‘Little Tradition’… the ‘pre-Buddhist indigenous religion,’

---

34 Obeyesekere and Gombrich, 3.
the ‘sub-religion’ … the ‘spirit religion’ … and ‘animism’.”

Obeyesekere stated that the Sinhala Buddhists pantheon “is neither a Theravada Buddhist nor a specifically ‘animist’ one, but a Sinhalese Buddhist pantheon. The Buddha, gods, demons, and an array of lesser supernatural beings constitute a single system, which displays a wholly consistent structure.”

However, the movement of “Protestant Buddhism” has meant that the middle-class Sinhala people “consider practices which they observe among the working class and peasantry (e.g., traditional community rituals to the deities . . .) to be ‘folk’ practices that are not to be confused with ‘true’ Buddhism.”

This view is revealed in the categorization of Sinhala Buddhist rituals by A.G.S. Kariyawasam, where he places the practices of Sinhala Buddhists under three broad headings. The first two categories are associated with lay Buddhist activities while the third, is associated with rituals adapted from folk religions.

These rituals, considered under the latter category are recognized as ‘semi-religious’ in character and are considered a “mixture of Buddhism and folk religion.” It is these rituals that are the focus of this thesis.

Three types of rituals were identified by my performer informants:

1. **Bali** (also known as *bali yāga* or *bali šāntikarma*)

2. **Tovil**

3. **Maḍu** (or *dēva šāntikarma*)

---


36 Kapferer, 30.

37 Obeyesekere and Gombrich, 4.

38 Kapferer, 31.


40 A. G. S. Kariyawasam, 50.
Kapferer identifies the same rituals as *bali tovil, yak tovil* and *dēva to vil.* Each ritual will be explained and representative examples of each type of ritual examined. I.e., *bali* (*gra ha pūjāva*), *tovil* (*Kalu Kumāra samayama*) and *maḍu* (*devol maḍuva*).

**1.3 Bali**

The term *bali* refers to an offering of a gift or oblation. The *bali* ritual stems from a belief in the benevolent and malevolent influences of the nine planetary deities on humans. It is often intended for a particular individual. During this ritual, the planetary deities are invoked and pacified in order to ward off their evil influences. The deities are Ravi (sun), Chandra (moon), Kuja (Mars), Budha (Mercury), Guru (Jupiter), Sukra (Venus), Sani (Saturn) and Ketu, the ascending and descending modes of the moon. Each planetary deity, among other things, has its own particular form, colour, vehicles, weapons and preferred foods. The *bali* ritual contains some demonic references, however, it is not regarded as a demonic ritual per se.

It is believed that from birth to death, an individual passes through periods over which certain planets have authority. The duration of these periods can be known in advance by referring to a horoscope that charts relevant planetary movements. A horoscope is cast at one’s birth, and is often consulted at times of crisis or illness. If it is ascertained that an individual is under a planetary combination with a harmful influence, a *bali* ritual may be recommended to weaken these influences.

---

41 Kapferer, 14 and 130.
42 Tissa Kariyawasam, 13.
43 De Silva, 23-24.
44 De Silva, 15-22.
Scholars agree that the present version of the *bali* practised in Sri Lanka originates in the Kotte period.\(^{45}\) Prior to this period, there had been an established practice of Indian Brahmins visiting Sri Lanka to conduct *bali* rituals for royals and other privileged people in exchange for considerable amounts of money. One story\(^{46}\) revolves around one such Brahmin in the ritual trade, known as Pandit Ramachandra, and Sri Rahula of Totagamuva, a popular nationalistic monk at the time, who was determined to reduce the power of the Brahmins. The monk invites the Brahmin to perform a *bali* ritual at his temple. Without the Brahmin’s knowledge, the monk instructs his skilled disciple, Vidagama Maitree Thero, to transcribe the whole ritual as it is carried out. At the end of the ritual, the monk Rahula claims that he recalled a similar ritual to the one just performed, stored in the collection of palm leaf texts at his temple. When the Brahmin is shown the text, he realises that he has been tricked. He feels embarrassed and leaves, vowing never to return again. De Silva states that “Rahula deliberately stole the knowledge of the *bali* ritual from the Brahmin and gave [it] a Buddhist appearance by placing it under the Buddha.”\(^ {47}\)

Conversely however, a number of mythological stories exist, tracing the origin of the *bali* ritual back to the time of the Buddha. One story, presented by Tissa Kariyawasam revolves around Vijaya, who is believed to be the first King of Sri Lanka, and Kuveni, a demon Queen.\(^ {48}\) Another story, mentioned by the same author, is about the King Mahā Sammata, who is considered to be the first King of mankind. Mahā Sammata was the son


\(^{46}\) The story given here is based on what Sandhoris Jayantha told me.

\(^{47}\) De Silva, 38.

\(^{48}\) Tissa Kariyawasam, 19-28.
of the Surya (sun) God. The first ever time the sun shone, the Surya prince became the King with everyone’s blessings. In this myth, he dreamt that a viper fell on him. As a result of continually contemplating this dream, he suffered severe headaches, swollen limbs, and finally became insane. This is regarded as the first illness that had ever befallen man. After many treatments, a bali ritual, carried out by Brahmins, made the King recover his normal health.49

The two most popular stories relate to the mythical city of Visala in India. In the first version, a group of Lichavi princes in the kingdom of Vishala are playing in the sand, when one mysteriously falls ill. In order to cure the prince, the sages make a statue of the prince from sand and offer it to the demons, and this cures the prince. The second version, also set in the city of Visala, mentions the Buddha explicitly. This is the story that is referred to by S.N. Daniel when he performs rituals.

In Daniel’s version, the Buddha chants texts (pīrit) intended to ward off malevolent spirits in the city of Visala, at a time when the city is swept with an epidemic (janapati rōgayā). The text is the ruvan sutra, and the recital of it eradicates most of the illnesses and suffering. However, there remain pockets of dōsa due to influential planetary deities, demons, and other gods. The Buddha advises the practice of performing bali rituals to seek protection from this suffering. De Silva notes that “whatever actual historical connections between bali and this particular place and time exi[s]t, the bali is given a powerful legitimacy by this association with the Buddhist mythological tradition.”50

---

49 This story is similar to the origin of the devol maḍuva (section 1.5.2)
50 De Silva, 34.
Most ritual experts believe that there are 35 types of bali. The size and type of the bali are directly linked to the individual needs of the patient and the misfortunes suffered. Only four types of bali rituals were held during the period of this study: graha pūjāva (offering to graha deviyo, i.e. planetary deities), mal baliya (similar offering to graha deviyo conducted for pregnant women to ensure their pre-natal care and safe delivery of the child), Bhahirava pūjāva (conducted to protect houses and land) and hat aḍiya. This last ritual is an offering to graha deviyo with an additional segment based around the seven steps taken by Prince Siddhartha at his birth. All rituals except the Bhahirava pūjāva, only vary slightly from each other, and include drumming and dancing. The Bhahirava pūjāva is solely a chanting ritual. The graha pūjāva is chosen for this study as it represents the most generic version of the bali ritual. However, performances of the generic sections of mal baliya and hat aḍiya will also be considered in order to enrich the analysis of the ritual’s drumming.

The structure of the traditional bali ritual is said to be divided into three periods or Three Watches: sāndāyama (evening watch), mādiyama (midnight watch) and aluyama (morning watch). In the sāndāyama, supernatural spirits are invited to the ritual area. They are given offerings in the mādiyama, then encouraged to leave the patient’s surroundings in the aluyama. The detailed chronology following shows the overall

51 De Silva, 30.
54 Tissa Kariyawasam, 85-86.
55 Bandara, 96.
structure of the graha pūjāva ritual and how the music is accommodated. A more detailed
description and analysis of the performance of the ritual is presented in Chapter 6, using
the segments named below.

1. Ceremonial drumming (magul bera)\textsuperscript{56} and the observance of five precepts

2. Recitation of verses in salutation to the Three Refuges

3. Recitation of verses of bali ritual inception

4. Placing of ceremonial objects on the patient’s feet

5. Chanting of the thread with pirit (pirit huya)

6. Unveiling of the curtain to display the altars

7. Offerings made to planetary deities

8. Singing verses for the planetary deities (graha kavi)

9. Blessings with oil lamp threads

10. Warding off the malevolent spirits and ritual conclusion

\textit{1.4 Tovil}

Tovil, unlike the bali rituals which are for pacification of planetary deities, are identified
as rituals carried out to ward off evil influences inflicted by demons. Traditionally, tovil
rituals are exorcism rites and are aimed at healing individuals possessed by demons. Such
rituals were studied by Kapferer and Wirz. Sheeran confirms the exorcist nature of the
ritual: “The cluster of practices that constitute a tovil usually involves a possession as
well as appearances of the various malignancies and negative influences in masked

\textsuperscript{56} This piece is played at most openings or inaugurations. See Chapter 4 for details.
The tovil ritual studied in this thesis, known as the Kalu Kumāra samayama, is much smaller in scale and does not involve masks. Although it resembles an exorcism, this ritual is not carried out for individuals believed to be possessed, and therefore does not involve possession. Instead it is carried out for women who are unable to conceive and believed to be under the influence of the Kalu Kumāra demon.

Paranavitana explains: “The birth of a child is considered [by Sinhala Buddhists] as one of most joyous occasions and a great achievement for a family. Consequently, the pregnant women are given a special place in society and treated with respect. When the news of the pregnancy is expressed to the members of the family, they take all the steps to please the one who is pregnant and protect her and the child by performing family customs, rituals and meritorious acts.” When a couple are unable to conceive for a number of years in their marriage, one belief is that the woman may be under the influence of the Kalu Kumāra demon. The woman involved in one of the tovil rituals I attended, found it difficult to conceive for the first ten years of marriage, which is an exceptionally long time to be without children for a married couple in Sinhala culture.

This Kalu Kumāra samayama ritual is also known as the kalas biñḍīma (the breaking of the pot). This name stems from a rite carried out a few months prior to the ritual. Daniel explained that the woman involved in this ritual had a positive result within three months of the initial consultation of the kāṭṭadi mahattaya. At the initial consultation, a clay pot

---

58 The Kalu Kumāra samayama is considered the equivalent of the more elaborate raṭa yakuma in the Southern regions.
(kalaha) is filled with a number of auspicious items as an offering to the demon, and this is kept in a high place inside the woman’s house. During the same consultation, the woman makes a vow to carry out a ritual in the event that she conceives. The ritual is generally held a few months after the child is born. The clay pot is smashed during the ritual performance and this symbolizes the fulfilment of the vow to hold a ritual.

The legend of the Kalu Kumāra demon has a number of variations. A popular version goes back to the period of the ancient Anuradhapura kingdom (4th century BC – 11 century AD) of Sri Lanka. It is based on the Neela Maha Yōdaya, a giant, who serves a Sinhala King and leads an army to fight against a King of North India who had enslaved many Sinhala people. While in India, the giant comes across a mysterious city, Strīpura (city of women). There, his handsome and well built body attracts the attention of many women by whom he is eventually harassed. The giant dies in anger and is reborn as the Kalu Kumāra demon that harasses women in revenge.

The Kalu Kumāra demon is among several others that are traditionally believed to spread illness and disease. Among these, are the Riri yakā (the blood demon), Mahasōna (demon of the cemetery) and the Sanni yakā (also known as Kōla Sanniya) which is a composite of eighteen different demons. The Kōla Sanniya is the chief of these demons. In association with his follower, the Sanni yakku are identified as being responsible for causing specific illnesses. Today, rituals held for these latter demons are popularly

---

60 See: Wirz, 34. Also, Kapferer, 122.
61 For example, vedda sanniya is believed to cause bubonic plague, vata sanniya is believed to cause flatulence, kepala sanniya is believed to spread insanity among men and maru sanniya causes delirium.
known as the *daha aṭa sanniya* (18 Sanniya’s) and are of a large-scale and exhibitive in nature. Another demon known as the Garā yakā, is believed to get rid of *vas dōsa* “which includes minor witchcraft from the evil eye, mouth, and tongue as well as ritual danger from inadvertent taboo violation or incorrect performance of ritual,”\(^{62}\) and appears in the *devol maḍuva* ritual (see section 1.5.1).

The exorcism rituals studied by Kapferer are clearly organized according to the traditional Three Watches (explained in the *bali* ritual structure in section 1.3), with significant breaks in between each segment.\(^{63}\) However, the Kalu Kumāra *samayama* is not organized in such a manner, even though a number of segments in the ritual are dedicated to the demons of Three Watches. The Kalu Kumāra *samayama* lasts for around seven hours (8pm – 3 am) and includes a small number of performers (four at the most). The breaks between the segments are relatively short. The ritual is small in scale, with the attendance of only a few close family members. It is held indoors in the main lounge, aside from the segment which presents the offerings of the Kalu Kumāra demon. The description of the ritual and analysis of its music in Chapter 5 is organized under the following structure:

1. Ceremonial drumming (*magul bera*) and the observance of five precepts
2. Recital of verses of salutation to the Three Refuges
3. Inviting the demons of the Three Watches
4. Placing of ceremonial objects on the patient’s feet

---


\(^{62}\) Obeyesekere, 173.

\(^{63}\) Kapferer, 137.
5. Unveiling of the curtain to display the altars

6. Dance segment dedicated to the demons of the Three Watches

7. *Hat pada pelapāliya* (seven dances) and offering food (*dola*) to Kalu Kumāra demon

8. Dedication of offerings (*pidēni taṭu*) for Mahasōna and demons of Three Watches

9. Dedication of offerings (*pidēni taṭu*) for Kalu Kumāra demon

10. Breaking of the clay pot (*kalas biṅdīma*)

11. Warding off the malevolent spirits from the ritual house and ritual conclusion

1.5 *Maḍu*

The third broad category of rituals, *maḍu*, are communal rituals, carried out in honour of the deities. These rituals intend to bring prosperity to the entire community. Similar to *bali*, these rituals contain demonic references even though they are not considered to be rituals of demonic nature. Various forms of these rituals have existed in the past (*gammaḍuva*, *pūnā maḍuva*,64 and *pam maḍuva*),65 however today the version of the ritual referred to as the *devol maḍuva* is the most popular. During Kapferer’s study, the *gammaḍuva* and *devol maḍuva* were performed to “protect the community from misfortune as well as from a variety of communicable diseases such as measles, chicken pox and small pox.”66 These latter aims of healing are absent in contemporary *devol maḍuva* rituals.

---

64 Obeyesekere, 71.
65 Wirz, 152.
66 Kapferer, 14.
The *devol maḍuva* is by far the most expansive Low-Country ritual seen today, in terms of participants, audience, the length of ritual, the amount of drumming patterns and the ritualistic procedures. It is held outdoors and consists of around twenty performers in total. The *devol maḍuva* often accommodates younger artists and thus serves as a useful training ground. The ritual usually commences around 7 pm and concludes sometime between 10 am to midday, the next day. The ritual primarily honours the goddess Pattini, who is one of the most popular deities among the Sinhala Buddhists and Hindus of the east coast of Sri Lanka. The content of the ritual is believed to be based on one of the greatest poems in Tamil literature, the *Cilappatikāram* which is composed during A.D. 500-800.\(^{67}\) Two other deities are worshipped with high priority: Devol (the deity after whom the ritual is named) and Vāhala (also known as Daḍimunḍa or Daḍimunḍa Vāhala Bandāra). The ritual also accommodates the major Gods in the traditional Sinhala Buddhist pantheon such as the Gods of Four Warrants and the Twelve Gods. Among the demons referenced are those of the Three Watches and the Garā demon. As with the other rituals, there are a number of mythical stories attached to the supernatural beings of the *devol maḍuva*, and as a background to the ritual and to enhance the appreciation of the segments, I mention a number of them below. The deities Pattini, Devol and Vāhala, which have segments of the ritual named after them, are considered first, followed by the legend of the Garā demon.

1.5.1 Legends of the supernatural beings

One version of the story of Pattini, describes her as a sincere, truthful and trustworthy woman from a family of affluent merchants. She is married to Kōvalan, the son of a...

\(^{67}\) Obeyesekere, 3. Also confirmed by Sandhoris Jayantha.
merchant prince. Kōvalan indulged in a life of luxury and pleasure and leaves Pattini to live with Matavi, an attractive dancer. Having exhausted all his resources living with Matavi, he returns to Pattini, who welcomes her husband without any anger or ill-will. They both set off to the city of Madurai with the intention of starting a new life. While in Madurai, Pattini gives her husband one of her gold ankle bracelets. Kōvalan is tricked by a goldsmith, to whom he was trying to sell the anklet, and he gets wrongly accused of a theft that is reported from the queen’s palace. Kōvalan is beheaded under the King’s order without trial. Pattini having heard of the tragedy, rushes to the King in fury, accuses the King of murdering her husband, and destroys the King and his city by tearing her left breast, which sets the city on fire.68

The myth of Devol describes the Devol prince, who is the son of Sri Rāmasıṃhe from the city of Kuduppūri in North India, as a trouble-maker causing havoc for his people. The King loses his patience, and deports the prince along with his six brothers on ships. The ships get caught in a storm near Sri Lanka and the princes plead to the God of the seas (muhudu manimēkalā) to save them, and attach a gemstone to the top of the mast as an offering. They are denied entry to the island at several ports by various powerful Gods, among which, is the goddess Pattini, who creates seven mountains of fire. The princes cool the fires and are given a warrant from Pattini, and are able to finally land in the southern coastal town of Sīnigama. The princes in return agree to wipe out illness and suffering in the country. This ability of Devol to control fire is symbolized in the fire-walking segment of the ritual. The segment of planting the Torch of Time (known as the

which is a decorated areca pole with a torch affixed on top, symbolizes the Devol story. Decorative chains are attached to the Torch of Time to represent the shape of a ship and the Torch of Time is intended to protect the community from untimely disasters.  

The myth surrounding Vāhala refers to the time of Buddha’s enlightenment. Māra, or death, (personified as Vasavat, a divine being such as Satan in Christianity) accompanied by a host of demons and female temptresses try to stop Buddha’s enlightenment. All the deities who were present to witness the auspicious occasion fled in fear, except Vāhala, who stood by to defend the Buddha. Thus Vāhala is considered to be the “controller of demons.” Vāhala’s fearless and courageous nature is enacted in the segment of the ritual dedicated to the deity.

One of demons referenced in the ritual is the Garā yakā, and a segment dedicated to him appears near the end of the devol maḍuva. Garā literally means ‘devour’, and is believed to be a greedy demon that eats up everything, including polluted substances. The myth of Garā refers to a prince called Dala Kumāra (Tusk Prince) who desires his own sister, Giri Dēvi. Dala Kumāra’s father, acting on prior predictions made by astrologers, separates the prince from his sister at an early age. The attempts fail, and the prince kidnaps his sister, taking her away to the forests, and lives with her. One day, while her brother is

---

69 K. N. O. Dharmadhasa, Gammada (Colombo: Department of Cultural Affairs, 1996) 11. Also confirmed by Sandhoris Jayantha
70 Obeyesekere, 112.
71 Obeyesekere, 212-214.
away, Giri Dēvi runs away and hangs herself from forest vines. In his rage, Dala Kumāra creates destruction and havoc.\textsuperscript{72}

1.5.2 Origin of the devol maḍuva ritual

The origin of the devol maḍuva ritual is described in the tale of the Tamil King Sēraman of India in which the King is woken up by an antelope during his sleep. Angered by the event, the King orders his ministers to hunt this animal. The animal, after being chased, dies in front of the King’s palace in anger, and wishes an equal suffering upon the King in the future. Days pass, and in a routine bath at the lotus pool, the King spots a beautiful lotus standing out from the rest. Mesmerized by its beauty, the King breaks it from its stem and smells its pleasant aroma. He afterwards spots a number of small frogs. The King imagines that one of these went into his head and through this paranoia, develops a serious headache. One of the frogs is a reincarnation of the animal which died in the King’s palace. The headache could not be cured despite spending considerable wealth on medical experts. In consulting the Brahmins about a dream he had, in which a beautiful woman travels in the air, the King is advised to stage a ritual as an offering for the woman who is recognized as the goddess Pattini. The King as recommended, sails to Sri Lanka and holds the first devol maḍuva ritual at a place called Ruvanvėlle. The ritual cures the King’s headache. As a gesture of paying respect to the goddess who cured her King, the Queen offers a bough, crafted out of sandalwood, and wishes for prosperity on the island. This bough, known as the bisō kapa is commemorated in one of the segments of the ritual.

\textsuperscript{72} Obeyesekere, 184.
1.5.3 Ritual preparation

In preparation for the ritual, it is customary to plant a pole (known as a *kapa*), usually cut out from an areca tree (*areca catechu*), near the ritual grounds a few weeks prior to the set date of the ritual. This action is known as *kap situvīma*, and it is a promise made to the Gods to carry out a *devol maḍuva* ritual on an arranged date. Cancellations from this point onwards are extremely rare. During the same time, if a *milla* tree (*vitex altissima*) is not available near the ritual grounds, a branch of a *milla* tree is planted, in order to be used in the ritual. Unlike the other rituals studied in this thesis, the preparation of the ritual area itself usually begins at least a day prior to the event and involves a team of people headed by the *kottoruvā* (official ritual assistant). The preparation consists of building the ritual hut, numerous altars including the ceremonial archway (described in Chapter 4), various ritual objects which are featured in different segments, and performance tools for the dancers such as flame-torches.

1.5.4 Ritual structure

Analysis and description of the drumming of the ritual are presented in Chapter 4 under the following segments. In describing the segments, references are made to several rituals of *devol maḍuva* held during the period of this study.

1. Cutting of the *milla* tree (*milla kāpîma*)
2. Bringing in the oil to commence the ceremony (*tel vādavāvīma*)
3. Dancers seek blessings and permission to perform in the ritual (*yahan dākma*)
4. Cleansing and incensing the ritual arena
5. Offering of fire to the demons (*pidēni dīma*)
6. Planting the Torch of Time (*kālapandama*)

7. Dance segment for the demons of the Evening Watch (*sândā samayama*)

8. Planting of the Queen’s Bough (*bisō kapa*)

9. Ritual of the ceremonial archway (*toran yāgaya*)

10. Segment dedicated to the Pattini deity

11. Performance of ceremonial drumming (*magul bera*)

12. *Telme*, the dance in honour of the Twelve Gods

13. Segment dedicated to the deity Vāhala

14. The dance of Devol and fire trampling

15. The dance of the Garā demon

16. Thanksgiving and sending the deities back to their abodes (*deviyanta pin dīma*)

**1.6 Buddhist ceremonies**

Low-Country drumming is currently experienced in several other Buddhist ceremonies outside the rituals mentioned above. I have identified a number of such contexts: the *bera pōya hēvisi* performance, the *pirit* chanting ceremony and Buddhist temple processions known as *perahāra*. The following paragraphs explain the typical drumming content of these contexts and show how the content of most events duplicate the above rituals, with the exception of the *bera pōya hēvisi* performance, which is extremely rare today.⁷³

*Bera pōya hēvisi* is recognized as a specific type of *hēvisi* performance which is considered an offering of sound to the Buddha (*śabdha pūjā*).⁷⁴ The *hēvisi* ensemble uses

---

⁷³ I witnessed one performance during my fieldwork periods.

⁷⁴ A. G. S. Kariyawasam, 15. Also see: Seneviratna, 53.
three instruments named *davula*, *tammaṭṭama* and *horanāva* (see section 2.2 for descriptions of these instruments). This ensemble is seen performing in temples, either on a daily basis or on every full moon (*pōya* day), and for *pirit* ceremonies and processions. The Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic in Kandy is one place where the *hēvisi* performance can be observed daily.\(^{75}\) The *bera pōya hēvisi* is a specialized form of this event, where an ensemble of drummers playing the *yak beraya* join the performance.\(^{76}\) In the performance held during this study, the two ensembles alternated, playing for around an hour at a time. Performances are carried out during the day and last from around 8 am to 5 pm. The absence of dance in this performance makes it distinctly Buddhist compared to the rituals discussed in previous sections. It is also seen as an opportunity for the drummers to display their technical skills. The content of the drumming mainly stems from the *magul bera* piece and its extensions known as *hatara vaṭṭam* and *hat vaṭṭam* which are rarely heard today. A senior drummer introduces one of these extension patterns and each drummer in the ensemble follows individually, playing the same pattern. Certain patterns played between these sections by the whole group act as bridges. Some of these patterns were performed during the *magul bera* performance of the *devol maḍuva* ritual until only a few years ago.\(^{77}\) However, today even excerpts of these patterns are rarely performed at concerts. Consequently, I consider the drumming of *bera pōya hēvisi* beyond the parameters of this study.

\(^{75}\) Rajapakse gives a detailed account of the drumming at this temple in her book. Waidyawathie Rajapakse, *Daladhā Māligāva Saha Tūrya vādanaya [The Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic and Its Percussion Music]* (Colombo: S. Godage and Brothers, 2002).

\(^{76}\) The version of this performance in the Up-Country uses the *gāta beraya* instead of the *yak beraya*.

\(^{77}\) Prasantha revealed this when he mentioned an incident where he and Jayantha were playing these patterns at a *devol maḍuva* ritual. Also, I have viewed footage of a *devol maḍuva* ritual held on 16 December 1994, which has these performances. This recording is archived at the C. de. S. Kulatillake Research and Information Centre, at the University of Visual and Performing Arts in Colombo.
Pirit, the Buddhist chanting ceremony is on occasion accompanied by the above hēvisi ensemble. The ceremony is most commonly conducted by Buddhist monks, however it is also carried out by lay people (this version is called gihi pirit). Conducting this version of the ceremony served as one of the means of income for Sandōris Jayantha, during the latter years of his life when I first met him. Although I was not able to witness a gihi pirit first hand, Jayantha informed me that it is customary to play the magul bera and the pūjā bera at the start and end of the ceremony respectively.

Perahāra or processions organized by Buddhist temples consist of a large variety of performances, and one of these is usually a Low-Country ensemble. This ensemble would commonly play short repetitive patterns, mostly excerpts of those played in the rituals, in order to enable the performers to keep moving on the path of the procession. Dancers’ costumes are often the ones they wear for the telme segment of the devol maḍuva ritual.

1.7 Secular performance settings

The yak beraya is used in several secular performance contexts: Buddhist weddings (not considered a sacred event), parades that welcome politicians and other important personnel, performances aimed at tourists, popular music recordings and the concert stage. Low-Country style performers are rarely hired for Buddhist weddings, as most wedding performances involve Up-Country style ensembles. Similar to perahāra, the wedding performances are limited to a number of repetitive patterns which are excerpts of those played in the rituals. In addition, a shortened version of the magul bera piece is

---

78 A. G. S. Kariyawasam, 35. Kariyawasam’s description of the pirit ceremony is of a rarely seen fully fledged event.
played to accompany the lighting of the oil lamp. Parades that welcome politicians and other important personnel involve similar performances to weddings. The country’s best performers, who often find employment under the State Dance Ensemble, which operates as part of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, most regularly perform in these contexts.

Performances aimed at tourists intend to exhibit national heritage and pride, however, as Fleisher notes, these performances see the Low-Country drumming being compromised. “Many of those [younger drummers] who do decide to inherit the trade have discovered that one way to reconcile a desire to maintain their family tradition with the conflicting desire for socioeconomic self-betterment is through the capitalist commodification and commercialization of their skills: the big tourist hotels on the coast now regularly hire practitioners to perform modified versions of the dances and ceremonies to help augment the tourist trade. Of course, this development has ironically stripped the tradition of its ‘tradition.’”

The yak beraya also appears as an accompanying instrument in Sinhala popular music recordings. The genres vary from Sinhala light popular music to contemporary percussion music ensembles. A number of examples are listed:

1) W.D. Amaradeva – in the song entitled satara varam devi maharaja.  
2) Roahan Baddage – in songs entitled mal sarā and dāsaman malak vagē. 
3) Pradeep Sampath – in a song written about the telme dance.

4) Gunadasa Kapuge – in the song entitled *biṁbarak senega.*

5) Sunil Edirisinghe – in the song entitled *lencina mage nangiyē.*

In most of these settings, the use of the *yak beraya* is confined to short repetitive patterns. Therefore, the expressive nature of the Low-Country drumming in these settings is compromised. Aside from the popular music recordings, very few recordings of traditional music exist, and one recording entitled, ‘Rhythms of Sri Lankan drums,’ produced by Piyasara Shilapdhipathi is a notable example. However, this recording does not include any drumming music of Low-Country rituals.

The concert stage, which includes concerts of traditional music, most often showcase performances which are short excerpts of various rituals that are arranged and limited to a few minutes. A number of such concerts staged within the last several years are listed below:

1) *Santuru Rangālaya* – John De Silva Theatre, Colombo on 2 Sept 2002. This concert was a tribute to Sandhoris Jayantha. Some of the items included in the programme were: *vadiṅga patuna,* which is a dance from the Matara sub-tradition, a short item from the *bali* ritual, a *magul bera* performance and a performance of the *telme* dance.

---

82 N.a., Metacafe: Low Country Folk Dance of Sri Lanka, 25 July 2009
84 Sunil Edirisinghe, *Saṅdakadapahana.* CD. Singlanka. No number.
2) *Raṅga bera mihira* – Lionel Wendt Theatre, Colombo on 07 April 2009. This was a concert organized by Prasantha. The programme included one item of a masked dance performance from the Low-country tradition.

3) The Art of Chitrasena – Lionel Wendt Theatre, 21-23 July 2006. This was a memorial concert for the well known dancer, Chitrasena. The programme included a short performance of the masked play known as *kōlam* from the Matara sub-tradition.

4) Ceremony which granted Sri Lankan residency for Chinese expatriates - Banadaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall, 2 April 2009. This concert included two Low-country dance items: a *telme* dance and a masked dance.

**1.8 Chapter summary**

The use of the *yak beraya* is currently seen in a number of performance settings. In secular performance settings, the Low-Country performances of traditional music concerts are limited to several minutes. In addition, the use of the *yak beraya* in popular music, compromises the expressive nature of the drumming. The drumming content of Buddhist ceremonies, by and large, consists of excerpts of performances included in the rituals. Therefore, the ritual remains to be the most suitable context to study Low-Country drumming. The public ritual provides the largest body of drumming patterns and this means that a thorough knowledge of the basics of Low-Country drumming can be gained by studying this larger *devol maḍuva* ritual.
Chapter 2

The Yak Beraya

The yak beraya is the primary instrument representing the Low-Country tradition of drumming. It is among a number of other musical instruments also discussed in this chapter that are representative of traditional Sinhala music. The purpose of this chapter is to place the yak beraya in the context of these other instruments and focus on its present construction process, an area currently overlooked by Sinhala literature which tends to favour ancient instrument making practices. General instrument making processes are also notably absent from English writing scholars. A summary of past practices of instrument making, in company with references as to how musicians perceive their instrument is included. This provides insights into the relationship between the instrument and the musician, while a brief comment on tuning and maintenance of the yak beraya concludes this chapter.

2.1 Instrument classification

The great chronicle Mahavaṃsa was written in the sixth century and is considered to be a primal record of Sri Lankan history. It classifies the traditional musical instruments of the island under a system recognized as pañcatūrya nāda (pañca meaning fivefold). Of the

---

88 Rajapakse, 34-39, Seneviratna, 50.
five categories, the first two refer to drums: ātata (single-headed drums) and vitata (double-headed drums). The third category ātatavitata is interpreted as string instruments or stringed drums, while the final two, susira and ghana refer to aerophones and idiophones respectively. More recently however, Sedaraman suggested the classifications are better understood as: ātata (instruments played by hand), vitata (instruments played with a stick) and ātatavitata (instruments played with a stick and hand). Acknowledging the widely accepted older representations, all drums introduced in this chapter can be placed in the vitata category of instruments.

2.2 Commonly used traditional instruments

Currently, aside from the yak beraya, the most commonly used drums are: the gāṭa beraya, davula, tammatṭama, uḍḍakkiya and rabāna. All except the latter two drums are played suspended from the player’s waist. The gāṭa beraya (figure 2) represents the Up-Country tradition and is a double headed, barrel shaped, laced (with W lacing) membranophone played with hands on both sides. The two drumheads are covered with different skins. Cow skin is used for the drumhead which produces a bass sound while the other side is covered with monkey or goat skins. The gāṭa beraya is never covered with cow intestines as implied by Sheeran. This latter side produces the most characteristic sound unique to this drum; a sharp high-pitched sound recognized as the jim sound. The

standard length of the drum measures at 27 inches (69 cm),\textsuperscript{93} 8 inches (20 cm) in diameter at the drumheads, and around 9.5 to 10.5 inches (24 to 27 cm) in diameter at the widest part of the body\textsuperscript{94}. As Sheeran points out, attempts to consolidate an Up-Country tradition during the independence struggle at the turn of the century resulted in many characteristics of the region, including its instruments being considered as the purest and oldest of Sinhala culture.\textsuperscript{95} Consequently, there exists a misconception by the general public that the \textit{gāṭa beraya} is the most important of the Sri Lankan drums. This is yet another example where the Low-Country tradition is marginalized even within the genre of traditional music.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{gata_beraya.png}
\caption{\textit{Gāṭa beraya} (representing the Up-Country tradition)}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{93} Inches are used as a scale of measure as this is what is used by current drum makers.

\textsuperscript{94} Sheeran states the \textit{gāṭa beraya} is “roughly 86 centimeters [34 inches] in diameter at the widest part.” Sheeran, \textit{The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music}, 964. This measurement is most likely to be the circumference of the widest part of the drum.

\textsuperscript{95} Sheeran, \textit{The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music}, 964.
The *davula* (figure 3), representing the Sabragamuwa, is a cylindrical shaped, laced (with Y lacing) membranophone played with a specially carved stick (*kaḍḍippuva*) on one side and using the hand on the other side. The drumheads are covered with goat skins. It measures around 15 to 17 inches (38 to 43 cm) in length and 12 to 14 inches (36 to 37 cm) in diameter at the drumheads. The *davula*’s sound does not contain a bass sound as low as the *gāṭa beraya* and the instrument’s tone is generally more piercing, especially on the side that is beaten with the stick.

![Figure 3: Davula drums (representing the Sabaragamuwa tradition)](image)

The *tammaṭṭama* (figure 4) is associated with the Buddhist temple rather than exclusively a single tradition. It consists of a pair of vessel-shaped kettle drums, laced (with W lacing), membranophones, bound together and played using a pair of specially made cane sticks (*kaḍḍippu*, plural) with curved, circular ends. Both drums measure around 8 to 9 inches (20 to 23 cm) in height and are covered with cow hides. The smaller, higher pitched drum measures 7 to 8.5 inches (18 to 22 cm) in diameter and the larger, lower-pitched drum measures around 8.5 to 10.5 inches (22 to 27 cm) in diameter. The
combination of the *tammaṭṭama*, the *davula* as well as another instrument called the *horanāva*, which is “a conical-bore, quadruple-reed oboe”\(^96\), constitutes the *hēvisi* ensemble referred to in Chapter 1 (section 1.6).

![Figure 4: Tammaṭṭama](Image)

The two smaller hand-held drums, *uḍḍakkiya* and *rabāṇa* are most commonly heard as an accompanying percussion instrument in light popular music recordings. The *uḍḍakkiya* (figure 5) is an hour glass shaped drum with variable tension\(^97\) and the *rabāṇa* is a frame drum, with a diameter ranging from 10 to 14 inches.\(^98\)

---


In addition to the yak beraya, rituals of this research also utilize two other instruments: a conch shell (hak geđiya) and a small hand-held bell (mini geđiya). Respectively these instruments are of the susira and ghana categories within the ancient, Mahavaṃsa classification system. The hak geđiya often accompanies the magul bera (auspicious drumming) piece and is seen as symbolising an auspicious and positive atmosphere. The mini geđiya used in bali rituals is intended to create a soundscape desirable for the healing nature of the ritual.
2.3 The yak beraya

Jayantha believes that the yak beraya (literally demon drum), being the main instrument of the Low-Country, with its powerful, low and resonant timbre combined with the frequency, dynamics and vibration of the sounds, assists the communication between the ritual specialists and supernatural beings.\(^9^9\) The power of the yak beraya is not openly recognized unlike the dhol of Garhwal studied by Alter: “Notion of the dhol’s power, as codified in the Dhol sāgar and reiterated regularly at rituals … serve to reinforce Garhwalis’ beliefs in music’s power to communicate with the supernatural.”\(^1^0^0\)

![Yak beraya](image)

**Figure 7: Yak beraya (representing the Low-Country tradition)**

---

\(^9^9\) Sandhoris Jayantha, personal interview, Hokandara, Sri Lanka, 10 July 2006.

\(^1^0^0\) Andrew Alter, *Dancing with Devtās: Drums, Power and Possession in the Music of Garhwal, North India* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), 134.
The yak beraya is also known as the devol beraya (named after the ritual devol maḍuva and the god devol), ruhunu beraya (named after a historically important Sinhala kingdom of the south called Ruhunu\textsuperscript{101}), pahataraṭa beraya (Low-Country drum) and gōšaka beraya (gōšaka meaning noisy). It is a double-headed, laced (with W lacing), cylindrical-shaped membranophone, played with both the hands and strapped around the player’s waist. The preferred wood, chosen in order of preference by current drum makers for the body of the drum, is from trees with hard cores such as āhāla (golden shower tree – cassia fistula), milla (vitex altissima), kohoḿba (azadirachta indica), jack (artocarpus integrifolia) and kitul (caryota urens).\textsuperscript{102} It is preferred that the previously mentioned drums are also made with similar woods. Currently, however, lesser quality and more widely available drums are made from coconut (coco nucifera).\textsuperscript{103} Sheeran comments on this difference in wood quality: “Nowadays, because of restrictions on the felling of woods like jak, or kos, the low-country drum is usually made from coconut wood.”\textsuperscript{104}

The quality of these coconut wood drums seems acceptable for beginners’ instruments in schools as well as most instrument stores that cater for tourists. However, most professional artists do not play drums made out of this wood as they do not produce the most desirable tones.

The yak beraya measures 27 inches (69 cm) in length, similar to the gāṭa beraya. The diameter of the drumhead is around 7.5 to 9 inches (19 to 23 cm). Both the drumheads of the yak beraya are covered with cow stomach-linings, whereas the straps along the drum

\textsuperscript{101} Sheeran, The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music, 955.
\textsuperscript{102} Jinadhasa mahattaya (instrument maker), personal interview, Udugampola, Sri Lanka, 1 July 2007.
\textsuperscript{103} Jinadhasa mahattaya.
\textsuperscript{104} Sheeran, The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music, 961.
and the outer layer of skin consist of normal cowhide. Although the drum is not tuned to an exact pitch, the side played with the drummer’s stronger hand (sural taṭṭuva) is slightly thinner. Therefore, this produces a higher pitch and marginally sharper tone, compared to the other side (hai taṭṭuva) which is slightly thicker. The terms used to refer to the various parts of the yak beraya are as follows:

1. hai taṭṭuva – the thicker drumhead. Taṭṭuva means a drumhead.

2. hākma – the outer layer of skin. This is also identified as the kāpum hama.

3. bera gāṭiya – the woven ring around the edge of the drumhead.

4. kanvaraya – the woven loop that attaches the waist strap to the drum.

5. varapaṭi – the straps that connect the two drumheads along the drum.

6. bera kaṇḍa – the body of the drum.

7. boraṇḍam raṭā – decorations on the body of the drum.

8. bera lanuva – the waist strap.

9. sural taṭṭuva – thinner drumhead.

10. gāṭivāla – the circular cane rim around which the skin is tightened.

### 2.4 Traditional instrument making practices and attitudes

Bandara\(^{105}\) and Rajapakse\(^{106}\) describe the traditional instrument-making practices in connection with a number of rituals which demonstrate the sacred quality ascribed to the instrument. A number of variables were considered for the felling of a tree suitable for drum making, namely that trees grown near temples, waterfalls or trees brought down by natural causes such as lightening were preferred. Trees near cemeteries were considered

\(^{105}\) Bandara, *Udaraṭa Bera Vādana Kalāva*, 57-90.

particularly unsuitable. Once a suitable tree was chosen, the earth under the tree was cleaned, and offerings were made to the Gods to seek their permission. Verses and prayers were recited for up to seven days prior to the felling of the tree and carried out at a particular auspicious time according to astrology. During the construction of the instrument and after the body of the instrument was carved out, it was kept under flowing water for around seven days. It was then taken out to be dried in the shade. A paste of heated resin was coated on the inside of the drum, with the belief that this would protect the instrument from undesired, external, malevolent influences usually reserved for humans as discussed in Chapter 1. Colouring the body of the instrument is believed to have started during the Kandyan kingdom (1469-1815). The gāṭa beraya and the yak beraya were believed to be left uncoloured while the instruments such as davula, tammatṭama, uḍḍakkiya and rabāna were coloured with natural paints to match the colours of wall paintings in Buddhist temples, illustrating the association of the davula and tammatṭama with Buddhist ceremonies (see section 1.6) which existed during this period.

The dimensions, in units of viyat and aṅgul, of the drum are traditionally described using a system of measure that concurs with an individual’s hands. A viyat is the length from the thumb to the little finger, as the fingers are spread. An aṅgul is the length from the first joint above the palm, to the end of the index finger. The dimensions of the longer drums (i.e., yak beraya and gāṭa beraya) were traditionally measured at three viyat and three aṅgul in length, and one viyat at the diameter of the drumhead.107 Measuring the dimensions to such a scale and according to the individual for whom it was intended,

---

107 Rajapakse, Udaraṭa Tūryavādana Purāṇaya, 67.
ensured that the drum perfectly suited the musician’s body type and individualized the musician-instrument relationship.\textsuperscript{108} This close relationship is further established by commentaries that suggest making of one’s own instrument was considered to be the norm.\textsuperscript{109}

The connection between the musician and their instrument still remains individualized and pervasively strong, even in contemporary times. An older musician, M. K. Babanis from the Sabaragamuwa tradition revealed to me that he sleeps next to his *davula* that he inherited from his father, out of respect. Practices that show general respect for instruments, include musicians putting their hands together to casually worship the instrument before and after playing. A specific pattern is traditionally associated with this gesture (see section 3.8.3). I have observed Prasantha Rupathilake casually worship the instrument as a form of respect, particularly in instances where he needs to place his feet on the drum to support it to tighten the *varapāṭa* (straps along the drum). Wegner documents a similar but a more significant practice in his study of Nāykhī drumming: “an excuse *pūjā* … is still performed by some drum-makers after the completion of their work”\textsuperscript{110}, in-case the supernatural beings are offended by the action of using the feet to support the drum.

\textsuperscript{108} Kulatilaka acknowledges this in: Kulatillake, 36.
\textsuperscript{109} Rajapakse, *Udaraṭa Tūryavādana Purāṇaya*, 60.
2.5 Construction of the yak beraya

The content of this section is drawn from visits made to three instrument makers. The largest of the three workshops employs around six workers and is located in Udugampola, outside the main town of Gampaha, about 30km from the capital. The variety of instruments made in this workshop ranges from traditional Sri Lankan drums to Indian and African drums. It is possible, while visiting the workshop, to observe the complete process of instrument making. However, the other two workshops are much smaller and mostly carry out the latter stages of connecting the skins to the drums. For this they rely on bringing in the carved bodies of drums. One of these workshops is located in Mathara, a southern coastal town, and is run by two siblings. The other workshop is the smallest of the three, is based at a musician’s residence in Kottawa, an outer suburb of Colombo.

2.5.1 Preparing the body of the drum

The preparation of the body begins with cutting a suitable log to the desired length with an electric chain-saw. At the workshop in Udugampola, the standard length of a drum is 27 inches (69 cm) and the diameter of the drumheads is a choice between 7.5, 8 or 8.5 inches (19, 20 or 22 cm), unless specified otherwise by the buyer. These measurements roughly assimilate the traditional scales mentioned above in section 2.4. During the cutting process, the bark is scraped off the log with an axe (porava) before it is mounted on an electric lathe. Most of the work on the outside of the body (liyavīma), including shaping the drum and adding the finishing touches by creating decorations (boraṅdam), is then carried out on the electric lathe as well as with the use of hand-held chisels. Once the
outer shape is completed, the inside of the drum is carved out until the thickness of the shell of the body is around half an inch. This is done first using a long, hand-held chisel known as the älavanguva, followed by small hand-held ones.

![Carving the inside of a drum with a long-chisel](image)

Figure 8: Carving the inside of a drum with a long-chisel

The inside surface is chiselled with marks since a rough surface is believed to create the desired amount of resonance. The inside of the drum is generally coated with an anti-insect varnish as a treatment for the wood. This purpose would have also been served with the coating of resin in the traditional instrument making process. The body of the drum is sometimes wrapped with a number of metal rings, usually made of aluminium, with the intention of protecting the wood from splitting or even as a decoration. The edges of the drum and the outer body are smoothed out using sandpaper and the drum is varnished.
2.5.2 Preparation of drum skins

The following photographs show the process of drying animal skins to be used as drumheads at the workshop in Mathara. Cow and goat skins require preparation by instrument makers. However, cow stomach-linings are purchased from butchers, ready to be used.
The fleshy side of the skin is coated with ash, in order to stop it from decomposing. The skin is then spread on a flat surface, thoroughly stretched, with the use of pegs or nails. The stretched skin is then dried under the sun. Once the skin is dried to satisfaction, the hair on the outside of the skin is scraped off with a sharp knife.

The varapaṭa (straps along the body of the drum) are cut to around quarter of an inch in width from dried cowhide. These straps hold the two outer skins of the drum together and are also used for tuning. They are cut along the outside edge of the skin, working inwards in a spiral shape, in order to get the maximum length from individual pieces. The straps are then stretched out by tying the ends to a couple of poles or trees. A slightly thinner version of varapaṭa is recognized as venivara and is used to construct the woven ring around the edge of the drumhead (bera gātiya). Given that these straps are intended to be smooth, extra attention is paid to smoothing them out by scraping a knife at points where rough edges are found.

Figure 11: Venivara (thin straps) stretched and smoothed
2.5.3 Preparation of the hākma (the outer layer of skin)

The hākma covers the playing skin around the edge of each drumhead and holds the varapaṭi in place, allowing the drum to be tuned. The construction of the hākma is described in three stages. The first stage entails that a piece of cowhide is soaked in water and placed on one end of the drum. A piece of rope is then wrapped over the skin, around the body of the drum, in order to temporarily hold the skin in place. These two steps are repeated at the other end of the drum. Sixteen holes are pierced towards the outer edge of the cowhide, below the point where the rope is tied, on both sides, and a rope is woven through the holes and pulled tight so it stretches both skins. The skins are then left to dry. This first stage is referred to as boruvara ädiña or ‘fake strapping’.

It is during the second stage that once the dried hide is moulded into the shape of the drum, then the ropes are unwrapped and taken off. At the workshop in Udugampola, the bera gātiya (the woven ring around the edge of the drumhead) is made without detaching the fake strapping (figure 15). Alternatively, as is done at the workshop in Kottawa, the
inside of each surface is cut out in a circular shape, leaving a gap of around half an inch from the edge of the drum. The excess hide along the body of the drum is also taken off, leaving around two inches of hide from the edge of the drum.

![Figure 13: The hākma with excess hide cut off](image)

Sixteen holes of equal distance, known as illam are then marked and cut on the skin on the edge of the drumhead.

![Figure 14: Illam (sixteen holes around the edge of the hākma)](image)

The final stage of the hākma entails weaving the bera gāṭiya (woven ring around the edge) onto it while it is placed on the drum. The weaving involves the insertion of two lines of venivara (the thin straps) through the sixteen holes, over and under, around the
häkma. Making a tightly packed, smooth bera gāṭiya is believed to be one of the most challenging tasks in the construction of the drum. It is desirable not to join pieces of venivara to create the bera gāṭiya as this would make it rough and in turn, hard on the musician’s hands when playing the drum.

![Figure 15: Weaving the bera gāṭiya (rim around the edge of drumhead)](image)

2.5.4 Placing the drumheads (bera taṭṭu)

The häkma is temporarily taken off and kept aside while the drum is dressed with the playing skin. Prior to attaching the playing skins, a bamboo ring known as the gāṭivāla is placed around the edge of the drum. The ring is wrapped with a strip of material to provide a better grip and tight fit.
Following this, the chosen cow stomach-lining is soaked in water and gently scrubbed. It is then laid over the drumhead, with the rough side of the skin facing up. A piece of string is used to tightly bind the skin to the drum immediately below the gāṭivāla. The string is wrapped once around the drum at which point the skin is stretched further by pulling the excess skin, whilst wrapping it with the rest of the string.

The excess skin is cut off using a knife and the hākma is placed back on top of the drumhead.
2.5.5 Attaching kanvaraya, varapaṭi and the waist-strap

When both drum heads are placed on the drum and the two hākma are secured, a loop that is used to attach the waist strap to the drum (kanvaraya) is woven through two holes made on the edge of each hākma. The next process is to attach the varapaṭi (strap along the body of the drum) to the two hākma. The strap is inserted through the bera gātiya between the points of illam (sixteen holes used to weave the bera gātiya). A knot is then tied at the starting point and the straps are woven over and under the bera gātiya right around the drum. The varapaṭi are then stretched to tune the drumheads as required. The waist-strap (bera lanuva) is usually synthetic and is sometimes placed in a casing of brightly coloured material in order to make it more attractive and comfortable on the musician’s waist. The bera lanuva is measured to be roughly three times the length of the drum. The strap is inserted through the two loops of the drum (kanvaraya) and secured with a knot on the end of the hai tattuva. This enables the musician to instantly recognize the two sides of the drum when preparing to play the yak beraya. One particular method
of tying a knot, enabling the musician to hold the drum around the waist, is illustrated in Appendix 3.

2.6 Tuning and maintenance of the yak beraya

The tuning of the drum is generally done using the palm of the hand. The drumhead is tightened by hitting the *bera gatiya* on top, towards the body of the drum, and it is loosened by hitting the *bera gatiya* on the side, away from the drum. The musicians from the Mathara sub-tradition use a wedge cut out of wood in the shape of a traditional door stopper. This tool is used because the *hakma* of the *yak beraya* in the Mathara sub-tradition is too thick and tight to be adjusted using the palm. Using the wedge, the drum is tightened in a similar manner as mentioned above, and the drumhead is loosened by placing the thinner side of the wedge under the *hakma* on the side of the drum. The breaking of the *yak beraya* drumheads is fairly common due to the thin nature of the cow stomach-lining. In order to replace a drumhead, it is recommended that only three to four loops of *varapati* are removed, so that the *hakma* can be detached from the drum. When pulling the *varapati*, it is recommended that the *varapati* that comes under the *bera gatiya* is pulled, as pulling *varapati* that comes over the *bera gatiya* risks breaking and damaging the *bera gatiya*. Removing the *hakma* may also pull out the old drumhead if it is stuck to it. In such an event, soaking the area in some water assists in separating the two segments without causing any damage to the *hakma*. The new drumhead is replaced and the *varapati* are tightened after the *hakma* is then placed back on the drum. A less time-consuming approach which enlivens the sound of the drum, particularly if the drumheads are not torn, is to slightly loosen the *hakma* and dampen the drumheads by
spreading a few drops of water on the drumheads. This process is usually carried out in the afternoon of a performance night, and is considered as good as replacing drumheads. The substitution of skin parts of the drum is extremely rare. However, on one occasion during my fieldwork, I witnessed a drum in which plastic straps were used as varapaṭi. Sandhoris Jayantha, who was invited to play this instrument, expressed his dissatisfaction with it, as the plastic straps did not hold the tuning of the drum as well as the original skin straps.

![Image of a drum with plastic straps](image)

Figure 19: Plastic straps used for varapaṭi

### 2.7 Chapter summary

Little has changed in the process of Sri Lankan drum making in comparison with traditional instrument making methods, though the use of electric tools has considerably sped up the stages of preparing the body of the drum. The abandoning of construction rituals associated with making instruments in contemporary practice, as well as the use of standard measurements, has somewhat lessened the sacred quality of the drum. Nevertheless, musicians still maintain their respect for the instrument and the drum is perceived by older artists as a tool that assists communication with the supernatural,
despite it still not being explicitly stated in the tradition. The mass production of drums has meant that the general quality of the instruments, which are available to the public, is generally poor. However, it is possible to purchase high-quality instruments made to suit individual requirements, provided that the instrument maker is aware that the buyer requires a professional instrument.
Chapter 3

Theory of Low-Country Drumming

A comprehensive theory of Low-Country drumming that addresses concepts such as timing, tempo, drumming techniques and patterns remains unwritten. It has been said that artists’ views about timing and rhythm are associated with Hindu mythology: “the drum had its birth from the mouth of Brahma, timing from his teeth, and song from his tongue.” Others have argued that the contemporary drumming of the Low-Country cannot be examined within any existing framework, “including South Indian drum theory.” There is a Sinhala drum theory known as the *tit* system, and Seneviratna implies that this system can be applied to all Sinhala drumming traditions. I believe that the *tit* system is unsuitable for analysis of Low-Country drumming. Kulatillake confirms my view where he states: “The low country tradition associated with the style of *ruhunu* or *yak bera* totally discards the *tit* system. It is also the fact that the *tit* system has been formulated on the style of the *gäta bera.*” This chapter elucidates a theory of drumming of the Low-Country in its own terms, whilst taking some practical aspects of playing into account. It is organized under a number of sections: drumming patterns, *akṣara* (drum syllables), basic drum strokes, advanced techniques, relationship between *akṣara* and technique, tempo and performance.

---

111 Seneviratna, 51.
113 The *tit* system is based on the tradition of Up-Country drumming and it primarily recognizes different meters and measures that are considered to be a framework for Up-Country drumming patterns. A detailed study of the *tit* system appears in Wijewardana, 46-125.
114 “The timing of the Sinhalese drum beats is known as the *tit* system.” Seneviratna, 51.
115 Kulatillake, 39.
3.1 Drumming Patterns

Scholars consider that the Sinhala rhythm system consists of 216 fundamental drumming patterns. One accepted interpretation is that the fundamental patterns “consist of 32 Tālams or rhythmic time measures, 64 Saudam or varieties of drum beats in salutation to Gods, 21 Sural or elaborations, 27 Poḍi Sural or rhythmic subdivisions, 15 Vandamānam or narratives to be played and sung as offering[s] to Buddha, 16 Dākum At or drum beat pieces played in the presence of a God or the King in the form of salutation, 40 Aḍapada or forty half beats.” No single artist interviewed during this study claimed to know all these fundamental patterns. However, each knew a handful of these patterns that are played during specific segments of the rituals practised today. Presumably the fundamental patterns that are no longer remembered are associated with rituals that are now extinct. Thus the entire gamut of fundamental patterns is of little relevance to the contemporary drumming of the Low-Country.

Artists in the tradition recognize the drumming patterns simply as pada or patterns, regardless of whether the patterns are short (i.e., several beats in length) or long (i.e., lasts several minutes). The vocabulary of patterns in the Low-Country is common to both drummers and dancers of the tradition. The majority of the patterns played in the three rituals of this thesis are presented in Appendix 1 and are examined within the body of the text in Chapters 5-7. The patterns are categorized as follows:

---


117 Seneviratna, 52.
a) Short repetitive patterns that accompany vocal recitations and dance (sarala pada, literary means ‘simple patterns’).

b) Decorative patterns with torches (pañdam pada).

c) Sets of patterns specifically associated with segments in devol maḍuva (Pattini, Devol, Garā, sāndā samayama, telme, kavi tāla, bisō kapa and kālapañdama).

d) Solo drumming patterns (magul bera and pūjā bera).

e) Patterns that accompany salutations to deities (vāṇḍum at).

f) Patterns where dancers go around in a circle (vaṭṭam pada).

g) Patterns performed to seek blessings from the deities and bless the audience (yahan dākma and āvaḍana padē).

h) Patterns played for cleansing ritual objects and ritual space (kotal padē, dummala padē, pidēni pada).

i) Introductory patterns (ārabhaka pada).

j) The patterns of the bali ritual (these will include a number of repetitive patterns and longer patterns performed as transitions, labelled bali patterns and transition patterns respectively).

k) The patterns of the tovil ritual (these include one repetitive pattern, one yak panti and a number of patterns specific to the series of seven dances or the hat pada pelapāliya).
3.2 Akṣara (drum syllables)

Any theory of Low-Country drumming requires the introduction of the concept of the akṣara. The term akṣara literally means ‘letter’ or ‘syllable’, and in Low-Country drumming it refers to the smallest rhythmical unit. Akṣara are vocalized as syllables that “represent a kind of oral notation” of Low-Country drumming, as musicians internalize and pass down drumming patterns by memorizing their akṣara. Each akṣara must be interpreted in the context of the drumming pattern and it generally refers to a combination of stroke, timing and timbre. Other drumming cultures use similar systems as suggested by musicologist, Robert Brown: "In highly developed practices of drumming, such as are found in Africa and India, the performer tends to symbolize his rhythmic patterns of sound in terms of vocal syllables." For example, in Indian music, the vocal syllables are called bol in the North and solkaṭṭu in the South.

Seneviratna claims that Sinhala drumming consists of five basic syllables, “tat, jit, ton, nan, ta” which he collectively terms pañcatāla. However, both drummers and dancers in the Low-Country tradition recognize only four primary akṣara called tat, dit, toṃ and naṃ; the following analysis adapts this latter framework. The four primary akṣara when singled out are produced by four distinct strokes on the yak beraya. These strokes

---

120 Ellingson, 431.
121 Ellingson, 431.
123 This is consistent with the four basic syllables (tha, dhi, thom, na) identified in the theory of the south Indian mridangam in V.P.K Sundaram, *The Art of Drumming*, trans. V. Murugan, 1st ed. (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1988) 7.
are often referred by the ṛṣāra they produce when played in this way, i.e. tat stroke, dit stroke, toṃ stroke and nam stroke. This study collectively refers to these four strokes as the ‘four basic strokes.’

3.3 Four basic strokes of tat, dit, toṃ, nam

The tat and toṃ strokes are produced from the hai taṭṭuva (thicker drumhead). This side of the drum is played by the drummer’s weaker hand. Dit and nam are produced from the sural taṭṭuva (thinner drumhead) which is played by the drummer’s stronger hand. Tat is produced by slapping the skin of the drum, using all fingers except the thumb, on the middle of the drumhead. The thumb is kept out of the way and the palm rests on the edge of the drum at the point of contact. The stroke is played with relaxed fingers allowing the finger tips to spring off the drumhead after contact. Nam is produced in a similar manner but on the opposite drumhead. Because of this tat and nam sound very similar. When playing tat, experienced drummers often slightly muffle the opposite drumhead with two fingertips, in order to better differentiate the two sounds.
Figure 20: Four basic strokes that produce the four basic akṣara

Tom is played using all fingers, except the thumb, towards the edge of the drum. Considered to be the strongest sound of the drum, toṃ is a bass sound which is allowed to resonate. Dit too is played in a similar fashion on the edge of the drum, however, is a weaker, muffled sound produced by resting the fingers on the skin after playing the stroke.

3.4 Flick-thumb technique

Aside from these four primary akṣara, there are many other akṣara that make up the drumming patterns of the Low-Country. Another essential drumming technique combines two strokes to produce sequences of some of these other akṣara. As artists do not identify this technique using any particular name, it will be labelled for this analysis as the ‘flick-thumb’ technique. The ‘flick-thumb’ technique is not strongly associated with any particular pair of akṣara, but instead it is used to produce several combinations of akṣara.
The flick-thumb technique is played using the drummer’s stronger hand on the *sural taṭṭuva*. Its first stroke is played using the first four fingers, with a flicking motion, towards the body, turning the palm upwards while rolling the wrist. The second is played by the thumb, away from the body, while rotating the wrist the opposite way, turning the palm downwards. The wrist is kept very relaxed and used as a pivot point for the rotation.

### 3.5 Advanced hand techniques

The advanced techniques presented in this section are not taught explicitly in the tradition. They are implicitly learnt and only seen to be used by the most experienced drummers. The techniques highlight various subtle sounds of the drum and are most extensively heard in the drumming of *bali* rituals, and feature to a lesser extent in the *devol maḍuva* ritual. Six of the advanced techniques are identified through this study. These have been named for the purpose of discussion and described below.

1) Finger-flick: This stroke is usually played on the *sural taṭṭuva* and it is a flick using the index and middle fingers, played towards the edge of the drum using the player’s stronger hand. Similar to when playing the basic strokes, the thumb is kept out of the way and rested on the *bera gātiya* (edge of the drumhead).
2) Light stroke on the edge of the drumhead: This stroke is played lightly with all fingers, except the thumb, towards the edge of the drum. It is played on the *sural tattuva* and is identified by the artists as a *kannilama* (filler-stroke) when it is used in patterns played at slow tempos. However, when used in playing repetitive patterns to accompany singing, it often acts as a quieter replacement for the *tat* stroke. This technique produces a similar sound to the finger-flick mentioned above, but they are used at different points when drumming. The light stroke on the edge is generally used at points where the strokes that follow are relatively simple, as fast sub-divisions are easier to play after the finger-flick.\textsuperscript{124}

\textsuperscript{124} Prasantha Rupathilake, personal interview, Pannipitiya, Sri Lanka, 21 July 2008.
3) Pitch bending using one finger: This is one of two techniques used to manipulate and bend the pitch of a sound produced by an aksara. It is played either on the same or opposite side of the drum immediately after a stroke is played. The technique is mostly used to manipulate the pitch of tom and dit strokes using either the ring or middle finger rubbed along the surface of the drum.
4) Pitch bending using the palm: The second technique of pitch bending involves rubbing the whole palm along the drumhead immediately after an *akṣara* is produced. It is used in a similar context as the previous technique. However, this technique is preferred when playing at higher volumes and faster tempos.

![Figure 25: Advanced technique 4 (pitch bending using the palm)](image)

5) Flick-forefinger technique: This technique is a quieter version of the flick-thumb technique, and the only difference is that the second stroke of this technique uses the forefinger instead of the thumb. The rolling of the wrists is done in the same manner as playing the flick-thumb technique. This technique is chosen to play rolls and quicker note subdivisions when accompanying vocal recitations that need to be heard. Drummers prefer the flick-thumb technique when playing at higher volumes or accompanying solely the dance, as it allows the drummer to produce a stronger, heavier roll compared to the flick-forefinger technique.
6) Taps: Subtle taps on the opposite drumhead to which a stroke is played add texture to a pattern. These taps are comparable to ‘flams’ in the Western percussion terminology, and are mostly only seen used in the indoor rituals.

As the above six techniques are not directly taught, no strict rules are associated with their use. Experienced performers tend to develop their own subtle unique individual styles and freely choose the exact techniques according to their preference.
3.6 The relationship between akṣara and technique

It is important to recognize that a number of different akṣara can be produced by the same stroke. Also, some akṣara themselves can be produced by different strokes, depending on features such as phrase placement, rhythmic pattern, duration and timbre. For example, the akṣara ta can be produced by the tat stroke or the naṃ stroke. The tat stroke can also be used to produce the akṣara ga, ka and dā. The table below shows various akṣara that can be produced by the four basic strokes. Emphasized are akṣara that can be produced by more than one stroke.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stroke</th>
<th>Akṣara</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tat</td>
<td>gat, tat, ta, ga, dā, ka, da, ṭa, ki</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dit</td>
<td>di, dit, ti, tit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>toṃ</td>
<td>guṃ, gu, di</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naṃ</td>
<td>ta, tat, tam, hiṃ, de, ňda, ňdaṃ, ṭa, ka</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Examples of akṣara produced by the four basic strokes

This seemingly complex relationship between akṣara and technique is not explicitly addressed in the tradition, and as a result, understanding it remains a significant challenge faced by the novice who approaches the learning of the yak beraya. Students often take a number of years in close association with an experienced teacher until they completely understand this relationship between akṣara and technique. I discuss this akṣara-technique relationship through a framework I propose below and label ‘akṣara-cells.’
There are two akṣara-cells consisting of two akṣara each, from which a variety of akṣara sequences can be built. Sequences grown from the same cell may have different rhythms and durations, however they are produced using similar techniques. Most sequences of akṣara that appear in drumming patterns can be identified as representations of one of these two akṣara-cells. Furthermore, a set of rules on the techniques used to produce akṣara in one akṣara-cell can be applied to all akṣara sequences that are representative of this akṣara-cell. The concept of akṣara-cells is illustrated below with reference to these two cells. For the purpose of this analysis I have named these ‘cell-1’ and ‘cell-2’ respectively.

3.6.1 Cell-1

Cell-1, in its simplest form consists of two strokes, a tat stroke followed by a nam stroke. Examples of akṣara sequences that are produced by cell-1 in its basic form are: ga ta, gat tat, gat taṁ, ga tat, ga taṁ, gat ta. The differences between most of these are in terms of rhythm. The sequences ending with tat and taṁ are similar, the only difference being that taṁ is allowed to ring whereas tat is muffled using fingertips as described in section 3.3. The particular instance of the cell-1, ga taṁ, is also known as dā him and these two are referred to interchangeably by practitioners in some contexts.

![Figure 28: Cell-1 akṣara sequences in simplest form](image)

Cell-1 can be expanded in four ways to create a number of other akṣara sequences and these four scenarios are listed below:
1) **An akṣara added to the start of cell-1:** In such an instance, the added akṣara can be one of ga, de or di. The akṣara ga in this event is produced by another tat stroke. De is produced by a nam stroke and di is produced with a dit stroke. Examples: gat ga ta, de ga ta, de ga tat and di ga taman. At times the last akṣara of the cell is omitted if the akṣara is a de. Example: de ga.

![Figure 29: Cell-1 akṣara sequences with akṣara added to the start](image)

2) **Akṣara added to the middle of cell-1:** This is most often di or ti akṣara which in this context are produced by the dit stroke. A ga may be inserted after the dit stroke and this is produced by a gat stroke. Examples: ga di ta, ga ti ta, ga dit ta, ga tit ta, ga di ga ta, ga di ga taman.

![Figure 30: Cell-1 akṣara sequences with akṣara added to the middle](image)

3) **An akṣara added to the end of cell-1:** If the added akṣara is produced with a nam stroke it is referred to by ta. It is a ka if produced with a tat stroke, and ku if produced by a toṃ stroke. Examples: ga tam taman, dā hiṃ taman, ga taman ka, ga taman ku.
4) **Akṣara added to both middle and end of cell-1**: The added akṣara follow the same principles presented in 2) and 3) above. Example: ga di ta ka, ga ti ta ka, ga di ta ku, ga ti ta ku.

![Figure 32: Cell-1 akṣara sequences with akṣara added to middle and end](image)

**3.6.2 Cell-2**

Cell-2 in its basic form is a toṃ stroke followed by a nam stroke. Examples of sequences of akṣara in their basic form are: gu ŋda, guṃ ŋdam, gu ŋdat, gu ŋda.

![Figure 33: Cell-2 akṣara sequences in their simplest form](image)

Like cell-1, cell-2 can be expanded in five ways to create other sequences of akṣara:
1) **An akṣara added to the start of cell-2:** This is one of three akṣara: gu, de or di, produced by a toṃ stroke, a nam stroke or a dit stroke respectively. Examples: gu

   gu ŋda, gu gu ŋdam, de gu ŋda, de gu ŋdam, de gu ŋdat, di gu ŋda. Similar to the cell-1, at times the last akṣara of the cell is omitted if the added akṣara is a de. Example: de gu.

   ![Figure 34: Cell-2 akṣara sequences with akṣara added to the start](image)

2) **An akṣara added to the end of cell-2:** If the akṣara added to the end of the cell is produced by a tat stroke it is a ka. If it is produced by a toṃ stroke it is a ku, and a ta if produced with a nam stroke. Examples: gu ŋda ka, gu ŋda ku, gu ŋdam ta.

   ![Figure 35: Cell-2 akṣara sequences with akṣara added to the end](image)

3) **Akṣara added to the middle of cell-2:** If a dit stroke is added to the middle of the gum-ṅda cell, the Ńda akṣara becomes a ta. Examples: gu ŋdi ta, gu ŋdit ta. These groups of akṣara also exist without the ta at the end. Examples: gu ŋdi, gu ŋdit.

   ![Figure 36: Cell-2 akṣara sequences with akṣara added to the middle](image)
4) **Aksara added to both middle and end of cell-2:** The added aksara follow the same principles in 2) and 3) above. Examples: *gu ŋdi ta ka, gu ŋdi ta ku.*

![Figure 37: Cell-2 aksara sequences with aksara added to the middle and end](image)

5) **The first aksara of the cell-2 is modified:** Artists in the tradition recognize that a *tom* stroke played in unison with a *nam* stroke produces a *dom* aksara. The two same strokes if played a fraction after each other produce a *dim*. In this form of the cell-2, where the first *aksara* is either a *dom* or a *dim*, the second *aksara*, produced by a *nam*, is a *ta*. Examples: *dom ta, dim ta*. The *aksara* sequence *dom ta* can be expanded by adding a *ka* or a *ku* to the end, produced by a *tat* or *tom* stroke respectively. Examples: *dom ta ka, dom ta ku.*

![Figure 38: Cell-2 aksara sequences with the first aksara modified](image)

The two *aksara*-cells (cell-1 and cell-2) provide an account for the techniques that produce most of the *aksara* sequences in the Low-Country drumming vocabulary. The remaining six types of *aksara* sequences presented below, cannot be linked with an *aksara*-cell as they are specialized and contain *aksara* produced by the flick-thumb technique.
3.6.3 Akṣara sequences produced by the flick-thumb technique

These sequences of akṣara, unlike the ones that represent akṣara-cells, are always played using the same strokes and rhythm. The flick-thumb is technically two strokes but in the first two examples is referred to by one akṣara.

1) tari, diri

![Figure 39: Flick-thumb technique akṣara sequences 1](image)

2) tarda, tardaka

![Figure 40: Flick-thumb technique akṣara sequences 2](image)

3) Ta ka ṭa and di ka ṭa. These two sequences of akṣara are also known as ga hi di and gu hi di respectively.

![Figure 41: Flick-thumb technique akṣara group 3](image)

4) ta ri ki ṭa, gu hi di ga di ri ki ṭa, ki ṭi ta ka

![Figure 42: Flick-thumb technique akṣara group 4](image)
5) One of the four basic strokes followed by ka ṯa. I.e. tat ka ṯa, dit ka ṯa, toṃ ka ṯa, nam ka ṯa

![Figure 43: Flick-thumb technique akṣara group 5](image)

6) Roll or surala. Examples: re, rim, ru ŋda, ru ŋdam

![Figure 44: Flick-thumb technique akṣara group 6](image)

Rolls are played by the repetition of a fast triplet, starting with the flick-thumb technique followed by a toṃ stroke. Subtle differences exist between the different rolls. In re, the last bass stroke is muffled to end the roll. In rim, a tat stroke is played immediately after the last bass stroke. In ru ŋda and ru ŋdam, the rolls end with a ringing toṃ stroke.

### 3.7 Tempo

Artists in the tradition identify three general tempos known as bara, haraṁba and kaḍinam and these are broadly translated as slow, medium and fast. However, considering the literal meanings of the terms reveals that the tempos primarily reflect expression and aesthetic qualities of the drumming rather than specific ranges of metronomic speeds. Bara literally translates as ‘heavy’, haraṁba (more formally saraṁba) as ‘rudiments’ or ‘exercises’, and kaḍinam as ‘quick and lively’. Drumming patterns played at the bara tempo are recognized as having the most expressive power, as
the drumming at this tempo often does not consist of a regular beat. The *haraṁba* is the most commonly used tempo. Drumming at the *kaḍinam* tempo sometimes finds the dancers in a state of trance.

### 3.8 Performance

This section presents three practical aspects drawn from my hands-on learning of the drumming as well as discussions and observation made during the fieldwork of this study. These issues are posture, relaxation and rudimentary exercises.

#### 3.8.1 Posture

Three common positions are adapted by the drummers when playing the *yak beraya*. At the *devol maḍuva* ritual it is most common to see the drummers perform standing. The *bali* ritual sees the drummer sitting cross-legged on the floor, whereas in the *tovil* both these positions are adopted during the ritual. In most informal settings such as for teaching and practising, drummers sit on a chair. When standing, the drum is secured by a strap around the waist as discussed in Chapter 3. Drummers usually tilt the drum so that the *sural taṭṭuva* (drumhead played by the stronger hand) is slightly lower than the *hai taṭṭuva* (drumhead played by the weaker hand). This is in order to relax the shoulder and hand that plays the flick-thumb technique. The musician’s leg on the side of the *hai taṭṭuva* is often placed slightly more forward than the other, and the knee bent to a small degree, in order to rest the drum on the forward thigh muscle and relieve stress on the

---

back when playing for long periods. When sitting, the drum is usually left unsecured and resting on the floor.

### 3.8.2 Relaxation

I discussed the concept of relaxation informally with Sandhoris Jayantha who said that being relaxed in the whole upper body, including shoulders, arms and chest while drumming, is imperative in order to drum expressively, as well as enhancing the groove and physically being able to play for long periods. Jayantha recognizes that at this ultimate state of performing, i.e. being extremely relaxed, the drum becomes a part of his body and the physical energy felt from the sound of his own drumming and the connection with dancer he accompanies, allows him to continually play for many hours without feeling any physical pain or stress on his body. The concept of relaxation while playing is not recognized by a single term in Low-Country drumming, simply because a suitable term in Sinhala does not exist. The closest term in the language is sāhālluvīma, but this was felt by Sandhoris Jayantha as being too unrelated to the context of drumming.

### 3.8.3 Rudimentary exercises (saramba)

Sandhoris Jayantha explains that “communicating expressively on the yak beraya can be only successfully achieved by first developing the physical skills of playing the instrument.” The traditional method of training requires the practice of twelve

---

126 Jayantha understands this term to mean ‘lighten.’ He feels it is too strongly associated with mental relaxation and mediation: Sandhoris Jayatha, personal interview, Hokandara, Sri Lanka, 15 May 2007.
127 Quoted in: Goonetileke, 26.
rudiments or *saraṁba*. Prior to this, the student is taught how to produce the four basic strokes correctly. For instance, as mentioned in section 3.3, a perfect *tom* stroke consists of a deep bass sound which is allowed to resonate and is considered impure if it is mixed with any undesirable high-pitched sounds. In contrast *tat* and *nap* should not contain any dominating bass sounds, as these strokes are intended to be high-pitched, snappy sounds. During the early stages of my drumming lessons, emphasis was placed on producing these pure sounds. Suggestions were made to adjust the hand positions at instances where an undesired sound was produced.

Jayantha described that when he was a student, his teacher expected him to be highly competent with the twelve *saraṁba* exercises before he was taught any drumming patterns. However, during his time as a teacher, Jayantha adapted his own teaching method, where he introduced certain *saraṁba* exercises, intermittently with other patterns, to his students. He claimed that this was more suitable for today’s environment where novice students are unable to dedicate unlimited time to practice, compared with his own period of being a student. Yet another learning environment was identified during this study. Susantha Rupathilake, a highly competent drummer, admitted that he did not go through any of the *saraṁba* exercises, rather he learnt purely through imitation of patterns. Thus the *saraṁba* exercises should be viewed only as one way of learning Low-Country drumming.
The twelve *saraḿba* (Appendix 6, track 1) as learnt by Jayantha are as follows:

1) [Image: Figure 45: Saraḿba 1]

This first *saraḿba* serves as a foundation for the roll (*surala*). By practising this rudiment, the student develops the fluent rotational wrist movement of the flick-thumb technique. The clarity, strength and the speed of a drummer’s *surala* often provides a good measurement of the drummer’s standard of technique.

2) [Image: Figure 46: Saraḿba 2]

The second *saraḿba* is an *akṣara* sequence that appears often in longer drumming patterns (this was identified under section 3.6.3).

3) [Image: Figure 47: Saraḿba 3]

---

128 The term *surala* also refers to a type of pattern.
The third *saraṁba* reemphasizes the importance of being able to produce the four basic strokes correctly.

4)  

![Figure 48: Saraṁba 4](image)

The fourth *saraṁba* introduces the *akṣara* sequence *ki ū ta ka*, which is played alternatively with the four basic strokes.

5)  

![Figure 49: Saraṁba 5](image)

The fifth *saraṁba* is a combination of rudiments 2 and 4 above.

6)  

![Figure 50: Saraṁba 6](image)
The sixth saraṅba purely addresses the use of the flick-thumb technique, as seen by the last akṣara sequence of the exercise (ki ṭi ki ṭi ta ka) which rarely appears in the drumming outside of this saraṅba.

7)

![Figure 51: Saraṅba 7](image)

The seventh saraṅba introduces two akṣara sequences, ta ri and di gu űdam and presents these in an exercise that is played with each of the four basic strokes. The desired sound of tari is only achieved when it is played rushed.

8)

![Figure 52: Saraṅba 8](image)
The eighth rudiment is an extension of the previous Saràba. This exercise introduces the student to play in a pulse of seven (i.e., four beats followed by three). Both the student and the teacher are often unaware that the pattern is in seven, as they think in terms of akṣara sequences.

9)

Figure 53: Saràba 9

The ninth Saràba introduces the akṣara groups de ga and de gu. These are combined with two common akṣara sequences produced by the flick-thumb technique.

10)

Figure 54: Saràba 10

The tenth Saràba contains the akṣara sequences, targa and dom. Similar to targa in the seventh Saràba, targa is required to be played rushed. As mentioned in section 3.6.2, dom is produced by toṁ and naṁ strokes played in unison.
This *saraṁba* introduces the roll (*surala*) in the context of a pattern among other *akṣara* sequences played in previous rudiments. The student is encouraged to lengthen the duration of the roll and it is accepted that this duration varies each time.

The final *saraṁba* is one of the most challenging of the twelve. The exercise is made up from *akṣara* sequences that are of varying lengths. The student is encouraged to bend the pitch of the *ńdi akṣara* of the exercise using advanced technique 3.

The practice of *saraṁba* is also associated with a *namaskāra pada* (worship pattern) which accompanies the act of worshiping the drum as a sign of respect to the instrument.
and the art form (mentioned in section 2.4). Traditionally, the following pattern is played three times at the end of a practice session.

![Worship pattern](image)

**Figure 57: Worship pattern played at the end of a practice session**

### 3. 9 Chapter summary

An अक्षरा (drum syllable) represents the smallest metrical unit of rhythm in Low-Country drumming. Each अक्षरा must be interpreted in the context of the drumming pattern and generally refers to a combination of stroke, timing and timbre. The drumming patterns are made up of many sequences of अक्षरा, produced using a limited number of techniques on the yak beraya. Four basic strokes and the ‘flick-thumb’ technique, produce all the अक्षरा sequences seen in the drumming patterns. Several advanced techniques exist, however they are only used in embellishment and do not produce separate अक्षरा sequences. The limited number of techniques used to produce the अक्षरा sequences entails that a number of different अक्षरा can be produced by the same stroke. Also particular अक्षरा themselves can be produced using different strokes. This complex relationship between technique and अक्षरा is not explicitly recognized in the tradition, and hence generally not understood by the novice for a number of years. This relationship is explored in this chapter through a concept proposed as ‘अक्षरा-cells.’

Low-Country artists recognize three general tempos bara, haramba and kadinam as slow, medium and fast. However, the meaning of the terms reveals that the tempos also refer to
certain aesthetic qualities of the drumming over specific speeds. Relaxation, when drumming is not a concept explicitly recognized in the tradition. However, it is considered imperative to perform with expression. Experienced artists recognize that communication through drumming is possible once the necessary physical skills are developed. One way to develop these skills is the practice of the twelve rudimentary exercises (saramba).
Chapter 4
The Devol Maḍuva Ritual

Because the devol maḍuva is the most expansive ritual of the Low-Country, the study of its drumming provides a strong basis for understanding the vocabulary of patterns and significant features of Low-Country drumming. Creating a comprehensive collection of drumming patterns in a ritual which is performed for well over twelve hours is a demanding task. This explains why the music of the ritual has remained undocumented. This chapter responds to this challenge by presenting selective patterns of the devol maḍuva ritual. A more extensive collection of the patterns appears in Appendix 1. While providing an appreciation of the range of vocabulary, the transcription of drumming patterns within this chapter, aims to identify particular features of timing that contribute towards the expressive nature of the drumming. As the ritual is held outdoors, the dynamics of drumming remain relatively constant and loud throughout. The fact that there is a larger group of drummers, whose range of experience differs, means that improvisation in this ritual is minimal. The analysis of the drumming patterns will show common compositional features and structures and also how the different patterns relate to each other. The analysis will also highlight the relationship of drumming to other performance elements of dance and singing. The performance descriptions of some segments of the ritual reveal hidden characteristics of the music and the change that is occurring in the ritual.

The different segments of the ritual are organized under the structure presented in the ritual background in Chapter 1. The initial segments will describe detailed explanations
of repetitive and short patterns in order to familiarize the reader with the norms of this ritual’s performance. As details of ritualistic procedures, ritual texts and performance costumes could constitute papers on their own, descriptions of these aspects are given only in order to provide the context for drumming patterns being discussed.

The delivery style of vocal recitations of text in the ritual is mentioned in order to show the connection between the voice and drumming. In the ritual performance, the drummers and the dancers generally sing in a ‘call and response’ style, alternating the lines of a verse between each other. The different singing styles are identified and presented in the table below, which follows ethnomusicologist Andrew Alter’s presentation of the different vocal delivery styles of musicians from Garhwal. This table will also be used as a basis for documenting the singing style of the other two rituals discussed in this thesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocal delivery style</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Drums</th>
<th>Dance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pitched Recitation A (PR-A)</td>
<td>text set to the musical metre of a repetitive pattern</td>
<td>3-4 semitones</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>most occasions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitched Recitation B (PR-B)</td>
<td>lines of verses are short, these are lengthened to fit the musical metre of a repetitive pattern, recognized as keṭi kavi</td>
<td>3-4 semitones</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitched Recitation C (PR-C)</td>
<td>no text, melody is sung using sounds of tā and nā, set to musical metre of repetitive pattern, identified as tānam singing</td>
<td>3-4 semitones</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitched Recitation D (PR-D)</td>
<td>no text, melody is sung using sounds of tā and nā, set to longer patterns with an irregular beat</td>
<td>3-4 semitones</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitched Recitation E (PR-E)</td>
<td>not set to a metrical metre, texts generally are in honour of the Three Refuges</td>
<td>3-4 semitones</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

129 An extensive textual analysis of a variant of this ritual is carried out by Obeyesekere.
130 Alter, 183.
Table 2: Vocal delivery styles in Low-Country rituals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>text set to musical metre of repetitive pattern, only occurs in <em>bali</em> ritual</th>
<th>10 semitones</th>
<th>yes</th>
<th>yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pitched Recitation F (PR-F)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpitched Recitation A (UPR-A)</td>
<td>Unmetrical. Text recited with attack, only in offerings in <em>tovil</em> and <em>bali</em> rituals</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1 The ritual space

A brief overview of the physical set up of the ritual space of the *devol maḍuva* is illustrated in the following diagram prior to the presentation of drumming in each segment. The earth inside the ritual space is covered in a thin layer of sand in order to create a suitable performing surface for the dancers.

![Ritual space diagram](image)

Figure 58: Ritual space of *devol maḍuva*

The ceremonial archway (*Pattini torana*), being the most elaborate ritual structure is dedicated to the goddess Pattini. At the centre of the Pattini *torana* is an altar presented to the deity. This altar remains covered with a white curtain until it is unveiled during the *toran yāgaya* segment of the ritual.
The two altars directly opposite the main altar are dedicated to the deities Devol and Vāhala. A number of smaller altars are built along the boundary of the ritual space. The deities for whom these are offered vary among rituals, whereas some function purely as altars in which offerings of flowers and lights are placed. The altar on the side of the ceremonial archway is the main flower-couch and this is at times offered to the Gods of Four Warrants. The roof which covers the area of the archway is designed such that no support poles are needed at the centre of the ritual space.

4.2 Cutting of the milla tree (milla kāpīma)

A rite performed either at the start of the ritual or just prior to the Devol segment, depending on the head priest’s preference, is the cutting of the milla tree. It is “an independent rite performed for the purpose of collecting the wood for the fire-walking
ritual”\textsuperscript{131} in the dance of Devol segment which appears later in the ritual. The segment lasts around half an hour and involves one dancer, one drummer, the koṭṭoruvā (official ritual assistant) and an additional chanter. The performers are inside the ritual space initially, as the dancer begins the recitation of verses (PR-A) with an introductory pattern labelled ārambhaka pada-A (Appendix 6, tracks 2-3). All dance performances commence with an introductory pattern. The same patterns also function as endings for dance performances. Several of these exist and some, such as this one, appear in many segments. Others however, are only specific to one or two segments. Introductory patterns, in particular their endings, are usually played quickly and this makes the beat of the pattern illusive.

Another feature of introductory patterns is the irregular nature of the pulse. This applies for most drumming patterns in the Low-Country drumming repertoire and it occurs because Low-Country drummers feel the pulse in terms of akṣara. This is what most distinguishes the concept of rhythm in Low-Country drumming from Western drumming, where the pulse is generally regarded as regular. Feeling the pulse in term of akṣara is a primary characteristic of Low-Country drumming which contributes towards its expressive nature. Because of this, ‘pulse’ in this thesis can be considered as synonymous with ‘akṣara’.

\textsuperscript{131} Obeyesekere, 140.
The verses that follow describe the Devol princes’ journey to Sri Lanka and are accompanied by sarala pada-D (Appendix 6, track 4). This short repetitive pattern consists of a regular beat and appears often in most of the segments of the ritual. Sarala pada-D reveals a balance between aksara that produce high and low sounds. For example, the aksara marked with the letter (A) in the first half of the pattern (transcribed below) produce deep low sounds. In contrast, aksara marked with the letter (B) in the second half, produce sounds with higher pitches. In addition, the low, resonating, sound produced by the aksara gum, at the first beat, provides a strong start to the pattern’s cycle. All these features are common to most repetitive patterns in the Low-Country drumming repertoire. The rhythmic nuances of sarala pada-D can only be transcribed approximately (for example, the timing of the aksara sequence ‘ñām gat ga ta’). This is because the drummers feel the pulse in terms of aksara, as opposed to a strictly regular sense.
The dancer leads a procession towards the *milla* tree. The procession consists of the other performers and the *koṭṭoruvā*, who walks under a canopy held up by four people. Once at the tree, the dancer places some areca flowers, a vessel of turmeric water (*kaha diyara kotala*), and an incense holder (*aṅguru kabala*), at the bottom of the tree. These objects are used throughout the ritual and are symbolic of cleansing the ritual space. Recitation of verses continues in the same style (PR-A), though in a different metre, and the drumming pattern changes to *sarala pada*-B1 (Appendix 6, track 5). Most *sarala pada* consists of a number of variations and the pattern transcribed below presents one such variation (*sarala pada*-B2).

![Figure 62: Sarala pada- B1 and Sarala pada- B2](image)

The ārambhaka pada-A is performed again to mark the end of the recitations, and is followed by short versions of the dance patterns *yahan dākma*, *kotal padē* and *dummala padē*. The *yahan dākma* seeks blessings and permission for the dancer performing the segment. The *kotal padē* is a pattern in which the dancer purifies the ritual area by spraying turmeric water from *kahadiyara kotala*. The *dummala padē* is performed while the dancer incenses the ritual area using the *aṅguru kabala*. These three patterns are explored in detail in sections 4.4 and 4.5 of this chapter.
The *milla* tree is then cut as more verses that invoke the Kurumbara demons are recited (PR-A). The drumming pattern, which accompanies these verses, is recognized as the *yādini mātraya* (invocation beat) and for analytical purposes, it is labelled *sarala pada*-E1. This pattern is followed by the *keti yādini mātraya* (short invocation beat, labeled *sarala pada*-E2) which is a variation of the previous pattern played twice as fast. The end of this section of recitations is marked with *ārambhaka pada*-G3. The drums momentarily stop as the dancer throws handfuls of resin powder into the air over the torch, igniting flames of fire as offerings for the Kurumbara demons. This rite known as *pidēni dīma* also appears right throughout the ritual and will be explored in section 4.6.

The performers, including the *koṭṭoruvā*, carrying the tree cuttings, walk back to the ritual space with the drummer playing *sarala pada*-B2. Once in the ritual space, the *koṭṭoruvā* places the cuttings in an altar as the dancer recites more verses in the same style as before (PR-A) to *sarala pada*-B3 and *sarala pada*-B4, which are more variations of *sarala pada*-B1 shown above. The segment concludes with the pattern which started the segment (*ārambhaka pada*-A), followed by a blessing from the dancer, wishing people prosperity; “āyuḥōvēvā!” meaning, “may you live long!” This is accompanied on the drums by the *āvaḍana padē* (blessing pattern). Blessings in this manner are made at the end of most segments of the ritual.

### 4.3 Bringing in the oil to commence the ceremony (*tel vāḍavavēma*)

This ritual segment lasts roughly an hour and is considered to be the official opening of the *devol maḍuva* ritual. It is characterized by the rite of the *koṭṭoruvā* auspiciously

---

132 These demons are viewed as the servants of god Devol. Obeyesekere, 68.
133 This is a characteristic *sarala pada* of the Low-Country and is explored under the *yahan dākma* in section 5.4.
bringing in the container of oil into the ritual space, in order to light the oil lamps that are placed in the ritual altars. A senior dancer begins the segment with an introductory pattern (ārambhaka pada-C) which is performed with the dança (stick) of Vāhala, in front the deity’s altar. The pattern that follows is identified as a vāṇḍum ata, which means ‘worshipping hand’, and it is performed as a salutation to supernatural beings; the deity Vāhala in this instance. The intention of saluting Vāhala is to clear the ritual space of any demons, as Vāhala is considered the controller of demons. The pattern performed is labeled vāṇḍum ata-A (Appendix 6, track 6) for the purpose of this analysis. The dancer, when performing these types of patterns, makes a gesture of worship, first using each hand, followed by both hands, as an outward display of salutation. The structure of these vāṇḍum ata patterns reflects this sequence of hand worship. As shown in vāṇḍum ata-A below, phrases 1-3 decrease in length and each phrase is repeated twice to accommodate the worship by each hand of the dancer. In phrase 4, the dancer uses both his hands in the worshiping gesture. The technical aksara sequence ‘gat di ri ki ṭa’ in phrase 4, is generally played in a rushed manner and this makes the beat illusive.
The structure of this *väňdum ata* pattern, shown below, features the foreshortening of phrases. This structure is also common to several other longer patterns in the Low-Country drumming vocabulary. Recognizing such structures has enabled musicians to memorize the patterns of the tradition. Jayantha confirmed this view, when he stated that “once you memorize a few patterns, it is easier to remember the rest.”\(^{134}\)

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase 1</th>
<th>(-X) length (repeated twice, thrice in some occasions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phrase 2</td>
<td>(-X/2) length (repeated twice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrase 3</td>
<td>(-X/4) length (repeated twice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phrase 4</td>
<td>(-X) length or longer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

The koṭṭoruvā enters the ritual space under a white canopy held by four people similar to the previous segment. He wears a mouth mask and a white turban on his head on which he holds the container of oil. The costumes symbolize the purity and the auspiciousness of the occasion and this is also enhanced by the blowing of the conch, as mentioned in the instruments’ chapter.\textsuperscript{135} The koṭṭoruvā encircles the ritual space and this movement is accompanied on the drums with a type of pattern known as vaṭṭam pada, meaning ‘patterns to go around.’ These patterns are repetitive but often consist of a string of short aksara sequences, which make the beat illusive, and also the start and the end points of the pattern unidentifiable. This feature makes vaṭṭam pada distinctive from sarala pada that accompany vocal recitations. The pattern played during this instance, labelled vaṭṭam pada-A (Appendix 6, track 7), is transcribed and felt in four beats.

After circling for a number of times, the koṭṭoruvā stands still and this cues the start of vocal recitations for the Gods of Four Warrants (PR-A). This is opened with an introductory pattern (labeled ārambhaka pada-E) specific to this segment, performed by a senior dancer. The above three events i.e., the encircling of the koṭṭoruvā, ārambhaka pada-E and vocal recitations are repeated three times. Repetitive drumming patterns that accompany the recitations move through a range of metres (sarala pada-A, B, G and C) throughout the three sections. During these sections of recitations, certain drum embellishments (known as alankāra) of the sarala pada energize the performance. These

\textsuperscript{135} Confirmed by Obeyesekere, 74.
embellishments are usually fixed, and therefore will be labelled as ‘set-embellishments’ for the purpose of analysis. The dancers, who usually sing while moving on the spot during the sarala pada, dance more steps during these set-embellishments.

An example of sarala pada-A and its set-embellishment is transcribed below in figure 67 (Appendix 6, track 8). Sarala pada-A consists of an ‘embedded pattern’ in seven beats (figure 66). The pattern is termed ‘embedded’ because this is a layer of rhythm that is felt within sarala pada-A. However, it is also not always stated in sarala pada-A and thus should be considered to be underneath the surface beats of the pattern. To clarify, it is only the beats (labelled B and D) of sarala pada-A that state this embedded pattern. Even though, the other two beats (labelled A and C) do not explicitly state this, these beats also fit over it, i.e., it is only the beat marked with an (x) on the embedded pattern that is left out of these two beats (A and C). This embedded pattern also appears in other drumming patterns played at a slow tempo (also discussed with kavi tāla in section 4.10).

![Figure 66: Embedded pattern in seven beats](image)

Artists of the tradition are often unaware of the above embedded pattern as it is engrained in their practice. This was revealed to me when Prasanth Rupathilake counted the pattern above as ‘one two three four.’ He also emphasized ‘one’ when counting this pattern. The emphasis on ‘one’ reveals that artists have a good sense of the duration of this entire embedded pattern. This allows them embellish freely using different grouping
of notes which do not fit into the embedded pattern. The groupings of notes of six and eight in the set-embellishment of *sarala pada*-A (shaded in grey) are examples of these instances.

![Diagram of set-embellishment]

**Figure 67: Sarala pada-A**

The roll at the beginning of the above set-embellishment cues the dancer to begin, thus on repetition the roll is often replaced with a rhythm similar to the rest of the embellishment. As the exact duration of the roll changes each time, it can only be notated approximately.

Drummers strive to finish the roll on a slap stroke which lands closest to the beat. This is a feature of Low-Country drumming which makes the beat illusive, and in turn contributes towards the free and expressive nature of the drumming.

The vocal recitations conclude with *ārambhaka pada*-A. The head priest respectfully takes the container of oil from the *koṭṭoruvā* and, as in the *milla kāpīma* segment, blesses the audience with the *āvaḍana padē*. With the container against his forehead, the dancer performs the *ārambhaka pada*-C in front of all altars in the ritual space. The pattern is also initially played in brief in front of all the altars. Following this, it is performed in full
in front of the main flower-couch. Once at the altar, the dancer signals to the drummers that he is ready to perform the pattern, by stepping the *aṅṣara guṇ dāhin*.

The performers take a brief break while the head priest and the ritual organizers light the oil lamps in the altars. Two more offerings are considered part of this segment: offering of betel leaves (*dalumura pūjāva*) and offering of flowers (*mal pūjāva*) to the Gods. Two trays of betel and flowers being offered are symbolically purified by spraying turmeric water from *kahadiyara kotala* and incensed using the *aṅguru kabala* (the two ritual objects mentioned in the previous segment), with the *kotal padē* and *dummala padē*. The offerings are then placed on the altars during a section of vocal recitations (PR-A) accompanied by the drumming of *sarala pada-G* and B1.

### 4.4 Dancers seek blessings and permission to perform in the ritual (*yahan dākma*)

The segment of *yahan dākma* is around half an hour in length and it marks the entry of all the dancers performing in the *devol maḍuva* into the ritual arena. Dancers perform this pattern with the intention of ensuring permission to perform and receive blessings from the Gods, who are believed to be resting in their dedicated altars during the ritual. Artists of the tradition recognize that the *yahan dākma* consists of three movements (*vattama*) which are dedicated to the Three Refuges. Short versions of this pattern are performed in other segments of the ritual. However, in this *yahan dākma* segment the pattern is performed in its entirety. For the purpose of analysis, each *vattama* is labeled as
consisting of three sections, one distinct section and two others that are common to all three movements (figure 68). When artists refer to a vaṭṭama of the yahan dākma, they generally refer to one of these distinct sections.

![Figure 68: Basic structure of yahan dākma](image)

The tempo of the pattern gradually increases throughout the three movements. The artists of the tradition describe section A of the first vaṭṭama as being in the bara (slow, heavy) tempo. The drumming and dancing of the bara tempo is considered to be most expressive (mentioned in section 3.7). The dancer at this tempo is given the authority to dictate the timing to a certain extent. This results in an irregularity of the beat, in addition to the irregularity of the pulse, which results from feeling the pulse in terms of aḵsara. The irregular beat is considered as enhancing the expressiveness of the performance. Collectively, these features mean that patterns in bara can only be transcribed approximately. In order to provide a forward momentum to the pattern, drummers accompany the dancer by using kannilam or filler-strokes (introduced in section 3.5, advanced hand techniques), played lightly to the edge of the drum. Kannilam also help to roughly mark out an underlying tempo, even if the beat and the pulse are irregular, and fill the silences between the main aḵsara of the pattern. When performed by a group of drummers, kannilam can sound cluttered due to the heterophonic nature of the playing, i.e., the kannilam strokes played by different drummers often land on different points. However, I suggest that these kannilam sounds contribute towards the expressiveness of Low-Country drumming. The first vaṭṭama (section A) of the yahan dākma transcribed
below (Appendix 6, tracks 9-10), marks out the points where kannilam are played. Generally, at these points drummers play two or three consecutive kannilam strokes. The position marked with ‘A’ is where the dancer performs the most expressive body movements. The drumming here varies according to the performer, however the phrases are similar to the line ‘guñ da ga di ta ga ta’. The roll at the beginning of the pattern is lengthened according to the dancer’s preference.

Section B of the yahan däkma is in five beats and it consists of drumming embellishments. The playing of this particular style of embellishments will be discussed in the context of the bisô kapa segment (section 4.9). Section C is a vāṇdum ata (worship pattern; explained in tel vādavāvīma), labelled vāṇdum ata-B, which is specific to the yahan däkma pattern. This vāṇdum ata also conforms to the structure in figure 64, which identified the feature of foreshortening. The third vaṭṭama (section E) consists of a repetitive pattern, sarala pada-B3. This includes a variation identified as the gaman tālaya, which literary means, walking metre, labelled sarala pada-B4 (Appendix 6, track 11). The dance of this pattern is an energetic, simple, yet jagged, walking metre which can be considered a trademark of the Low-Country tradition. The pattern is predominantly felt in a compound duple metre and can only be transcribed roughly due to

---

**Figure 69: Yahan däkma - first vaṭṭama**

---
an extremely subtle, uneven rhythmic pulse. This unevenness is created on the one hand by the drummers, as they feel the pulse in terms of akṣara, which are often not strictly regular. For example, gat ta and ga tam, in the second half of the pattern, usually represent different rhythms. However, in this pattern, the duration of these akṣara sequences are similar. On the other hand, the momentum of the dancer can be described as polyrhythmic, consisting of a ‘two over three’ rhythm between the hands and feet. This also complements the subtle unevenness of the pulse, which is definitive of Low-Country drumming.

![Figure 70: Sarala pada-B4 (gaman tūlaya)](image)

In addition to the above mentioned basic sections, experienced artists, when performing the yahan dākma individually, perform a short sequence of patterns as a prelude. These patterns identified as mōsam pada, are repetitive and played slowly at first, then accelerated on each repetition. This kind of acceleration is a common feature of the drumming which contributes towards its expressiveness in timing. As it also appears in paṇḍam aḍi vaṭṭam in the sūndā samayama segment (in section 4.8) it will be examined in this latter context.

### 4.5 Cleansing and incensing the ritual arena

As mentioned in milla kāpīma, artists in the Low-Country tradition associate two patterns with this segment, kotal padē and dummala padē, which are named after the two ritual
objects *kaha diyara kotala* (vessel of turmeric water) and the *aṅguru kabala* (incense holder) respectively. A dancer performing one of these patterns holds the associated ritual object during the performance, and aside from this distinction, the two patterns are musically identical. In this segment, the two patterns are performed at length, simultaneously by two dancers. One holds the *kaha diyara kotala* and the other, the *aṅguru kabala*. These two patterns are performed in shortened form at the beginning of most segments in the ritual as already mentioned in the *milla kāpīma* and *tel vādavāma*.

The basis of the *kotal padē* and *dummala padē* (Appendix 6, track 12) is a short repetitive pattern felt in the compound duple metre. At times during the performance, the tempo is increased from the marked figure and this has an effect of enlivening the performance.  

![Figure 71: Basic pattern of kotal padē and dummala padē](image)

The rest of the pattern is made up of a number of sections and unlike the *yahan dākma*, the arrangement of these sections varies slightly across different performances. The sections are cued by the dancer, which prompts the drummers to play a phrase that is recognized as an ending or *hamāre* of the above pattern (Appendix 6, track 13). Similar endings are associated with most *sarala pada* of the Low-Country vocabulary. In this instance, the *hamāre* is slowed right down and this deceleration indicates the arrival of a new section.
Figure 72: Ending (hamāre) of kotal padē basic pattern

The ending cues the performance of a longer pattern in the bara tempo, which is introduced with an additional ārambhaka pada-B. This is followed by the basic pattern of kotal padē.

Another longer pattern is of the type known as surala which consists of technical rhythms and dance steps. Performing a surala is generally considered an opportunity for an individual drummer to show his skills. Thus, during such a performance, a drummer is invited to play the pattern individually, which is then repeated for the dancers. However, in the kotal padē segment, the surala (plural, sural) is performed by the two dancers and the drummers together as a way of keeping the continuity of the performance. Three movements (vaṭṭama) of sural are associated with the kotal padē (Appendix 6, track 14). The composition of the three movements (analysed below), reveals the use of extension and repetition of phrases as a technique of developing the patterns. This feature is apparent in most sets of sural in the Low-Country drumming vocabulary.

A surala is generally performed with regular timing. However, the technical phrases such as the aksara group gu hi di ga di ri ki ṭa, in the third phrase of the patterns below, are played in a rushed manner. This in turn creates a sense of illusive, rhythmic beat, which again contributes to the expressive nature of the drumming.

---

136 Surala in this context is different to the drum roll which is identified by the same name.
Figure 73: Kotal padē first surala

Figure 74: Kotal padē second surala
The end of the *kotal padē* segment is marked similar to the *tel vādavāvīma* segment with the ārambhaka pada-C followed by blessings to the audience with the āvadana padē.

### 4.6 The offering of fire to the demons (*pidēni dīma*)

The offering of fire to the demons as mentioned in *milla kāpīma*, is demonstrated by the performer with a lit-torch igniting flames by throwing handfuls of resin powder in the air. This segment consists of the same rite though it is elaborately performed as compared to the *milla kāpīma*. The dancer performs this segment for around half an hour, and enters the ritual space and spins across the length of the arena as he performs ārambhaka pada-D (Appendix 6, track 15). This introductory drumming pattern is specifically associated with spinning and is also seen in the Vāhala segment. The roll is lengthened in
accordance with the drummer’s preference and the repeating section is played until the dancer stops spinning. Similar to other introductory patterns the ending of the phrase is played quickly.

![Figure 76: Ārambhaka pada-D](image)

The basic pattern for the segment is short and repetitive in four beats. It is simple compared to the pattern which is the basis of the kotal padē and dummala padē. During this segment, an acceleration of tempo is also used, similar to the previous segment, in order to shape the performance. This segment consists of the dancer performing a number of decorative patterns with the torches (pañdam pada), in front of the ritual altars, intermittent to the basic pattern. Two of these patterns are also played as introductory patterns (ārambhaka pada-A, F), therefore will not be labelled as separate patterns. A third pattern performed specifically with the torches, is labelled pañdam pada-A. However, this too consists of similar characteristics to introductory patterns. As seen with the tel vāḍavavīma, these patterns in front of the altars are cued by the dancer with the steps gumi dāhiṃ. The segment is concluded with ārambhaka pada-D with an additional dancer who arrives in the ritual space to take part in the next segment.

**4.7 Planting the Torch of Time (kālapaṇḍama)**

The kālapaṇḍama is one of the more significant segments of the ritual which lasts close to an hour. Artists identify one main pattern named kālapaṇḍama padē, as being specific
to this segment. The *kālapaṅdama padē* is a longer pattern danced by most of the dancers in smaller groups with vocal recitations in the style of PR-D. This recitation style is not explicitly taught in the tradition as the performer stretches the text to fit in with points of emphasis in the pattern. The pattern consists of a short prelude (*antādiya*) performed only as an introduction, prior to the initial performance of the *kālapaṅdama padē*.

The structure of the *kālapaṅdama padē* (Appendix 6, track 16) is worth exploring in detail, as the pattern is an example in which some of the drumming features in the Low-Country, mentioned up until this point, exist mutually with each other. The sections of the pattern, marked on the transcription as A, A1, A2, B, C and D are analyzed as follows:

1. Sections A, A1, A2 – These three are essentially the same section, however they contain slight differences in order to develop the performance. Section A can be considered the basic framework on which the other two sections are developed. Section A2 embellishes the phrase in Section A, marked with a dotted line on the transcription. Section A1 differs from A2 at the start of the phrase. The start of section A1 (*dāhiṃ guṇda guṇda*) marked with a (y) on the transcription also doubles as the end of Section D, contributing towards the continuity of the pattern. The starting phrase of section A1 is a condensed version of the start of Section A2 (*riṃ dāhiṃ ruṇda guṇda*).
2. Section B – This section is a type of pattern that is considered to be in the bara tempo. As mentioned previously (in section 4.4 in the yahan däkma), these patterns allow the dancer to be expressive. Phrases marked (x) demonstrate common phrases that drummers play to accompany these expressions. These are not considered as part of the pattern (hence notated with a cross on the note head) since they are only played in response to the dancers movements.

3. Section C – This section is a common phrase played when the drummers spin in a circle and it serves a similar purpose to ārambhaka pada-D played to accompany the spinning across the arena in the pidēni dīma segment.

4. Section D – This section, as well as serving as a bridge which connects the performance back to section A1, also acts as a transition to continue with recitations of verses after the performance of the kālapaṇḍama padē. Immediately after the final group of dancers perform this pattern drummers play the set-embellishment of sarala pada-A (figure 67) introduced in the tel vāḍavavīma segment. The timing of the rhythmic phrases of this section is similar to the groupings of sub-divisions in six, found in the set-embellishment of sarala pada-A.
Figure 77: The kālapaṇḍama padē
Following the kālapaṇḍama padē, the recitation of verses (PR-A) from the story of the Devol princes adventure, move through a number of metres similar to the tel vāḍavāvīma segment. As mentioned above the drum embellishment of sarala pada-A leads into sarala pada-A which is followed with sarala pada-E, C and B as well as their own
embellishments. The recitations end with a long ending (known as an *irrattiya*) which features the structure of foreshortening explored in figure 64 of section 4.3. This pattern is only performed partially in contemporary *devol maḍuva* rituals. In response to this Prasantha Rupathilake stated that “abandoning segments of patterns in this way demonstrates how performers do not understand some of the basic structures of patterns in the Low-Country tradition. The appreciation of the structures is what has made the patterns survive in musician’s memories for generations. The breaking down of these structures would mean that the patterns have less chance of surviving for the next generation of musicians.”\(^{137}\)

The performances of the *kālapaṇḍama* segment ends with the usual blessings with the āvadana padē. To conclude the segment, a senior *kapu mahattaya* oversees the erecting of the Torch of Time, which is a decorated areca pole, at the centre along the boundary of the Devol altar. As mentioned in the ritual background, decorative coconut-leaf chains are attached to the nearby altars to symbolize the ship of Devol.

### 4.8 Dance segment for the demons of the Evening Watch (*sāndā samayama*)

The Evening Watch is dedicated to Kurumbara demons\(^ {138}\) mentioned in the *milla käpīma* segment. This performance sees offerings of fire made to the Kurumbara demons in a similar way to the *pidēni dīma* segment. However, it is more elaborate and lasts for

---


\(^{138}\) Obeyesekere, 109.
around one hour, with four dancers performing, dressed in red costumes, resulting as entertainment which is highly popular among audiences.

The first part of the segment consists of no new musical material, as the basis of the drumming is the same as in *pidēni dīma*. In addition to the introductory pattern *ārambhaka pada*-D, already seen performed in *pidēni dīma*, vocal recitations (PR-A) which invite the demons of the Evening Watch, accompany *sarala pada*-D, B and C. All of these patterns were introduced in previous segments, except *sarala pada*-C. Transcribed below, *sarala pada*-C (Appendix 6, track 17) is a common pattern felt in four beats.

![Figure 78: Sarala pada-C](image)

The remainder of the segment consists of a number of patterns that are specific to the *sāndā samayama* segment identified as *paṇḍam ṛdi vaṭṭam* (Appendix 6, track 18). When performed, these patterns are repeated, starting at a slow tempo and accelerating throughout the repetitions. The number of repetitions is determined by the lead dancer’s cue, where he steps the *aṅkara gum dāhīṃ* as seen in previous segments. Three patterns make up the vocabulary of *paṇḍam ṛdi vaṭṭam*. Each pattern is directly developed from the previous one. The three patterns are of increasing length. The composition of the three patterns also features the use of extension and repetition, similar

---

139 A similar type of pattern known as *mōsam pada*, were identified as being a prelude to the *yahan dākma* in section 4.4.
to the three *sural* patterns of the *kotal padē* (explored in section 4.5). The third pattern transcribed below is in five beats. This pattern is used to demonstrate the use of acceleration in Low-Country drumming. This is another important feature that enhances the expressiveness of drumming in terms of timing. The two types of lines are marked for purpose of analysis and this will be explained further down.

During the initial repetitions, in which the pattern is performed slowly, drummers embellish the pattern. Following, is the first line of the pattern played with these embellishments.
In contrast, during the latter repetitions, condensed and shorter *aksara* sequences are used to accommodate the faster tempo. As the first line of the pattern demonstrates below, the modification is such that, the pattern changes to one which is in two beats.

![Figure 81: First line of *pañdam aḍi vaṭṭam*-3 performed fast](image)

In addition to the *pañdam aḍi vaṭṭam* patterns, current performances of the *sândā* *samayama* segment include a number of other patterns which accompany decorative moves of the dancers (labeled *pañdam pada*-B and C). The structure of the *pañdam pada* features a strict foreshortening of two phrases similar to the third *pañdam aḍi vaṭṭam* pattern (illustrated with two types of lines in figure 79). I argue that the simple formation of these patterns ensures that the performance is relatively unchallenging for the general audience, hence more suited to the entertaining nature of the segment.

This study also reveals that current performers of *devol maḍuva* rituals do not perform two longer patterns known as *pañdam pada iraṭṭi* (included in Appendix 1-C under *sândā* *samayama*), which are associated with this segment. Jayantha considers these patterns to be of high artistic value, due to their advanced structure and the opportunity they provide for the drumming to be fully expressive. However, these patterns are much more challenging for the audience. This explains why these patterns are not performed, as their inclusion would be detrimental to the popular nature of this segment. In a ritual that is changing its focus towards entertainment, I foresee patterns with simpler structures being
performed more often at the expense of the patterns which are considered to be of high artistic value. Jayantha expressed his deep concerns regarding this situation, while viewing recorded footage of a devol maḍuva included in this study: “The best contemporary performers do not perform these patterns of high artistic value. This means that these patterns will not survive in the vocabularies of the younger artists.”

The entertaining performance of the segment concludes with blessings (āvaḍana padē) as one of the dancers takes a pot containing the offering for the Kurumbara demons from an altar and invites one of the organizers of the ritual to make the offering. The organizer is invited to sit on a mat laid on the floor and to hold the offering on his head, while verses are recited (PR-A) to sarala pada-D, E1 and E2. The dancer utters a plaint (UPR-A) and asks the organizer to say ‘kāpai’ or ‘it is done,’ indicating that all the misfortune and evil will leave the attendants of the ritual as a result of the offerings. The dancer places the offering at the dedicated altar and performs a short worship pattern vāṇdum ata-C to conclude the segment.

4.9 Planting of the Queen’s Bough (bisō kapa)

The bisō kapa is the ritual object featured in this segment and it symbolizes the bough planted by the Queen of Tamil King Sēraman at the inaugural devol maḍuva ritual. “It is a trunk of a banana tree, about four feet high, the outer bark nicely peeled so that the kapa shows a shiny cream color. The head of the kapa is decorated with tender coconut (gok) leaves forming a bulge on top in the shape of a full pot symbolizing fertility. Coconut and

---

areca flowers are stuck on the kapa."\(^{141}\) This segment is relatively short and about half an hour in duration.

At the start of the segment the bisō kapa is brought out and kept on a chair covered in a white cloth. The introductory pattern ārambhaka pada-A, performed by two dancers opens the performance. Brief versions of kotal padē and dummy padē are followed in a similar way to the offering of betel leaves and flowers in the tel vāḍavāvīma segment. Ārambhaka pada-C concludes this brief segment of cleansing the ritual object.

As seen in the kālappaṇḍama segment, the bisō kapa too consists of a long pattern (labelled bisō kapa-A), and a prelude which is specific to this segment. Even though this bisō kapa pattern is distinguishable, it does not show any drumming features unexplored until this point. Prior to the performance of the bisō kapa pattern, which is repeated individually by a number of dancers, a short recitation of text, as thanks to the Three Refuges identified as stotra\(^{142}\) (praise) and sanna (exposition),\(^{143}\) is seen in the style of PR-E. Even though recitation in this style does not occur often in the devol maḍuva ritual, it is extensively featured in the opening of the bali ritual. After the bisō kapa pattern, a section of recitation of verses (PR-A) to the drumming of sarala pada-D concludes with a short ending pattern (ārambhaka pada-F). This is followed by another stotra and sanna (PR-F).

---

\(^{141}\) Obeyesekere, 107.
\(^{142}\) Also identified by artists as slōka.
\(^{143}\) Obeyesekere, 115. “Stotra (thanks) are highly formalized verse or prose texts generally recited as thanks giving to the Three Jewels or the higher gods. In some stotras every word is in formal, stylized Pāli or Sanskrit … The sanna is an elucidation of the stotra in less formal, but nevertheless ‘good’ Sinhala.”
The section which follows consists of dancing and recitations (PR-A) that praise the bisō kapa, to the following drumming pattern, in seven beats. Artists recognize this pattern as a kavi tāla (these patterns are explored in section 4.10). I label the pattern as kavi tāla-E for purpose of analysis. The drumming of kavi tāla-E includes a type of embellishment similar to that of section D of the yahan dākma. This particular type of embellishment is more spontaneous compared to the set-embellishments of sarala pada, therefore, will be termed ‘free-embellishment’. However, I still prefer the term embellishment over improvisation, when referring to these patterns, as the drummer is expected to strictly follow the rhythm and/or aksara at particular points of the pattern. The highlighted sections of the pattern mark these points of kavi tāla-E (Appendix 6, track 19).

![Figure 82: Kavi tāla-E](image)

The recitation and dance to kavi tāla-E is varied with recitations of a similar style (PR-A) with sarala pada-C. The transition between the two patterns is filled with a short
bridging phrase in four beats. This demonstrates how performers freely change back and forth between patterns of different beats. Performers are able to do this because patterns are generally learnt by their aksara sequences rather than with reference to the number of beats.

![Figure 83: Short bridging phrase for kavi tāla-E](image)

In order to conclude the segment, a recitation of verses of “festival joy”\textsuperscript{144} in (PR-A) in seven beats, to sarala pada- G, is performed with one of the dancers holding the bisō kapa. At the end of the recitations the dancer holding the bisō kapa performs the final segment on his own, sequentially, with patterns sarala pada-B, ārambahaka pada-A, vāṇḍum ata-B and vāṇḍum ata-D. The final pattern in the segment is labeled as vāṇḍum ata-E (Appendix 6, track 20). The final phrase of this vāṇḍum ata is an example of how phrases of drumming in performance, are played in a manner which disguises the beat.

This enhances the expressiveness of drumming and also contributes towards the mysticism of the ritual.

\textsuperscript{144}Obeyesekere, 108.
The segment concludes as the *bisō kapa* is planted in front to the right of the Pattini *torana* and the audience is blessed with the *āvaḍana padē*.

### 4.10 Ritual of the ceremonial archway (*toran yāgaya*)

This segment, about an hour in length, honours the ceremonial archway which is dedicated to goddess Pattini. By the end of the segment, the white curtain, which covers the altar built in to the archway, is removed and this declares the altar’s official opening in the ritual. The segment is begun as others, with an introductory pattern (*ārambahaka pada*-F) and, similar to the previous segment, sees a section of recitation of *stotra* and *sanna* (PR-F). This is the beginning of the segment’s main performances.

The *toran yāgaya* is considered especially significant for the performers, as in this segment they are given an opportunity to perform a particular type of dance pattern known as *kavi tāla*. These patterns, being relatively long, are performed slowly and are considered to be of high artistic significance. They are accompanied with vocal
recitations in the style of PR-D similar to the kālapañdama padē, discussed in section 4.7. Similar to other patterns played in bara, the dancer dictates the timing of kavi tāla and the patterns allow specific points in which the dancers are free to show their expressive movements. However, drummers do not play as many filler strokes in these patterns as compared to those played in bara. The patterns are usually opened with a short introductory pattern (ārambhaka pada-B) and performed individually or in smaller groups. The performances highlight a unique aspect of the relationship between the drummer and dancer. During these performances the dancer does not inform the drummers of the pattern he is about to perform in advance. The drummers are supposed to work out what the pattern the dancer is performing within the first two or three aksara of the pattern. Thus the majority of the skill of a drummer in this segment lies in being able recognize these patterns, which in turn requires the memorization of a reasonable number of such patterns. The segment also gives the drummers an opportunity to highlight their skills, since often the performance of a kavi tāla is followed with a sural that is associated with the pattern. These sural patterns are performed in the conventional format as explained under the kotal padē (section 4.5), whereby a drummer is invited to perform the sural individually and it is repeated for the dancers. A general segment of toran yāgaya sees the performance of around five to six different kavi tāla and at most three sural performances. Below, two patterns of kavi tāla are used as an opportunity to explore the connection between the dancer’s footsteps and the aksara of patterns, which are common to both the dancer and the drummer.
Similar to the relationship between akṣara and techniques in drumming discussed in Chapter 3, dancers perform particular akṣara of patterns with different footsteps depending on their placement within a pattern. An in-depth study of the relationship between the dancers footsteps and the akṣara of a pattern constitutes a paper on its own. Thus, in the following analysis I explore the direct correlations between the footsteps of the dance and the drumming, using frames captured from a live performance of two kavi tāla patterns. The analysis aims to recognize a number of akṣara and sequences of akṣara which dancers consistently use in the same way. I suggest that these akṣara act as ‘signposts’ within a pattern, and assist the drummer to play the pattern by memory. In the performances of kavi tāla, these akṣara also help the drummer recognize the pattern being performed by the dancer.

The first kavi tāla examined is labelled kavi tāla-A (Appendix 6, track 21). It features the hidden, embedded pattern in seven, mentioned in section 4.3. In this pattern, it is only the phrase ‘di ta ga ta’ that explicitly states this embedded pattern.

The captured frames in figures 86-91, present the dancer’s footsteps while dancing the akṣara of kavi tāla-A. The akṣara of the pattern are labelled below each figure from left to right. A brief description of the dancer’s movements also follows each figure.
**Figure 86: (doṃ, ta, ku, doṃ, ta)**

- *doṃ* - dancer jumps backwards landing on both feet on *doṃ*
- *ta* - right foot is taken forward and lands on *ta*
- *ku* - left foot is taken forward and lands on *ku*
- *doṃ* - jumps backwards, landing on both feet on *doṃ*
- *ta* - right foot is taken forward and lands on *ta*

**Figure 87: (ku, doṃ, ta, ga)**

- *ku* - left foot is taken forward and lands on *ku*
- *doṃ* - dancer jumps backwards landing on both feet on *doṃ*
- *ta* - right foot stretches to the right and lands on *ta*
- *ga* - the left is brought back and *ga* is played on the drum as the dancer's foot is moving back
Figure 88: (di, ta, ga, ta)

- **di** - left foot lands on **di**
- **ta** - right foot moved back and lands on **ta**
- **ga** - left foot taken back and lands on **ga** to stand with parallel feet
- **ta** - right foot lands on **ta** while the dancer remains in the same position

Figure 89: (guṁ, dāhiṁ, guṁ, dāhiṁ)

- **guṁ** - right foot taken up and lands on **guṁ** and immediately springs up
- **dāhiṁ** - right foot taken back and lands on **dāhiṁ**
- **guṁ** - left foot taken up and lands on **guṁ** and immediately springs up
- **dāhiṁ** - left foot taken back and lands on **dāhiṁ**
Figure 90: (ga, ta, gum, dit)

- **ga** - dancer walks forward, right foot lands on *ga*
- **ta** - *ta* is played during the walking motion
- **gum** - left foot lands on *gum* and is lifted up
- **dit** - dancer turns to the right and lands on the right foot on *dit*

Figure 91: (dä, him)

- **dä** - the dancer jumps and the right foot lands on *dä* while the left is still in the air
- **him** - left foot lands on *him* next to the right, to conclude the pattern

A similar analysis of another *kavi tāla* pattern, labelled *kavi tāla*-B (Appendix 6, track 22) is presented below.
Figure 92: Kavi tāla-B

Figure 93: (ruṃ, ōdaṃ, gat, taṃ, gu)

- ruṃ - dancer shuffles backwards along the ground
- ōdaṃ - right foot lands to the side on ōdaṃ to come to a still position with parallel feet
- gat - right foot is taken forward and lands on gat
- taṃ - left foot is taken forward to be parallel to the right foot and lands on taṃ
- gu - right foot is taken to the side and lands on gu

Figure 94: (ńdi, ta, ku, doṃ, doṃ)

- ńdi - left foot is taken across and forward and lands on di
- ta - right foot is taken forward and lands on ta
- ku - left foot is taken forward to be parallel with the right and lands on ku
- doṃ - jumps, landing on both feet on doṃ
- doṃ - jumps, landing on both feet on doṃ
Figure 95: (dä, hiṃ, gat, dä, hiṃ)

dä - jumps, landing only the left foot on dä
hiṃ - the right foot, still in the air, lands on hiṃ
gat - left foot stretched to the left and lands on gat
dä - jumps, landing only the right foot on dä
hiṃ - the left foot, still in the air, lands on hiṃ

Figure 96: (ga, ta, ga, di, ta)

ga - right foot stretched to the right and lands on ga
ta - left foot taken close to the right foot, landing on tha and bounces off the floor
ga - left foot lands forward on ga
di - right foot is taken back to a position closely behind the left and lands on di
ta - left foot is lifted up and lands on the same position for ta
**Figure 97:** (ka, re, gu, ŋda, ka)

- **ka** - right foot stretched to the right to be parallel to the left and lands on *ka*
- **re** - right foot is rotates about 45 degrees while still keeping contact with the floor, using the toes as a pivotal point
- **gu** - right foot is taken back, lands on *gu*, and is immediately bounced for the next akṣara
- **ṅda** - right foot is moved forward and lands on *ṅda*
- **ka** - left foot moved forward to be parallel to the right and lands on *ka*

**Figure 98:** (dā, hiṃ, dā, hiṃ, gat)

- **dā** - jumps, landing only the left foot on *dā*
- **hiṃ** - the right foot, still in the air, lands on *hiṃ*
- **dā** - jumps, landing only the right foot on *dā*
- **hiṃ** - the left foot, still in the air, lands on *hiṃ*
- **gat** - right foot stretched to the right and lands on *gat*

**Figure 99:** (dā, hiṃ, ga, ta, gu)
dā - jumps, landing only the left foot on dā
hiṃ - the right foot, still in the air, lands on hiṃ
ga - left foot stretched to the left and lands on ga
ta - right foot is moved close to the left to be side by side and lands on ta
gu - right foot is stretched to the right and lands on gu

Figure 100: (ňda, gu, ņda, ga, di)

ňda - left foot is moved close to the right and lands on ņda
gu - left foot is stretched to the left and lands on gu
ťda - right foot is moved close to the left and lands on ņda
ga - right foot is moved forward as the performer keeps moving and lands on ga
di - left foot lands on di forward from the right while still moving forward

Figure 101: (ta, ka, ru, Ňdaṃ)

ta - right foot lands on ta forward of the left while still moving
ka - left foot lands on ka to stop the forward movement
ru - dancers shuffle backwards along the ground
ťdaṃ - right foot lands to the side on Ňdaṃ to come to a still position with parallel feet.
The analysis of the frames reveals that *aksara dom* and *rim* (or other versions of the roll) are danced consistently with the same footsteps each time. *Dāhīm* is generally performed consistently, with a rare exception of when it is treated as one *aksara* (figure 89). As confirmed by the artists, *gum* is also generally consistently stepped and bounced off immediately (figure 89). In addition, the *aksara* sequence *re gu ūda ka* (figure 97) is danced the same way each time. As mentioned prior to the analysis, the consistency of how the above *aksara* are stepped, assists the drummer in recognizing the *kavi tāla* pattern being performed and act as ‘signposts’ to successfully play the pattern by memory.

Similar to some of the patterns of the *sāndā samayama* segment, the performance of *kavi tāla*, regardless of their high artistic value, is not extremely popular among the audience. This is recognized by the artist and as a result, a number of performances with simple patterns *sarala pada-C*, *B*, *B4* with recitations (PR-C), as well as exhibitive
performances of acrobatics and spinning, often prelude each performance of kavi tāla. Unlike the patterns which are omitted from the sāndā samayama segment, kavi tāla remains to be a significant element of the vocabulary of Low-Country drumming and dance.

The section of kavi tāla is followed by recitations of verses (PR-A) in sarala pada-B, F, identified as toran kavi which mention the decorations, measurements and the preparations of the ceremonial archway. The Pattini altar is respectfuully unveiled and the segment of the toran yāgaya concludes with the same patterns being performed as the ending of bisō kapa. In this instance these patterns are performed with the dancer wearing the unveiled curtain around his neck.

4.11 Segment dedicated to the Pattini deity

During the ritual preparations, the casket of divine ornaments of the goddess Pattini is placed in the main flower couch. It may also be placed in a Pattini shrine near the ritual space, in case the ritual is carried out in the vicinity of such a shrine. In both instances the casket is brought into the centre of the ritual space in procession, with recitations (PR-A) that invite the goddess (with sarala pada-F) at the start of this segment, similar to the milla kāpīma and tel vādavīma. The dancer performs this segment dressed as Pattini. The performance is carried out on a path laid out with white material from the Pattini altar to the centre of the ritual space, where the casket is temporarily placed. The setting up of the segment as well as the longer duration of around one and a half hours reflects the higher status and importance of the goddess in this ritual.
The importance given to the goddess is further revealed in the extensive performances of the yahan dÄkma, kotal padë and dummala padë compared to the brief versions of these patterns performed at the start of other segments. The slow procession from the centre of the ritual space to the Pattini altar begins with an introductory pattern (ārambhaka pada-A) as the Pattini dancer respectfully places the casket on his head. Vocal recitations (PR-A) during this procession describe various manifestations of Pattini\textsuperscript{145} in sarala pada-D, B and C.

The Pattini segment consists of a number of patterns specific to the segment. The extent to which these patterns are performed depends on the skill of the dancer, as some of the dance patterns are among the most technical in the ritual. During the above procession to the Pattini altar, the experienced dancer performs a type of pattern known as karāñdu pada. Vañdum ata-L is performed prior to this as a transition from the recitations. Karāñdu pada are long technical patterns and consist of three movements. The movements see the use of extensions and repetitions of phrases, similar to the sural of kotal padë. Once at the Pattini altar, the dancer ceremonially places the casket of ornaments in the altar with vañdum ata-E.

Two other sets of dance patterns, specific to the segment identified as Pattini pada, and mātrā pada are performed next, in honor of the goddess. These patterns are also long and technical and demand considerable skill from the dancers. The patterns are in bara and each consists of a sural. The bara pattern sees the performance of singing tānam in the

\textsuperscript{145}Obeyesekere, 119.
style of PR-D similar to *kavi tāla* and the *kālapaṇḍama padē*. The *sural*, when danced by an experience dancer, is generally done on light feet, conveying the feminine and subtle nature of the goddess. Expression of characteristics of a supernatural being in this way is recognized by the term *bhāvaprakāṣana*. Artists recognize seven Pattini *pada* and seven *mātrā pada* to be in the vocabulary of Low-Country drumming. However, even the most experienced dancer performs, at the most, three Pattini *pada* and occasionally one *mātrā pada* in current *devol maḍuva* rituals. Refer to tracks 23-24 in Appendix 6 for a performance of Pattini *pada* and its *surala*.

\[
\text{Figure 103: Pattini pada 1}
\]

---

146 Sandhoris Jayantha
It is customary for a dancer performing a major segment to dance a type of pattern identified as an *aḍauva* or *saudama* and to receive donations from the audience. A *saudama* is a salutation verse in which the drumming mimics the phonetics of each line of the verse. Thus in its performance, each line of the verse is repeated with the drums. The following table presents the *saudama* performed in this segment, known as the Pattini *saudama* (Appendix 6, track 25). The transliterated lines of the verse appear on the left column and next to each line is the transcription of the drumming which imitates the voice. The *aksara* of the drumming is not transcribed as the phonetics of the verse are considered to be the basis of the drumming when playing a *saudama*. The notes marked with the technique symbol (x) are produced using advanced techniques.

---

147 A *saudama*, as mentioned in Chapter 4, is a type of pattern that is identified in the 216 fundamental patterns of Sinhala drum theory.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase</th>
<th>Representation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tat dit toṃ nam tāla udāraya</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Musical Notation" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kimanika saudam</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Musical Notation" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>harda devi pādaya</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Musical Notation" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chandravatīgē indra nīla gata</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Musical Notation" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kimanika suraluvanē</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Musical Notation" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>takunam jehekita</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Musical Notation" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vinaka vinōdara</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Musical Notation" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gatta eratnam salaṁba atē</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Musical Notation" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>setsiri denamā Pattini karunā</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Musical Notation" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aṇḍituṇdi paṇḍipura</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Musical Notation" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jehenuka tat tari</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Musical Notation" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tāhaka jen jen Pattini sura sauvdam</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Musical Notation" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natana pada Pattini sura saudam</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Musical Notation" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Pattini saudama
The final performance of the Pattini segment consists of another set of patterns known as tevā pada (Appendix 6, track 26). In order to perform the tevā pada, the dancer takes the goddess’ shawl from the Pattini altar and wears it over his arms. The two anklets of the goddess are also taken from the altar and worn on the dancer’s hands over the shawl. The dancer’s hands are shaken and the anklets are rattled, in order to express the power of these divine ornaments. Tevā pada are short repetitive patterns, performed with the dancer wearing the divine objects of the deity in the above manner. These patterns include a unique phrase gatim dim dim which is not seen in any other drumming pattern of the ritual.

![Figure 105: Tevā pada](image)

This exclusive phrase seen in tevā pada also reflects the importance of Pattini in the devol maḍuva. The dance performances of the Pattini segment conclude with the usual round of blessings to āvaḍana padē.

### 4.12 Performance of ceremonial drumming (magul bera)

In Sinhala culture the magul bera pattern is performed at most events that are considered to be auspicious. The performance of the pattern is also accompanied by the blowing of the conch, which further contributes to the auspiciousness of the environment. Older
artists believe that the particular combinations of *akṣara* groups in the *magul bera* contain the power to create such an environment.

The *magul bera* demonstrates the expressive qualities of free and stretched timing in Low-Country drumming to the highest standard. It is one of two Low-Country drumming patterns which does not accompany the performance of dance.\(^\text{148}\) Drummers regard the pattern to be the most important in the drumming repertoire. The pattern consists of three movements or *vaṭṭams* which are dedicated to the Three Refuges (Appendix 6, track 27). Each *vaṭṭama* includes drumming phrases that are strung together with *akṣara* sequences free of a regular beat or measure. I analyse the composition of the *magul bera* below in order to identify some of its other features that contribute towards its highly expressive nature of stretched timing. This analysis also recognizes some of the compositional features of drumming patterns introduced up to this point.

The structure of the *magul bera* pattern is divided into 16 different sections within the three *vaṭṭams* for purpose of analysis. The different sections are labelled ‘sub-structures.’ Each sub-structure either demonstrates a particular feature of the drumming or the development of a particular rhythmic motif. A number of other phrases inbetween the sub-structures are labelled as ‘connecting phrases.’

1. This is an introductory phrase at the start of the first *vaṭṭama*. It features the use of acceleration of the *akṣara* sequence *dā hiṃ*. The exact number of repetitions varies during different performances.

---

\(^{148}\) The other pattern is *pūjā bera* presented in section 4.17. Sri Lankans generally only associate the *magul bera* with the *gēta beraya* of the Up-Country as the majority of ceremonial occasions employ Up-Country drummers and dancers. However the *magul bera* pattern exists in all three traditions.
2. Sub-structure - this is developed with the motif at the end of the introductory phrase guṇ đaṃ đă hiṃ. This section also features the use of acceleration.

3. Connecting phrase - most of this phrase, apart from the final two aksesara sequences, is played in a rushed manner.

4. Sub-structure - this is built using the feature of foreshortening.

5. Sub-structure - this is the start of second vaṭṭama and this features the roll, which is extended according to the drummer’s preference.

6. Sub-structure - this is built on a repetitive pattern. It is embellished and accelerated throughout the section.

7. Connecting phrase - a new slower tempo is set in this phrase which develops the phrase ru đaṃ guṇ đaṃ đă hiṃ. This is an extension of the phrase used in 2) above.

8. Sub-structure - this section is based on a repetitive pattern and features similar characteristics to the sub-structure in section 6) above.

9. Connecting phrase - this marks the end of second vaṭṭama. The tempo is slowed down in this phrase.

10. Sub-structure - this opens the third vaṭṭama, and this features the repetition of a short phrase. The drumming is accelerated on each performance.

11. Connecting phrase - this phrase is played at a slower tempo and its ending is repeated in the next sub-structure.

12. Sub-structure - this is built using repetition of fragments of the opening phrase of this sub-structure.

13. Sub-structure - this features the use of foreshortening.

14. Connecting phrase - the ending of this phrase is played gradually slowing down.

15. Introductory phrase to the final section of the pattern. This is identical to the introductory phrase of the magul bera pattern.

16. Sub-structure - this develops the phrase dom đăhiṃ and it concludes the magul bera pattern.
Figure 106: Magul bera vaṭṭam 1
Figure 107: Magul bera vaṭṭam 2
Figure 108: Magul bera vaṭṭam 3
The performance of the *magul bera* pattern in the *devol maḍuva* has changed dramatically over the last two decades. Recorded footage of a *devol maḍuva* held in 1994 reveals that performances of *magul bera* during this time were made by a group of around ten drummers (Appendix 6, track 28).¹⁴⁹ The performances consisted of the above three *vaṭṭams*, as well as the extensions of the pattern (known as *hatara vaṭṭam* and *hat vaṭṭam*).¹⁵⁰ These performances provided an opportunity for the drummers to showcase the depth of their vocabulary as individuals, as during the majority of the ritual the drummers play to accompany the dancers. The performance is of a competitive nature, whereby a senior drummer performs a particular extension of the *magul bera*, thereby challenging a younger drummer to play the same extension. This environment ensures that the younger drummers strive to reach the level of the older experienced artists. The performance also includes small dance routines of the extensions performed by the drummers themselves, ensuring that the drummers have a thorough understanding of the dance of Low-Country.

In contrast, today, the *magul bera* is performed by two to three drummers in *devol maḍuva* rituals. The performance is condensed to such an extreme that sections of the basic three *vaṭṭam* are left out (Appendix 6, track 29). While this entails that the drumming pattern considered to be of highest importance in the Low-Country is commodified, the loss of the extensions also fails to provide the inspiration needed for the younger drummers to achieve the highest level drumming. These changes in the

¹⁵⁰ As mentioned in the ritual background, these extensions are only rarely heard in the *bera pōya hēvisi*. 
magul bera can be associated with the entertaining nature of the outdoor ritual, where patterns of artistic value are being compromised.

4.13 Telme, the dance in honour of the Twelve Gods

The telme segment, around an hour in length, features dancers dressed in colourful costumes and is perhaps the most obvious illustration of a ritual that is changing its focus towards entertainment. A large collection of patterns are associated with the segment and these include short repetitive patterns as well as a number of longer patterns. The short repetitive patterns (grouped and presented under telme sarala pada) are performed like the ones in śāndā samayama where the acceleration of tempo is used to shape the performance. The longer patterns include specific vāṇḍum at, antādi or preludes, vaṭṭam pada and sural and as these do not feature any new characteristics of the drumming outside of the ones already discussed. Some of these longer patterns are presented in Appendix 1-C under telme.

Current performances of this segment omit most of the longer patterns whereas the short repetitive patterns are performed extensively, and made elaborate with impressive displays of acrobatics and spinning by the dancers. Some ritual organizers go as far as replacing the longer patterns with guest displays from gymnasts brought in from outside the community of Low-Country artists (Appendix 6, track 30).

These guest displays are an example of the most significant changes in contemporary rituals. The drumming accompaniments for these displays consist of phrases in the shape
of short introductory patterns. However, these patterns are not recognized as part of the drumming vocabulary. This is both due to the criticism the displays acquire from older artists and the performance’s relatively recent inclusion. The criticism is in response to the fact that these segments replace drumming patterns that are considered to be of high integrity. The displays also see the acrobatic performer replacing the Low-country dancer who shares the same vocabulary as the drummer. The inclusion of Western performance elements in the ritual is inevitable as the devol mađuva ritual evolves with today’s society. Thus, it is interesting how the expressive features of Low-Country drumming are adapted by the drummers to enhance the gymnastic experience for the audience.

4.14 Segment dedicated to the deity Vāhala

The dancer of the Vāhala segment shows a high level of physical endurance and displays an element of trance, which is intended to convey the bravery and strength of the deity. Contemporary Low-Country artists do not associate the appearance of trance with the possession of a supernatural being. They simply recognize trance as a feature that enhances the intensity of the performance. As Prasanth explains, “the dancer only appears to be in a trance, in order to make the performance dramatic and heighten the intensity of the performance.”\textsuperscript{151} This view is reflective of the emphasis on self control in Buddhist ideology. “Sinhala Buddhists have traditionally considered possession to be an undesirable state, for one possessed has no self-control but acts at the will of another being.”\textsuperscript{152} The dancer performing the Vāhala segment remains in complete control during the entire hour long segment. The excitement of this performance makes Vāhala the most popular segment of the ritual.

\textsuperscript{151} Prasanth Rupathilake, 6 September 2008.
\textsuperscript{152} Obeyesekere and Gombrich, 28.
The drumming of the segment contributes towards heightening the intensity of the performance. Artists recognize the drumming of this segment as in the kaḍīnam (fast) tempo. The drumming patterns during this segment are short and repetitive. The tempo of the drumming starts around 200 beats per minute and gradually increases to around 240 towards the end of the segment where the dancer appears to be in a state of trance. The continuous repetitive drumming demands considerable physical strength from the drummers, thus it is usual to see drummers taking turns in pairs or small groups, while others rest for brief periods. The acceleration and deceleration of the tempo is a main feature of this segment and drummers use this effectively to shape the performance.

The performance starts with vocal recitations (PR-A) dedicated to the deity with sarala pada-B and this is ended with the performance of vāṅdum at-A in front of the altar of Vāhala. Similar to other segments, the dancer opens with the yahan dākma, kotal padē and dummala padē. In order to establish the mood of the segment, only the third vaṭṭama of the yahan dākma and the repetitive sections of the other two patterns are performed. For the remainder of the segment, the dancer performs short repetitive patterns, similar to the basic pattern of pidēni dīma, using a number of ritual objects: hak geṭiya (conch), kalaha (clay pot), mugura (spear), pol mala (coconut flowers), paṇḍam (torches) and dummma (resin). The performance with each of these objects consists of short decorative patterns performed at the front of each ritual altar. Similar to pidēni dīma and sāndā samayama segments, these are cued by the dancer. The fast tempo of the patterns and the intensity of the performance in this segment means that the cue is simplified to a dom aksara instead of the usual gum dāhiṃ. Between each section performed with a ritual
object, the dancer spins across the middle of the ritual space with ārambhaka pada-D and briefly rests beside the Torch of Time. Even while the dancer rests, the drumming continues in a lighter manner in order to maintain the continuity of the performance (Appendix 6, track 31).

Figure 109: Ārambhaka pada-D in Vāhala segment

The patterns with ritual objects conclude when the dancer collapses, on a mat laid out in front of the Pattini altar, from exhaustion. The conclusion of the Vāhala segment is marked where the dancer gets up and performs the Daḍimunḍa\textsuperscript{153} saudama and receives donations from the audience. Performance of this pattern features the imitation of the voice (PR-A) with drumming similar to the Pattini saudama. The dancer blesses the audience and performs vāndum at-A in front of the altar dedicated to the deity.

4.15 The dance of Devol and fire trampling

The most significant drumming of the Devol segment includes the performance of Devol pada in honour of the deity. Other performances in the segment include a ritual drama, a ritual of fire trampling and an offering to the Kurumbara demons. The ritual drama and the fire trampling do not consist of any significant drumming as these focus on enacting the mythical story of Devol princes’ arrival on the island. The offering to the demons is identical to the rite described in sāndā samayama.

\textsuperscript{153} Daḍimunḍa also refers to Vāhala.
Artists often claim that there are seven Devol pada. However, I suggest that this claim is merely an attempt to remain convergent with numerology. Discussions with the artists reveal an acceptance that Devol pada are better considered as one entire performance, as the patterns are not singled out in performance, unlike some of the other segments in the ritual such as toran yāgaya or Pattini. The Devol pada are often performed in full, unlike significant patterns in other segments. The time, at which the segment is performed, around 9 am, usually has a fresh audience coming to see the end of the ritual. The Devol pada are also immediately followed with a ritual drama and the fire trampling which are of high interest to audiences. These factors contribute towards the entirety of the Devol pada performance. However, a closer examination of the pattern would reveal its musical elements that have allowed it to survive in the contemporary ritual.

The construction of the Devol pada demonstrates a fine balance of simplicity, variation, repetition, development and opportunity for displays of acrobatics. The majority of the pattern is in a compound duple metre. The first movement, known as the kāṅgul padē is of a simple structure with a phrase being foreshortened (Appendix 6, track 32).
The second movement (Appendix 6, track 33) is in the same metre and is made up of a theme phrase labelled (A) which is referred to regularly whilst playing phrases which are variations of the theme phrase. The final phrase labelled (End) concludes this movement.
The third movement (Appendix 6, track 34) is mostly in the same metre and consists of a similar structure to the second. However, variations of the theme are further developed by doubling the tempo and playing the theme at a *bara* tempo. The ending in this movement is longer and more elaborate compared to the previous but the ending’s final phrase is the same as the ending of the second movement.

![Figure 112: Devol pada movement 3](image)

The fourth movement is similar to the second movement. But this movement also includes the variation of the theme in the *bara* tempo similar to the third movement. The
fifth movement (Appendix 6, track 35) is significantly shorter. Its phrase labelled (B) is also heard in the ending of the third movement. The movement is a prelude to the displaying section, where dancers spin around in a circle and also the drummers are invited to play a number of *sural*.

![Figure 113: Devol pada movement 5](image)

The Devol *pada* are simple but consist of a variety of different performance aspects which make the patterns interesting. Thus, I suggest this segment risks relatively little change, in the contemporary world, compared to some of the other segments already explored in the ritual.

The Devol *pada* are concluded with the dancers performing a *vändum ata* (*vändum ata*-F) specific to this segment with the *mugura* (spear) of the God Devol. The following phrase, played at the end of *vändum ata*, sees the dancers circle their upper body, using their waist as a hinge which symbolizes the masculine power of the god (Appendix 6, track 36). A similar phrase appears again in the Garā segment. As mentioned in the Pattini segment, this is an instance of how the drumming contributes towards the expression of the dancer, conveying the characteristics of the deity.
4.16 The dance of the Garā demon

The performance of Garā is mainly made up of a ritual drama which symbolizes the banishing of vas dōsa. The drumming of this segment includes the usual introductory patterns as well as an antādiya (prelude) and an irattiya (special ending) however, these are rarely performed in today’s rituals. This is reflective of the decreasing belief in the Garā demon, in contemporary Sinhala society. The specific performance in which Garā banishes vas dōsa is identified as “a technique known as ves pāma, ‘shaking his guise.’”154 During this performance the dancer rotates his upper body from his waist, as in the Devol segment. The drumming phrase that accompanies this action is also similar to what is seen in the Devol segment. Additionally, a pattern specific to this segment is associated with the act of the performer blessing members of the audience. The structure of this pattern consists of the standard foreshortening of phrases.

---

154 Obeyesekere, 173.
4.17 Thanksgiving and sending the deities back to their abodes
(*deviyaṇṭa pin ḍima*)

In this final brief segment, the performers gather in front of the main Pattini altar and recite verses (PR-A) to *sarala pada*-B, in order to pay tribute and give thanks to various gods, teachers and parents. The verses request the gods to leave and return to their abodes, and ask forgiveness for any mistakes or offences the performers may have unknowingly made in the process of performing in the ritual. This conclusion of the *devol maḍuva* ritual is associated with the second solo drum pattern of the Low-Country drumming tradition known as the *pūjā bera*. The pattern is of a similar nature to the *magul bera*, however much shorter in length. Like the *magul bera*, the *pūjā bera* also demonstrates the expressive nature of the drumming in Low-Country to the highest degree (Appendix 6, track 37).
Several features of Low-Country drumming in the *devol mađuva* ritual contribute towards the expressive nature of the drumming. Most of the features are aspects of stretched timing. Improvisation does not feature in the drumming however, spontaneity, particularly in drumming embellishments and variations, enliven the performance. The dynamics of the drumming remain relatively loud throughout the ritual and therefore are not a contributing feature of expression. I have identified a number of aspects of timing in Low-Country drumming:

1) The irregularity of the pulse

2) The illusive nature of the beat
3) The irregularity of the beat

4) Manipulation of tempo (i.e., the use of acceleration and deceleration)

The first feature, the irregularity of the pulse occurs because the drummers feel the pulse in terms of akṣara, as opposed to feeling the pulse as strictly regular. Therefore, ‘pulse’ in Low-Country drumming, can be considered as synonymous with ‘akṣara’. I consider this to be the most important characteristic of timing in Low-Country drumming. This is best demonstrated in the subtle rhythmic nuances in short repetitive patterns (i.e., sarala pada-D and sarala pada-B4). The second feature, being the illusive nature of the beat, is also an important characteristic that appears in a number of patterns. Several examples are listed:

1) Magul bera and vaṭṭam pada-A

2) Last phrase of vāṇḍum ata-E, ārambahaka pada and sural

In the magul bera and vaṭṭam pada-A, the beat is illusive because the patterns consist of a string of short akṣara sequences. In vāṇḍum ata-E the last phrase is played in a rushed manner. In ārambahaka pada and sural, technical phrases are played quickly. In addition to this, the variation in durations of rolls, within repetitive drumming and longer patterns, often makes the beat illusive. The third feature i.e., the irregularity of the beat, is most apparent in the performance of patterns in bara, and these also show the most extensive connection between the drummer and the dancer (explained further below). The fourth feature of timing, which is the manipulation of tempo and, particularly the use of acceleration and deceleration is best illustrated in the performance of the magul bera pattern. The subtle manipulation of tempo also features during the performances of short
repetitive drumming patterns, as revealed in the performances of *kotal padē*, *pidēni dīma* and Vāhala. Other patterns such as *pañdam aḍi vaṭṭam* feature acceleration to an extent which features the drummer changing the *akṣara* sequences of the pattern, throughout its repetitions.

The study of the *devol maḍuva* reveals that there is no tonal relationship between the drumming and vocal recitations in the Low-Country. However, a strong connection exists between the drumming and the metrical component of recitation. This is most evident in the performance of *saudam* where the drumming rhythmically imitates the sounds of the text recited with the voice. This connection is less apparent in performances of longer patterns (*kālapaṇḍama padē*, *kavi tāla*, Pattini *pada*). Nevertheless, singing is stretched to fit in with the certain emphasized points of these patterns.

This chapter has also provided insights into the relationship between the drummer and the dancer in the Low-Country tradition. As mentioned in Chapter 3, both dancers and drummers work off the same vocabulary of patterns. The most extensive connection between the drummer and the dancer is seen during the performance of patterns in *bara* tempo. During these patterns the dancer is allowed to dictate the timing and the drummer plays filler strokes (*kannilam*) and decorative phrases in order to enhance the dancer’s expression. The irregular beat of these patterns and the clutter of filler strokes in turn contribute toward the expressive nature of the drumming. A specific type of slow pattern, *kavi tāla*, requires the drummer to work out what pattern the dancer is performing without advanced notice. Analysis of dance steps in *kavi tāla* in this chapter revealed that
a number of akṣara sequences (i.e., dāhim, dom, rim or gum) are danced consistently the same way. These akṣara act as ‘signposts’ and assist the drummer in playing in unison with the dancer. These akṣara are also used by dancers as cues during repetitive dance segments (i.e., pidēni dīma, tel vāḍavavīma, sāndā samayama and Vāhala). A similar example of a cue made by the drummers, is the use of the roll at the beginning of set-embellishment patterns in sarala pada (i.e., set-embellishment of sarala pada-A). Certain dance gestures are accompanied on the drums with specific phrases (i.e., spinning in ārambhaka pada-D). There are noticeable differences among the drumming that accompanies dance performances which represent supernatural beings of different nature (i.e., Pattini, Devol, Garā and Vāhala). Dances with gestures of salutation show a direct link to the structure of their drumming pattern (i.e., vāndum at). In short patterns, in particular sarala pada-B4, the dancer complements the irregular pulse of the drumming with subtle polyrhythmic movements between the hands and feet.

Three compositional features, extension, repetition and foreshortening, are common to most drumming patterns in the Low-Country. Even though these are not explicitly recognized in the tradition, experienced artists acknowledge how the identification of these features helps them memorize the drumming patterns. Certain drumming patterns (i.e., irraṭṭiya in the kālapaṇḍama segment), which are only performed in part during contemporary devol maduva rituals, suggest that performers are often unaware of these structures. Because of this lack of awareness, these patterns risk being lost, altered and disordered.
Drummers learn the patterns of the Low-Country repertoire with reference to the akṣara sequences of the patterns. As a result of this, the use of patterns in odd numbered beats, especially in five beats, is common. Learning patterns in terms of akṣara sequences also allows the drummers to freely alternate between patterns with different numbered beats. An example of this was shown in the bisō kapa segment where the drummers alternated between a pattern in seven beats and a pattern in four beats. Different pattern types in the repertoire of Low-Country drumming contain unique characteristics. Short repetitive patterns (sarala pada) generally consist of a regular beat and include variations and set-embellishments. These consist of akṣara that produce a balance of high and low sounds. In addition, akṣara with low, resonating, sounds are found at the start of most sarala pada. Patterns that accompany specific ritualistic acts, such as cleansing and seeking permission from the deities, are considerably condensed, when performed at the start of segments that are dedicated to other rites (yahan dākma, kotal padē, dummala padē). An ‘embedded pattern’ in seven beats is common to a number of different drumming patterns (i.e., sarala pada-A and kavi tāla-A) and this remains hidden from the artists themselves. Longer patterns, which are specific to some segments, are more complex and made up of different sections. It is these patterns that are regarded by the artists to be of the highest value. A number of these longer patterns are no longer performed as part of the ritual repertoire. I suggest that this is reflective of the changing nature of the ritual and its move towards entertainment. Segments with simple repetitive patterns and acrobatic dance displays are highly popular. The longer patterns that do remain usually include some form of acrobatic display. The loss of drumming patterns which do not accompany any dancing (such as extensions of the magul bera), means that younger drummers are less
likely to feel challenged and inspired to reach the highest level of drumming in the tradition. Because of this, I conclude that the *devol mađuva* ritual will not continue to serve as an effective training ground for the younger drummers as well as it has done in the past.
Chapter 5

The Tovil Ritual (Kalu Kumāra Samayama)

Prasantha recognizes that the performance elements of the Kalu Kumāra Samayama ritual “convey the intense power of the demons associated with the ritual.”\(^{155}\) This chapter examines the features of performance that contribute towards expressing this power, with references to drumming, dance and voice. The artists who conducted the tovil ritual studied in this chapter are highly experienced.\(^ {156}\) However, in the Low-Country tradition, tovil rituals are not exclusively performed by the most experienced artists. This means that, several longer patterns and examples of drumming improvisations and embellishments presented in this Chapter, are not necessarily characteristic of the music of the contemporary tovil ritual. However, I include these in this Chapter, in order to illustrate their connection with the drumming of the devol maduva discussed in Chapter 4.

5.1 Ritual space

As with the other rituals the performance space is important and an overview of the ritual space is illustrated below, in preparation for the study of the ritual performance. Most of the altars and offerings are placed in a line alongside each other, inside the house, in the main lounge area. These are dedicated to various demons of the ritual such as the Kalu Kumāra demon, Mahasōna and the demons of Three Watches. Artists refer to this row of altars, collectively as the viḍi raṅga mandalaya or ‘the street of performance.’


\(^{156}\) Daniel Rupathilake, Prasantha Rupathilake and Simon Kaṭṭadi Mahattaya (this is an honorific title).
patient is seated on a mat directly opposite these altars during the ritual. Among the offerings, is a chair covered in a white cloth which has limes, areca sprigs, incense and flowers placed on it. These limes are sometimes used for a rite known as lime-cutting. This is a simple rite carried out to seek protection from malevolent influences, in which a number of charmed limes are cut over the patient’s head using an arecanut cutter. A number of ceremonial objects: a coconut, some rice, a lime, pole used to crush grains (*mōl gaha*), and two medicinal plants known as *tolabō* (*crinum asiaticum*)\(^{157}\) and *sīrāssa* (*cissus quadrangularis*)\(^{158}\) are placed on a tray in front of the main altar. All these items are either of medicinal value or symbolic of disinfectants.\(^{159}\) A live rooster, with its legs tied is also placed in front of the main altar and this is a symbolic offering to the demons of the ritual. The only altar of the ritual built outside, is a small altar, in which the offerings for the Kalu Kumāra demon are placed.


5.2 Ceremonial drumming (*magul bera*) and the observance of five precepts

At the commencement of the Kalu Kumāra *samayama* ritual, the patient is invited to sit on the designated mat directly opposite the main altar. Two members of the house are invited to hold a white curtain (*kadaturāva*) in front of the patient. This is intended to block the patient’s view of the main altar until the curtain is taken off during the performance of the ritual. A short recitation of a *stotra* (praise) and *sanna* (exposition) follows in the style of PR-E. The recitations give thanks to the Buddha and wish that the *dōsa* affecting the patient will be vanquished by the act of performing this ritual. The leader of the ritual (*kaṭṭadi mahattaya*) invites the patient to light several oil lamps placed on a stool in front of the patient. He also asserts that the merit gained by holding the ritual will protect the patient and the new born baby from ill health and malevolent spirits. All
present in the ritual space observe the Five Precepts\textsuperscript{160} as the drummer performs the *magul bera* in order to commence the ritual. All three movements of the piece are played, standing on the side of the ritual space. This standing posture, which is adopted for the majority of the ritual, is intended to convey the intense power of the ritual.

### 5.3 Recital of verses of salutation to the Three Refuges

Performers recite a number of *stotra* and *sanna* as a thanksgiving to the Three Refuges in the style of PR-E. These are unaccompanied. De Silva notes that these verses are commonly recited at all major Buddhist rituals.\textsuperscript{161}

### 5.4 Inviting the demons of the Three Watches

This segment commences with the dancer, holding a pair of lit-torches, reciting verses in the style of UPR-A. This vocal style, which is unpitched, unmetrical, fast and recited with attack, conveys a feeling of invoking the demons. The following drumming pattern, recognized as a *vaṭṭam pada* (*vaṭṭam pada*-B), accompanies the recitations. The pattern is played on the *yak beraya* at a high volume. Examples of free-embellishments of the pattern noted below, are also played at a similar high volume (Appendix 6, track 38).

\textsuperscript{160} The Five precepts state: “not to kill, steal, be unchaste (not further defined), lie, or take intoxicants that may lead, through carelessness, to infringe the first four.” Obeyesekere and Gombrich, 24.

\textsuperscript{161} De Silva, 59.
During the recitations, the dancer incenses the altars and throws handfuls of resin, igniting flames in the ritual space. The segment is concluded as the dancer blesses the patient to the accompaniment of the āvaḍana padē in a similar manner to the devol mađuva ritual.

5.5 Placing of ceremonial objects on the patient’s feet

The recitations of this segment describe the origins of the ceremonial objects that will be placed at the patient’s feet at the conclusion of the segment. In the performance, the dancer holds each of the ceremonial objects as their particular origins are recited. The performance commences to the drumming of tovil pattern-A (Appendix 6, track 39), which is felt in three beats.
The recitation accompanying the above pattern is in the style of PR-A. However, artists recognize the singing of this particular instance as singing keṭi kavi (short verses). In this style, each line of a verse, which is relatively short, is freely stretched without feeling the need to make the duration of each line equal. The performance of these verses is further explored in Chapter 6 (section 6.4). The loud sound of the drumming generally overpowers the voice.

The short verses conclude with a longer pattern similar to a kavi tāla of the devol maḍuva ritual. The pattern includes a number of occurrences of the doṃ aḵṣara, which is played on the drum at a high volume. The dancer over-exaggerates the movements when performing the pattern. The recitation is in the style of PR-D similar to kavi tāla discussed in the devol maḍuva. However, in this ritual this vocal style is presented more roughly, with the addition of intermittent shouts of ‘oh!’ These features of the drumming, dance and the voice combine to further convey the intense power of demons.

The recitations continue with a change of metre, and initially with sarala pada-D. An example of a free-embellishment within this pattern, as played by Prasantha, is shown below (Appendix 6, track 40). It is more spontaneous compared to the pattern’s set-embellishment played in the devol maḍuva ritual. Nevertheless, it closely follows the structure of the set-embellishment of the pattern.
The metre is changed again to sarala pada-C on the dancer’s cue. These cues are often subtle and are made with a change of vocal phrasing. This will be explored closely in the context of the bali ritual in Chapter 6, as the use of these types of cues are a common feature of the bali ritual performance. The change to a new metre is often indicated by a performance of dance variations within the pattern. Artists describe the drumming accompanying the dance variations in sarala pada-C as occurring in the manner of ‘a continuous flowing string’ and thus I label the segment as improvisatory. Improvisation in Low-Country drumming is discussed further in the context of the bali ritual in Chapter 6. The following improvisatory segment is played loudly at a quick tempo using short subdivisions (Appendix 6, track 41). It includes a number of powerful dom ākṣara. These features of the improvisation again contribute towards conveying the nature of the demons. A similar improvisation is explored in Chapter 6, in order to further contrast the difference in the drummer’s approach between the two rituals.
The metre changes again to sarala pada-D followed by sarala pada-B. The recitations conclude with a short standard ending (hamāre) which is associated with the pattern. A short unaccompanied recitation of a sanna marks the conclusion of the segment, as the patient is requested to place their right foot on the ceremonial objects. The patient is then requested to say ‘kāpai’ or ‘it is done,’ and this indicates that the rite just carried out will free the patient from any dōsa that may be affecting them.

5.6 Unveiling of the curtain to display the altars

The recitations of this segment (PR-A) invite demons of the Evening Watch (sāndā samayama) to be present. The dancer performs this segment with two torches and ignites
flames by throwing handfuls of resin, similar to the *pidēni dīma* of *devol maḍuva* ritual. Initially, the drumming accompanies with *tovil* pattern-A, then it is followed with *sarala pada*-D and *sarala pada*-B. The segment also includes the performance of a number of decorative patterns with the torches (*pañdam pada*) which are introduced with *ārāmbhaka pada*-A and *ārāmbhaka pada*-D. As already mentioned with reference to several patterns in the *devol maḍuva*, these *pañdam pada* feature the acceleration of tempo throughout each repetition, which is characteristic of the expressive nature of Low-Country drumming. The segment comes to a close with the drumming of *vaṭṭam pada*-B, where the dancer abruptly pulls off the white curtain held in front of the patient. The abruptness of removing the curtain is intended to shock the patient. The dancer immediately blesses the patient using the torches with the *āvadana padē*. Following this, the patient witnesses a short display of fire, in order to be further overwhelmed. Daniel Rupathilake says such a performance “helps eliminate any bad energy and clear the blood of the patient.”162 The drumming, which is very loud enhances the above atmosphere.

### 5.7 Dance segment dedicated to the demons of the Three Watches

This segment, which lasts around an hour, is an offering to the demons of the Three Watches. Among the patterns performed, are the *pañdam aḍi vaṭṭam* discussed in the context of the *śāndā samayama* segment of the *devol maḍuva* ritual. In addition to these patterns, the greater experience of the performers in this ritual allows them to perform a number of longer patterns within this segment. These longer patterns include the *pañdam*

---

pada iraṭṭi which have been omitted from the segment of sāndā samayama, as mention in Chapter 4.

The other longer patterns are yak panti and yakini pada. When performing these patterns, the drummer is initially invited to play solo, and then they are repeated by the dancer. The solo drumming performance, which is played loudly, demonstrates the physical power of the instrument in addition to the skill of the musician. When playing yak panti, the drummer uses filler strokes (kannilam) similar to performances of patterns at bara (slow tempo). However, in this instance, the filler strokes are played sparsely. Because of this, they do not create a rhythmic clutter, unlike in the performance of bara patterns of the devol maduva ritual. Both these features (i.e., the louder dynamic and the sparse filler strokes), of the drumming contribute towards expressing the demonic nature of the ritual.

The first yak panti pattern is transcribed below (Appendix 6, track 42).

Prior to the performance of a yak panti, the dancer performs a number of decorative patterns featuring the torches. One such pattern transcribed below (pañḍam pada-D), sees
the dancer bending over to either side, as he performs these decorative moves with the torches (Appendix 6, track 43). The drumming pattern contains similar phrases to patterns performed in the Devol and Garā segments of the devol maḍava. Similar to these latter performances, the phrases of the following pattern musically symbolize the demonic nature of the supernatural beings associated with the performance.

![Figure 122: Decorative pattern with torches (pañdam pada-D) in tovil ritual](image)

This segment concludes similarly to the previous segment, where the dancer blesses the patient using the torches with the āvaḍana padē.

### 5.8 Offering food (dola) to the demons and the hat pada pelapāliya (series of seven dances)

In preparation for this segment, which lasts roughly for an hour, a pot containing the offerings of food that is intended for the demons is placed on a stool in front of the patient. Initially, a number of recitations in the style of PR-A mention the mythical stories of the demons. The drumming accompanies the verses with repetitive patterns which are featured in the bali ritual (bali pattern-B and bali pattern-D). Therefore, these will be explored in Chapter 6. The series of seven dances consists of seven patterns which are performed prior to the offering of the food to the demons. The first four patterns are performed with ritual objects: vessel of turmeric water (kaha diyara kotala), incense holder (aṅguru kabala), king-coconut, live rooster and a white shawl. The fifth pattern
features the use of hand claps by the dancer in an act which invites the demons to accept the offerings. The final dance is an offering of fire to the demons. As an act attaining permission to perform the seven dances, the dancer commences the segment with the *yahan däkma*, which is introduced with *ārambhaka pada*-A. The first *vatṭama* of the piece is omitted. This maintains continuity with the rest of the performance which, by and large, includes short repetitive patterns. The first dance of the series is performed with the vessel of turmeric water. *Ārambhaka pada*-F commences a number of verses, in the style of PR-A, which mention the birth story of the vessel of turmeric water. The drumming accompanies the recitations with *sarala pada*-D. The verses are concluded with *ārambhaka pada*-A, and this begins the performance of the *kotal padē*, which was explored in the *devol maḍuva* ritual. This dance is concluded with *ārambhaka pada*-C. A round of blessings with the *āvaḍana padē* follows. Similar blessings are carried out at the end of each dance of this series. The second dance is performed with the incense holder. Initially, verses about the birth of this ritual object are recited (PR-A) to the accompaniment of *sarala pada*-B on the drums. Similar to the previous dance *ārambhaka pada*-A commences the *dummala padē* and a performance of a *surala* associated with this pattern. The dance concludes, similarly to the previous dance of this series. The third, fourth and fifth dances which are performed sequentially with the king-coconut, rooster and the shawl, all follow a similar format. The performances commence with recitations (PR-A) which mention the origin of each object, to the accompaniment of repetitive patterns such as *sarala pada*-B, C and D. At the end of the recitations, *ārambhaka pada*-A begins a short repetitive pattern which is specific to each dance (Appendix 6, tracks 44-46).
Figure 123: Pattern danced with a king-coconut in the hat pada pelapāliya

Figure 124: Pattern danced with a live rooster in the hat pada pelapāliya

Figure 125: Pattern danced with a shawl in the hat pada pelapāliya

At the end of the dance performance with the shawl, the dancer is blessed with the āvadana padē as in the other dances of this series. In addition, the shawl is laid on the patient’s head, in order to place the pot containing the offerings on the patient’s head at the end of this segment. The sixth dance of the series is a performance of the dancer clapping his hands, in a manner which is intended to invite the demons to accept the offerings (Appendix 6, track 47). The hand claps are played at marked points of the following drumming pattern.
The seventh dance of the series, which offers fire to the demons, continues without a break, as the drumming changes to the tovil vattaṭṭam pada-A. The offerings of fire are made as before. However, in this instance the dancer heightens the intensity of the performance by appearing to be in a slight state of trance. The drumming during this performance is gradually sped up and the pattern transforms into the short repetitive pattern associated with the pidēni dīma segment of the devol maḍuva. Similar to the Vāhala segment of the same ritual, artists only acknowledge the trance state of the dancer as a technique of dramatizing the performance. Intermittent yells of ‘oh!’ also enhance this effect. The series of the seven dances concludes with ārambhaka pada-C and following this, the dancer places the pot of offerings on the patient’s head. A family member assists the patient by holding the pot on her head.

A set of recitations (PR-A) which follow, entreat the Kalu Kumāra demon to accept the offerings being made. These recitations are accompanied with the yādini mātraya (invocation beat, sarala pada E1) in five beats. Prasanta’s experience is demonstrated in the following free-embellishment played within the yādini mātraya (Appendix 6, track 48). This type of embellishment is not heard in the performance of the same pattern in the devol maḍuva ritual. The segment concludes with blessings followed by the placing of the offerings on the main altar inside the ritual house.
5.9 Dedication of offerings (pidēni taṭu) for Mahasōna and demons of Three Watches

The chanting in this short segment is done in the style of UPR-A, and is accompanied with a number of vaṭṭam pada similar to vaṭṭam pada-B. As the performance is similar to the segment described in section 5.4, the music and drumming of this segment does not feature any unexplored characteristics.

5.10 Dedication of offerings (pidēni taṭu) for Kalu Kumāra demon

This segment lasts around 45 minutes. It features the placement of the decorative offering prepared for the Kalu Kumāra demon in the altar, which is outside the ritual house.
Initially, the offering is placed on a stool in front of the patient with a lamp affixed on top.

The dance performance commences with ārambhaka pada-A, repeated three times. Immediately following, is the yahan dākma which is limited to the third vaṭṭama similar to how it is performed in the Vāhala segment of the devol maḍuva. The drumming of this segment is consistently loud and is played with a high level of intensity. The dancer, as mentioned in section 5.8, appears to be in a state of trance for the duration of the segment, in order to convey the demonic nature of the ritual. The yahan dākma is followed with kotal padē, dummala padē and an offering of fire. The drumming of this latter performance is similar to pidēni dīma of the devol maḍuva ritual. During this performance the dancer visits different rooms inside the ritual house and throws handfuls of resin in the air in order to ignite flames. He also does the same outside, around the altar in which the offering of the Kalu Kumāra demon will be placed. The performance concludes as the dancer picks up the offering from the stool and places it on the patient’s head and blesses the patient with the āvaḍana padē played by the drummer.

After a brief break, a short set of recitations (PR-A) accompanied by sarala pada-D signals a procession, in which the patient is guided outside towards the altar of the Kalu Kumāra demon. During the procession, the patient holds the offering placed on her head and two family members hold a white cloth over the patient. Once at the altar, the patient is requested to kneel on a white cloth laid on the ground, in front of a stand built for the offering. The dancer utters a sanna, which wishes that the offering about to be made will
protect the patient and the newly born child from all dōsa. The patient respectfully places the offering in the altar. As described at the conclusion of section 5.5, the patient is requested to say ‘kāpai’ or ‘it is done.’ The performer requests the patient to repeat another phrase ‘tīndui nivāranai’ and this further asserts that the offering has been accepted and the rite is confirmed.

5.11 Breaking of the clay pot (kalas biṇḍīna)

As discussed in the background of this ritual in Chapter 1, the clay pot (kalaha) symbolizes a vow to carry out a Kalu Kumāra samayama in the event that the patient conceives. The breaking of this pot, which is done during this segment, symbolizes the fulfillment of this vow. The performance during this segment is considerably laid back compared to the rest of the ritual, which suggests the closure of the ritual.

The performance commences with ārambhaka pada-A, and this is followed by a set of recitations (PR-A) which mention the origin of the clay pot. The dancer holds the clay pot during the recitations, which are accompanied with sarala pada-D. At the conclusion of the verses the patient is blessed and the clay pot is handed over to the patient for a moment. The patient is assured that all dōsa affecting her life will be minimized as the vow to hold the ritual will soon be fulfilled. The performer takes the clay pot and continues the recitations (PR-A) with sarala pada-B. He smashes the clay pot in front of the main altar and this action is accompanied with a short introductory pattern on the drums (ārambhaka pada-F). A performance of a saudama follows, as traditionally done after a major performance in order to receive the payment for successfully conducting the
ritual. The structure of this pattern is similar to the Pattini *saudama*, examined in the *devol maḍuva* ritual.

### 5.12 Ritual conclusion

In a brief segment a number of verses (PR-A) are recited in order to give thanks to the supernatural beings propitiated during the ritual with *sarala pada*-D followed by *sarala pada*-B. The dancer cues the performance of ārāmbhaka pada-A. The solo drumming of the *pūjā bera* marks the conclusion of the ritual, as in the *devol maḍuva*.

### 5.13 Chapter summary

The expressiveness of Low-Country drumming in the *tovil* ritual highlights the overwhelming demonic nature of this ritual and it is mainly achieved with the use of loud drumming. The indoor nature of the *tovil* ritual emphasizes the physical power and intensity of the drumming more than any other ritual studied. The majority of the drumming patterns in the ritual are short and repetitive (i.e., *vaṭṭam pada*, patterns of *hat pada pelapāliya*, *sarala pada* and *pañdam*). Several of these patterns are also played in the *devol maḍuva* ritual. However, free-embellishments and improvisatory segments within some of these patterns (i.e., *sarala pada*-C, D, E1), demonstrate a higher level of spontaneity compared to the *devol maḍuva*, as they are played by experienced artists. The longer patterns, which also demonstrate the experience of the performers, are played intensely with lesser use of filler strokes in order to highlight the power of the ritual. The

---

163 This cue is discussed in the context of the *bali* ritual conclusion in section 6.11.
frequent use of the dom aksara also enhances this. The dance also adds to the drama of the tovil ritual with the extensive use of fire throughout. The body movements of the performer, who appears to be in a trance state at times, are exaggerated in the slower patterns. In addition, the dancer’s movements in the decorative patterns, while using the torches, further express the heightened drama of the ritual. The recitation style of PR-E used on several occasions of this ritual conveys a feeling of invoking demons. Aside from this, vocal yells and shouts at various points of the performance contribute towards conveying the demonic nature of the tovil ritual.
Chapter 6
The Bali Ritual (Graha Pūjāva)

The graha pūjāva which represents the generic bali ritual, is mostly soothing in nature. The patterns which are specifically associated with ritualistic procedures are minimal. Instead, the majority of the patterns accompany vocal recitations which are featured throughout the ritual. These patterns, being repetitive, are played in a style that is unique to bali rituals. The other significant patterns of the ritual are longer and serve either as endings or transitions from one repetitive pattern to another.

As bali rituals are practised by the most experienced artists, it is acknowledged that this ritual’s performance is of the highest standard in the Low-Country tradition. A number of features in the performance such as the use of the hand-held bell, advanced techniques that produce subtle sounds of the drum, large range of dynamics, improvisation, embellishment and regularly alternating metres, collectively enrich and shape the performance. Drumming embellishments in this ritual can generally be identified as free-embellishments. The level of spontaneity in performance is relatively high in this ritual and this sees the extensive use of cues by artists. This chapter aims to explore the above performance features with a focus on the bali drumming. A brief description of the ritual space which follows provides necessary background for the discussion of the ritual’s performance.
6.1 Ritual Space

The main altar of the ritual is dedicated to the planetary deities (graha deviyo). This is made from plantain stems and coconut leaves, often using a chair as a base. The backdrop of this main altar displays pictures of the graha deviyo. A decorated tray placed inside this altar is used to place the offerings of food to the deities on during the ritual. A smaller altar containing offerings of flowers may be made, depending on the scale of the ritual. A chair covered in a white cloth with limes, identical to the tovil ritual, is kept on one of the sides of the altar. The same ceremonial objects used in the tovil are placed on a tray in front of the altar. The patient sits on a mat directly opposite the main altar. At the start of the ritual, a white curtain is held in front of the patient, which is later removed during the ritual.

Figure 128: The main altar of the bali ritual with the planetary deities

6.2 Ceremonial drumming (magul bera) and the observance of five precepts

The commencement of the bali ritual is identical to the tovil ritual discussed in the previous chapter. The only difference is that the drummer plays the magul bera seated on
a mat placed on the side of the ritual space, rather than standing as in the tovil. The drummer adopts this posture throughout the bali ritual. The posture itself signifies the soothing nature of the bali ritual.

6.3 Recitation of verses in salutation to the Three Refuges

These recitations are also identical to the ones heard in the tovil ritual. Additional verses in the same style (PR-E) salute a number of major deities of the Sinhala Buddhist pantheon including the Gods of Four Warrants, Pattini and the planetary deities (graha deviyo).

The hand-held bells (mini geḍiya), which are played by both the dancers Daniel and Susantha, throughout the initial segments of the ritual are introduced within these recitations. They are played in a constant continuous manner, at the start of the verses which mention the deity of the land (polō mahi kāntāva). The recital of these verses is intended as a salutation and a request for the deities’ permission to perform the ritual. Artists do not recognize any significance as to why the hand-bells are introduced during this particular verse. However, the addition of the bells makes a significant textural change for the vocal recitations and heightens the intensity of the performance.

6.4 Recitation of verses of bali ritual inception

The drumming begins as an accompaniment to a new set of recitations, which mention the inception of the bali ritual. The transition from the previous verses to these is made without a break and the performance is continuous. The introduction of the drumming
energizes the performance by adding another texture, just as the hand-held bells had done in the previous segment.

The repetitive pattern played on the drums is labelled as bali pattern-A for purpose of analysis. As the drumming commences, the bells are played at the points of the pattern marked with an (x). This drumming pattern is identical to tovil pattern-A. However, in this ritual the pattern is played with considerable subtlety compared to the tovil. The drummer achieves this by using advanced techniques discussed in Chapter 3. For example, the sound of the aksara gum is usually manipulated using one of the pitch bending techniques, and the aksara ēda is usually played with a finger flick or a light stroke to the edge of the drum head. The transcriptions in this chapter will not include any technical symbols due to the difficulty of accurately notating the use of complex advanced techniques. Sinhala characters will also be left out, in order to enhance the clarity of the transcriptions of relatively complex drumming passages. A selected number of transcriptions, such as the one below, will show with crosses, the aksara most often produced using advanced techniques.

\[
\text{Figure 129: Bali pattern-A}
\]

As discussed in the tovil, artists describe these verses as keṭi kavi (short verses). The style in which the verses are sung (PR-A), sees the performers freely lengthening each line of a given verse. This often makes the length of different vocal lines vary. The following transcription illustrates the performance of one instance of such a verse (Appendix 7,
track 1). In this, Daniel sings the first line. The length of this first line ends up to be eight cycles of *bali* pattern-A. Susantha, who sings the second line of the verse, waits until Daniel has completed the first line. Unaware and unconcerned about the length of the line which had just been recited, Susantha commences the second line at the start of the next drumming cycle. Sometimes this means that the two voices slightly overlap at the start of each line. The second line in this instance is 12 cycles of *bali* pattern-A. The third line, again sung by Daniel, has a length of 11 cycles of *bali* pattern-A. The fourth line of the verse, sung by Susantha is 12 cycles of the pattern. Because the length of each line is varied in this way, the drummer needs to have a thorough understanding of the dance and know each line of the verse, in order to play embellishments. During the first two lines, Prasantha uses advanced techniques to play softer and draw out the subtleties of the drum. During these lines, the dancers move on the spot. In the latter half of the verse i.e., the third and fourth lines, the dancers move around in a circle. The drum embellishments of these lines are played in response to these movements of the dancers. Drum embellishments within repetitive patterns in *bali* rituals are always prompted by the dancer in this way. These embellishments are significantly louder than in the first half of the verse.
Bali pattern-A ends with a short transitional pattern (labelled transition pattern-A). This pattern shows how the bali ritual drummer uses his intuitive knowledge of the dance to freely embellish the sections of this pattern played at bara. The timing is dictated by the dancers and the drummer uses kannilam, as discussed with respect to bara patterns in the other rituals. However, the embellishments are much freer in this ritual. The regularity of the beat is totally discarded as the drummer freely plays rhythms in between the spaces where the dancers step the akṣara of the pattern. Not all akṣara stepped by the dancers are marked by the drummer and this makes it difficult for the listener to hear how the drumming is related to the framework of the pattern.

The basic framework of akṣara in the pattern is as follows. When discussing this pattern, artists only refer to this basic framework, as the drumming embellishments are spontaneous in each performance. The time codes for the points marked A (00’15”), B (00’19”), and C (00’21”) of the audio example of the pattern (Appendix 7, track 2)
attempts to assist the reader in following the framework of the pattern. The first repeated section is in a tempo faster than the pattern played previously. This is one of several cueing patterns that the dancers make when leading into a transition. The remainder of the section is in *bara*.

![Figure 131: Transition pattern-A](image)

The transition leads to the first recitation of ritual inception verses in metrical time (PR-A). Artists recognize these verses as *tāl kavi* (verses in metrical time). Compared to the short verses examined earlier, when playing verses in metrical time, the drummer constantly embellishes the pattern.

The drumming pattern, labelled *bali* pattern-B, initially accompanies these recitations. The pattern is felt in a slow four-beat cycle. The subdivisions of the beat in the embellishments of the pattern are divided into groups of three to six. The artists do this effortlessly because they strongly feel the longer four-beat cycle of rhythm. The elements of dance and the voice in the performance of this pattern make the performance as a whole, polyrhythmic. The dancer’s steps are in five and the recitations are phrased in three. The polyrhythmic nature of this pattern makes the beat seem extremely illusive. Sandhoris Jayantha identified this pattern as a slow variant of *sarala pada*-C from the
devol māḍuva ritual. The connection between the two patterns will be explored later (section 6.5). Another feature of metrical recitations in bali rituals is that the singer always starts a set of verses by himself. The following transcription outlines an example of the rhythm of a vocal phrase that would cue the start of bali pattern-B. The phrase is sung in a slurred manner.

![Figure 132: Rhythm of vocal cue for bali pattern-B](image)

The drummer is expected to accompany the singer within the first cycle of the pattern. The point marked (x) on both transcriptions above and below, is where the drummer usually starts playing bali pattern-B during this first cycle.

![Figure 133: Bali pattern-B](image)

The bali pattern-B is one of few occasions where the drummer improvises within a “model”\(^\text{164}\) or repetitive framework of a verse that is fixed in length.\(^\text{165}\) Here, I use the term ‘improvise’ rather than ‘embellish’ as the rhythmic motifs heard in the drumming do not follow a repetitive formula or cycle. Artists of the tradition do not explicitly recognize improvisation as a musical process, and therefore are unable to comment on

---


\(^{165}\) Two other instances are the improvisation in sarala pada-C in the tovil (section 5.5) and in bali-pattern-E in section 6.6.
improvisatory thought processes in any detail.\(^{166}\) However, as mentioned in section 5.5, artists distinguish improvised drumming such as this, by identifying the drumming to ‘occur in a continuous flowing string’ or \(\text{vālaṭa galāgena enava}\).

The drumming of \(bali\) pattern-B is used in this chapter as an opportunity to analyze the ‘building blocks’\(^{167}\) of its improvisation. For the purpose of analysis, I consider three separate performances of \(bali\) pattern-B played by the three artists Prasantha, Daniel and Susantha. The analysis attempts to recognize a set of rhythmic motifs, from which the artists draw to improvise within this pattern. It also shows any individual characteristics of the drumming of the three artists when improvising on this pattern.

Prior to analysing the drumming of the pattern, it is necessary to explain the framework of the verse, in which the improvisation occurs. The verse in this instance consists of four lines and the length of one line accommodates two cycles of \(bali\) pattern-B. As explained with \(bali\) pattern-A, the drumming improvisations are made in response to the dancer moving with more emphasis. The dancer may cue the improvisations in such a manner during the second, third or fourth lines. Once the cue is made the improvisations occur till the end of the verse. The end of the verse is also cued by the dancer and the improvisation finishes on the first beat of the next cycle. The drumming at the start of the

\(^{166}\) However, Sutton considers artists’ comments to be important in the analysis of improvisation: “We need to pay heed both to the sound structures and to what musicians who have produced these structures have to say about the process whereby they produced them.” Sutton, 73.

\(^{167}\) Nettl uses this term to identify “units of musical content such as gestures or motifs … whose manipulation is a major component of improvisation in some cultures.” Bruno Nettl and Melinda Russell, eds., \textit{In the Course of Performance: Studies in the World of Musical Improvisation} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) 14.
verse is generally subtle, similar to *bali* pattern-A. The improvisatory segments are generally louder, however this varies among the three artists.

The first set of transcriptions below is two verses of Prasantha’s improvisation (Appendix 7, track 3). The improvisations begin at the end of the second line of the verse. The drumming prior to this is not transcribed as it is an embellishment of the basic pattern. Each sequence of *akṣara* of the improvisation is labelled for analysis. Any repetitions of a particular sequence of *akṣara* will be labelled the same as at its first occurrence. The label uses a number prefixed with a letter which represents the artist i.e., P for Prasantha, D for Daniel and S for Susantha. In addition, the labelled sequences of *akṣara* are also intended to highlight the absence of any strict repetition which occurs throughout the entire verse.

![Figure 134: Prasantha bali pattern-B improvisation verse 1](image-url)
In the table below, I categorize the above 22 *akṣara* sequences of Prasanth’s improvisatory segment into 13 groups of rhythmic motifs, considering only the rhythmic component of the *akṣara* sequences. Such a framework will be used for this analysis as the choice of *akṣara* within a rhythmic motif occurs spontaneously to each performance and performer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rhythmic motif</th>
<th>Akṣara sequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>P4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>P1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>P2, P10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>P5, P9, P13, P15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>P6, P18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Akṣara" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Akṣara" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Akṣara" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Akṣara" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Akṣara" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Akṣara" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Akṣara" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Akṣara" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4: Akṣara sequences of Pranatna**

The second set of transcriptions below, present two verses of *bali* pattern-B played by Daniel (Appendix 7, track 4). The *akṣara* sequences of the improvisatory segments are labelled similar to Pranatna’s. Daniel’s change of dynamics between the pattern embellishments and the improvisations is relatively small compared to Pranatna’s.
The table below amends the previous table (table 4) by including akṣara sequences from Daniel’s improvisations, which are categorized into 12 groups of rhythmic motifs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rhythmic motif</th>
<th>Akṣara sequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>P4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>P1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The final two transcriptions are of the same pattern played by Susantha (Appendix 7, tracks 5-6). His improvisatory passages are played at a similar volume to Prasantha’s.

![Figure 138: Susantha bali pattern-B improvisation verse 1](image-url)
The final table of the analysis below includes 14 rhythmic motifs used by Susantha. It shows that aside from the level of dynamics, and the starting points, the three improvisations consist of a high degree of similarity. Eleven motifs (shaded rows of the table) of the three artists’ vocabulary are common to two or more artists. These shared motifs can be considered to be the motifs that make the improvisations idiomatic of the Low-Country drumming style in this particular context. This means that the accepted level of originality and individuality of improvisation in Low-Country drumming is very subtle.\footnote{Sutton makes similar conclusions of improvisation by Javanese gamelan musicians with reference to gambang playing: “One may call the part ‘improvised’ only if one stresses that originality and invention are evident at only a very subtle level and that too much of either will result in unidiomatic playing.” Sutton, 83.}
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rhythmic motif</th>
<th>Akṣara sequences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>P4, S9, S14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>P1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>P2, P10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>P5, P9, P13, P15, D6, D11, S1, S17, S21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>P6, P18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>P7, P16, D15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>P8, P17, S20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>P11, S12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>P19, D1, S22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>P3, P20, D9, S15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>P21, P22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>P14, D7, D12, S2, S4, S18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>P12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>![Music Notation]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>![Music Notation]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>![Music Notation]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>![Music Notation]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>![Music Notation]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>![Music Notation]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>![Music Notation]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>![Music Notation]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>![Music Notation]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>![Music Notation]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>![Music Notation]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 6: Akṣara sequences of Prasanna, Daniel and Susantha**

A second transitional pattern, labelled transition pattern-B, concludes the verses of *bali* ritual inceptions (Appendix 7, track 7). This transition is longer compared to the transition pattern-A. The structure of it is common for all the remaining transitions of the ritual. The majority of the sections in the pattern are spontaneous and variable. However,
the final section is performed consistently in each performance. In the audio example provided, the transition is cued by the dancer with the akṣara sequence riṃ dahiṃ. The section (labelled A), on the transcription below, is a vaṭṭam pada where the dancers walk around in a circle. Within this section the dancers perform several repetitive patterns (one example is labelled B) which is started slowly and then quickens throughout the repetitions (similar to patterns explored in sāndā samayama of devol maḍuva). The drumming within these repetitive patterns may sound improvised, however it is relatively consistent throughout different performances. The patterns are broken up with the vaṭṭam pada. The second section (labelled C) consists of parts from the transition pattern-A, and this maintains continuity within the two transitions. The final section of the transition (labelled D) is the fixed component and artists identify this section as an adauva.

Section A

```
gat ta gat ga ta gat ta gum gu nda
```

Section B

```
dom ga ta gu nāa gata gu ndi taku dahiṃ gat ga tu ga di gu ta ga di ta ka dahiṃ
```

Section C

```
dahiṃ dit dahiṃ gum riṃ ta gu gu nāa ga ta ga di ta ka riṃ ga ta gu nāa ka dahiṃ
```

roll is extended to dancer’s preference
Section D

Figure 140: Transition pattern-B

6.5 Placing of ceremonial objects on the patient’s feet

Similar to the tovil ritual, the recitations during this segment describe the origin of the ceremonial objects that will be placed at the patient’s feet at the conclusion of the segment. The segment opens with a blessing of ‘āyubō āyu ārakṣā vēvā!’ literary, ‘may you have a protected long life!’, and this is carried out at the start of each segment for the remainder of the ritual. A short introductory pattern usually accompanies this blessing (ārambhaka pada-F). The recitations of verses are in the style of PR-A and these verses change through a number of metres. A number of transitional patterns are associated with these metres. Their inclusion in the performance depends on the scale of the ritual as mentioned in the start of this chapter.

Several verses are initially recited with the drumming of bali pattern-B. The transition from bali pattern-B to another pattern is often made subtly. In this instance the pattern changes to one which is in three (labelled bali pattern-C). The change is cued by the change of phrasing of the vocal recitations. Compared to the vocal phrasing that cues bali pattern-B (figure 132), the rhythm of the vocal phrasing which cues bali pattern-C, notated below, is more even. However, the change is subtle because the new pattern i.e., bali pattern-C is played at a tempo which is roughly three times that of bali pattern-B.
This makes the transition between the two patterns smooth. The point marked (Y) is where the drummer usually starts to accompany the voices.

![Figure 141: Rhythm of vocal cue for bali pattern-C](image)

When a pattern is changed in this way, the dancer commonly moves with intent, which cues the drummer to embellish in the new metre before it is played in its basic form. This kind of transition cannot be performed successfully unless the drummer is highly responsive to the subtle vocal cues of the dancer. The transcription below provides two verses of this pattern. The supplementary audio recording (Appendix 7, track 8) starts in the last line of a verse in bali pattern-B, in order to demonstrate the vocal change. On the audio, the following transcription starts at 00’11”. The use of dynamics is also apparent as the drumming in the first verse is considerably louder than the second. The second verse of the transcription also reveals that this pattern is an embellished version of sarala pada-D using advanced techniques.
Figure 142: Bali pattern-C and embellishment

This metre concludes with the same *iraṭṭiya* (ending) that is associated with the end of the *kālapaṇḍam* segment in the *devol maḍuva* ritual. Unlike current performances in the *devol maḍuva*, this pattern is performed in full at this ritual.

The next pattern in the ritual, labelled *bali* pattern-D, is the only instance in the rituals studied where the music shows a connection to the Up-Country tradition of drumming and singing. The vocal range of the singing style (PR-F), which is around 10 semitones, is wider compared to any other vocal recitations of the Low-Country. This pattern provides musical evidence to support the view that the *bali* ritual was “initially associated
almost exclusively with Kandyan royalty.”\textsuperscript{169} The basic pattern is as follows (Appendix 6, track 49). As seen with other patterns in this ritual, advance techniques are used to make the drumming lighter.

![Figure 143: Bali pattern-D](image)

The transition associated with this pattern, labelled transition pattern-C, shows further influence of the Up-Country tradition (Appendix 6, track 50). It is in four beats and contains a regular beat throughout, unlike any of the other transitions seen in this ritual. However, its framework is similar to transition pattern-B, where a \textit{vaṭṭam pada} (section A) and variations (section B) are followed with a fixed pattern or \textit{aḍauva} (section C). The transcription of the pattern with the different sections labelled is as follows.

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics{figure143}
\caption{Bali pattern-D}
\end{figure}

Section A

Section B

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics{figure144}
\caption{Variations of Bali pattern-D}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{169} Fleisher, 38.
Section C

The next two metres (labelled *bali* pattern-E, F) are embellishments of the Low-Country patterns *sarala pada*-C, B respectively. In the *bali* ritual these patterns are embellished and varied using advanced techniques. One particular embellishment of *bali* pattern-E shown below (Appendix 7, track 9), demonstrates the pattern’s connection to *bali* pattern-B. The shaded phrases highlight the similarity of the two patterns and provide reasoning for why Jayantha claims that *bali* drumming-B is a slow version of *sarala pada*-C.

The segment ends with a recitation of a *sanna* with the shaking of the hand-bells to place the ceremonial objects at the patient’s feet. Similar to the *tovil* ritual, the patient is invited
to place their right foot on the items and say ‘kāpai’ or ‘it is done,’ as commonly seen in instances when offerings are made.

6.6 Chanting of the thread with pirit (pirit huya)

In this segment, the dancer holds the pirit huya, which is a white ball of string associated with the protective Buddhist chant, pirit. The string also features in the pirit ceremony mentioned in Chapter 1. It is customary for Sinhala Buddhists to wear a ‘chanted’ pirit string around ones wrist for protection against malevolent spirits.

The opening of the segment is similar to the start of the ritual. The recitations in this segment describe inception stories of the pirit huya. A sloka and sanna in the style of (PR-E) follows with bali pattern-A then bali pattern-B. As described in the previous segment, bali pattern-B is changed smoothly to another pattern with a vocal cue. In this instance, it is changed to bali pattern-E, which is played roughly at double the tempo of bali pattern-B. This pattern is another instance where the drummer improvises, however the vocabulary of the improvisation will not be considered here. Similar to the transition to bali pattern-C in the previous segment, this pattern begins with an improvisation. A similar improvisation of this pattern was explored in the tovil ritual in section 5.5. In contrast to the tovil performance, the tempo in this instance is slower and the drumming is less busy (Appendix 6, track 51). It is played with less attack and there’s also a lesser use of the powerful dom aksara. This reflects the drummer’s intention to perform within the general feel of the ritual, which is more tranquil compared to the tovil.
The recitations continue in bali pattern-D, C and G. The segment concludes with a short ending pattern similar to the one associated with bali pattern-C. The string is given to the patient to hold as the performers recite a Buddhist chant (PR-E) to pay homage to the Three Refuges and bless the patient.

6.7 Unveiling of the curtain to display the altars

This short segment of unveiling the curtain consists of no new musical material. The dancer performs with a lit torch during this segment. In brief, the segment opens with a recitation of a sloka (PR-E) accompanied by hand-bells, followed by recitations of verses that describe the unveiling of the curtain in bali patterns A, C and G. The curtain is unveiled abruptly, similar to the tovil ritual. However, this moment is less dramatic in comparison to the tovil ritual. Hence, this moment is emphasized with the dancer igniting a number of flames with resin, dancing towards the altar and performing ārambhaka pada-A.

6.8 Offerings made to planetary deities

The offering of food to the graha deities are presented either in a pot with a small lit-torch affixed on top and on a tray. A recitation of a sloka in the style of PR-E is made at
the beginning of the segment. A family member is then asked to place the food in the tray made for the offerings, in the main altar. The short performance of the segment opens with recitations while making the offerings, in the style of PR-G accompanied by the same vattam pada seen at the start of the (vattam pada-B). This is followed with a lighter and faster version of bali pattern-A and the hand bell is shaken freely. The drumming is considerably lighter compared to the tovil. However, the performance does convey a feeling of anticipation when invoking supernatural beings.

6.9 Singing verses for the planetary deities (graha kavi)

The segment of graha kavi highlights the different metres of the Low-Country bali rituals. The verses describe the graha deities and make references to their appearance, their palaces, vehicles and other luxuries. The verses also request the blessings of these deities to the patient. The metres of the verses are changed on cue in this segment with no significant transitions in-between. Some metres are changed with standard ending-phrases or hamärē, which are associated with each repetitive pattern (see Appendix 1-A). The beat within each metre is generally regular and the dynamics of the drumming remain relatively constant at a low level. Most patterns played during this segment have already been introduced (i.e. bali pattern-C, bali pattern-D bali pattern-E, bali pattern-F). A pattern unexplored up until this point, labelled bali pattern-H, is in seven beats. As noted in the transcription below it is played lightly, solely using advanced techniques (Appendix 7, track 10). The example of the embellishment occurs at 00’12” in the supplementary audio track.

---

170 Sandhoris Jayantha, 1 September 2007.
6.10 Blessings with oil lamp threads

A family member is requested to light 54 oil lamp threads and hand them over to the performer reciting verses in front of the patient. The number is associated with the different types of dōsa a human can be subjected to. The recitations are in the style of PR-A with bali pattern-F. The verses intend to extract the dōsa out of the patient’s body. Each thread is caste on a bowl of coconut milk which is believed to be a disinfectant and symbolizes a form of irradiating the patient’s dōsa.

6.11 Warding off the malevolent spirits and ritual conclusion

This segment, being the most intense of the ritual, consists of recitations (PR-A) that intend to ward off malevolent spirits around the ritual house. The dancer moves through the house throwing handfuls of resin igniting flames in an act of cleansing the entire house. The drumming pattern sarala pada-D is played aggressively as in the tovil ritual. Recitations of thanksgiving to deities and teachers follow immediately. The dancers cue and perform the phrase guṇda guṇda gata gata, as introduced in transition pattern-A, in order to conclude the dance with ārambhaka pada-A. The bali ritual concludes as the pūjā bera is played in a similar way to both the other rituals studied. During this solo
drumming piece the dancers pay homage to the Buddha. Finally, the patient is reassured that all dōsa affecting him/her have been cancelled and he/she is invited to stand up.

6.12 Chapter summary

The experience of the performers in the bali ritual allows for a high level of spontaneity in the ritual’s performance. This is most evident in the segments of drumming that are improvised. Improvisation in drumming was explored in this chapter, in the context of one repetitive pattern (bali pattern-B) unique to this ritual. The analysis identified the framework and the ‘building blocks’ of the improvisatory vocabulary. It was discovered that a large proportion of the rhythmic motifs were common among different drummers and these can be considered idiomatic of the Low-country style. In addition, each drummer uses a small proportion of rhythmic motifs that are unique to the individual. This means that originality and individuality is only accepted in Low-Country drumming at a very subtle level.

Drumming embellishments in this ritual also consist of a significant element of spontaneity and this allows them to be labelled as free-embellishments. However, these differ from the sections of improvisations as the drumming consists of recognizable patterns of repetition. The embellishments played at lower volumes see the extensive use of advanced techniques on the drum. During these segments drummers draw out subtle sounds from the drum and contribute to the soothing nature of the ritual. The louder embellishments of drumming are played in response to cues given by the dancers and this is also the case with improvisations. Embellishment is seen extensively in the ritual’s drumming in frameworks such as variable length verses, fixed length verses, repetitive
patterns and transitions. The spontaneous decisions require each performer of the ritual to have a deep understanding of drumming, especially dancing and vocal styles. Several dance and vocal cues that performers use were identified within this chapter. In addition, several types of transitions are used by the artists in the performance of the bali:

1) Smooth transition between sections (i.e., introduction of hand-held bells in section 6.3 and introduction of drumming in section 6.4).

2) Changing the vocal phrasing of the recitations (i.e., the transitions of bali pattern-B to bali pattern-C in section 6.5 and bali pattern-B to bali pattern-E in section 6.6).

3) Introducing a new pattern with embellishments and improvisations (i.e., the same transitions as mentioned in 2) above).

4) Long patterns that feature the dancers (i.e., transition patterns-A, B and C)

5) Standard ending phrases or hamāre associated with repetitive patterns (i.e., patterns in section 6.9)

The bali ritual consists of a relatively small vocabulary of patterns. One particular pattern in the vocabulary (bali pattern-D), is evidence of the original connection of the ritual to the Kandyan Kingdom. Some other patterns are derived from the devol māduva ritual. Bali pattern-B, being one such pattern, is the only polyrhythmic drumming pattern of the Low-Country repertoire. Even though the vocabulary of patterns is derived from these different sources, the transitions maintain continuity in the ritual. Artists finely balance the element of spontaneity and fixed aspects of the performance to make the bali ritual include the highest standard of Low-Country performance.
Chapter 7

The Change in the Ritual and the Future of Low-Country Drumming

The contemporary Sinhala Buddhist rituals are undergoing a number of changes: decline of the traditional ritual, rise of small-scale rituals, spiritual practices and large-scale, exhibitive displays of the traditional, communal rituals. In this chapter, it will be argued that these changes and the future of the Low-Country drumming is uncertain in the context of the ritual. The need to bring forth the performance elements of the Low-Country ritual to the concert stage, in order to ensure the survival of Low-Country drumming in the future is highlighted. This is particularly so, with performances that present the music of a single ritual, unlike the contemporary traditional music concerts which present excerpts of rituals as items which are limited to several minutes. A collaboration project which involved the author, three performer informants and three New Zealand musicians is presented as one successful approach to introducing the Low-Country ritual music onto the concert stage. A discussion of the process reveals aspects which made the collaboration successful and means by which Low-Country drumming can have a more world-wide exposure in the future.

7.1 Decline of the traditional ritual

Traditional, Sinhala Buddhist villages consisted of kin groups and nuclear families, which gave the villagers a strong sense of community. Because of this, the traditional rituals of bali, tovil and mađu, were staged with the help from neighbours, relatives and
members of the community, regardless of whether the rituals were intended for the entire community or for an individual. Several scholars have associated the decline of the traditional rituals with a number of sociological and economic factors:

1) Loss of sense of community that existed in traditional villages
2) Rising costs
3) The extensive time demanded by rituals
4) Need to maintain privacy in contemporary society
5) Class associations with rituals (especially with tovil)

The lack of sense of community in contemporary society has meant that families staging rituals cannot depend on outside support. Obeyesekera and Gombrich recognize population growth and urbanisation as key factors which have created this diminished sense of community. They state that villages in “the whole western and southern littoral and the central area around Kandy”\(^{171}\) have expanded until they converge. Further, “Socially, many villages within about twenty miles of Colombo have in fact become suburbs. These villages have little or no social cohesion.”\(^{172}\) Urbanisation has also meant that the bulk of the material required for rituals cannot be gathered locally, unlike in the traditional villages.\(^{173}\)

The rising cost of staging rituals is another factor which has contributed towards their decline. Fleisher states that the exorcism rituals in the rural South coast are becoming extinct as “staging the ceremonies has become outrageously expensive even by upper-

\(^{171}\) Obeyesekere and Gombrich, 68.
\(^{172}\) Obeyesekere and Gombrich, 69.
\(^{173}\) De Silva, 94.
middle-class standards.”\footnote{Fleisher, 40.} De Silva in his study of *bali* rituals in the Bentota region, confirms this view: “until recently, not very much money was needed to put on a major healing ritual, partly because the performers were paid in kind … but today nothing can be done without money.”\footnote{De Silva, 94.}

The amount of time demanded from the hosts of the ritual is another factor contributing to the decline of rituals. De Silva states that, the general amount of time demanded from a patient’s family, of a minimum of twelve hours and an evening without sleep “is simply not practical for those who now have to cope with a fast moving capitalistic economy.”\footnote{De Silva, 97.} Fleisher presents a similar view: “the time commitment which the ceremonies demand of participants, generally a minimum of fourteen hours and an evening without sleep, is simply not viable for those of either the lower or the middle classes who now have to compete daily in a capitalist economy.”\footnote{Fleisher, 40.}

The need to maintain privacy in urbanised society has also contributed towards the decline of the traditional ritual. De Silva quotes a client of one of the rituals he witnessed, who stated that “beating drums in my house informs others of what was going on in my house.”\footnote{De Silva, 97.} This factor also threatens the performance aspects of the *tovil* and the *bali* rituals performed by my informants (see section 7.3).

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{Fleisher, 40.}
\item \footnote{De Silva, 94.}
\item \footnote{De Silva, 97.}
\item \footnote{Fleisher, 40.}
\item \footnote{De Silva, 97.}
\end{itemize}
The class association with the rituals, in particular the tovil ritual has seen their rapid decline. “Demon exorcisms are mainly a working-class and peasant practice, and are devalued by the middle class often because of their class associations and connotations.”179 In addition, Simpson states: “… for many Buddhists and particularly Buddhist priests, tovil was something of a bastard science practised by people of low caste whose rituals excite the senses in some very un-Buddhist ways.”180

7.2 Rise of small scaled rituals and spiritual practices

In addition to the decline of the traditional ritual, scholars have identified a rise in spiritual practices (i.e., worship of god’s in shrines), and small scaled rituals (i.e., transformed bali rituals), in contemporary society. Both these practices fulfil a primary function of the traditional ritual, which is to answer to practical individual hardship and crisis as they occur. Obeyesekere and Gombrich examine the worship of god’s in several shrines in Colombo and suggest that these practices are new to Sinhala Buddhists. In contrast, in Fleisher’s study of the Suniyam shrine on Baseline Road in Colombo, he concludes that these practices are a ‘translation’ of the traditional village ritual into urban society. De Silva’s account of the transformed bali rituals (in particular, at baliya and mal baliya), suggests a similar connection with the traditional rituals. Nevertheless, none of these new spiritual practices include any drumming or dance. The two studies of worship of gods in shrines reveal that these are generally carried out by a single priest and focus on textual recitations. De Silva also confirms: “The smaller bali rituals that I observed

179 Kapferer, 18.
did not include dance, drumming and comedy, but focused more in recitations with the participation of one *adura* [priest], rarely two or more.\(^ {181}\)

### 7.3 Large scale exhibitive displays

Given the rise of contemporary spiritual practices and small scale *bali* rituals, in addition to the decline of the traditional ritual, it is important to recognize where one could place the rituals *devol maṇḍuva*, Kalu Kumāra *samayama* and the *graḥa pūjāva* (or similar *bali* rituals) presented in Chapters 4-6. The majority of the *devol maṇḍuva* rituals I attended, attracted large audiences of around 500-1000 and were organized by youth community groups and political patrons. Some of these performances were videotaped and shown on national television. De Silva recognizes similar public performances of rituals as attempts of nationalist groups to preserve traditional culture.\(^ {182}\) Even though these performances preserve the ritual, their focus on entertainment see the drumming and dancing being compromised. De Silva foresees this: “it is difficult to see how these public performances can protect traditional forms of culture from external influences.”\(^ {183}\) Prasantha has expressed that this is one of the reasons as to why he has stopped performing in *devol maṇḍuva* rituals. Low-Country drumming in contemporary *devol maṇḍuva* rituals is being compromised in two ways:

1. **Loss of patterns of high artistic value** (e.g., *paṇḍam pada* *iraṭṭi* in the *sāndā samayama* segment, extensions of the *magul bera*, *telme pada*, Pattini *pada*).

2. **Replacement of patterns of high artistic value** (e.g., in the *sāndā samayama* and *telme* segments the longer patterns are replaced with simple repetitive

---

\(^ {181}\) De Silva, 95.  
\(^ {182}\) De Silva, 91.  
\(^ {183}\) De Silva, 93.
patterns. In the *telme* segment the longer patterns are replaced with Western gymnastic performances).

The Kalu Kumāra *samayama* and the *graha pūjāva* are both small scaled rituals and have also been affected by some of the factors that have seen the decline of the traditional ritual (section 7.1). Even the most fully fledged *bali* ritual included in this study, is considerably condensed compared to the traditional *bali* rituals, such as those witnessed by Kariyawasam. Among the most notable differences are the time taken to set up, the replacement of the clay figures of the planetary deities with pictures of deities on paper. Kariyawasam’s description below provides an account of the traditional *bali* ritual:

The preparation for the *bali* ceremony takes a day or two. Plantain stems, tender coconut leaves, coconut and arecanut racemes, powdered resin, limes, betel, torches made by wrapping clean rags around dry reeds (*vilakku* and *pandam*), coconut oil, flowers of different colors, and burnt offerings are among the main items needed. Plastic clay and reeds will be needed in large quantities to cast the *bali* figures. Life-size images of the planetary deities are molded from these and painted beautifully in bright colors... . When everything is ready, with the *bali* figures propped up leaning against a wall and the patient seated by a side facing the figures, the chief *bali* artist starts the proceedings by taking the Five Precepts and reciting a few benedictory stanzas while the drummers start drumming... . A live cock, with its legs tied together so that it cannot run about, is placed in a corner as an offering to the evil spirits. This is a kind of scapegoat, for all the evil influences of the patient are supposed to be transferred to this bird, which is released on the following morning. The ceremonies actually end early in the morning when the artists carry the clay images (*bali* figures) and the altars of offerings or *pideni-tatu* and leave them at the cross-roads that the evil spirits who give trouble are believed to frequent.184

In contrast, Daniel usually arrives at the residence, sometime after 2 pm in the afternoon, to arrange the ritual. The host family provides the required articles for the ritual, according to a list provided to them, several weeks in advance. The duration of these rituals, which is on average eight hours in length, is four hours less than the minimum

---

184 A. G. S. Kariyawasam, 51. A more recent, yet, more or less similar description is given by de Silva.
time demanded for the traditional ritual. Most rituals are held on a Friday or a Saturday evening, because the ritual hosts are often free from any work commitments on the following day. The class association and the low regard for tovil explain the small and unfinished nature of the houses, in which the two Kalu Kumāra samayama were held. It also explains why these rituals are extremely rare compared to the bali rituals. I only encountered two Kalu Kumāra samayama rituals during my four fieldwork periods. Daniel generally charges 1500 rupees per individual for a ritual, which is considerably less than what a performer would charge for an evening’s work in any other setting (i.e., popular music or Western music would be around 5000 rupees). Regardless of this lower price, often he can only afford to take one of his sons, even though he prefers the participation of both sons, as it makes the performance more colourful and less strenuous on the individual performers.

What most distinguishes the Kalu Kumāra samayama and the graha pūjāva from the rising contemporary spiritual practices mentioned above, is the fact that these consist of the performance elements of Low-Country drumming and dance to the highest level. The question arises as to why these rituals still consist of these performance elements. It can be explained with reference to the attitudes of my performer informants who conduct these rituals:

1) They have a strong connection with the performance outside of the practice of rituals. That is both Prasantha and Susantha are free-lance traditional musicians.

2) They recognize the importance of performance in the ritual. That is, all three artists Daniel, Susantha and Prasantha believe that the “drumming and dance
relaxes the mind and provide the patient with some psychological relief in the ritual.”

Nevertheless, there were a number of instances in which the performance component of the rituals carried out by my informants came under threat. At the *hat adiya* ritual which was held at a middle-upper class house in Navala (an inner suburb of Colombo), the host family asked whether the ritual could be carried out with minimum noise. At another instance, Prasantha and Daniel went to carry out a *graha pūjāva* in an apartment complex in Narahenpita (Colombo). Due to sound restrictions they had to carry out the ritual without drumming or dancing. In a number of other occasions, Daniel asked Prasantha to take the *gāṭa beraya* instead of the *yak beraya*, as the sound of the *gāṭa beraya* tends to travel less compared to the *yak beraya*. However, both artists prefer to use the *yak beraya* as the patterns played in these rituals have been developed for the *yak beraya*. Apart from the one instance of the apartment complex, the preference of the ritual hosts to minimize sound can be identified with the need to maintain privacy, mentioned above.

The fact that Low-Country drumming and dance is being compromised in the *devol maṭuva*, the event of a Kalu Kumāra *samayama* is extremely rare, and the performance elements of the *bali* ritual are being threatened, make the future of Low-Country drumming uncertain in the context of the ritual. In addition, the music of the ritual is generally not performed in any other contemporary performance context, including the concert hall, except as items which are confined to a few minutes (see section 1.7 in Chapter 1). This is not because the music is considered to be too sacred. In fact the exact

---

reason for this is unknown and requires further research. A number of reasons, however, are evident:

1) The music of the rituals is too strongly associated with the rituals as well as its ritualistic aspects.

2) The music of the rituals is not generally appreciated for its artistic value (evident from the *devol maḍuva* ritual).

3) The music of the Low-Country rituals may be not regarded as being worthy of being performed in concert settings. This may be due to its traditional association with the lower castes.

If the music of the Low-Country rituals is to survive and be preserved in a context which would allow it to evolve without being compromised, it has to be brought into the contemporary concert stage, particularly to a context which would present the music of a single ritual comprehensively. This may also open up the possibility of exposing the music internationally. Howard suggests a similar approach to globalize Korean music: “… to develop an audience in a specific country or territory requires touring musicians to move from the commonly proposed pick–‘n’–mix to concerts dedicated to more solid sustained repertoire.”\(^{186}\)

### 7.4 Collaboration in Baliphonics

If presenting the repertoire of a Low-Country ritual, solely with Low-Country artists may not be successful, given the above reasons, then a collaborative performance, such as the

\(^{186}\) Howard, 351.
one discussed in this chapter, can be more favourable. Such a collaboration can introduce the performance elements of the Low-Country ritual (i.e., drumming, dance and singing) to the concert stage. An illustration of this is the ensemble which resulted from the collaboration project named Baliphonics. The name itself was chosen to promote the performance elements of the Low-Country ritual with a fresh approach. The name was also intended to weaken the performances strong connection with the ritual, so that it can be appreciated for its artistic value. Baliphonics included the author, three performer informants (Prasantha, Susatha and Daniel) and three New Zealand musician colleagues (Misha Marks, Isaac Smith and Reuben Derrick). The project was carried out in Sri Lanka, during the month of April 2009.

My Sri Lankan informants were confident that the completed project was a successful approach for keeping the Low-Country music alive in the future. They reflected on the Baliphonics as being successful, primarily because they felt that the collaboration did not compromise Low-Country drumming and dance in any way. “I have seen many instances where the Low-Country dance has been compromised. However, in this project we have not degraded the Low-Country dance or drumming in any way. It is time that we exposed this music to the world. I am very enthusiastic about doing more performances with this group in order to develop this further. No one can criticize us to say that we are degrading the art forms of Low-Country dance or drumming.”

The New Zealand artists were also highly satisfied with the way the collaboration enabled them to create a unique performance of high artistic integrity, without degrading the Low-Country art forms. In

---

187 Susantha Rupathilake, personal interview, 01 May 2009.
the remainder of this chapter, the process of this collaboration project is documented in order to highlight what made it successful.

7.5 Background for collaboration

Having being brought up in Sri Lanka and migrating to New Zealand at a young age, the idea of collaboration has allowed me to maintain my connections with the two countries. Having both insider and outsider views of both cultures, affords me an opportunity to identify, compare and merge my different perspectives of these cultures. Prior to the Baliphonics collaboration, I facilitated several projects which involved the collaboration of various musicians from New Zealand and Sri Lanka. In two instances, in 2002 and 2004, I and a number of New Zealand musicians travelled to Sri Lanka and collaborated with various popular singers and traditional percussionists.188 In 2005, on two separate occasions, I initiated collaborations between Piyasara Shilpadhipathi, a renowned traditional drummer, and Sunil Edirisinghe, a popular Sri Lankan singer, and a number of New Zealand musicians in New Zealand. These two projects made up the content of one of my honours projects.189 In January 2009, I brought over three musicians from the Sri Lankan State Music Ensemble to collaborate with two musicians from Wellington, which resulted in a New Zealand-wide tour.190 I performed with these groups playing harmonium, Western drum set and various percussion instruments including Sri Lankan drums.

188 The recordings of these performances can be heard in a compact disc titled ‘Serendipity’ which is an album produced by a New Zealand ensemble I was part of called Mundi.
190 This project including several others were funded by Creative NZ: Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa.
The idea for the Baliphonics collaboration first came to me in 2008 in New Zealand, during a period away from the field. At this time, I was learning the drumming patterns of the bali ritual and improvising in the style of bali pattern-B. I had started to play these patterns using my main instrument (the jazz drum set), as it was necessary for me to communicate my understanding of these patterns with my informants through performance. At that stage I did not have the technical ability to play these patterns on the yak beraya as such skills require a number of years of extensive drumming on the yak beraya itself. Over a period of several months, these patterns made up an increasing proportion of my improvisational vocabulary while I was engaged in musical performance. At this point I had truly begun the process of hybridizing my playing with the techniques and concepts I had absorbed over the study of Low-Country drumming. To agree with Snow, I was starting to see that there was a real possibility of appropriating techniques from Low-Country drumming and integrating them into the contemporary Western musical context.191

A catalyst for the Baliphonics project occurred when a Sri Lankan community organization in Wellington, New Zealand, requested me to organize a performance for a musical evening. For this event, I chose to organize a piece based on the Low-Country pattern sarala pada-D, which I had studied closely. The performance included two fellow New Zealand musicians (Misha Marks and Isaac Smith) and a Sri Lankan community member (Chalanka Athalage) who had a limited knowledge of Low-Country dance. The performance itself, even though very well received, did not reach the concept’s full

potential. More importantly, the experience, suggested to me that there was a strong need for a more carefully considered collaboration to take place, with the ritual musicians in Sri Lanka. Within a few weeks, my enthusiasm for such a project grew, and thus I suggested the idea of this collaboration to Prasantha and his family. I mentioned to Prasantha that I was planning to bring over a number of New Zealand musicians for this project and he was immediately enthusiastic at this suggestion. I received a similar response from Jayantha, when I mentioned the idea to him. Upon request, Jayantha even wrote a letter of support to assist the process of seeking funds, in order to make this collaborative project come to fruition.\footnote{This was Sandhoris Jayantha’s last letter (see Appendix 4).} This initial, positive response encouraged me, as it suggested that both Prasantha and Jayantha were confident of such a collaboration being successful. Even though I initiated the project, both of them, being passionate about their art form, would not have shown this initial interest if they felt that such a collaboration would degrade the music and dance of the Low-Country. To them, my suggestion felt like a natural continuation from the progression of events that occurred during my second fieldwork period. During this time, Jayantha had grown to respect my background and performance experience in jazz and improvising contexts, and I was requested to teach the Western drum set to his son.\footnote{This is a kind of reciprocal action identified by Shelemay in: Gregory F. Barz and Timothy J. Cooley, eds., \textit{Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 189.} Prasantha had also showed interest in taking part in a collaborative performance of some sort during this same fieldwork.

During my third fieldwork period, it was decided that the \textit{bali} ritual was most suitable to use as a framework for the collaboration. The \textit{bali} ritual was chosen because it is performed more often than the \textit{tovil}, and it meant that the visiting artists from New
Zealand would have a higher chance of seeing the performance in its original context. This was going to be essential for the collaboration’s success. The *bali* also consists of lesser ritualistic aspects compared to the *tovil*, and it displays the highest spontaneity and use of improvisation. This meant that the performance component of the ritual could easily be appreciated for its artistic value.

### 7.6 Musicians in the project

The artistic excellence, experience, open mindedness and creativity of Prasantha, Susantha and Daniel were discussed in the Introduction of this thesis. The New Zealand musicians who were involved in the project were Misha Marks, Isaac Smith and Reuben Derrick. I have worked extensively with all three musicians in the past in various settings leading up to this collaboration. All three musicians have a reputation for exploring a vast range of both conventional and unconventional sounds using their instruments, a versatility which is essential in collaborating with a non-Western musical system. Similar to the Low-Country ritual musicians, the New Zealand musicians involved, primarily perform in a marginalized context of contemporary music, identified as ‘free’ music. The minimal limitations in the performance of free music meant that the New Zealand musicians were not going to constrain the Low-Country musicians in the collaboration, as opposed to musicians of another genre, who might follow more rules in the music making process.

Of the three artists, Misha Marks, born in 1983, has the most experience collaborating with Sri Lankan artists. Previous to this project, he travelled to Sri Lanka on two
occasions, in 2002 and 2004, in order to take part in the collaborations I facilitated. Misha was also involved in the collaborative concerts I organized in 2005, throughout New Zealand. With the experience of these projects, Misha was already familiar with working with Sri Lankan musicians, especially in the rehearsal process where communication was limited. Misha’s vast experience of playing with musicians in Spain, Mexico, Vienna, Barcelona and London has provided him the essential skills for working with musicians from other cultures. His jazz, Javanese gamelan, classical, flamenco and free music backgrounds all provided him with a wide range of skills. Especially, his ability to explore the possibilities that the classical guitar offers to its full potential, including preparing the instrument in a variety of ways to produce sounds that are not conventionally heard from the guitar, allows him to use the instrument to fulfil roles within a group not usually occupied by the guitar.

Isaac Smith, being the youngest of the three musicians, already had considerable collaboration experiences leading up to this project. He, too, has previous experience working with Sri Lankans, as he was involved in the project I facilitated in 2009. Isaac has developed considerable skills on the double bass, being a graduate from the New Zealand School of Music Jazz Program. His extensive collaborative work with theatre\(^\text{194}\) gave him a special interest in Low-Country dance.

Reuben Derrick (born in 1978) capitalized on his wide range of experiences of collaborating with various international musicians, during the Baliphonics collaboration. Reuben, having completed a Bachelor of Music in Performance from the Conservatorium

\(^{194}\) Isaac frequently performs with the New Zealand theatre company Indian Ink.
of Music in Sydney, resided in Australia for several years, from 2001-05, and regularly performed with leading Australian and international musicians.\textsuperscript{195} His special interest in music making in the outdoors and creating soundscapes using extended saxophone techniques\textsuperscript{196} allowed him to effectively collaborate with the chanting of the Low-Country rituals, which consists of subtle microtonal variations.

\textbf{7.7 The preparation prior to the collaboration}

The initial preparation for the collaboration itself provided an opportunity for the transcriptions of this study to be used in a practical context, rather than purely serving to preserve the drumming patterns. The three New Zealand artists were sent transcriptions of drumming patterns in the \textit{bali} ritual, in order to give them an appreciation for the different musical sections of the ritual. The transcriptions were accompanied by video and audio material as well as written notes to assist the artists’ understanding of the rhythmic patterns. This material was considered to be most valuable by the New Zealand musicians at this initial stage. The preparatory process for the Sri Lankan artists mostly involved discussions focused on choosing the music for the programme.

Preparation was carried out with the three New Zealanders on two separate accounts. Immediately after the performance that stimulated this project, Misha and Isaac were introduced to several drumming patterns from the \textit{bali} ritual, over a period of two to three months. Separately, Reuben was introduced to the music in preparation for a performance.

\textsuperscript{195} These include Jim Denley, Clayton Thomas and Chris Abrahams, Richard Nunns. He has also performed in festivals in Sydney, Hobart and Melbourne.

\textsuperscript{196} His solo album “Peeping behind the bucket” best demonstrates these skills.
I did with Reuben, around a month prior to the Baliphonics collaboration.\footnote{This was the launch of the New Zealand South Asia Centre at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand. March, 2009.} This performance also included a separate collaboration with a Bharatanatyam dancer, Mark Hamilton.

### 7.8 The collaborative process

The collaborative process occurred over three weeks in April 2009. My initial expectations for the success of the project were minimal. I had learnt from my previous experiences of musical collaborations, that I could not predict the success of the project until the project was well under way. In fact, similar to how musicians felt in Steve Coleman’s collaboration with Afrocuba De Matanzas,\footnote{Michael Dessen, “Improvising in a Different Clave: Steve Coleman and Afrocuba De Matanzas,” \textit{The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue}, eds. Ajay Heble and Daniel Fischlin (Wesleyan University Press, 2004) 179.} after the initial week of rehearsals, I felt doubt as to whether the collaboration would work at all. Similarly, Susantha, who was unable to take part in these initial rehearsals as he was unwell, said that “overhearing these rehearsals, I did not think that this would work!”\footnote{Susantha Rupathilake, 1 May 2009.} This collaborative process of Baliphonics will be discussed under the following headings: non-musical and social collaboration, establishing mutual respect, the Baliphonics programme, rehearsals and performances. The latter two sections will focus on the musical aspects of the collaboration.
7.8.1 Non-musical and social collaboration

The New Zealand musicians and I attended a mal baliya ritual carried out by Daniel, Susatha and Prasanth, a day after everyone had arrived on the island. During this initial first-hand experience of the ritual, the New Zealanders were equally fascinated with both the musical and non-musical aspects of the ritual. The altars, incense, offerings of fire and the hospitality of the ritual hosts, collectively gave the New Zealanders a great sense of enthusiasm to be involved in the project. During this mal baliya ritual, my informants introduced the New Zealanders to chewing betel leaves with areca nuts. Over the next few days, the New Zealander’s developed an appreciation for betel and this created a connection among the two groups of artists on a social level. Encouraged by the visitors’ attentiveness throughout the ritual, they were invited to another bali ritual, which was a Bhahirava pūjāva. During these initial meetings, the artists found connections on a number of levels. For example, Reuben and Prasanth discovered that they shared something in common, as they have children who are similar in age. Isaac’s interest in astrology developed a connection between him and Daniel. Also Isaac’s fascination with the dance resulted in him receiving casual lessons from Susantha. Misha developed an interest in demonology.

7.8.2 Establishing mutual respect

The New Zealanders had developed a high level of respect for my informants after the initial ritual experiences. Similarly, two separate performances enabled the Sri Lankan artists to develop a sense of musical respect for the New Zealanders. The first instance was when we visited Jayantha’s residence. Jayantha’s son was rehearsing with his band
which used Western instruments and the New Zealanders played an impromptu set upon request. Prasatha who witnessed this, expressed his appreciation of the New Zealander’s skills. The second instance was when the New Zealanders appeared as guest artists at ‘bera gī mihira’ concert organized by Prasantha. This performance was witnessed by all three Sri Lankan artists. Susantha after witnessing this performance said that it gave him more confidence that the collaboration could work.

These initial events which enabled both groups of artists to witness performances of each other contributed towards establishing a mutual respect for each others’ artistic capabilities. A parallel to these exchanges of performances is seen in Coleman-Afrocuba collaboration, where during the early stages of the collaboration, each group exchanged performances by playing something for each other.200

7.8.3 The Baliphonics programme

The Baliphonics programme was aimed to be roughly 70 minutes in length. This was a conscious effort to develop a performance which would be suitable for international festival programmes. Arranging the programme was primarily my task, however I relied on the input of all the artists involved and made a number of alterations throughout the rehearsal process. The final version, outlined below, which is designed to be performed without any breaks, lists each musical segment with brief descriptions of the performers’ involvement.

200 Dessen,179.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Performers</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Magul bera</strong></td>
<td>Prasanta and author</td>
<td>All three movements of the <em>magul bera</em> are played by both performers in unison.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verses in salutation to the</td>
<td>Initially Prasanta, Susantha and</td>
<td>Four verses are chanted. The hand-held bells are played in the third and fourth verses. New Zealanders and author create soundscapes to accompany the recitations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Refuges</td>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bali</em> pattern-A</td>
<td>All performers</td>
<td>Misha and Isaac play with the pattern. Reuben improvises phrases in response to the chanting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition pattern-A</td>
<td>Prasanta, Susantha and Daniel</td>
<td>This is performed as it is done in the ritual. Reuben changes instrument from soprano to tenor saxophone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bali</em> pattern-B</td>
<td>All performers</td>
<td>The New Zealander’s join in after the first verse. They state the rhythmic pattern of the last beat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bali</em> pattern-E</td>
<td>All performers</td>
<td>The performance gradually intensifies during this section. The section starts with variations of the <em>Bali</em> pattern-E, building from the previous section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition pattern-B</td>
<td>Prasanta, Susantha, Daniel and author</td>
<td>The performance reaches a peak during this section. This transition is performed more elaborately compared to the first.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical improvisation</td>
<td>Misha, Reuben, Isaac and author</td>
<td>This section is a free improvisatory section, featuring the New Zealanders. It provides a rest for the dancers. It contrasts with the previous sections where the rhythmic patterns were a strong feature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattern/Section</td>
<td>Performers</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bali pattern-B</strong></td>
<td>All performers</td>
<td>The previous section is merged with this pattern which is introduced for the second time. Here, the New Zealanders play from the beginning and develop what they played during the improvised section.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bali pattern-C</strong></td>
<td>All performers</td>
<td>This new pattern is introduced without a transition and is cued by the voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Iraṭṭiya of bali pattern-C</strong></td>
<td>All performers</td>
<td>The New Zealanders play on certain beats of this pattern, emphasizing the foreshortening structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bali pattern-D</strong></td>
<td>All performers</td>
<td>Featuring the Up-Country influence, this section releases the tension built up until this point with a wider ranged melody and more major tonality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transition pattern-C</strong></td>
<td>All performers</td>
<td>New Zealanders improvise over its first portion as the beat is regular. The final section of the pattern excludes the New Zealanders in order to feature the dance and the Sri Lankans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verses of planetary deities (graha kavi)</strong></td>
<td>All performers</td>
<td>The section gradually builds, starting from a pattern in 5 beats, 6 beats then 7 beats. Susantha and Daniel perform with lit-torches, similar to the ritual. As the patterns consist of regular beats, the New Zealanders are able to use their jazz vocabulary to improvise counter-phrases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Short recital of a sanna in order to conclude the</strong></td>
<td>Daniel and Susantha</td>
<td>This section is a low point of the performance which is...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The arrangement of the programme considered several aspects of musical collaboration:

1) Collaboration between the original ritual structure and musical aspects.
2) Balance of performance between the New Zealanders and Sri Lankans.
3) Balance between singing, dance, drumming and instrumental sections.
4) Balance between improvised and fixed sections of the programme.

The Baliphonics programme, to a large extent, was based on the original ritual structure. The beginning and the end of the programme followed the solo drumming patterns (*magul bera* and *pūjā bera*) of the original ritual structure, as these effectively framed the performance. The performance of these patterns with both the drummers (Prasantha and me) also intended to gain the attention of the audience. The sections containing ritualistic aspects were left out from the Baliphonics programme, and the focus was placed in shaping the performance by using the different musical sections of the ritual. The balance between the two groups of performers was created by including sections that featured one of the two groups by themselves. The section featuring the New Zealanders (musical improvisation) was arranged after the section of extensive dance by the Sri Lankans.
(transition pattern-B). In addition to creating the balance between the performers, this helped maintain continuity of the programme, as the dancers generally require a break after a section of extensive dance. As the Sri Lankans are featured more often in the programme, the duration of the musical improvisation was extended during the live performances to create some balance between the performers. The sections of the programme also created a balance between the different performance elements of dance, drumming, singing and instrumental. Unaccompanied recitations were used at low points of the performance. The whole ensemble, with the added visual component of fire, created the climax. The structure of the programme was fixed, however, there was extensive space to improvise within this structure. The lengths of each section varied between different run-throughs of the programme, as the changes were cued. This ensured that the spontaneity of the original ritual performance was uncompromised.

7.8.4 Rehearsals

Communication among the performers during the rehearsals was kept to a minimum, partly due to the linguistic barrier. I fulfilled the role of a translator when it was required. Generally, the artists enjoyed communicating through their instruments more. The rehearsals occurred during most days of the first three weeks and these sessions were recorded on a regular basis. The Sri Lankans were fascinated to see how Misha prepared his guitar using clothes pegs and blue-tack, similar to how the New Zealanders were initially fascinated with the ritual performances. The rehearsal process of the Baliphonics collaboration, with reference to group learning, challenges faced by the artists and the
general approaches of musicians follows, and is intended to illustrate, how the collaboration occurred on a musical level.

In the first few sessions, the rehearsals consisted of moving back and forth between playing different patterns in isolation (i.e., bali patterns A-E). The Sri Lankans were patient and pleased to repeat the patterns many times, until the New Zealanders were able to familiarize themselves with the timing. Most attention was paid to bali pattern-B as it was the most challenging for the New Zealanders, due to its polyrhythmic nature. The New Zealanders particularly had trouble feeling the beat, during sections where Prasantha improvised. Isaac commented on how he heard these improvisatory sections: “I can only hear Prasantha whacking the drums hard!” In this instance, I was able to assist the New Zealanders understand the improvisatory sections by acting as a bridge. In a number of focused sessions between myself and the New Zealanders, I improvised in the style of Prasantha, until the New Zealanders understood what Prasantha was playing. Another important form of group learning occurred in the process of listening back to the rehearsals, which were recorded regularly. This was most useful in reflecting on the progress of the project as it was carried out.

The New Zealanders were faced with the challenge of familiarizing themselves with the transitional patterns. The transitional patterns-A and B featured irregular timing, that unique feature of the Low-Country drumming patterns. If the New Zealanders were to contribute to these sections effectively, the patterns had to be thoroughly understood and internalized. In contrast, if these transitional patterns were arranged to be performed
strictly the same, each time, this would have helped the New Zealanders. However, this would have undoubtedly compromised the Low-Country dance and drumming. Even though initially the New Zealanders attempted to learn these patterns, it proved too difficult to be internalized within a short period. Therefore, these two transitional patterns were used as an opportunity to feature the Sri Lankan performers without the input of the New Zealanders. Similarly, Steve Lacy, an influential American saxophonist, acknowledges the challenges of internalizing unfamiliar systems of music when engaging in collaborations with musicians from other cultures. “Sometimes it’s impossible. Because in most cases like that [i.e., working with musicians from different cultures], they play what they play. They’re not going to suddenly learn … And I can’t do that, it would take me years and years to get that music in my blood. So we’re doing different things at the same time in the same place. It’s a question of really just finding some fragile thread, just to get the connection to it.”

The New Zealanders also had to learn to play with the vocal recitations which were not sung consistently, as the tessitura of the singing varied according to the energy levels of the Sri Lankans. This, too, was an essential quality of the music. Daniel stated that “generally, we strive to sing above the pitches produced by the drumming.” One of several methods the New Zealanders experimented with, in order to overcome this challenge, was tuning the double bass and the guitar to a number of different tones produced by the yak beraya. However, due to the unpredictability of this process, it was

---

decided that the musicians were best to confront this issue by determining the pitch of the chanting during each performance, and adjust the tuning on the instruments as required.

For the Sri Lankans, especially Daniel, being the oldest artist, a challenge was getting used to the structure of the new Baliphonics programme. The ritual has become an intuitive performance for Daniel and he is usually accompanied by musicians who are capable of closely following him during the performance. Thus, initially, he found it difficult to perform only the sections chosen for the Baliphonics programme in their new arrangement. However, Daniel overcame this challenge with the repetition of the Baliphonics programme at rehearsals.

The individual approaches of the New Zealand artists varied. All being experienced in free improvising, with high musical maturity, they were well capable of finding their roles in new musical environments. The techniques they brought into the music were highly personal and had been developed through their own music for a considerable period. Most importantly, their attitude was not to impose a stylistic genre on the Low-Country drumming or dance, rather complementing the expressive nature of these art forms. Considering my individual approach, I was not playing or mapping the syllables of Low-Country drumming patterns strictly or systematically on to the drum set.\(^{203}\) Rather, I had internalized the patterns and developed a method of playing the patterns on the drums so that they were recognizable to the Sri Lankans. This was proven in the process as the Sri Lankans were happy to dance being accompanied solely by the drum set. My understanding of the two different musical languages of the performers in the

\(^{203}\) Influenced by my lessons and conversations with the Australian drummer Simon Barker.
ensemble, allowed me to take part in sections that featured one of the groups of performers. In addition, I was able to spontaneously choose the style of improvisation within the different sections of the Baliphonics programme.

7.9 Performances

The rehearsals which were regularly carried out during the first three weeks of the Baliphonics collaboration, concluded with two performances. The first performance was made on 22 April 2009 at the John De Silva Theatre in Colombo, specifically for the purpose of creating a video recording of the Baliphonics programme. Therefore, this performance did not consist of an audience. The stage was decorated using altars similar to rituals and these were created by Prasanth at the theatre, around two hours prior to the performance. The Sri Lankan performers were dressed in the traditional ritual costumes. I and the New Zealanders were dressed in plain black costumes, in order highlight the traditional costumes. During this performance, we took a number of breaks and repeated some sections with which we were dissatisfied. This performance also acted as rehearsal for the second performance which did involve an audience. The following stage setup was used in both the performances.
The second performance was on 25 April 2009 at the Barefoot Gallery, in Bambalapitiya, Colombo, which is a venue which caters for tourists and the higher socio-economic sector of Colombo (a video of this concert is included in Appendix 9). The evening also included a performance of a popular local rock fusion band known as Triloka, which consisted of members aged 18-25. For this performance, I organized Jayantha’s son to build an altar, as Prasantha had prior commitments during the day of the performance. As the building of the altar at the venue was inconvenient I transported the altar to the venue from Jayantha’s residence. During the performance, Daniel unintentionally changed the order of some of the segments. However, the preparation during the rehearsals and the previous performance meant that the New Zealanders were able to follow Daniel without hesitation. Each artist received a payment of 8000 rupees each for this performance. The members of audience for the evening were mostly of young and middle ages. The responses of the performance were by and large positive. One audience member said that he did not expect the performance to be of such a high artistic integrity. Several members of Triloka who performed after the Baliphonics said that they could not concentrate during their performance, as they were overwhelmed and thrilled by the Baliphonics.
Another audience member said that the Baliphonics should aim to perform internationally. Perhaps the most open feedback was given to me by an audience member, when we were engaged in a causal conversation after the concert. When inquiring about what the band members were paid for the performance, the person asked with surprise “did the ritual musicians get paid that much?” This comment reveals the existing marginalisation of Low-Country ritual musicians in contemporary society.

7.10 Chapter summary

Several factors contributed towards the success of the Baliphonics collaboration:

1. Not compromising the Low-Country drumming, dance or singing in the process.
2. Minimal expectation of the outcome of the project.
3. The social and non-musical aspects of collaboration.
4. Effective group learning.
5. Artists experience, excellence and commitment.

If viewed purely as a contemporary performance which incorporates traditional Low-Country ritual music, the project could be criticized in a similar way to modern Korean music, illustrated by Hwang’s comments: “The utilization of kugak in modern composition poses the danger of political incorrectness, of accusation of ‘playing [one’s] ethnic trump card’ (Serra Hwang 2003), or ‘promoting exoticism or otherness to secure grants or performance’ (Na 2003).” However, as I have argued in the earlier part of

---

this chapter, it is critical that the performance elements of the Low-Country ritual is brought fourth onto the concert stage, and exposed internationally, if Low-Country drumming is to survive. The Balliphonics collaboration successfully avoided the greatest risk which could occur in the process, which is to compromise the art of Low-Country drumming. In addition to the exposure, if I had not taken the initiative to set up this collaboration, the performance aspects of the bali ritual, which demonstrate the Low-Country disciplines to the highest standard, would remain by and large hidden and unappreciated, providing little incentive for the younger musicians to pursue and master these art forms to the highest level. The inclusion of the New Zealand musicians, especially helped legitimize the performance aspects of the Low-Country ritual among the locals. The New Zealanders commitment also strengthened the Sri Lankans level of confidence to perform the ritual music as a specific repertoire on the concert stage. Placing the Low-Country musicians on equal grounds with Western musicians, would also have the long term effect of raising their economic and social standards. I believe that the Baliphonics performance reflects the music of the bali ritual in its totality, in a contemporary setting and “... is, in essence, that of the fashionable preservation movement, or of those who espouse ‘historically informed performances’ or the maintenance of tradition.”^205

^205 Howard, 354.
Conclusion

This study provides the first detailed documentation of the drumming of three Low-Country rituals: graha pūjāva, Kalu Kumāra samayama and devol maḍuva belonging to the three respective categories of bali, tovil and maḍu rituals. Examining the musical structures of the rituals has revealed the extensive repertoire of Low-Country drumming patterns. The most common drumming patterns are the short repetitive patterns (sarala pada) which accompany singing and simple dance. The second most common are the introductory patterns (ārambhaka pada) which are played at the beginning of any segment of dance. Many other patterns accompany different acts of the ritual, such as, salutations, blessings, cleansing, and making offerings. Others are specifically associated with dancers’ moves i.e., patterns where dancers go around in circles and decorative patterns where torches are waved. There are also longer patterns which are associated with specific segments of the devol maḍuva. Two other longer patterns magul bera and pūjā bera are the only solo drumming patterns of the Low-Country tradition. All these different pattern types in the Low-Country drumming repertoire contain characteristics that are unique to themselves. The longer patterns are often more complex and are made up of different sections. Artists recognize these longer patterns to be of the highest artistic value. The analysis of the drumming patterns identified three structural features of the patterns: extension, repetition and foreshortening. These features are common to most drumming patterns in the Low-Country. Even though these are not explicitly recognized in the tradition, experienced artists acknowledge how the identification of these features helps them memorize the drumming patterns. The lack of appreciation for these structures risk the patterns being lost, altered and disordered. Transcriptions of the
patterns and descriptions of drumming techniques also makes these more accessible for people interested in learning Low-Country drumming.

A study of the main instrument of the tradition, the *yak beraya*, focuses on its construction process and the relationship between the instrument and musician. The *yak beraya* is a double-headed, laced, cylindrical-shaped membranophone, played with both the hands and strapped around the player’s waist. The body of the drum is made using wood from trees with hard cores and the drumheads are covered with cow intestines. Little has changed in the current construction of the instrument compared to traditional instrument making methods. Currently, electric tools are confined to the making of the body of the drum, while the other steps in the making of the drum are still done by hand. The traditional instrument making practices involve certain rituals and these give the instrument a sacred quality. Even though these rituals are currently abandoned, it was found that drummers still have a deep respect for their instruments.

From an in-depth understanding of the Low-Country drumming, it was revealed that there are a number of aspects that make it highly expressive in nature. These aspects can be categorized as follows:

1. Timing
   a) Pulse, *akṣara* and dance
   b) Beat, accent and dance
   c) Tempo and dance

2. Embellishment and Improvisation
a) Degrees of embellishment
b) Individuality in improvisation

3. Dynamics
   a) Range and level of dynamics
   b) Dynamics of embellishment and improvisation cued by dance

4. Pitch
   a) Pitch of akṣara
   b) Pitch of singing and relation to drumming

5. Performance
   a) Relaxation
   b) Rudimentary exercises

The first feature of Low-Country drumming is its timing, which is unique and different from Western, Jazz and other Sri Lankan traditions. The most significant aspect of timing that gives it its character is the pulse. Low-Country drummers feel the pulse in terms of akṣara (drum syllables) rather than feeling the pulse in terms of the smallest, regular, units of time. The term ‘pulse’, therefore, in Low-Country drumming, can be used interchangeably with ‘akṣara’. The pulse is irregular and is often random and illusive. The irregularity of the pulse is what most accounts for the rhythmic nuances. How drummers feel this irregular pulse most significantly explains the unique way in which Low-Country drummers feel time. Akṣara are vocalized syllables and represent the smallest rhythmical unit. There are four basic akṣara known as tat, dit, toṃ and naṃ. These also refer to four basic drum strokes. In addition to the four basic akṣara, there are
many other akṣara that make up the drumming patterns of the tradition. Akṣara must be interpreted in the context of the drumming pattern and it generally refers to a combination of duration, stroke and timbre. The duration of different akṣara varies. Even the duration of the same akṣara may vary subtly, depending on the stroke and timbre. It is this variation that makes the pulse in Low-Country drumming irregular.

Dance in the Low-Country tradition influences most aspects of the drumming. This is because a large proportion of the drumming repertoire accompanies dance. In addition, both the drummers and dancers work from the same repertoire of patterns. The connection of dance to the irregular nature of drumming akṣara is most apparent in the short, repetitive, drumming patterns with regular beats. The dance of one of the most characteristic short patterns in the tradition, known as the gaman tālaya (walking metre), consists of a jagged movement, and it is in this visual movement that the irregularity of the drumming akṣara can be seen very clearly.

In addition to the irregular pulse, the beat is often illusive and irregular. The illusive nature of the beat is most apparent in patterns that consist of a string of short akṣara sequences. The beat is also extremely illusive in a particular pattern of the bali ritual i.e., bali pattern-B. This is both due to its embellishments that use varying subdivisions of the beat and the polyrhythmic nature of the performance as a whole. Other features of drumming that make the beat illusive include the playing of technical phrases in patterns in a rushed manner and the variation in duration of rolls within repetitive drumming and longer patterns. The irregular beat is most apparent in the longer drumming patterns,
which are played at a slow tempo, identified as bara. Experienced artists consider patterns played at the bara tempo to be the most expressive. This is because during these patterns, the dancer is allowed to dictate the timing of the drumming, without giving concern to keep a regular beat. At certain points within these patterns, the dancer is allowed to show expression using body movements. Patterns at bara reveal the most extensive connection between the drummer and the dancer, as both the drummer and the dancer perform in unison. In these patterns, drummers extensively use accents in order to emphasize the stronger beats. Silences are often filled by drummers using lighter strokes known as kannilam. The lighter strokes, when played by a group of drummers, often sound random and cluttered due to the heterophonic nature of the playing. However, they too contribute towards the overall expressive nature of the drumming. Patterns with regular beats usually accompany vocal recitations. Some of these consist of odd groupings of beats such as five and seven. As Low-Country drummers learn and refer to the patterns in terms of their akṣara, they are often unconcerned about the odd beat numbers. This also allows them to freely alternate between patterns with different beats.

Three tempos are recognized in the tradition as bara, haraṁba and kaḍinam. These three terms respectively refer to slow, medium and fast tempos. In addition, the terms are also associated with different qualities in performance. Bara is considered to be most expressive. Haraṁba meaning both ‘exercises’ and ‘medium’ is therefore the most commonly used tempo. The kaḍinam tempo sometimes sees the dancer appearing to be in a state of trance. The subtle acceleration and deceleration of tempo is most commonly used in short repetitive patterns played at the kaḍinam tempo. Drummers use this feature
to effectively control the intensity of the performance. A larger range of acceleration is used in repetitive dance patterns. At times, the acceleration during these patterns is so significant that the beat of the pattern undergoes a change during the latter repetitions of a pattern. Another two drumming patterns that heavily feature the use of acceleration and deceleration are the two solo drumming patterns magul bera and pūjā bera.

The next most important features of drumming that contribute towards its expressive nature are embellishment and improvisation. Embellishment is recognized by the artists as alankāra, and this is far more common compared to improvisation. The level of embellishment can be categorized into three degrees in terms of spontaneity: variation, set-embellishment and free-embellishment. These first two degrees i.e., variation and set-embellishment are taught as pre-determined patterns. Variations refer to the different ways in which the short repetitive patterns may be played. Set-embellishments are also associated with short repetitive patterns. However, during these, dancers perform more steps, whereas they generally dance on the spot during recitations accompanied by repetitive drumming patterns. The third degree of embellishment, labelled as free-embellishment, involves more spontaneity. However, the drummers still closely follow a basic pattern in order to accompany the dancer. Of the three rituals studied, the drumming of the devol maḍuva is limited to these varying degrees of embellishment. The other two rituals feature improvisation in addition to embellishment. Embellishment in the drumming of the bali ritual is unique to the bali as it features the extensive use of advanced techniques. There are no set rules of how advanced techniques are used. Therefore, drummers usually develop their own individual styles when using advanced
techniques. Improvisation in drumming is most extensively practised in the bali ritual. Drummers recognize improvisatory playing to occur ‘in a continuous flowing string’ or vālaṭa galāgena enava. Unlike embellishment, improvisation is neither taught nor discussed as a concept. It is practised only by the most experienced drummers. A large proportion of the rhythmic vocabulary of improvisatory segments is common among different drummers. However, a small proportion of the drummers’ improvisatory vocabulary is unique to each individual and provides the different drummers with subtle individual characteristics.

The third characteristic of the drumming that contributes towards its expressive nature is dynamics. Drumming in the devol maḍuva ritual is consistently loud. The outdoor nature of this ritual requires the drumming to be loud, if it is to be heard, and its presence felt. The dynamics of the drumming in the tovil ritual are also mostly loud. Unlike the devol maḍuva, the tovil studied in this thesis is always held indoors and, consequently, the sound of the drumming is much more intense and powerful. This sound effectively conveys the power of the demons of the ritual. The largest range of dynamics is used in the drumming of the bali ritual. The soothing nature of the ritual has allowed for the quiet, subtle sounds of the drum to be featured. However, the performance is still shaped and kept alive with the extensive use of dynamics. The embellishments and improvisations in the bali ritual, cued by the dancer, are significantly louder than the segments that focus on the singing.
The fourth characteristic of the drumming, pitch, is a subtle aspect. It is revealed in the tuning of the instrument itself. Although the yak beraya is not tuned to specific pitches, different drumming akṣara generally represent high and low sounds. Most short repetitive patterns consist of a balance of high and low akṣara. The akṣara with lower pitches are often used at the start of patterns as they resonate more and provide a strong start to the cycle. The dom akṣara, which consists of both low and high sounds produced in unison, is featured in the most intense drumming. There is no strict tonal relationship between the singing and the drumming of the Low-Country but the tessitura of the singing varies according to the energy levels of the performers. Generally, the performers strive to sing above the pitches produced by the drumming. Sometimes in bali rituals, the singing naturally settles on similar pitches to the overtones produced by the drumming. Even though there is no strict relationship between the pitch of singing and the drumming, the metrical component of recitations, in both repetitive and longer patterns, closely follows the drumming.

The fifth and final factors that contribute towards the drumming’s expressive nature are two aspects of performance: relaxation and rudimentary exercises. Experienced artists believe that being completely relaxed in the upper body is imperative to communicate through the drumming and play with expression. The development of physical skills and techniques is also considered to be essential in order to perform expressively. The most common approach to develop these necessarily skills is to practise a set of rudimentary exercises identified as haramba.
This study revealed a number of hidden aspects of the Low-Country tradition. Of aspects already mentioned, the feeling of the pulse in terms of akṣara, compositional features of patterns and relaxation are generally hidden from the artists themselves. Another aspect hidden from the artists is the embedded pattern in seven in slower patterns. The main reason why these aspects are hidden from the artists is because of the artists’ intuitive knowledge. Being part of an oral tradition, Low-Country drummers have not felt the need to openly define or theorize their drumming even to novice drummers. A major aspect that remains hidden is the relationship between akṣara and the techniques used to produce akṣara. The limited number of techniques used to produce the different akṣara means that a number of different akṣara can be produced by the same stroke. Also particular akṣara themselves can be produced using different strokes. This complex relationship between technique and akṣara was discussed in this thesis through a concept proposed as ‘akṣara-cells’. Many aspects of Low-Country drumming already discussed in this conclusion remain hidden from the audience, the most significant being the musical structure of the rituals, the structures of the drumming patterns and the structures of akṣara cells.

Below the surface of the expressive drumming, the patterns performed in the ritual are structured through the use of various cues. It is the dancers who most often cue the drummers. Dancers use certain akṣara consistently the same way and these act as signposts to keep the drummer and dancer together, particularly in the performance of slower patterns. The same akṣara are used as cues when performing lengthy segments of repetitive patterns and in transitions between different patterns in the bali ritual. Aside
from dance cues, performers in the bali use vocal cues, such as changing the phrasing of the singing, in order to maintain the musical structure of the performance. The wide range of cues used in the bali ritual demands that all the performers involved have a thorough intuitive knowledge of drumming, dance and singing. It is such hidden aspects that have contributed towards a lack of appreciation of Low-Country drumming.

Through fieldwork, I have established close relationships with my informants to an extent that they feel comfortable enough to allow me to take initiatives to preserve and ensure the survival of Low-Country ritual drumming, overseas and in Sri Lanka itself. Prasantha said “You have dedicated several years to study our art form in depth. This means that you can expose this music to international audiences without degrading it. Most importantly, we are now friends and we are certain of your sincerity. We have been treated unfairly many times during our overseas tours in the past. This is because we do not have the necessary skills to organize performances overseas ourselves. The people who have taken us in the past have had their own agendas.” Currently Low-Country ritual drumming is not comprehensively performed outside of the ritual contexts. In addition, the contemporary ritual is undergoing several changes from its traditional form. Firstly, smaller versions of spiritual practices, which are recognized as translations of the traditional ritual forms, are becoming popular. However, these rituals have excluded the performance elements of drumming and dance. In the period of this study, I have noted a number of occasions where my informants had to omit the performance aspects of the ritual. Secondly, even though the performance elements are still present in the public rituals, these rituals are being adapted to contemporary society with a focus on

---

206 Prasantha Rupathilake, 1 May 2009.
entertainment. This has meant that the patterns which are considered to be of high, artistic value are becoming excluded from the repertoire of the public rituals. As a result of this, the public ritual does not serve as an effective, inspiring, training ground for younger artists. Because of these changes in the ritual, the future of Low-Country drumming is uncertain in the context of the ritual. In order to ensure the survival of Low-Country ritual drumming, it needs to be brought into a different, contemporary, performance context, out of the ritual, such as the concert stage. I have documented a collaborative performance, in which, the drumming was brought into such a performance context. After only the initial collaboration and performances, my informants are confident that this is one approach which would allow the Low-Country drumming, along with its other performance elements, to remain alive without being degraded or compromised. In this light, the future of Low-Country drumming remains positive.
Bibliography

English literature


---. Reference Guide to Sri Lankan Folk Songs and Music - A Field Collection by the
Music Research Unit Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation. Ed. C. De. S.

---. Metre, Melody, and Rhythm in Sinhala Music. Colombo: Sinhala Music Research
Unit, Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation, 1980.


Lancashire, Terence. "World Music or Japanese - the Gagaku of Tôgi Hideki" Popular

Maceda, José. A Manual of a Field Music Research with Special Reference to Southeast
Asia. Quezon City: Dept. of Music Research, College of Music, University of
Philippines, 1981.


Marapana, Purandara Sri Bhadra. "Demonology." Ed. Museum of Ethnology and Folk
Art. Ratnapura, Sri Lanka, N.d.

McGillvray, Dennis B. "Paraiyar Drummers of Sri Lanka: Consensus and Constraint in an


Midgley, Ruth, ed. Musical Instruments of the World: An Illustrated Encyclopedia by the

Mittal, Anjali. Hindustani Music and the Aesthetic Concept of Form. New Delhi: D.K


Nettl, Bruno, and Melinda Russell, eds. In the Course of Performance: Studies in the


Sinhala Literature


**Web Sites**


**Audio Visual Material**


N.a., *Sri Lankan Traditional Drums*. CD. Air Lanka. No number.


Appendix 1: Transcriptions of Drumming Patterns
Appendix 1-A: Short repetitive patterns that accompany vocal recitations and dance (*sarala pada*)

*Sarala pada-A*

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Variation**

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Set-embellishment**

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>FTB</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sarala pada-B*

**Variation 1 (sarala pada-B1)**

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S/B</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Variation 2 (sarala pada-B2)

Variation 3 (sarala pada-B3)

Variation 4 (sarala pada-B4)

Ending (hamāre)

Sarala pada-C
Variations

Variation 1

Ending (hamāre)

Sarala pada-D
Set-embellishment

Sarala pada-E

Yādini mātraya (sarala pada-E1)

Keṭi yādini mātraya (sarala pada-E2)

Sarala pada-F
Ending (*hamāre*)

![Musical notation](image)
Appendix 1-B: Decorative patterns with torches (*pañdam pada*)

**Pañdam pada-A**

**Pañdam pada-B**
Pañdam pada-C

Pañdam pada-D
Appendix 1-C: Sets of patterns specifically associated with segments in *devol maḍuva*

Pattini segment

*Karaṇḍu pada-1*
Karaṇdu pada-3

(Repeat until cued. accell.)

(Repeat 3 times)

(Repeat 3 times)

277
Mātrā pada-1

gat guñdam guñdam gat dāhim ga ti ga ta gat dāhim re ga ta ku dom

Mātrā pada-2

dom dom dom rim ta de ga ta guñda dāhim

gat tat dom ruñda ga ta guñda ga ta gat tat de ga tat dom
Mātrā pada-5

Pattini pada-1

(Note: drummer plays filler strokes at marked points)
Pattini *pada-1* (surala)

```
\begin{align*}
\text{Pattini pada-1} \quad \text{(surala)}
\end{align*}
```

Pattini *pada-2*

```
\begin{align*}
\text{Pattini pada-2}
\end{align*}
```
Pattini pada-2 (surala)

Pattini pada-3
Pattini pada-3 (surala)

Tēvā pada-1
Devol segment

Devol pada- movement 1

Devol pada- movement 2

(A) bunch

(Variation)

(A)

(Variation)

(End)
Devol *pada*- movement 3
Devol pada- movement 4

(Variation)

Devol pada- movement 5

(Ending)
Devol pada- sural 1

tat re ga ta ga hi di ga tam gu hi di ga tam tat re ga ta ta tat ta

Devol pada- sural 2

tat re ga ta ga hi di ga tam gu hi di ga tam tat re ga ta

ta tat tat di ga tam dit re ga ta ga hi di ga tam

287
Garā segment

Garā antādiya

(Repeat 3 times)

Pattern for ves pāma
Ves iraṭṭiya

(Sound)

Sändǟ samayama segment

Pañdam aḍi vaṭṭam-1

289
Pañdam aḍi vaṭṭam-2

Pañdam aḍi vaṭṭam-3
Pañdam pada ḥraṭṭi-1
Telme segment

Telme sarala pada

1) 

2) 

3) 

4) 

5) 

6) 

7)
Telme antādiya

Telme pada-1
**Telme pada-1 (surala)**

```
gat tit tat tat ga hi di ga tam de ga tit tat guninda ga hi di ga tam tat

S M S S S S F T S S S S M S B S S F T S S S

ga hi di ga tam guninda ga hi di ga tam dom ga dit ta gat ti ta guninda tat tat


di ri ki ta gu hi di ga di ri ki ta ga hi di ga tam

F T S S B F T S F T S S S F T S S S

dim ga ta ga ta ga ti ga ta gat dom gu nda gat tam

B S S S S S S S M S S S B/S B S S S S
```

**Telme pada-2**

```
rim ga ta gu gu ndat de ga tat dom dom ga ta gat ti ta ga ta gu nda ga ta


de ga tat ga hi di ga tam dom dom ga ta dihim rim ga ta gu nda ta

```
Telme pada-2(surala)

Telme vañdum ata
Toran yāgaya segment

Kavi tāla-A

Kavi tāla-B

Kavi tāla-C
Bisō kapa segment

Bisō kapa-A

(The notes at marked points are followed with alankara - filler strokes)

gat ga ta gum ru ńda gu ńda gat dāhim gat ti gu ńda gat dāhim

dom dom ta ka re gu ńda ka dāhim di ta gu ta gum ńdam dāhim

gum dāhim gat ti ta gu ńda gat dāhim dāhim gum

dom ta gu gu ńda gu ta ga di ta ka re ga ta ku dom ru ńda gu ńda gat

Kālapaṇdama segment

Kālapaṇdama antādiya

dāhim gu ta gu ti ta gu ta ka dom gu ta gu ńda ti ta gu ńda ka dāhim

299
Kālapaṇḍam padē
Iraṭṭiya

Repeat 3 times

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{dom} & \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{tam} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{ti} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{ta} \\
\text{S/B} & \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{M} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{B} \\
\text{Repeat 3 times}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{di} & \quad \text{gu} \quad \text{ñda} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{tam} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{ti} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{ta} \\
\text{M} & \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{M} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{B} \quad \text{S/B} \quad \text{S/B} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{dom} & \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{tam} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{ti} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{ti} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ku} \quad \text{dom} \quad \text{dom} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{ta}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{S/B} & \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{M} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{B} \quad \text{S/B} \quad \text{S/B} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{di} & \quad \text{gu} \quad \text{ñda} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{tam} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{ti} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{ti} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ku} \quad \text{dom} \quad \text{dom} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{ta}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{M} & \quad \text{B} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{M} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{B} \quad \text{S/B} \quad \text{S/B} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{dom} & \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{tam} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{ti} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{de} \quad \text{gu} \quad \text{ñda} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{tam} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{ti} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{gu} \quad \text{ta}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{S/B} & \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{M} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{B} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{M} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{dom} & \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{tam} \quad \text{de} \quad \text{gu} \quad \text{ñda} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{tam} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{gu} \quad \text{ñda} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{ri} \quad \text{ki} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{daham}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{S/B} & \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{B} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{M} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{F/T} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{dom} & \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{tam} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{di} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{dom} \quad \text{de} \quad \text{gu} \quad \text{ñda} \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{daham}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{FTB} & \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{M} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{B} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{B} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S} \quad \text{S}
\end{align*}
\]
Appendix 1-D: Solo drumming patterns (*magul bera* and *pūjā bera*)

*Magul bera* pattern (*vaṭṭam 1*)

---

*Magul bera* pattern (*vaṭṭam 1*)
Magul bera pattern (vaṭṭam 2)
Magul bera pattern (vaṭṭam 3)

(repeat 4X)
Appendix 1-E: Patterns that accompany salutations to deities
(väňdum at)

Väňdum ata-A

Phrase 1

dom ga tam ga ta gat ta ga di ta ga ta
dom ga tam ga ta gat ta ga di ta ga ta

Phrase 2

dom ga tum ga ta gat da ga di ta ga ta

Phrase 3

dom ga tam dom ga tam
gat di ri ki ta gat di ri ki ta gat tut dahim

Phrase 4

dom gat da gat dahim
gat di ri ki ta ga ta ko dahim

Väňdum ata-B

In the image, the notation for the phrases is shown with musical notation symbols and text in a language that appears to be a musical notation from a specific cultural or linguistic context. The phrases are labeled as Phrases 1 through 4, with each phrase represented by musical notation and text that likely correspond to specific patterns or rhythms.

The text within the phrases is not directly translated into English, but it is assumed that the phrases are meant to be performed in a specific manner as indicated by the notation symbols and text provided. The phrases may represent traditional or cultural musical patterns associated with salutations to deities, as indicated by the title “vänšum at” (vändum at).

The musical notation includes symbols that seem to represent notes, chords, and rhythmic patterns, which are essential for interpreting and performing the patterns accurately.

The page number is indicated as 306, suggesting that this is part of a larger document, possibly a musical or cultural study.
Vāṇḍum ata-E

(last line is repeated 3 times. The first aksara dom is replaced with dīnhim on repeats. Pattern ends on dāhim)

Vāṇḍum ata-F
Appendix 1-F: Patterns where dancers go around in a circle
(vaṭṭam pada)

*Vaṭṭam pada-A*

*Vaṭṭam pada-B*

*Vaṭṭam pada-C*

*Vaṭṭam pada-D*

*Vaṭṭam pada-E*
Appendix 1-G: Patterns performed to seek blessings from the deities and bless the audience

Yahan däkma

Section A

Section B
Section C (also labeled as vāṇḍum ata-B)

Section D

Section E

Variation (gaman tālaya)
Mōsam pada-A

Mōsam pada-B

Mōsam pada-C

Āvaḍana padē
Appendix 1-H: Patterns played for cleansing ritual objects and ritual space

*Kotal padē and dummala padē*

Variation 1

Variation 2

*Hamāre (ending)*
Surala-1

Phrase 1

Phrase 2

Phrase 3

Surala-2

Phrase 1

Phrase 2

Phrase 3
**Surala-3**

**Phrase 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/B</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>(x3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Phrase 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/B</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Phrase 3**

| B | F | T | S | F | T | S | S | S | S | B | F | T | S | F | T | S | S | S | S |
|    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

**Pattern in bara**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/B</th>
<th>F/B</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/B</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>F/B</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Pidēni pada**

Variation 1

Variation 2

Variation 3
Appendix 1-I: Introductory patterns (ārambhaka pada)

Ārambhaka pada-A

Ārambhaka pada-B

Ārambhaka pada-C
Ārambhaka pada-D

(Repeated till dancer stops spinning)

Ārambhaka pada-E

Ārambhaka pada-F

Ārambhaka pada-F (variation)

Ārambhaka pada-G

(Repeat till cued)
Appendix 1-J: Patterns of the *bali* ritual

*Bali pattern-A*

\[ \text{gum} \quad \text{ñda} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{ta} \]

*Bali pattern-B*

\[ \text{re} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{gu} \quad \text{ñda} \quad \text{gu} \quad \text{ñdim} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{gum} \]

*Bali pattern-C*

\[ \text{gum} \quad \text{ñdam} \quad \text{gum} \quad \text{ñdam} \quad \text{ki} \quad \text{ti} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ka} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{gum} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{tar} \quad \text{de} \quad \text{gu} \]

*Bali pattern-D*

\[ \text{gum} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{tam} \quad \text{tam} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{gum} \quad \text{gu} \quad \text{ñda} \]

*Bali pattern-E*

\[ \text{gum} \quad \text{gu} \quad \text{ñda} \quad \text{gum} \quad \text{gu} \quad \text{ñdim} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{tam} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{ta} \]

*Bali pattern-F*

\[ \text{de} \quad \text{gat} \quad \text{ga} \quad \text{ta} \quad \text{ku} \quad \text{gu} \quad \text{nda} \]
Bali pattern-G

\[ \text{\textbf{Bali pattern-H}} \]

\[ \text{Transition pattern-A} \]

\[ \text{Transition pattern-B} \]

Section A

Section B
Section C

Section D

Transition pattern-C

Section A

Section B

Section C
Appendix 1-K: The patterns of the *tovil* ritual

*Tovil* pattern-A

Hat pada pelapāliya (king-coconut)

Hat pada pelapāliya (live rooster)

Hat pada pelapāliya (shawl)
Hat pada pelapāliya (hand claps)

Yak panti
Appendix 2: Glossary of Selected Sinhala Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>adauvu</td>
<td>also known as <em>saudama</em>. It is a salutation verse in which the drumming mimics the phonetics of each line of the verse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adura</td>
<td>priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>akṣara</td>
<td>drum syllables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alankāra</td>
<td>drum embellishments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ālavanguva</td>
<td>long hand-held chisel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aṅgul</td>
<td>length from the first joint above the palm, to the end of the index finger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aṅguru kabala</td>
<td>incense holder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>antādiya (plural antādi)</td>
<td>prelude pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ārambahaka pada</td>
<td>introductory pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>āvadana padē</td>
<td>blessing pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bali</td>
<td>also known as <em>bali yāga</em>, <em>bali śāntikarma</em>, <em>bali tovil</em> ritual dedicated to planetary deities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bara</td>
<td>slow and heavy tempo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bera gātiya</td>
<td>the woven ring around the edge of the drumhead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bera kañḍa</td>
<td>body of the drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bera lanuva</td>
<td>waist strap of the drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>berava</td>
<td>the caste to which the drummers traditionally belong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beraya</td>
<td>drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhāvaprakāṣana</td>
<td>expression of characteristics of a supernatural beings through dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bisō kapa</td>
<td>bough of the Queen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>borañḍam ratā</td>
<td>decorations on the drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boruvara ādīma</td>
<td>fake strapping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dalumura pūjāva</td>
<td>offering of betel leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>danda</td>
<td>stick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>davula</td>
<td>the main instrument of the Sabaragamuwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deviyanṭa pin dīma</td>
<td>giving thanks to deities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deviyo</td>
<td>deities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>devol maḍuva</td>
<td>outdoor communal ritual of the Low-Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dola</td>
<td>food offerings for demons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doloha deviyo</td>
<td>Twelve Gods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dōsa</td>
<td>malevolent influences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dumma</td>
<td>resin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dummala padē</td>
<td>pattern associated with incensing ritual objects or ritual space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gaman tālaya</td>
<td>walking metre, characteristic Low-Country dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gammaḍuva</td>
<td>larger, older version of the <em>devol maḍuva</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gāṭa beraya</td>
<td>the main instrument of the Up-Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gāṭivāla</td>
<td>a bamboo ring placed around the edge of the drum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gihi pirit</td>
<td>Buddhist chanting ceremony conducted by lay people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gok kola</td>
<td>tender coconut leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>graha deviyo</td>
<td>planetary deities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>graha pūjāva</td>
<td>a commonly held ritual for planetary deities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
hai taṭṭuva - thicker membrane of the Low-Country drum
hak geḍiya - conch shell
hākma - thick outer layer of skin on the drum. Also known as käpum hama
hamāra pada, hamāre - ending pattern
haraṃba - exercises
hat aḍiya - a version of the bali ritual with segment symbolizing seven steps taken by Prince Siddhartha at his birth.
hat pada pelapāliya - ritual of seven dances
hatara varam deviyo - Gods of Four Warrants
horanāva - a conical-bore, quadruple-reed oboe
illam - holes
iraṭṭiya (plural iraṭṭi) - special ending pattern
kaḍaturāva - curtain
kaḍāppuva (pl. kaḍāppu) - stick
kaḍinam - fast
kaha diyara kotala - vessel of turmeric water
kalaha - pot
kālapaṇḍam padē - pattern specific to Torch of Time
kālapandama - Torch of Time
kalas bindima - breaking the pot
Kalu Kumāra samayama - tovil ritual dedicated to the Kalu Kumāra demon
kāṅgul padē - first movement of Devol patterns
kannilam - filler strokes
kanvaraya - woven loop that attaches the waist strap to the drum
kap situvīma - planting a bough
kapa - bough
kāpāi - it is done
kāpīma - to cut
kapu mahattaya - lay priests who communicate with the Gods
kāpum hama - see hākma
kaṭṭadi mahattaya - lay priests communicate with the demons
kavi tāla - a specific type of slow patterns that display dancer’s skills
kavi - verses
keṭi kavi - short verses
keti yādini mātraya - short invocation beat
kolam - Low-Country masked play
kotal padē - pattern associated with the vessel of turmeric water
koṭṭoruvā - official ritual assistant
liyavīma - carving and shaping
mādiyama - Middle Watch
maḍu - also known as dēva śānti-karma, dēva tovil type of communal outdoor rituals dedicate to the deities
magul bera - auspicious drum pattern
mahattaya - gentleman
mal baliya - planetary ritual carried out for pregnant woman
mal pūjāva - offering of flowers
milla kāpīma - cutting of the milla tree
mini geḍiya - small hand-held bell
mōl gaha - pole used to crush starch
mugura - spear
namaskāra pada - worship pattern, especially associated with worshipping the instrument
padē (plural, pada) - pattern
pahata raṭa - Low-Country
pañcatūrya nāda - classification system for Sri Lankan traditional musical instruments
pañdam aḍi vaṭṭam - patterns specific to sāndā samayama
pañdam pada - decorative patterns with torches
pañdama - torch
pidēni dīma - offering of fire
pidēni taṭu - offerings for demons
pin - acts of virtue
pirit - Buddhist chanting ceremony
pol mala - coconut flower
porava - axe
pūjā bera - solo drumming pattern played at the conclusion of a ritual
pūjā - offering
rabāna - frame drum
śabdha - sound
samayam, samayama - demon
sāndā samayama - segment for the demons of the Evening Watch
sanna - exposition, elucidation of the stotra
sarala pada - short repetitive patterns
saraṃba - exercises
saudama - see aḍauva
stotra - praise. Also known as sloka. Highly formalized verse or prose texts generally recited as thanks giving to the Three Jewels or the higher gods
sural taṭṭuva - thinner drumhead
surala (sural) - drum roll. Also a name given to a specific type of technical pattern																																														
tammaṭṭama - vessel-shaped kettle drums
ṭānam - a style of singing using sounds of tā and nā
tel vādvīma - bringing in the oil
telme - dance in honour of the Twelve Gods														
tīt - a Sinhala drum theory associated with the Up-Country tradition
toran yāgaya - segment in devol maḍuva ritual dedicated to the ceremonial archway

torana - ceremonial archway
tovil, yak tovil - type of ritual associated with demons
udā raṭa - Up-Country
udḍakkiya - hour glass shaped drum with variable tension
vāṇḍum atā (pl.vāṇḍum at) - dance and drumming patterns using gestures of worship
varapaṭa (pl. varapati) - straps along the body of the drum
vas dōsa - minor witchcraft from the evil eye, mouth, and tongue
vaṭṭam pada - patterns where dancers move in circles
vaṭṭama (plural, vaṭṭam) - movement
venivara - thinner version of varapaṭa
viyat - length from the thumb to the little finger, as the fingers are spread
yādini mātraya - invocation beat
yahan dākma - pattern where dancers seek blessings from the deities
yakā (plural yakku) - demon
Appendix 3: Attaching the *Yak Beraya* to the Waist

A series of nine photographs presented below, illustrates one method of tying a knot, which enables the musician to hold the drum around their waist. In photograph 1, the left hand grips the strap at the *kanvaraya*, and this holds the drum temporarily. The right hand stretches the waist strap about a foot away, in order to create a triangular shaped loop. In photograph 2, the strap on the right hand is crossed over to the left hand. Photographs 3-7 illustrate the main knot. With the loop created, the section closest to the body is taken over and under the strap, through the remainder of the loop. The final two photographs show how the excess strap is used to make a simple knot over the top of the existing knot.
Appendix 4: Sandhoris Jayantha’s Letter of Support for the Collaboration

Original letter written in Sinhala
Towards a Collaborative Performance between the West and the East

Sumuditha Suraweera has gained a comprehensive training in Sri Lankan Low-Country drumming from artists belonging to a lineage of long-established traditional drummers and dancers. Prasantha Rupathilake and his family, who will be involved in this collaboration, are well respected traditional artists in Sri Lanka. For instance, Prasantha’s father is a receiver of ‘Kalābhūṣana’ honours by His Excellency the President of Sri Lanka. Their skills and wisdom on traditional rituals of tovil, bali and devol maḍu are unprecedented. I consider that Sumuditha Suraweera was privileged, and quite lucky, to receive training and witness rituals performed by this (Rupathilake) family. Sumuditha had already studied Sri Lankan drumming for a number of years when he first came to me (Sandhoris Jayantha – a Low-Country drummer from the Raigama tradition). When I first met Sumuditha, his Low-Country drumming skills were found to be far ahead of his age. He studied with me for around three years and developed an in-depth knowledge of the tradition. Through our association, I have realized that Sumuditha Suraweera is highly talented and capable of synergising the sounds and musical configurations of the Low-Country with Western music. I thought about this matter deliberating for about three days and having realized that such a production by Sumuditha will do no harm whatsoever to our traditional art from, I approved of this collaborative project. Therefore, I consider it a great honour for the entire world of art, if Sumuditha Suraweera is provided all support and assistance in order to bring over at least three Western musicians of his calibre to Sri Lanka, for this project.

Signed:

G.S. Sandhoris Jayantha

Kalābhūṣana Presidential Honours
Head of Sandhoris Institute of Traditional Art
Appendix 5: Catalogue of Field Recordings

Video (Low-Country)

V.LC06.1 - DVD, Devol maḍuva at Hokandara, disc 1
V.LC06.2 - DVD, Devol maḍuva at Hokandara, disc 2
V.LC06.3 - DVD, Devol maḍuva at Hokandara, disc 3
V.LC06.4 - DVD, Devol maḍuva at Hokandara, disc 4
V.LC06.5 - DVD, Devol maḍuva at Hokandara, disc 5
V.LC06.6 - DVD, Sandhoris Jayantha playing basic exercises and magul bera
V.LC06.7 - DVD, Graha pūjāva, Jayantha, Susantha and Daniel
V.LC06.8 - DVD, Parapuren Parapuraṭa TV programme showcasing Jayantha
V.LC06.9 - DVD, Santuru Rangālaya Low-Country concert, disc 1
V.LC06.10 - DVD, Santuru Rangālaya Low-Country concert, disc 2
V.LC06.11 - DVD, Sandhoris Jayantha’s classes with his students
V.LC07.12 - DVD, Devol maḍuva at Bellanwilla, disc 1
V.LC07.13 - DVD, Devol maḍuva at Bellanwilla, disc 2
V.LC07.14 - DVD, Devol maḍuva at Bellanwilla, disc 3
V.LC07.15 - DVD, Devol maḍuva at Bellanwilla, disc 4
V.LC07.16 - DVD, Devol maḍuva at Bellanwilla, disc 5
V.LC07.17 - DVD, Devol maḍuva at Bellanwilla, disc 6
V.LC07.18 - DVD, Devol maḍuva at Bellanwilla, disc 7
V.LC07.19 - DVD, Devol maḍuva at Athurugiriya, disc 1
V.LC07.20 - DVD, Devol maḍuva at Athurugiriya, disc 2
V.LC07.21 - DVD, Devol maḍuva at Arangala, disc 1
V.LC07.22 - DVD, Devol maḍuva at Arangala, disc 2
V.LC07.23 - DVD, Hat aḍiya bali ritual, Prasanth, Susathna and Daniel, disc 1
V.LC07.24 - DVD, Hat aḍiya bali ritual, Prasanth, Susathna and Daniel, disc 2
V.LC07.25 - DVD, Hat aḍiya bali ritual, Prasanth, Susathna and Daniel, disc 3
V.LC07.26 - DVD, Hat aḍiya bali ritual, Prasanth, Susathna and Daniel, disc 4
V.LC07.27 - DVD, Hat aḍiya bali ritual, Prasanth, Susathna and Daniel, disc 5
V.LC07.28 - DVD, Kalu Kumāra Samayama, disc 1
V.LC07.29 - DVD, Kalu Kumāra Samayama, disc 2
V.LC07.30 - DVD, Kalu Kumāra Samayama, disc 3
V.LC07.31 - DVD, Graha pūjāva in Horana, disc 1
V.LC07.32 - DVD, Graha pūjāva in Horana, disc 2
V.LC07.33 - DVD, Graha pūjāva in Horana, disc 3
V.LC07.34 - DVD, Devol maḍuva workshop directed by Jayantha, disc 1
V.LC07.35 - DVD, Devol maḍuva workshop directed by Jayantha, disc 2
V.LC07.36 - DVD, Devol maḍuva workshop directed by Jayantha, disc 3
V.LC07.37 - DVD, Devol maḍuva workshop directed by Jayantha, disc 4
V.LC08.38 - DVD, Garā yākuma ritual at Bellanwilla, disc 1
V.LC08.39 - DVD, Garā yākuma ritual at Bellanwilla, disc 2
V.LC08.40 - DVD, Graha pūjāva in Pannipitiya, disc 1
V.LC08.41 - DVD, Graha pūjāva in Pannipitiya, disc 2
V.LC08.42 - DVD, Yak maḍuva in Kadawatha, disc 1
V.LC08.43 - DVD, *Devol maḍuva* in Arangala, disc 1
V.LC09.44 - DVD, *Bera pōya hēvisi* at Bellanwilla, disc 1
V.LC09.44 - DVD, *Mal baliya* ritual, disc 1
V.LC09.45 - DVD, *Mal baliya* ritual, disc 2
V.LC09.46 - DVD, *Mal baliya* ritual, disc 3

**Video (Up-Country)**

V.UC06.1 - DVD, *Kohonomba Kankariya* at Mahanama College, disc 1
V.UC06.2 - DVD, *Kohonomba Kankariya* at Mahanama College, disc 2
V.UC06.3 - DVD, *Kohonomba Kankariya* at Mahanama College, disc 3
V.UC06.4 - DVD, *Kohonomba Kankariya* at Mahanama College, disc 4
V.UC06.5 - DVD, *Kohonomba Kankariya* at Mahanama College, disc 5
V.UC06.6 - DVD, *Kohonomba Kankariya* at Mahanama College, disc 6
V.UC06.8 - DVD, Up-Country *Ves* ceremony at Bellanwilla, disc 1
V.UC06.9 - DVD, Up-Country *Ves* ceremony at Bellanwilla, disc 2
V.UC06.10 - DVD, traditional music concert directed by Piyasara Shilpadhipathi
V.UC06.11 - DVD, *Kohonomba Kankariya* at Kurunagala, disc 1
V.UC06.12 - DVD, *Kohonomba Kankariya* at Kurunagala, disc 2
V.UC06.13 - DVD, *Kohonomba Kankariya* at Kurunagala, disc 3
V.UC06.14 - DVD, *Kohonomba Kankariya* at Kurunagala, disc 4
V.UC06.15 - DVD, *Kohonomba Kankariya* at Kurunagala, disc 5

**Video (Sabaragamuwa)**

V.SB06.1 - DVD, Interviews with M.K. Babanis
V.SB08.2 - DVD, *Bera pōya hēvisi* in Ratnapura, disc 1
V.SB08.2 - DVD, *Bera pōya hēvisi* in Ratnapura, disc 2

**Audio**

A.UC06.1 - MD, *Ves* ceremony, disc 1
A.UC06.2 - MD, *Ves* ceremony, disc 2
A.UC06.4 - MD, Interview with Piyasara Shilpadhipathi
A.UC06.5 - MD, Prasantha playing the *kandyan* drum
A.UC06.6 - MD, Talks with Piyasara Shilpadhipathi
A.SB06.7 - MD, Interviews with Sandhoris Jayantha and M.K Babanis
A.SB06.8 - MD, Interviews with Sandhoris Jayantha and M.K Babanis
A.SB06.9 - MD, Interviews with Sandhoris Jayantha and M.K Babanis
A.LC06.10 - MD, Discussions and lessons with Sandhoris Jayantha
A.LC06.11 - MD, Discussions and lessons with Sandhoris Jayantha
A.LC06.12 - MD, *Graha pūjāva* Sandhoris Jayantha, Susantha and Daniel
A.LC06.13 - MD, Kalu Kumāra *Samayama* at Vidyala Handiya
A.LC07.14 - CD, Jayantha vocalising drumming patterns of *devol maḍuva*, disc 1
A.LC07.15 - CD, Jayantha vocalising drumming patterns of *devol maḍuva*, disc 2
A.LC07.16 - CD, Jayantha vocalising drumming patterns of *devol maḍuva*, disc 3
A.LC07.17 - CD, Jayantha vocalising drumming patterns of devol maḍuva, disc 4
A.LC07.18 - CD, Jayantha vocalising drumming patterns of devol maḍuva, disc 5
A.LC07.19 - CD, Hat aḍiya bali ritual, Prasantha, Susathna and Daniel, disc 1
A.LC07.20 - CD, Hat aḍiya bali ritual, Prasantha, Susathna and Daniel, disc 2
A.LC07.21 - CD, Hat aḍiya bali ritual, Prasantha, Susathna and Daniel, disc 3
A.LC07.22 - CD, Hat aḍiya bali ritual, Prasantha, Susathna and Daniel, disc 4
A.LC07.23 - CD, Hat aḍiya bali ritual, Prasantha, Susathna and Daniel, disc 5
A.LC07.24 - CD, Graha pūjāva in Horana, disc 1
A.LC07.25 - CD, Graha pūjāva in Horana, disc 2
A.LC07.26 - CD, Graha pūjāva in Horana, disc 3
A.LC07.27 - CD, Graha pūjāva in Horana, disc 4
A.LC07.28 - CD, Raṭa yākuma in Galle, disc 1
A.LC07.29 - CD, Raṭa yākuma in Galle, disc 2
Appendix 6: Guide for Supplementary Video Examples of Rituals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Track</th>
<th>Pattern</th>
<th>Performers</th>
<th>Event/Description</th>
<th>Corresponding figures/tables in text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Drumming rudiments (saraṁba)</td>
<td>Sandhoris</td>
<td>Performance on request at Jayantha’s residence</td>
<td>figures 45, 44, 55 and 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ārambhaka pada-A</td>
<td>Dancer: Lasantha Drummers led by Premadasa</td>
<td>Devol maḍuva at Athurugiriya (special Pattini performance)</td>
<td>figure 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ārambhaka pada-A</td>
<td>Dancer: Valikala Drummer: Sugath</td>
<td>Devol maḍuva at Athurugiriya (milla kāpīma). This is a shortened, rushed version of the pattern.</td>
<td>figure 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sarala pada-D</td>
<td>Dancer: Valikala Drummer: Sugath</td>
<td>Devol maḍuva at Athurugiriya (milla kāpīma)</td>
<td>figure 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sarala pada-B1 and Sarala pada-B2</td>
<td>Dancer: Valikala Drummer: Sugath</td>
<td>Devol maḍuva at Athurugiriya (milla kāpīma)</td>
<td>figure 62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Vāṉdum ata -A</td>
<td>Dancer: Narangala Drummers led by Narangoda</td>
<td>Devol maḍuva in Arangala near Jayantha’s residence (tel vāḍavāvīma)</td>
<td>figure 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Vaṭṭam pada-A</td>
<td>Dancer: Narangala Drummers led by Narangoda</td>
<td>Devol maḍuva in Arangala (tel vāḍavāvīma)</td>
<td>figure 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sarala pada-A</td>
<td>Dancers led by Sedaraman. Drummers led by Narangoda</td>
<td>Devol maḍuva in Arangala (tel vāḍavāvīma)</td>
<td>figure 67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Yahan dākma - first vaṭṭama</td>
<td>Dancer: Lasantha Drummers led by Premadasa</td>
<td>Devol maḍuva at Athurugiriya (special Pattini performance)</td>
<td>figure 69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Leader(s)</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yahan dākma - first vaṭṭama</td>
<td>Dancer: Saman Drummers: Prasantha and Ajith</td>
<td>Garā yākuma at Bellanwilla</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sarala pada-B4 (gaman tālāya)</td>
<td>Dancers: Lasantha, Saman and Jayantha Drummers led by Sugath</td>
<td>Devol mađuva at Bellanwilla (sāndā samayama)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Basic pattern of kotal padē and dummala padē</td>
<td>Drummers led by Ajith</td>
<td>Devol mađuva in Hokandara (cleansing and incensing the ritual arena)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Ending (hamāre) of kotal padē basic pattern</td>
<td>Drummers led by Premadasa</td>
<td>Devol mađuva at Bellanwilla (cleansing and incensing the ritual arena)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Kotal padē second surala</td>
<td>Dancer: Lasantha Drummers led by Ajith</td>
<td>Devol mađuva workshop (Pattini)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ārambhaka pada-D</td>
<td>Dancers: Mahilal Drummers led by Premadasa</td>
<td>Devol mađuva at Bellanwilla (pidēni dīma)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>The kālapaṇḍama padē</td>
<td>Drummers led by Premadasa</td>
<td>Devol mađuva at Bellanwilla (kālapaṇḍam segment)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Sarala pada-C</td>
<td>Dancers led by Sedaraman. Drummers led by Narangoda</td>
<td>Devol mađuva in Arangala (tel vāḍavāvīma)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Paṇdam aḍi vaṭṭam-2 and Paṇdam aḍi vaṭṭam-3</td>
<td>Dancers: Saman, Lasantha and Jayantha Drummers led by Sugath</td>
<td>Devol mađuva at Bellanwilla (sāndā samayama)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Kavi tāla-E and short bridging phrase for kavi tāla-E</td>
<td>Dancer: Jayantha Drummers led by Ajith</td>
<td>Devol mađuva workshop (bisō kapa)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Dancer</td>
<td>Drummers led by</td>
<td>Workshop Details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Vändum ata-E</td>
<td>Jayantha</td>
<td>Ajith</td>
<td>Devol mađuva workshop (bisō kapa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Kavi tāla-A</td>
<td>Jayantha</td>
<td>Ajith</td>
<td>Devol mađuva workshop (toran yāgaya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Kavi tāla-B</td>
<td>Jayantha</td>
<td>Ajith</td>
<td>Devol mađuva workshop (toran yāgaya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Pattini pada 1</td>
<td>Lasantha</td>
<td>Ajith</td>
<td>Devol mađuva workshop (Pattini)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Pattini pada 1 - surala</td>
<td>Lasantha</td>
<td>Ajith</td>
<td>Devol mađuva workshop (Pattini)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Pattini saudama</td>
<td>Sandhoris</td>
<td>Performance on request at Jayantha’s residence</td>
<td>table 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Tēvā pada</td>
<td>Valikala</td>
<td>Ajith</td>
<td>Devol mađuva in Hokandara (Pattini)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Magul bera vaṭṭam 1-3</td>
<td>Sandhoris</td>
<td>Performance on request at Jayantha’s residence</td>
<td>figures 106, 107 and 108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Magul bera extensions</td>
<td>Sandhoris</td>
<td>Devol mađuva in Homagama (extracted from archived recording with permission)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Magul bera shorter version</td>
<td>Ajith and Premadasa</td>
<td>Devol mađuva at Bellanwilla</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Acrobatic performance</td>
<td>Guest performers</td>
<td>Devol mađuva in Arangala, organized by Lasantha (telme)</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Ārambhaka pada-D in Vāhala segment</td>
<td>Channa</td>
<td>Sugath</td>
<td>Devol mađuva at Bellanwilla (Vāhala). This video also shows the use of the cue with the akṣara dom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 32 | **Kāṅgul padē**  
(Devol pada movement 1) | Drummers led by Premadasa  
Dancers led by Jayantha | Devol maṭuva at Athurugiriya (Devol. This is a special performance where the dancers perform on an altar known as the gedige. Usually this is done on the ground) | figure 110 |
| 33 | **Devol pada**  
movement 2 | Drummers led by Premadasa  
Dancers led by Jayantha | Devol maṭuva at Athurugiriya | figure 111 |
| 34 | **Devol pada**  
movement 3 | Drummers led by Premadasa  
Dancers led by Jayantha | Devol maṭuva at Athurugiriya | figure 112 |
| 35 | **Devol pada**  
movement 5 | Drummers led by Premadasa  
Dancers led by Jayantha | Devol maṭuva at Athurugiriya | figure 113 |
| 36 | **Devol væṇḍum ata** (væṇḍum ata-F) | Drummers led by Premadasa  
Dancers led by Jayantha | Devol maṭuva at Athurugiriya | figure 114 |
| 37 | The pūjā bera pattern | Sandhoris | Graha pūjā in Horana | figure 115 |
| 38 | Vaṭṭam pada-B | Dancer: Daniel  
Drummer: Prasantha | Kalu Kumāra samayama in Pannipitiya | figure 117 |
| 39 | Tovil pattern-A | Dancer: Daniel  
Drummer: Prasantha | Kalu Kumāra samayama in Pannipitiya | figure 118 |
| 40 | Sarala pada-D embellishment | Dancer: Daniel  
Drummer: Prasantha | Kalu Kumāra samayama in Pannipitiya | figure 119 |
| 41 | Improvisation on sarala pada-C in tovil ritual | Dancer: Daniel  
Drummer: Prasantha | Kalu Kumāra samayama in Pannipitiya | figure 120 |
| 42 | Yak panti pattern | Drummer: Prasantha  
Dancer: Daniel | Kalu Kumāra samayama in Pannipitiya | figure 121 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Pattern Description</th>
<th>Dancer</th>
<th>Drummer</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td><em>Pañdam pada</em>-D</td>
<td>Daniel Drummer: Prasantha</td>
<td>Kalu Kumāra <em>samayama</em> in Pannipitiya</td>
<td>figure 122</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Pattern danced with a king-coconut in the <em>hat pada pelapāliya</em></td>
<td>Daniel Drummer: Prasantha</td>
<td>Kalu Kumāra <em>samayama</em> in Pannipitiya</td>
<td>figure 123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Pattern danced with a live rooster in the <em>hat pada pelapāliya</em></td>
<td>Daniel Drummer: Prasantha</td>
<td>Kalu Kumāra <em>samayama</em> in Pannipitiya</td>
<td>figure 124</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Pattern danced with a shawl in the <em>hat pada pelapāliya</em></td>
<td>Daniel Drummer: Prasantha</td>
<td>Kalu Kumāra <em>samayama</em> in Pannipitiya</td>
<td>figure 125</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Pattern featuring hand claps in the <em>hat pada pelapāliya</em></td>
<td>Daniel Drummer: Prasantha</td>
<td>Kalu Kumāra <em>samayama</em> in Pannipitiya</td>
<td>figure 126</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Prasantha’s embellishment of <em>yādini mātraya</em></td>
<td>Daniel Drummer: Prasantha</td>
<td>Kalu Kumāra <em>samayama</em> in Pannipitiya</td>
<td>figure 127</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td><em>Bali pattern</em>-D</td>
<td>Daniel and Susantha Drummer: Prasantha</td>
<td><em>Hat aḍiya bali</em> ritual at a residence in Rajagiriya</td>
<td>figure 143</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Transition pattern-C</td>
<td>Daniel and Susantha Drummer: Prasantha</td>
<td><em>Hat aḍiya bali</em> ritual at a residence in Rajagiriya</td>
<td>figure 144</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Improvisation in <em>bali pattern</em>-E</td>
<td>Daniel and Susantha Drummer: Prasantha</td>
<td><em>Mal baliya</em> ritual, at a residence in Pannipitiya</td>
<td>figure 146</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 7: Guide for Supplementary Audio Examples of Rituals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Track</th>
<th>Performers</th>
<th>Pattern</th>
<th>Corresponding figure in text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Drummer: Prasantha&lt;br&gt;Dancers: Daniel and Susantha</td>
<td><em>Bali</em> pattern-A and embellishment</td>
<td>figure 130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Drummer: Prasantha&lt;br&gt;Dancers: Daniel and Susantha</td>
<td>Transition pattern-A</td>
<td>figure 131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Drummer: Prasantha&lt;br&gt;Dancers: Daniel and Susantha</td>
<td><em>Bali</em> pattern-B improvisation (2 verses)</td>
<td>figures 134 and 135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Drummer: Daniel&lt;br&gt;Dancers: Prasantha and Susantha</td>
<td><em>Bali</em> pattern-B improvisation (2 verses)</td>
<td>figures 136 and 137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Drummer: Susantha&lt;br&gt;Dancers: Daniel</td>
<td><em>Bali</em> pattern-B improvisation (verse 1)</td>
<td>figure 138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Drummer: Susantha&lt;br&gt;Dancers: Daniel</td>
<td><em>Bali</em> pattern-B improvisation (verse 2)</td>
<td>figure 139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Drummer: Prasantha&lt;br&gt;Dancers: Daniel and Susantha</td>
<td>Transition pattern-B</td>
<td>figure 140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Drummer: Prasantha&lt;br&gt;Dancers: Daniel and Susantha</td>
<td><em>Bali</em> pattern-C and embellishment</td>
<td>figure 142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Drummer: Daniel&lt;br&gt;Dancers: Prasantha and Susantha</td>
<td><em>Bali</em> pattern-E</td>
<td>figure 146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Drummer: Susantha&lt;br&gt;Dancers: Daniel</td>
<td><em>Bali</em> pattern-H and embellishment</td>
<td>figure 147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 8: Letter of Human Ethics Approval

HEC Ref: 2006/108

5 October 2006

Sumuditha Suraweera
Music
UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

Dear Sumuditha

The Human Ethics Committee advises that your research proposal “Comparative Study of High and Low Country Drumming in Sri Lanka” has been considered and approved.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

Dr Alison Loveridge
Chair, Human Ethics Committee