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WATER AND WELLS, SYMBOLS OF PRESTIGE, POWER  
AND PROSPERITY IN A SINHALESE VILLAGE

A STUDY MADE IN SRI LANKA

ANITA KELLES-VIITANEN

# REPORT • 1 / 83 • B

INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI

COMMISSIONED BY THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS,  
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FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
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"People are always trying to get electricity. The people of our village think that government gives electricity free, that's why they are always working hard. But electricity will cost over 4000 rupees per house... Government people are making wells. It is not suitable for this village. We have poor people in this village who are living in houses with hayroof. Why can't they make new roofs to these poor people? We can't drink this water... Some people want pipeline along the road. It is very expensive and many people are not living near the road. Those people who are living by the road have all the facilities. But people who are living far from the roads have no facilities. To get roads to P. would be more important than the pipeline... If there is a sick person, people put sticks into a chair and then carry her to the road."

(A villager)

## Acknowledgments

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This study was financed by the Finnish Foreign Ministry who as well as my teacher, Dr. Marja-Liisa Swantz, gave me the opportunity to delve into a real research adventure, which field work at its best always is. Special thanks also to Auli Keinanen, my colleague in research and experience. Mrs. S.K. Mendis took me into the secrets of Sinhalese language and culture and kindly read also the manuscript with a critical eye. To her I am also grateful.

Kandy 21.12.1982

Anita Kelles-Viitanen

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Research Problem

Domestic water project - to accomplish their objectives, at least the five following factors must be included:

- (1) New water networks and wells are not out of order and are used by the people.
- (2) Water provided is and stays pure.
- (3) People understand the significance of pure water and they know the factors that pollute or defile water and can cause disease. Therefore people prefer and appreciate clean water.
- (4) New water technology "fits". That is, it conforms with cultural traditions and does not conflict with them badly. Therefore the people would accept the new technology.
- (5) People for whom the projects are intended have some role in locating, building and maintaining of wells and pipelines.

In my study I ask: How are the new wells functioning? Do they provide pure water to the people? Do people use them and how? How do the wells fit into cultural patterns? Do people accept them and how? What is the role of villagers in locating, building and maintaining of wells?

Auli Keinanen in her report<sup>1</sup> will study people's ideas about clean water, as well as their ideas relating to water-related diseases.

This study is a part of a research project "Water and Society" done together with the University of Sri Lanka, Peradeniya. Area of the study was Harispattuwa electorate in Kandy district to which the Finnish government gives development aid in the form of building wells, later pipelines

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<sup>1</sup> Keinanen, Auli 1982.

and possibly a water plant. The study was made in collaboration with the University of Peradeniya which chose 5 kind of settlements to be researched. One of them is the village studied here. This village which is just called Village in the report was also one of the first places where Finnish consultancy firm had constructed 10 new handpump wells. As pipelines and deep wells have not yet been constructed in the study area, the problems related to them could not be observed here. These questions are nevertheless looked into in the report prepared by the University of Sri Lanka, Peradeniya.

The village chosen for the case study is a traditional Sinhalese village with two castes. In the future similar kinds of depth studies should be carried out in other kinds of villages. Due to the short time of the research it was not possible to do it now.

To understand the effects and use of new wells it was necessary to collect a large amount of material about traditions and life of the village in general. Some of the material is included in this report when describing economic, social and political background of the village. This is essential in understanding the problems with new wells. Much of the data helped to frame and focus the study and was useful for an outsider to understand the Sinhalese life as far as it was possible in this short period of time.

A case study like this has some advantages as well as drawbacks. By concentrating on a single village one can get a thorough glimpse of what happens at village level and even discover some hidden structures of society. This is not possible with a questionnaire type of survey done in several villages. But on the other hand a case study leads to problems of generalization. I think that it is still possible here to raise some more general aspects to be considered, recommended and possibly taken into consideration in future water projects, like:

- (1) What kind of social knowledge should be taken into consideration when planning and realizing a water project?

- (2) What kind of cultural knowledge is needed?
- (3) What kind of action on the side of villagers and different organizations is needed so that the projects in future would give maximum benefit to maximum number of people as well as the poorest part of population?

It should be borne in mind that it is not only technology which is transferred from one country to another, but with it the whole behavioral pattern and cultural values. The goal in this case may very well be pure water to people but with the project some other latent goals, not necessarily intended, may also be accomplished. It is the role of the researcher to try to find out these consequences. This I have intended to do here as well.

## 1.2. Method of Research

In the study anthropological participant observation was partly used. Participant observation means that the researcher lives among those he studies, participates in their daily lives and tries to learn their culture. There was no time to participate in villagers' daily work routine, due to the short time allocated for the research (5 months in which writing of report as well as assisting the university in methodology was included). As much material as possible was to be quickly collected. That is why mostly interviews, formal and informal ones, were used. Photography has also been used in data collection, and as a research technique to analyze together with informants one special ritual (Bandana Kapima).

Anthropological field work consists of inference-making from three kinds of sources: (1) What people say and how they say it. (2) What people do and how they do it. (3) What kinds of artefacts people use and how they use them. I have had to rely very much on what people said. But as

far as possible an attempt was made to check what was actually happening by observing meetings, rituals, use of water, farming activities etc.

Besides villagers, also some of the personnel of the Finnish consultancy firm (especially those connected to siting wells) were interviewed. Some Sri Lankan and foreign officials and experts related to water projects or development in general were consulted, too. The list of these informants, whose anonymity, as that of the village and villagers, is preserved in the name of anthropological research ethics, is in Appendix 1.

At the beginning of field work the field investigators of the Peradeniya University were to be supervised. Apart from their formal census questionnaire, some informal interviews were held in order to orientate to habits of water use as well as problems. This was the explorative part of field work. As some things in the life of villagers and their customs became evident, interviews could be more focused on some special subjects. Information about traditional as well as new wells, their history and customs was collected in this manner. The subjects asked are included in Appendix 2. People who were interviewed about wells represent the following castes: Bodiwansa (70) and Berawa (4). Their age, sex, economical and educational distribution is presented in Tables 1 - 4.

Table 1. Age and sex distribution of those interviewed about wells

Age Distribution	Male	Female	Total
0-9	-	-	-
10-19	2	3	5
20-29	1	4	5
30-39	8	13	21
40-49	5	10	15
50-59	9	6	15
60-69	5	3	8
70 and above	3	2	5
Total	33	41	74



Table 2. Size of land owned by those interviewed about wells

Size Distribution Acres	High Land		Low Land	
	No. of Reporting	Total Acres	No. of Reporting	Total Acres
Less than 0.25	-	-	3	0.25
0.25-0.49	22	5.5	7	1.75
0.5-0.99	14	7.5	10	5.25
1.0-1.99	9	10.75	4	4.0
2.0-2.99	9	20.0	1	2.0
3.0-3.99	1	3.5	1	3.0
4.0-4.99	1	4.0	0	0
5.0 and above	2	23.75	0	0
Total	58	75.0	28	16.25

Table 3. Economic background of those interviewed about wells

Economic activities	No. of persons
1. Owner non cultivator	4
2. Owner cultivator	11
3. Tenant cultivator	11
4. Wage labourer	14
5. Tenant cultivator & wage labourer	6
6. High land cultivator	4
7. Owner cultivator & tenant cultivator	5
8. Owner cultivator & wage labourer	1
9. Owner cultivator & tenant cultivator & wage labourer	1
10. Business	2
11. Tenant cultivator & business	2
12. Owner cultivator & business	2
13. Government jobs	8
14. Other (Sarvodaya, weaving, astrology)	3
Total	74

Table 4. Educational background of those interviewed about wells

Education	No. of persons
1. Illiterate	12
2. Grade 1-5	23
3. Grade 6-10 (o/l or s.s.c.)	37
4. Advanced level	1
5. University	0
6. Training	1
Total	74

When one compares these tables with those from the whole village (see Appendix 3) one can see that the interviewed population is roughly representative.

About rituals relating to water, 10 ritual specialists in the village were interviewed. I also participated in some of the rituals (Pirith, Bandana Kapima).

Chairmen and some active members of the village societies as well as other influential people in the village were interviewed about the role and place of organizations in village development, their role relating to water services as well as in health and sanitation education. Also shopkeepers and people from cottage industries in the village were interviewed.

#### 1.2.1. Field Work Problems

I moved to the village on 9th of August and stayed there until the 28th of October, but in November and December some occasional visits were also made. Field work was several times interrupted due to meetings in Kandy, financial matters and due to absence of our translators, who also worked as field investigators for the Peradeniya University.

The field work was further interrupted for a period of three weeks. Two weeks in the middle of the field period

was necessary to check and organize material collected so far. We stayed away from the research area for another week as we were advised not to stay in the village during the presidential elections because of possible outbreaks of violence between different parties. Short time spent on the field (the set time of 5 months for whole research writing of the report included is too short in itself) naturally affects the quality of data. It has been pointed out over and over again that it takes time to create confidence between researcher and those being studied so that more confidential, private and sensitive data can be collected. I think we nevertheless succeeded to create some confidence for our work in the village. (There were nevertheless some disturbing factors as pointed out later.) We got information about witchcraft and some conflicts inside the village. These are subjects which are normally not freely discussed with strangers. More and more of this kind of material came out towards the end of field work. This gives support to the fact that it takes about three months to build up close relationships with the people. This was also pointed out by one of the field investigators<sup>1</sup> who had studied one of the Sinhalese villages. The way I was being observed was revealed and expressed in the following words of one of the women in the village:

"Three months ago you came and were always afraid to walk on the bunds of the paddy field; now you walk better than us, and you even jump!"

I received also many astrological prophecies about myself from the village astrologers. These also could be used as projective devices to find out how the villagers react to the researcher. Of course the exact time for building confidential relations with villagers varies depending on the character of the researchers and how the study is presented. Misbehaviour can destroy trust easily.

The villagers watched our behavior very carefully and even tried to find out where we lived in Kandy and whether

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<sup>1</sup> Prema Wijesinghe.

we were associating with the Finnish consultancy firm. This screening of our behavior must have in the end been favourable to us. This was clearly expressed to us in the speech by the Nayake monk:

"These two sisters were working very hard. They are learning... This brother always worked with these two sisters. They have very good characters."

And another village leader:

"First I was sad, they could not understand our language. They lived in our village like our villagers. We are happy about it. Now they know us very well. They know our wells and latrines. They came alone from Finland. They both are young. This mister also is young. These people behaved very well. It is a very good lesson for our village youth."

The trust nevertheless was about to be endangered through the behavior of our first translator and investigator, who had to be dismissed due to it. Our second translator was much liked by the villagers and this naturally was a great asset in our study.

I think the material collected about traditions in the village has not been unduly overemphasized. There is probably much more to traditions than has been collected here. At times the villagers seemed to be ashamed of their own traditions. This may also be related to the way we as Europeans were observed. Possibly it was assumed that modernized Europeans no more may have any traditions and may regard them as signs of backwardness. For that reason I on several occasions emphasized my appreciation of their traditions.

I also feel that women were more reliable as informants than men. Men are used to give public and all too good image about themselves and their life situation. On one occasion one of our female informants came to us crying and demanded us to change the information she gave about her family's economic situation, as her husband had become angry and hit her when finding out that she had given us the correct

information about it.

The confidence of villagers as well as making the research more participatory was tried by organizing meetings for the villagers. About 80 villagers attended our first meeting which was arranged on the full moon Poya day, so that people would not be working. The purpose of our research was explained and their main problems concerning water, health and sanitation were inquired. The second meeting had to be arranged as one section of the village with the most problems did not attend the meeting. Hundred people including those who were absent earlier attended it. A third meeting was organized for the villagers and the members of the Finnish consultancy firm to discuss the villagers' problems. Attendance was very poor (15 adult villagers).

At the fourth and last meeting, organized for the villagers, information about our research results as well as advice relating to hygiene were given. Framed photographs to be donated to the new society building were used as an attraction for the villagers to attend the meeting. Little more than 100 people attended. The discussions in these meetings are also very valuable material for research.

Even though we asked the villagers to spread the information about our studies, some people in the outskirts and especially some women were still ignorant of our study even after our second study.

A similar kind of informative meeting was also organized for the Finnish consultancy firm.

In the meetings with villagers as well as in interviews there were problems relating to use of interpreters. The interpreters who are students from Peradeniya University also worked as field investigators. As they did not speak nor understand English very well early data was not as reliable as later. With time and with practice their English improved, as well as my knowledge of Sinhala language, which I started to study as soon as I arrived in Kandy. I learned to understand some Sinhala and I could see when wrong or leading questions were put to the informant. I could also

make sure that the words of informant, and not ideas of translator, were given to me. As many of the questions were asked several times, from different informants, that is, it was also possible to cross-check information given.

Even though I was in the field a relatively short time it was possible to follow the whole cycle of paddy cultivation, but in the reverse order: I came to the village during harvesting time in the end of the yāla season and left when the paddy was again planted and replanted in the beginning of the maha season.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately the effects of the dry season could not be studied. There was nevertheless a short period of "dry weather", i.e. lack of rain in September. Water level then in many traditional wells went down quite drastically. The driest period is nevertheless in February and March. It would have been extremely important to study the performance of new hand pump wells during that time. 1982 has been a relatively wet year all over the island. Also the village received the heaviest rains in December. Roads were blocked due to earthslides, one bridge leading to the village collapsed, paddy fields were flooded. As most of the traditional wells are situated on the paddy fields the water from the paddy fields must have gone into them. It was not possible to study the effect of this very wet weather due to lack of time. Neither could New Year's rituals be studied as the period of study terminated before this festival in April. In this village there are customs and traditions relating to water during the new year. These limitations were beyond the control of researchers.

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<sup>1</sup> There are two paddy cultivation seasons in Sri Lanka: yāla and maha. Yāla starts in April and ends in August-September. Maha starts in September-October and ends in March.

## 2. GENERAL BACKGROUND OF THE VILLAGE BEING STUDIED

The village being studied is situated in the central part of Harispattuwa electorate in the Kandy district. There are 864<sup>1</sup> inhabitants in the village (see Appendix 3, table 15). In 1881 there were 624 inhabitants (325 males, 299 females) in the village, but 1891 the population had dropped into half (151 males, 159 females).<sup>2</sup> One of the oldest men (94 years) claimed that there was an epidemic of chicken pox and measles at the end of the 19th century in the village, and many people had died. Whether true or not could not be proved. Similar phenomenon anyway seems to have occurred in some nearby villages as well.<sup>3</sup>

Still in 1912 to 1923 elephants were claimed to be used in the village for moving rocks, levelling roads and moving tree trunks. As there were no roads from A. to G. elephants were also used for wares transportation. Large tea estates were also claimed to have existed in the area.

"White people bought highlands by force, when they came in my father's time. So did some chettiyas, Indian businessmen. Sinhalese and Indian tamils worked as estate labourers at that time. There was a tea estate of 200 acres in Pujapitya, Haddawa, Dolapihillagama, Wattegoda, Kahatagastenne."

There are also different versions of how the village got its name.

One reason for the village to be included in the survey done by Peradeniya University was that it was considered

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<sup>1</sup> Twenty houses' housing scheme has been left out of the survey done by Peradeniya University.

<sup>2</sup> Lawrie 1896, 177-178.

<sup>3</sup> Lawrie 1896.

as a typical rural village in the area. It is also a pilot village in sanitation and shallow well construction. During the research the traditional nature of this village became even more prominent. Many rituals and old customs were still preserved even though it was claimed that some traditions were dying away, and some - like worshipping plow and bull's yoke when starting farming - had already died away. One sign of the modernization process in the village may be the slight embarrassment people seem to feel about their traditions. Traditions are also differently observed by different sections of the population: affluent people had sangha pirith ceremonies, poorer ones held gihi pirith ceremonies and bandana kapimas.

One of the new things affecting the way of villagers' life is television.<sup>1</sup> There are now two battery-operated televisions in the village. There will be many more when electricity finally comes to the village and/or incomes from cloves come. Like in the early days when television came to Finnish villages people flock to the houses where the televisions are.<sup>2</sup> So far the Sinhala films are most popular.

There is no electricity in the village, but it is expected in January 1983, even so only along some part of the main road. A huge power line going to Jaffna goes however through the village over the hills. Some jaktrees, valuable for their fruits and timber had to be cut to make way for this power line. Villagers complained about the insignificant compensation for the cut trees.

The village is ten miles away from Kandy. To Kandy as well as to some nearer towns there are good transport connections. Central regional transport board buses operate 24 hours per day one way. Besides there are privately operated buses and vans transporting people. During the

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<sup>1</sup> One shop already opened later next day after the film on television.

<sup>2</sup> Number of viewers varies between 70 and 200.



night there is no transport and problems arising due to heavy rain can also adversely affect road transport.

There are no telephones in the village. Nearest telephone for public use is 1,5 miles away from the village. But telephones are sometimes out of order for several days.

The village is not an isolated unit even though people identify themselves with their villages and often express this by saying that they are all relatives.<sup>1</sup> As there are no dispensaries nor hospitals in the village, nearby hospitals and dispensaries are being used. There are nevertheless six ayurvedic physicians,<sup>2</sup> one traditional midwife and one registered midwife in the village. A nurse, working in Kandy General Hospital also resides in the village.

Some villagers also work outside the village. Many have relatives outside the village, who visit and are visited upon. Also three people from the village have gone to work to Arab countries.<sup>3</sup>

These external connections are not new. It has been claimed that "Ceylonese village has long been exposed to economics and other influences from the outside world. Any suggestion that the village long lived in isolation and is only recently beginning to make significant regular contact with the outside world is way wide off the mark".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Kinship system is a complicated one in Sri Lankan society and I have not gone into it here. But see Robinson 1975, 39-49.

<sup>2</sup> One of them is a registered ayurvedic physician. These traditional practitioners are specialized. One of them treats ulcers, boils, breast cancer and toothaches. Another one treats dog and snake bites. Third one is an eye specialist. Fourth one takes care of burns. Some of them also work as astrologers and exorcists. But villagers consult traditional physicians in nearby villages as well.

<sup>3</sup> As a mechanic, a driver and a house maid.

<sup>4</sup> Morrison, Moore, Ishak Lebbe 1979, 15.

In the village Buddhism is practiced. But also gods of Indian origin are venerated. Spirits form a part of religious life of the villagers as well. There are two Buddhist temples in the village: one belonging to Siyam-Nikaya, the other one to Amarapura Nikaya. There is a primary and secondary school (mahavidyale) with ten classes and with 13 teachers and 389 pupils. Some pupils are from nearby villages. There is a post office, which was opened in 1960 and a gramasevaka's office, where a government service officer works for the villages which comprise his gramasevaka area.<sup>1</sup> His work consists of the following:

- (1) Search for criminal cases, as there is no police in the area.
- (2) Assisting agrarian, social, religious and educational development work in the village.
- (3) Distributing welfare assistance from government to villagers.
- (4) Election duties.
- (5) Issuing identity cards.
- (6) Food stamps.<sup>2</sup>
- (7) Giving character certificates for jobs and passports.
- (8) Negotiating marital and land problems.
- (9) Checking reasons for death.
- (10) Giving court assistance to villagers.
- (11) Issuing permits for cutting jaktrees.
- (12) Working as a mediator between government and villagers, for example conveying of government notices to villagers.

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<sup>1</sup> Gramasevaka was established in 1963 and he is usually an outsider nominated by government to his post. Before that in 1942 to 1962 village headman was in charge of revenue & administrative affairs of the village.

<sup>2</sup> People are in theory entitled to food stamps if their incomes are under 300 rupees per month. In practice those who earn incomes over 300 rupees receive them due to lapses in follow-up of economic condition of villagers.

(13) All low-level government administration.

(14) Registering births and deaths and reporting them to galasiya pattua secretary.

He has had also some role in locating wells as will be explained later.

### 2.1. Economical Background of the Village

There are eleven small food and general shops in the village. One of them is a government co-operative store. There are also six teashops selling tea, bread, fruits and shorteats. There are two barbers and one bag and tailoring shop, two paddy-grinding mills, one carpentry workshop with three trained carpenters and one pupil, one beedi factory employing two men and 12 women,<sup>1</sup> one bakery with three workers, and a government weaving center employing three women. Besides there are some timber yards and a brickyard employing eight women and child labourers (aged 14-16).

In two of the shops there is a kind of "bank", a wooden shelf with drawers with customers' name on each drawer. After shopping customers can put the change into them and collect the money on new year when extra money is needed for new clothes, foods and sweets. Shopkeeper takes a small rent of 3 or 10 rupees for the drawer. Sarvodaya is also trying to get villagers to participate in their saving system as the indebtedness to shopkeepers, middlemen and moneylenders is a problem for poor villagers.

Main agricultural activity is paddy cultivation. Size of the lands can be seen in Appendix 3. On highlands tea and minor export crops (cloves, pepper, nutmegs, coffee, spices) are grown. Areca nuts, some vegetables and fruits are grown, too.

People either own land, or work as tenant cultivators

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<sup>1</sup> Women work at home, not all of them are only of this village.

(ande) or as wage labourers' (see Appendix 3b).

Women have active economical role in the village. Besides taking care of usual household chores they participate in paddy cultivation, in which there is a division of labour: men till and otherwise prepare the field, women plant and replant the paddy, men cut the paddy, females collect and carry the paddy to the threshing floor, men do the threshing and women winnow the paddy. The exact division of paddy labour is not necessarily the same in other areas.

Fig. 1. Men ploughing the paddy field



Fig. 2. Women preparing paddy breeding place and a man preparing field according to a new method



Fig. 3. Men cutting the paddy in attam.



Fig. 4. Woman carrying the paddy to the threshing floor



Fig. 5. Threshing of paddy by buffaloes



As can be seen from the pictures, buffaloes are used in preparing the paddy fields (ploughing, puddling and levelling) and in threshing.

Women also collect firewood, which sometimes can take several hours. They also collect grass and other fodder for animals as well as carry water. Children often help them to carry water. During the dry season a lot of water is needed for watering gardens. Women can also work as wage labourers carrying bricks, working in paddy fields, plucking tea leaves, cleaning gardens, rolling beedi etc. They can also earn some money by sewing clothes for others, making mats, supplying shorteats to tea shops.

Child labour is also a common phenomenon in the village. Some children work as child labourers, but many more children help their parents regularly in paddy cultivation and girls take care of household chores from an early age. During harvest time especially, some children can drop out of school for as long as one month. Following reasons for it were given in school:

- (1) Harvesting time children are needed either at home or on paddy field.
- (2) Many people do not feel the need for better education.
- (3) Children are at home to help in housework, especially to cook or look after young children.

This year the school vacation was during harvesting time so that it did not interfere with children's schooling. As it has been suggested it would be wise to try "modifying the rigid school timetables, which clash with the equally rigid but more persuasive demands of paddy cultivation".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Morrison, Moore, Ishak Lebbe 1979, 135.

## 2.2. Political Background of the Village

Politics was said to come to the village after 1948, in Prime Minister D.S. Senanayake's time, but party politics with quarrelling came after 1970 in Sirimavo Bandaranaike's time. These quarrels and fights sometimes escalate even to murder and arson. But in the village being studied there has only been some small quarrels, stonethrowing, and hootings. Even this is considered a problem:

"After elections there is fighting and quarrelling. But after 2-3 years people unite, but now elections are coming again, and problem will also continue."

A referendum is to be held on 22nd of December, soon after the presidential election held in 20th of October.

After the elections emergency was declared in the country and schools also closed for ten days.

"There are two main parties in this country. Both cannot win. Winner should respect the defeated, but here some young people are like beasts. Winner always attacks the defeated."

The village was visited before the presidential elections at least by UNP, SLFP and JVP party members. Members of parliament and the presidential candidates visited the area, too, and had mass-rallies in nearby towns. Politics in the village as elsewhere in the country was very visible: decorations for political meetings were prepared, posters and information about political meetings were to be seen. And after elections political slogans were painted on the roads in front of gathering places, shops, teashops, temple:

(1) "We will win. UNP. Thank you. Today president, tomorrow president, too."

(2) "Today elephant,<sup>1</sup> tomorrow the king."

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<sup>1</sup> Presidential candidates had different symbols and the symbol of UNP candidate, sitting president, is elephant.



(3) "We are also elephants. We too are for the elephant. New president also J.R."

In the village power has vacillated between the two major parties: conservative UNP and socialist SLFP as in the whole country. In 1970 majority of the villagers supported UNP. But in 1977 votes went to SLFP. Again in presidential elections of 1982 people inclined towards UNP. Following results of the whole Gramasevara area in question was given by a village leader:

UNP	630 votes
SLFP	125 votes
JVP	7 votes
LSSP	5 votes

The UNP party branch was established in 1981 and there are about 200 members. There was also a party branch of SLFP in the village during 1970 and 1977. Now there are little less than 50 active members of SLFP.

After the election situation changed in the village even more in favour of UNP. Second MP for Harispattuwa electorate crossed over from opposition to the UNP. With him many of his supporters in the village also switched over. This was also considered to be one of the reasons that there were no serious after-election incidents in the village. As a result village is not polarized to the degree it used to be. Curiously enough the quarrels have not ended. Now the quarrels, even fighting goes on inside the UNP party, because a second UNP party branch was established by some disgruntled villagers. The disagreements started with the celebration at the close of the mason-class organized by the government. In the celebration masons were to get their certificates. The representatives of the new party branch were of the opinion that only those belonging to UNP should get the certificates. The members of the old branch objected quite correctly saying that this was against the development of the whole village. This quarrel also characterizes the

phenomenon of politicization of rural areas and development. Development in the village is not necessarily credited to government or state but to a special party. Now UNP takes credit for water projects, housing schemes and electricity. Electricity was used as a carrot for villagers to vote UNP. It was promised that villagers would get electricity before the day of the presidential election. This, however, did not happen and the next deadline is in January. Nevertheless because of it many votes surely went to UNP.

It is in the interest of the parties to get strong foothold in the village, but one cannot bypass the fact that villagers also try to read some benefit from politics. One reason for participating in politics or switching over to other party is to be favoured by those who happen to be in power.

"If the government is doing something in the country, people of this branch also try to participate. That's why we are not getting new buildings for the school, new hand pump wells, electricity etc. 3-4 years ago the electricity board put up the poles, but did not give electricity, that's why we started a party branch. The minister also liked this."

Often the village organizations can be bypassed and political patrons contacted outside the village as will be pointed out in discussing location of hand pump wells. This makes the decision-making in the village rather confusing as the party is also represented in the village organizations. Presidents of the following organizations also support UNP: Temple Society, Gramodaya Mandala, Grama Sanwardana, Death Donation Society, Mau Haule. Only Sarvodaya's Shramadāna Committee seems to be outside party politics. The reason that members of parliament are contacted is due to the felt, and I think real, impotence of the village organizations and societies and their lack of resources and power. Old village committees on the other hand had some real power to collect taxes and perform statutory duties.

Some of the villagers are also rather cynical about politics. Many say that they do not care about party politics, some even said they hated party politics and considered villagers as fools when they were fighting. Someone said also: "Members of parliament only want votes."

### 2.3. Village Organizations

There are several organizations or societies (samitie) in the village. Some of them are government-established, some are borne out of the villagers' own needs. Some of them are already inactive and some new ones are established. For government establishing organization means development:

"The government believes in all organizations. The government believes it to be village development."

It is clear that organizations as such are no guarantee for development. Much depends on how the members are elected, whether the organization in question really represents all social groups and stratas, whether the organization is active, whether people participate in them actively and extensively, and whether they have real power and resources.

This is not the case with some village organizations: some are no more active; in some, people no more participate actively; some lack money; some have no real power but simply act as pawns for the government (see Appendix 4). Some institutions established and maintained by government lack money as well.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In nearby village, home for aged has been unable to pay food bills to co-operative shop of government and salary of caretaker for three months. Vegetables had to be dropped out of lunch. A hospital and maternity home nearby is without any staff since three years.

There is a saying in Sri Lanka that societies are like soda bottles, which first fizz and rush with activity but later are in complete stand-still.

The following organizations exist in the village:

- (1) Co-operative Society
- (2) Temple Society (Dayaka Sabha)
- (3) Village Development Society (Grama Sanwardana)
- (4) Village Development Committee (Gramodaya Mandala)
- (5) Death Donation Society (Maranadara Samities)
- (6) Sport Committee (Preja Mandala)
- (7) Sarvodaya
  - Shramadāna Committee
  - Mothers' Meeting (Mau Haule)
- (8) School Development Society

From Appendix 4 we can see that people are not satisfied with the established government organizations because of the lack of real power in them.

Some organizations have stopped altogether. I am here only referring to villagers' own organizations. Two of the youth societies have stopped: Sarvodaya's Youth Meeting (Yovun Haule) which was still active in 1979<sup>1</sup> and Vesak Festive Society was last time active in 1979. Women's organization Mahila Samitie which was established in the village 40 years ago has now merged with the village development society. Women said that they did not need a separate society. Result of this is now that the only female member in Gramodaya Mandala is the teacher of the weaving center who is without a vote. Villagers do not now have any woman representative in that development organization. The teacher is not from the village. The wish of women's bureau is that "more women are represented at the Gramodaya Mandalays". This was emphasized in their symposium on women, "New dimensions in the role of women"

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<sup>1</sup> Children's meeting (Singiti Haule) is active in village and they have opened a bank for children to save and invest money on children's gardens.

in 11.11.1982 on their session communique. Development in this village, however, seems to move in the opposite direction in women's affairs.

The former local government organizations are not examined here in detail. It suffices here to say that some of them have stopped working (the village council, i.e. Gam Sabha and the agricultural society, i.e. Govikāraka Sabha).

It has been claimed by researchers that "some salient points about rural organizations are that (i) there is a multiplicity of organization, (ii) the important organizations with considerable resources are the government sponsored ones, (iii) some of those organizations have been successful in their stated objectives and some not, (iv) the involvement of the villagers is greater in those organizations which are indigenous to the villagers".<sup>1</sup> I agree with (i), (iii) and (iv) with the addition that organizations are not only multiple, sometimes they are also identical in their objectives which is waste of time and resources.<sup>2</sup> But I must disagree with (ii). In the village studied government-sponsored organizations seemed to lack resources, but on the other hand the Death Donation Society organized by villagers was doing very fine with a bank account of 19132,80 rupees.

#### 2.4. Castes of the Village

The caste system of traditional Sri Lanka was not similar to that of India. It differed from the Indian one in the following ways:

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<sup>1</sup> Morrison, Moore and Ishak Lebbe 1979, 177.

<sup>2</sup> This is the case also on national level. The work of Water Resources Board and NWSDB is partly identical.

- (1) Buddhism tempered Sinhala caste by depriving it of religious rationale sanction of Hinduism.
- (2) There was no Brahmin caste - depriving it of religious rationale and sanction as in Hinduism.
- (3) There was no Brahmin caste, but in Sri Lanka the govigama (the farmers) were the largest caste.
- (4) Contrary to the pyramid structure of Indian system with a small minority of Brahmins on the top, govigama, the highest caste in Sri Lanka constitutes over half of the population and the lowest castes are small.
- (5) Sinhala castes were never occupational categories in any total sense, but provided different services to the temple. Whether drummers or washermen they still could be all cultivators.<sup>1</sup>

There were still probably govigama families in the village before the First World War. Now the only govigamas in the village are the Buddhist monks in the other temple in the outskirts of the village. Most of the villagers belong to bodiwansa caste. What exactly are the duties of this caste is not clear. It may have been taking care of the sacred bodhi-tree, as their origin is connected in their folklore to the arrival of Mihindu and Sanghamitta to Ceylon.<sup>2</sup> Bodiwansas consider themselves as their relatives. I will quote Lynn de Silva:

"It is believed that a branch of this very same bodhi-tree under which the Buddha attained enlightenment was brought here in the reign of King Devānampiyatissa when Buddhism was first introduced to Ceylon. It was brought by Theri Sanghamitta, the sister of Mahinda Thera in 247 B.C. and planted in Anurādhapura, then the capital city of Ceylon ..."

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<sup>1</sup> Ferdando 1979, 29-31.

<sup>2</sup> De Silva 1980, 67.

As the tree was brought to Anuradhapura, so the villagers' relations to this town should be studied. It is interesting that the nayaka thero's (the chief monk's) vihara is near Anuradhapura.

The minority caste consists of berawas (drummers) and they are considered to be lower to bodiwansa.

Table 5. Caste Distribution in the Village\*

	Bodiwansa	Berawa	Total
No. of Persons	810	54	864
%	93.75	6.25	100

\* Census done by the Peradeniya University's research team.

When govigamas were in the village, there were some conflicts between them and lower castes. (1) The lower castes were not allowed to use shirts. (2) Govigama monks never came to lower caste ceremonies and social occasions. (3) The lower castes were generally ignored. Because of these problems new temple and monastery was built 35 years ago. The villagers do not visit the old monastery.<sup>1</sup> The two temples belong also to different nikayas (different schools or sects of Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka). The old one belonged to Siyam Niakay, the "new" one to Amarapūra Nikaya.

The caste system is very sensitive and a difficult subject to probe into. One reason is that people would not like to admit that it exists or would give an appearance of belonging to a higher caste. Fernando also points this out by saying that "caste thinking has become covert rather than overt and situational rather than pervasive".<sup>2</sup> It still nevertheless affects social relationships. It was

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<sup>1</sup> Donations stopped only after 1975.

<sup>2</sup> Fernando 1979, 40.

claimed in the village that there was no difference in wealth and joining in societal, religious and agricultural activities between bodiwansas and berawas. It was only considered to affect marriages: intermarriage is not possible, nor do they partake in each others' weddings. But looking at the members of boards in different village organizations it becomes evident that berawas are not there. Also they inhabit those areas (Pathkoladeniya and Kaulagala) that have been neglected so far in the construction of new hand pump wells.



### 3. WELLS OF THE VILLAGE

#### 3.1. Traditional Wells and Other Water Sources

There are altogether 80 traditional wells in the area. Traditional wells are the ones that have been built by villagers or village organization, not by outsiders as the case has been with the new hand pump wells. All 80 wells are still in use. Besides these there are very few abandoned wells. Old wells are usually used as areca-nut pits: areca nuts are kept in water for eight months in order to cure them.

The use of the traditional wells is as follows:

Table 6. Use of Traditional Wells

Main Purpose of Use	No. of Wells
Drinking	28
Dish washing	1*
Garden	1**
Bathing	39
Drinking and Bathing	11
Total	80

\* Former drinking well

\*\* Former bathing well

Wells that are used both for drinking and bathing are of course from hygienic point of view questionable. Actually some of them are pihillas, combined pipe and tank systems. Bathing is done under the spout and drinking water is taken from the tank or well above (see Figure 10). The villagers usually make a very clear distinction between bathing and drinking wells. Water can still be taken from these wells for other purposes.

Water for dishes or toilet can be taken either from a drinking or bathing well. People can do their morning washing in any well as well. This is done with or without soap. During the dry season a lot of water (varying between 10 and 100 buckets per day) is needed for watering gardens. It is usually carried by women and/or children. The amount of water used in household varies according to the size of the family and the type of latrines. The exact amount of water needed for those purposes has not been studied. Sometimes clothes are also washed near the drinking well. This has been directly observed as well as inferred from the traces of soap on the stones used for washing.

The belief that it is only women who fetch the water is not exactly true. I have seen men fetching water and seen them also washing clothes (usually their own). It was also expressed to me with the following words:

"Always females take water, but sometimes men, too."

I have distinguished six types of traditional wells according to walling:

Table 7. Types of traditional wells

Type of well	Bathing	Drinking	Both	Total
1. Mudholes	8	4	1	13
2. Stone wells	15	14	3	32
3. Pihillas	2	2	4	8
4. Tree trunk wells	0	2	0	2
5. Tyre wells	1	0	0	1
6. Cement wells	16	8	0	24
Total	42	30	8	80

Fig. 6. Mudhole well used for bathing by two houses



Fig. 7. Mudhole well used for drinking by three families and situated in the middle of a paddyfield

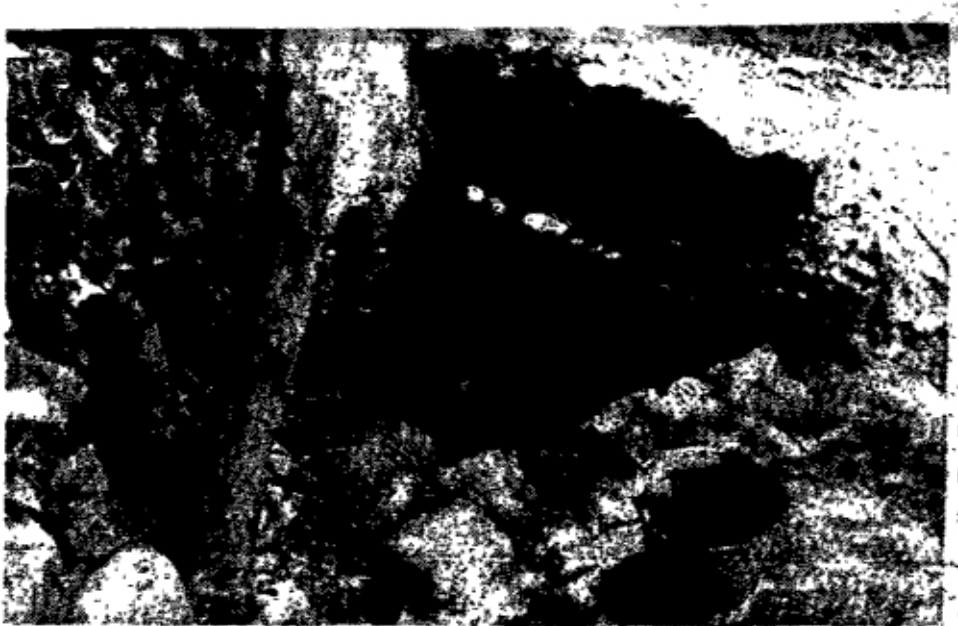


In mudholes lining is simply mud. In stonewells dry stone walling is used.

Fig. 8. Stonewell used for drinking by six families and situated near a paddy field



Fig. 9. Stone well used for bathing by ten houses



'Pihilla' (Sinhalese) can be translated spout. This is a small tank-like water reservoir and a simple pipe, made of bamboo, s-lon or steel. The water source is usually a spring situated on a higher plane.

Fig. 10. Bathing and drinking pihilla used by 15 families



Fig. 11. Bathing pihilla



The tree-trunk well is a traditional well type, which probably has been common earlier. A trunk of kitul-tree (*Caryota urens*) is usually used. Sometimes also that of jak-tree (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*) can be used.

Fig. 12. Kitul tree trunk well used for drinking by 25 families and situated in the middle of a paddy field



In a tyre well, tyres on top of each other have been used for lining.

Fig. 13. Tyre well used for bathing by one family



Cement wells are either laid on concrete or a precast concrete pipe is used (Fig. 14).

Fig. 14. Cement well used for bathing by one family and situated near a paddy field



Fig. 15. Cement well used for drinking by 4-5 families and situated in the paddy field

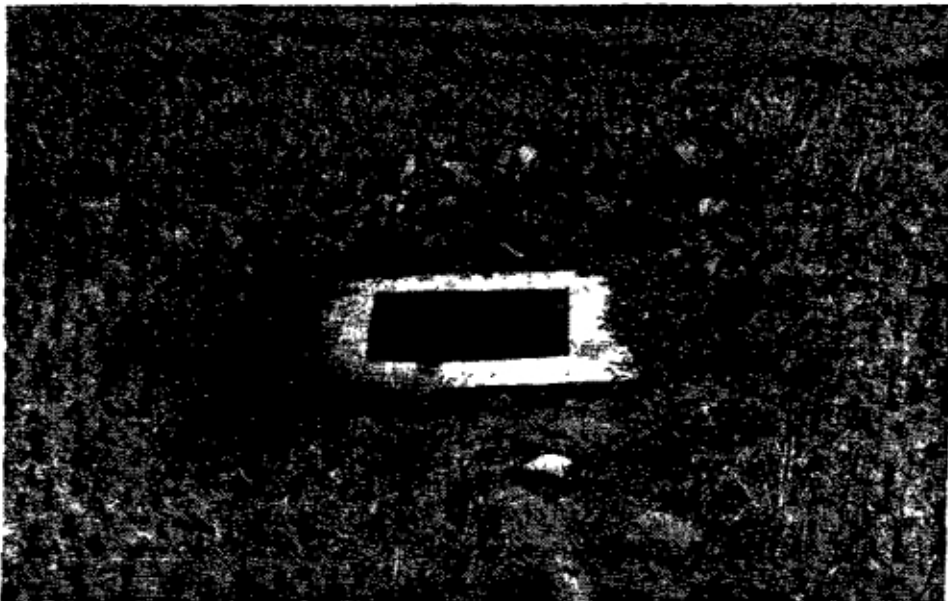




Fig. 16. Drinking well made of concrete precast pipe used by 25-30 families near a paddy field



Rain water is also often used for household purposes: dish washing and toilets. It is collected from the roofs into pots and basins or small tanks. It may be also used for drinking purposes, especially when it is continuously raining.

Fig. 17. Rain water being collected



There is no one shape for these wells. Materials used in building can also vary. In wells meant for bathing there is also a small platform on which people stand bathing. This is either made of cement, broken tiles, stones or wood. 21 of the 51 bathing wells<sup>1</sup> (41 %) have names given by villagers. 9 out of 29 drinking wells (31 %) have names as well.<sup>2</sup> The most common type of name of a well refers to some tree (10 out of 30). This is not coincidence: the

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<sup>1</sup> Mixed wells are also included here.

<sup>2</sup> Names are of following types: "Well of the rankot house", "Middle garden well", "Temple well", "Tree-trunk well", "Well

type of tree is also important in the traditional siting of wells. People consider some wells as private, others as common.

Table 8. Private and common wells

Ownership of wells	Drinking wells	Bathing wells	Total
Private	23	32	55
Common	5	16	21
Missing information	1	3	4
Total	29	51	80

As can be seen from the table above, private wells are in majority. This does not nevertheless mean that these private wells would be used only by one family.

Table 9. Use of drinking wells

Number of families using	Private drinking wells	Common drinking wells	Total
1	6	0	6
2-10	8	3	11
10-20	4	1	5
20-30	2	0	2
over 30	0	0	0
Missing information			5
Total	20	4	24

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under the kumbuk-tree" (white murdah, *Terminalia arjuna*), "Mucus well". The last one refers to the effects of cold water in it.

Table 10. Use of bathing wells

Number of families using	Private bathing well	Common bathing well	Total
1	12	0	12
2-10	14	5	19
10-20	4	6	10
20-30	0	2	2
over 30	0	1	1
Missing information			7
Total	30	14	44

### 3.1.1. Poisoning of Wells

There is a strong taboo against having a drinking well alone. As can be seen from Table 10 only 6 out of 20 private wells are used by one family alone. This taboo is expressed as a fear for poisoning of wells by angry or jealous neighbours. These people when agitated are believed to put poison in wells. But no informant (out of 21) seemed to know about any actual cases having happened in the village. Stories that were told always concerned some other villages nearby.

(1) "About poisoning of wells, we do not know. Some people say, don't use well alone. Some people can poison the water. That's why many people are not using well for drinking alone, for one family. That's why I try to cover my well in the future with concrete. I try to imitate new wells."

(2) "We have only heard something, we heard that it is not so good to use one well by one family. This is only suspicion. Rural folk says this. This is just word of mouth (kata wacchane). These are spoken words only (podu viyawahare)."

In the next quotation, another explanation is given to the poison:

(3) "It is not so good to have well just for one family. Bathing well can be used by one family alone. Drinking well should not be used just by one family. It can be poisoned. In this area three or four families always use one well. Twenty years ago, according to some people, in Valdeniya area about six people died. One lady boiled some water in a pot. Some very terrible lizard, sikanalla, had fallen into the pot and died. Food was prepared with this water without knowing that sikanalla was there. All who ate the food died. Villagers thought that water was poisoned, but I don't think so, only sikanalla was there. Our mothers and fathers tell these stories about poisoning. I do not know if it has actually happened anywhere. Some people may get angry and threaten to put kitul nuts in a well, but they do not necessarily put them there. If I had a well and you would always come to bath in my well, we might quarrel. I could ask you not to come to my well. You could threaten me with kitul-nut poisoning. Kitul nuts can give rash."

Some people assume that poison could be pesticides. There is actually a high rate of pesticide poisoning in Sri Lanka. Poison is also believed to be made of poisonous animals (visasattu), especially of the monitor lizard (kabaragoi). It is believed that this oil<sup>1</sup> can be put into foods, too. Also a poisonous snake can be used for the purpose according to the beliefs of villagers.

In many of the village wells fresh water fishes (kaneo) can be seen. Some say that they are put on purpose, other on the other hand appear ignorant about how the fishes got there. Fishes are believed to be good for wells: they clean

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<sup>1</sup> Rodiya caste members are claimed to prepare it.

the water by eating mosses, dirty things and small insects. Some regard frogs in a similar manner. One informant gave another explanation:

(4) "If there is some poison, fishes die. Then better not to drink nor bathe!"

He said that it may not be a poison put by somebody, but poison which accidentally comes from gardens and snakes etc.

With bathing wells there are no strong taboos of similar type. On the contrary it is believed that it would be good to have bathing wells alone. But it was still impossible because of the lack of places for wells. There nevertheless still exists a belief that somebody could put kitul nuts in a bathing well that would cause rash in the skin. This is not as strong and dangerous a threat. From Table 10 we can also see that the percentage of people using private bathing wells alone is greater than in drinking wells.

The function of these kinds of beliefs is to control people's behaviour. Buddhist concept "pin" (merit) and "pau" (demerit) can also be seen in this light. Some well-owners expressed their acceptance and delight in seeing other people using their wells by referring to merits received by such a deed:

(5) "Hundred people use the well. Well is used only for drinking. I acquire merit. Because all the people are drinking from it."

These beliefs have an integrative effect on society. Paradoxically these suspicions "force" people to co-operate in use.

(6) "If well is used by many families it cannot be poisoned. It keeps unity, never quarrel, no fight."

Poisoning can be a cultural expression for water-related diseases as well:

(7) "... in one village, Haputale-side, somebody put poison. I heard that some terrible poisonous snake was killed and put into the well and they

used that water for drinking and two people died with vomiting and diarrhea."

This kind of social control never works hundred percent. Some villagers do not want others to use their wells for several reasons:

- (1) People have dirty buckets. They can use the same one for toilet and drinking purposes.
- (2) People do not want others to cross their gardens.
- (3) People with empty vessels are considered a bad omen.

Land problems are common. One woman was so afraid of crossing other people's land that she was taking now less water home than before the quarrels. Some people also fence their lands, even with barbed wire so that others cannot pass through.

During our short stay in the village we did not hear of quarrels between berawas and bodiwansas about the use of wells. There may not be any quarrels as berawas live together in one compound not mixing with other villagers. On the other hand there was at least one conflict between govigama and bodiwansa well-users in the outskirts of the village bordering a govigama settlement.

### 3.1.2. Construction of Wells

During the last five years five new bathing wells and five drinking wells have been constructed. The approximate age of the traditional wells can be seen in Table 11.

Table 11. Age of traditional wells

Years	Drinking wells	Bathing wells	Total
0-20	13	19	32
20-40	5	11	16
40-60	1	5	6
60-80	3	8	11
"ancients"*	0	3	3
Information missing	7	5	12
Total	29	51	80

\* Dating to "King Walagamba's time" and "white people's time".

Many wells have been built during the last 20 years. Reason to this perhaps is that traditional wells do not last very long.

Table 12. Builders of wells

Builders	Drinking wells	Bathing wells	Total
Family members	10	15	25
Neighbours	2	1	3
Forefathers	0	4	4
Village societies	1	5	6
Masons & labourers	2	4	6
Outside organizations	0	2	2
Missing information	14	20	34
Total	29	51	80

Even though there is quite a number of missing information it is probable that the villagers themselves are constructing wells. Some women have also built wells



by themselves.

The depth of the wells in feet is as in Table 13.

Table 13. Depth of the wells in feet

Depth	Drinking wells	Bathing wells	Total
0-2	2	2	4
3-4	7	5	12
5-6	9	8	17
7-8	0	10	10
9-10	3	7	10
over 10	0	7	7
Missing information	8	12	20
Total	29	51	80

We can see from Table 13 that the bathing wells tend to be deeper than drinking wells.

Villagers choose the location of wells according to the presence of a spring (ulpata) or marsh to be seen. Some claimed that there had to be certain type of mud, another mentioned decomposed granite (kudugal) as a promising site for a well. Sometimes an old well is just enlarged. A well can also be built around a source of water discovered accidentally. It is also believed that a water source is especially good if there is moss to be seen: it never gets dry. Moss is also believed to absorb muddy water and keep the water cool. Sometimes the distinction between two kinds of moss was made: longish die sevele, i.e. water moss and ball-shaped gal sevele which grows on stones. There actually is moss to be seen in many wells. Although it is generally regarded good for the well, too much of it is considered bad.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Moss was also used as medicine for children's eye diseases, dried and boiled with other plants.

Water is also considered very good, when the well is situated near the kumbuk tree (white murdah, *Terminalia glabra*).

Fig. 18. Bathing well of ten families situated under the kumbuk tree



Both moss and kumbuk trees are mentioned in Sri Lankan folktales:

"... when dawn came they searched and searched but nowhere was there a sign of a well. They tore up plants that had been undisturbed for ages and they hacked down the trees and the rope-like trunks of mighty creepers. There was no well to be seen. It was like looking for a needle in a haystack! Then the carpenter's son spied a tall, barkless tree and, knowing that it was a kumbuk tree and that these trees generally grow near water, he worked his way towards its foot.

There indeed was the secret well with a low moss covered earthen ridge round it and with water almost up to the brim. The roots of the mighty

kumbuk tree delved into the water of the well on the side on which it grew. There was a glade of emerald green round the well."<sup>1</sup>

Ritual specialists whose work is to find auspicious times as guide people in locating wells said that there is water if one can see: (1) kumbuk trees, (2) habarala plants (*Alocasia macrorrhiza*), (3) termite nests (humbas), (4) red (yellow?) bamboo, (5) cane bushes (wee wal), (6) godapara trees (*Ficus racemosa*), or (7) broken edges of earth. In "Medicinal Plants used in Ceylon" following could be found about growing places of some of those mentioned above:

- "It (kumbuk tree) is very common along banks of streams in the low country and in the dry regions in Ceylon ..."<sup>2</sup>
- (godapara tree) "A rather common, endemic species found in the moist low country."<sup>3</sup>
- "It (attikka tree) is common on banks of streams in the moist low country in Ceylon up to an altitude of 2000 feet."<sup>4</sup>

There probably is truth in the traditional observations. An astrologer (nakat kariya) is contacted when wells are built. The selection of auspicious and inauspicious times is important in Sri Lankan society. In the village important works and rituals are started on certain prefixed and auspicious times: going for a journey, starting cultivation work, building, wedding etc. One astrologer explained the auspicious time in the following way:

"When there is auspicious time all hopes relating to what we are doing come true. If there is for example disease in our body and we get medicine, medicine works and disease goes away. All work

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<sup>1</sup> Walatara 1975, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Jaya Weera 1980, Part 2, 1973.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., Part 2, 1973

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., Part 4, 95.

succeed like for example building of a new house, new vehicle on road, first visit to the merchant, cultivation, painting first eye to Buddha statue, building well."

Another one said that "during auspicious time cat is afraid of rat, lion is afraid of deer and eagle is afraid of snake". In other words even impossible things become possible. And when auspicious times are not taken into consideration things go wrong:

"If the digging of the well has been started on a bad time, there will be no water."

The poor condition of the new hand pump wells was seen in the light of this tradition, too.

(1) "If we do not care about the auspicious times for the wells, water will not be clean, nor will there be enough water. You can see whether I am right by inspecting the new wells."

(2) "If the engineers and the government do not look for good times that will have a bad effect. It may harm rural parties and this area's minister. Some new wells have been built at good times accidentally, some at a bad time: then there is rust like in the two wells which were built at inauspicious times. That's why there is rust."

Astrologers do not necessarily have to be from the very village. Auspicious time for wells was called diya wadana nakat (belonging to water). It could be either morning or evening, even night. But morning 6.02 or 6.03 which is called brahma mohotha is always considered good. The day is important, too: Thursdays and Fridays are best days as most auspicious times are believed to be on those days. But for wells Thursday was considered best. All the works relating to trees or earth should be started on that day to get power for achieving things (läbim).

## 3.1.2.1. Rituals in Construction

In construction of wells two rituals were mentioned: (1) bahirawa pooja and (2) taking water to bodhi tree.

By bahirawa pooja a special service of offering is made to bahirawa. There are believed to be eight bahirawa yās (semi deities) in the earth: (i) ginibahirawa, (ii) kālebahirawa, (iii) dēvabahirawa, (iv) rājabahirawa, (v) kūtabahirawa, (vi) prētabahirawa, (vii) devel-bahirawa and (viii) būtabahirawa. It is probable that bahirawa was originally a Hindu god Bhairava, who also has eight forms, eight interior manifestations of Shiva.<sup>1</sup> This has perhaps converged with a folk religion: belief in the spirits of trees, lakes, mountains, rivers etc. known to have existed in Sri Lanka.<sup>2</sup>

One of the Bahirawas guards wells, i.e. Kālebahirawa. It is believed that the offering to Bahirawa is necessary in order to have a good and steady water source. Some think that it is necessary only for the places where it is difficult to find a source of water. Neglecting Bahirawa pooja is also considered as a cause of bad water in new wells:

"Contractors did not offer any Bahirawa pooja, that's why the well is not good."

I have found three versions of Bahirawa pooja (see Appendix 5) lasting from ten minutes to a whole night.

Ritual specialists said that only two people in 1000 believe in bahirawa pooja any more, because of the great expense in performing them.

Sometimes a bahirawa pooja could be a simple ceremony like lighting an oil lamp, hanging an unhusked coconut on a stick or breaking a coconut at the place of construction (pol gedi bindala). Important to note here is that here we are engaging ourselves in an act of reciprocation.

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<sup>1</sup> Dowson 1982, 45.

<sup>2</sup> Rankine 1971, 1-2.

"We offer something to appease the bahirawas and buy land."

In reciprocity the idea is to give something for the thing received.

More common than bahirawa pooja is the taking of the first water to a bodhi tree of a temple. This is done once or thrice by males or females. (Bahirawa pooja is usually done by a ritual specialist.) Bottle of water is usually also offered at a statue of the Buddha. Even those people who said that they do not pay much attention to ceremonies and rituals still take the water to a temple. Sometimes the first water is poured at the base of a coconut tree close to the well. Sometimes the water taken to the bodhi tree is mixed with sandalwood and coconut milk.

### 3.1.3. Repairing of Wells

The condition of wells is rather bad. The biggest problem is the seepage of rain water into wells during rainy season from surrounding paddy fields. In fact in some cases there is a direct surface flow into the wells. Seepage is mainly due to the poor condition of the wells: there are cracks in the cement or holes made by crabs. The holes made by crabs are usually covered every time when the wells are cleaned, but cement wells with cracks can stay broken for years. The reason for not repairing them was claimed to be the lack of money. That the well was common was also given as a reason. Village societies are supposed to take care of common wells but they lack funds. People are also not motivated to take care of wells by the government.

"All wells are broken since 15 years. (Why are they not repaired?) They are not fixed, because this is a government well, common well. The village council built it. Nobody repairs it. (Is there any society who could repair it?) Grama sanwardana society, but they only said that if you can repair

this well, do so. That is no problem. If you have the money, try to repair it."

Organizations in the village have repaired some wells, though: for example village council and the school development society.

In private wells minor repair works are being done. Sometimes money is collected from neighbours, if needed. In this repair work women also participate. This information is nevertheless difficult to get because credit from this work is usually given only to men.

Even though the wells may not be broken people would like to get cement walling in their wells. Affluent people are interested to get water to be pumped into their house with pipe when electricity is available.

#### 3.1.4. Cleaning of Wells

When asked how often the wells are cleaned, the following information was received:

Table 14. Number of times the wells are being cleaned

Number of times the wells are cleaned	Drinking wells	Bathing wells	Total
Twice a week	3	0	3
Once a week	3	6	9
2-3 times a month	11	6	17
Once a month	7	5	12
6-8 times a year	2	4	6
3-5 times a year	2	13	15
1-2 times a year	0	9	9
Missing information	1	8	9
Total	29	51	80

This may not probably be exactly correct information, but within this short time of field work it was not possible

to get the information otherwise. Only one cleaning of a well was witnessed. It is not even possible to draw any conclusions about the state of wells or water in them as the water and the cleaned well looked exactly like before cleaning. So the appearance can be misleading.

Only some general trends can be seen: drinking wells are cleaned more often than bathing wells.

Cleaning is done by females or sometimes by females and children together. Men very rarely clean wells and only when a well is very deep or otherwise difficult to clean. Only the richest villagers use labourers or servants to do the work. Even there the females of the house may participate. The reason for the women to clean wells was explained as follows:

- (1) "Males do not have time."
- (2) "Only females go to drinking wells."
- (3) "Men are always working."

There is no auspicious time for cleaning of wells. Cleaning takes from 15 minutes up to several hours depending on the size of the well and the water in it.

Cleaning is done in the following manner: water is taken very briskly out of the well with buckets. Then somebody gets into the well. The walls are cleaned first by throwing water on them and then scrubbed with stones or whatever is suitable, such as a coconut husk. If there is mud or sand inside, it is taken out with coconut shells or buckets. Moss and grass are taken away either by hand or with mammoties. The area around the well is also cleaned and extra grass is taken away. Ground can be cleaned with a broomstick made of areca nut or coconut ekels. Minor repair work is also attended to; holes made by crabs are filled up with mud. In cleaning a pihilla which is normally kept closed with a piece of coconut husk when not in use, this stopper is removed, and the tank is allowed to run dry.

After the cleaning there is a small ritual with flowers. Small red lantana flowers and/or jasmine flowers are sprinkled on the water.



Fig. 19. Flowers put after cleaning a well



Sometimes tea flowers, coffee flowers, red roses or chrysanthemums are also used, but more rarely so. Together with the sprinkling of flowers the following verse is usually said three times:

"Budunta pā diya  
 Apita bora diya"  
 (To Buddha clean water,  
 to us muddy water)

Some say it a little differently:

"Deviyanta pā diya  
 Apita bora diya"  
 (To the deities clean water,  
 to us muddy water)

It is believed to secure good and clean water. Someone said this also to be a ritual against the evil eye.

#### 4. WATER IN RITUALS, CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS

Water has an important symbolic value all over Asia. Water is considered as a cleanser, sanctifier, reviver and creator. This can be discovered when looking at the way water is used in many rituals and listening to meaning given to water in them.

The potent aspect of water is sometimes enforced in some rituals with the expected efficacy of verses of benediction or mantras. At times ingredients such as turmeric is also put into water. This turmeric<sup>1</sup> water (kaha watura) is not used only in rituals or in purifying sacred premises like devalas. It is used in daily life very often as a disinfectant of floors and the air.

Water is also considered as a symbol of prosperity, which is not so strange. In a farming community, its prosperity most certainly depends on water. If there is no water, there is no grain. If there is no grain, there is no money to buy other foodstuffs and clothes. If there is no food and proper clothing, there is no health.

Like the earth, water is also believed to have gods. Chandra or sandudevi (moon) is believed to belong to water and rule it. This is related to the notions of hot and cold things as well. The sun is hot but the moon, like water, is believed to be cold.

##### 4.1. Rites of Passage

Rites of passage is a concept first used by van Gennep. People are moving and shifting from one status to another.

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<sup>1</sup> Besides turmeric, margosa leaves and garlic are other herbal antiseptics used in Sri Lanka.

And every move is celebrated by a ritual.

I am looking here only at those passages where water is used in rituals: birth, puberty, marriage and death.

Birth. Most of the births nowadays take place in hospitals. But when it does take place at home, a traditional midwife may be contacted.<sup>1</sup> She washes the mother's body before and after delivery with hot water and soap. The baby too is washed with water. Post-natal mothers are not encouraged to drink too much liquid, as it is believed that their abdomens remain enlarged if they do so. If the baby happens to have a rash, her body is bathed and washed with water in which barks, leaves and flowers of the flame of the woods (*Ixora coccinea*) have been boiled. For three months coconut milk is applied on the baby to tone up the skin. Mother is considered defiled (killla) after the delivery and she must bathe nine days after she has given birth.<sup>2</sup> She is then bathed in water boiled with leaves of orange tree, vitex plant (nika), pavettai (*Adhatoca vasica*) and castor plants. This medicinal bath is given at least three times. Some do so for seven days. If the mother is not well enough to have the baths she will be bathed like this after 15 or 20 days or whatever is the suitable time.

Puberty. The first menstruation is marked with many rituals which are not the same in all parts of the country.

If the girl happens to be outside when this is first noticed she is immediately covered with a white cloth and rushed into the house. She is then taken into the kitchen by a washer-woman (from the dhobi caste). She takes a pot

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<sup>1</sup> As pointed out earlier there is also a registered midwife in the village.

<sup>2</sup> Some other things considered as pollutants are funeral houses and menstruation in general.

of water in which sandalwood and herbs are put and moves it three times around the girl's head and then pours it over her. After this the pot is broken on the floor.<sup>1</sup> This is done to ward off any evil spirits (pretas) etc. so that they would not get inside the house. It is also claimed that the pot is broken to ward off any ill luck this event may have mainly on her parents and other members of her family.

An astrologer is also consulted. He casts a special horoscope based on the exact appearance of her first menstrual appearance. On this horoscope the girl's future, marriage prospects and other events are forecast. The astrologer also advises on the length of time the girl must be kept confined to her room and the date of the purifying bath.

She may be confined to the indoors for a couple of days or as much as half a month. Nine days' confinement often was the rule. In the beginning of her solitude the washer-woman takes her old clothes away and gives her clean ones.

On the day of her ritual bath the girl is taken at an auspicious time, usually early in the morning, to the well, with covered face. About 25 to 30 buckets of water are poured on her and the washer-woman washes her with soap. After bathing she will be presented with new clothes, earrings, bangles etc. and her face is covered once again. The washer-woman will also receive gifts, such as rice, money, pillows, bedsheet etc. All the old clothes of the girl are also given to her. In the house there is a big rice-washing bowl (koraha) with water and coins in it. On both sides of this bowl coconut oil lamps are lit. There is also a winnowing fan (kulla) on which there is milkrice (kiribat), rice and coconut. These are clearly fertility symbols. When the girl is brought to the house she is walked three times round the koraha and then her face is uncovered

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<sup>1</sup> This is sometimes done by the well on the last day of her confinement indoors.

and is washed with the water in koraha. This water is later thrown into the garden. There is a celebration for the girl for which no males are allowed. The goods are served, also to the washer-woman, but she eats separately. Between the first washing in the kitchen and the ritual bath the girl is allowed only to cleanse her mouth and wash her face.

There are many variations of this ritual even in this one village and perhaps in different castes, but due to the short time it was not possible to study these variations.

Wedding. I am not going here into all the details of the marriage ceremony, but I shall examine only those parts connected with water. Usually the mother of the bride will carry a pot full of water in front of the couple. This is done for the prosperity of the couple. In rich houses thumbs of the couple can also be linked and water poured on them. According to De Silva the meaning of this ritual is to call Earth goddess to bear witness to the union.<sup>1</sup>

Funeral. When the body is taken to the graveyard, some scented water (pinidiya) is sprinkled on it. Also a cup with a plate underneath is placed near the body on the ground. Some water from a jar is then poured by relatives into a cup until the water flows over and at the same time some verses are chanted by the monks, which can be translated as follows:

"Just as the water from a height flows into the sea, may this merit reach the departed."

It is hoped that by the power of merit thus gained the dead relative will be relieved from suffering in his/her future birth, on whatever plane (hell, heaven, world) that will be. This rite is also performed when transferring merit to the departed at pirith ceremonies, almsgivings etc. merits.

Lily de Silva thinks that "water is associated with the idea of donation from the very early times. When a

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<sup>1</sup> De Silva 19 , 231.

gift is given, the transference of full ownership to the recipient is symbolized by pouring water on the recipient's right hand."<sup>1</sup>

Before taking the body to be buried it is kept about 24 hours or more to pay last respects by villagers and relatives. As a dead body is also considered polluting visitors to a funeral house wash themselves before re-entering their homes. Sometimes lime leaves or limes are applied on the head, skin and arms instead.

## 4.2. Buddhist Ceremonies

### 4.2.1. Pirith Ceremonies

Pirith ceremonies are Buddhist ceremonies to protect people participating in them.

"As warding off danger and assuring protection, peace and wellbeing are the main objectives, paritta<sup>2</sup> can best be described as a prophylactic ceremony."<sup>3</sup>

It can be performed for an individual, community or nation and for different purposes into which I do not go here. Water is an essential part of this ceremony. Water for the pirith is either taken from a well specially dug for this occasion or from an old well which has been cleaned. The well should be dug in the place where people have not walked. Water is taken into a new and often decorated water pot. Pirith water is never boiled, only filtered.

There are two kinds of pirith ceremonies:

(1) Sangha-pirith is a ceremony executed by Buddhist

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<sup>1</sup> De Silva 19 , 231.

<sup>2</sup> Paliword for pirith.

<sup>3</sup> De Silva 19 , 1.

monks. As this was considered an expensive ceremony in the village it was rarely performed.<sup>1</sup>

(2) Gihi-pirith is performed by laymen and was a common type of pirith ceremony in the village.

The pirith ceremony can last from twenty minutes to several days. I attended a small pirith ceremony held at a child's first haircutting.<sup>2</sup>

For this ceremony, too, an auspicious time is necessary and the astrologers had given exact directions for the monk when and how to do it:

"1st of October Friday 3 minutes past 6 o'clock a.m. facing the north. Cut the hair, it is good. This is the list of the things needed:

- (1) Grass (ethana)
- (2) Pop-rice (wilauda)
- (3) Raw rice
- (4) Jasmine flowers
- (5) A vessel (bajanaya)

Take the equal amount of all of them and put clean water into a cup and chant the pirith 21 times and apply this water on the head and cut the hair on an auspicious time."

This was also done. The small tuft of the hair<sup>3</sup> is thrown into water, into a stream. But in this case the mother kept the hair.

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<sup>1</sup> Only affluent villagers could afford it. This year there had been a sangha-pirith in village, in which 200 people had participated.

<sup>2</sup> It is believed that if this is not done properly, the child will never learn to speak. It is done when the child is 11 months old or if not then, when 3 years old.

<sup>3</sup> The barber finishes the work later.

I am quoting Lily de Silva in sangha pirith:

"A small pot or jug of strained water, covered with a white kerchief is also placed on the table. A small coconut oil lamp, a tray of fresh flowers and a ball of white thread complete the essential ritual objects on the table. Water mixed with turmeric is lightly sprinkled all over the house to ensure ritual cleansing. If available a few grains of roasted paddy (pori), mustard seeds and rice are sprinkled on the table and around the place where the chairs are arranged. At the entrance to the house a basin of water and a towel are placed for washing and wiping the feet of the monks on arrival.<sup>1</sup> (...) This task is never performed by a female as it is improper for a monk to be touched by a female.<sup>2</sup> (...) The loose end of the thread is then tied round the pot of water.<sup>3</sup> (...) At the end of the recitation the thread is rolled back and placed on the pot or water.<sup>4</sup> (...) The person for whom the ceremony is specially performed is then summoned near the monks. One monk pours paritta water into his or her cupped hands while the monks recite the following formula in unison ...<sup>5</sup> Reverentially the devotee receives the water, drinks some of it and puts the rest on his face and head. Generally the water is not wiped, it is left to dry on the skin. After distributing the sacred paritta water to a few in this manner the monk takes a piece of paritta thread about a foot in length by breaking it with his hands. No implement is ever used to cut it. This is dipped in paritta water and then tied on the right wrist or arm of the devotee

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 52-53.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 56.



while reciting the following formula ...<sup>1</sup>  
 Neighbours who wish to have paritta water and thread are also welcome to receive them. If there is water remaining, it is disposed of the following day or the day after, generally in a place where nobody treads."<sup>2</sup>

For gini pirith I use the description of one of the gini pirith leaders:

"First thing to be done is to dig a new well and to buy a new pot. It should be decorated with coconut leaves.<sup>3</sup> Then new water is taken into a new pot from the new well. Only males do it. Well is dug near the house. There is so auspicious time for digging. After pirith ceremony the well is closed. Water pot is put in the middle of the pirith ceremonial place. Next morning this water has become pirith water.<sup>4</sup> Then people drink some pirith water. It is good for our health."

Also pirith thread (pirith-nūla) is being used as in sangha pirith. A few words should be said about it. This thread is always dipped in paritta water before being tied on the devotees. This is a very ancient custom. Lily de Silva thinks that "the purpose of dipping it into the water is to enliven the thread with sanctified water and render it more effective for protection."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>3</sup> This is also done in sangha pirith ceremonies.

<sup>4</sup> After chanting some Buddhist verses.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 155.

The water in pirith ceremonies is made potent by reciting various hymns and verses. Turmeric is also used. It is believed that turmeric has energy (shaktie) to kill germs.

#### 4.2.2. Other Ceremonies

Lord Buddha (i.e. statue as a symbol) is offered three times a day food and/or drink. This is called dāna. In the morning around 7 a.m. there is hīl dāna, around 11.30 dāna and around 3.30 p.m. gilan pasa. The Buddha is offered water three times. Besides there is at all times water pot in the vihāre, which is used for flowers and for washing hands before offerings. Washing hands before meals has a ritual base.

Some water is also used by Buddhist monks in their ordination ceremonies. There are two ceremonies: (1) baddesimāwe and (2) jālesimawe but only in jālesimawe water has a central role. This can directly be discovered from the concept itself: jāle means water. In jālesimawe 21 monks go near a river. One monk then takes some water and sprinkles this with his hand to east, west, north and south. Sometimes sands can be used instead of the water.

Bodhi pooja is a special service to the bodhi tree. It is an annual washing of the bodhi tree in which water<sup>1</sup> is sprinkled with the hands around the tree. It is believed to be effective against evil eye and other bad influences. It is also connected to prosperity and it is also sometimes done in case of drought. The bodhi tree is venerated as a tree under which the Buddha received enlightenment. But there may be other older bases to it as well. Quoting Sir J.G. Frazer de Silva claims that "practice of watering a sacred tree was done as an act of sympathetic magic to cause rain. This was a practice prevalent in many countries and

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<sup>1</sup> Sometimes mixed with coconut milk and sandalwood.

we could hardly doubt that it was prevalent among the people of Ceylon, too, before the advent of Buddhism. This belief was so deeply rooted in the minds of the people that the early Buddhist missionaries instead of trying to eradicate it, wisely 'baptized' it into Buddhism giving it a new meaning in connection with the cult of the bodhi tree."<sup>1</sup>

#### 4.3. Water in Healing

It is not possible to examine here traditional beliefs and traditional explanations to the origin of diseases. It suffices here to say that water is also believed to cause some illnesses: water can be dirty or too cold. But water has medicinal and healing properties as well. Medicines are mixed with water and sometimes baths are also recommended for some, such as skin diseases. But then on the other hand one is advised to refrain from bath in other cases - one man had not been bathing for one month while he had chicken pox. Sometimes charmed water is also used: sprinkled on the patient or given to drink. Charming has been done by mantras. This is done especially if the patient is believed to be possessed by devils. Charmed water can also be used against evil eye and evil mouth.<sup>2</sup>

In exorcism rituals (bandana kapima) water is also used. It is usually turmeric water mixed with vitex plant (nika), and is sprinkled on the patient with hand or flowers (roses, deliah, areca nut tree flowers), at times with betel leaves. Water is also sprinkled on other people around and on two "altars": one for gods (mal yahana) and one for devils (pideni). If the patient faints as often happens, water is also used besides purifying to revive the patient.

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<sup>1</sup> de Silva 1980, 68.

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes this water is mixed with king coconut water, turmeric and sandalwood.

Fig. 20. Exorcist sprinkling some water on patient



In one part of the ritual limes are cut (dehi kaptma). Limes are cut in halves near the patient's body with areca nut cutters and sometimes thrown into a vessel of water. If the halves of the limes float on the water it is considered a bad omen for the patient. Then some angry people have by sorcery tried to harm the patient.

Fig. 21. Limes thrown into water bucket after having been cut in half by the exorcist



The exorcist prepares himself for the performance of this ritual by bathing with limes and soap.

Bathing is not done just to cleanse the body from profane impurities but also to clean from mental and more abstract defilements. Campbell quoted by de Silva has also pointed this out:

"Next to fire<sup>1</sup> in power of driving away spirits comes water. Water drives off the spirit of thirst, it refreshes the fainting; it restores life to those in a swoon. On this power over diseases, that is, over evil spirits, the claim of water as the great purifier seems to rest. The endless bathing of the high class Hindus has its roots in the necessity for scaring evil spirits ..."<sup>2</sup>

In the end of the ritual the patient who is believed<sup>3</sup> to have been healed can be asked to wash himself or herself and change into clean clothes.

#### 4.4. Water in Customs and Beliefs

##### 4.4.1. New Year Customs

Sinhala New Year is in 13.-14. April. It is the time when some customs relating to wells take place. Almost every house has an almanac and in it - among other things - is explained what people should do on New Year. Following instructions which relate to water were given:

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2) For the bathing 12. April Monday use wood apple leaves and remember gods

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<sup>1</sup> Fire is also used in the ritual.

<sup>2</sup> de Silva

<sup>3</sup> I have also seen a healing happening.

5) Eating time, "exchanges"<sup>1</sup> time and working time is 14th April, Wednesday 7.33 morning. Wear green clothes and face the south. First begin the work, second do the "exchanges" (ganu denu) and third take the meals.

6) Put the oil on the head at bathing time, April 15th Thursday 10.07. Hang bodhi leaves over the head and stand on margosa leaves on earth. Wear golden clothes and face the west. Apply oil<sup>2</sup> on head and bathe."

As mentioned earlier "wells" play an important part in the New Year rituals in the village. A little water is taken from the drinking well and at the same time an offering of foods and coins are made at the well. This is a symbol of exchange.

"We cannot get anything free, that's why we put coins."

This as also mentioned in the almanac is done at the auspicious time by the eldest able woman in the house. Offering of foods, usually in boxes, are covered with a white cloth. These offering include rice, chillies, salt, onions, sometimes also turmeric, goraka<sup>3</sup> and dried fish. They can also be covered with betel leaves and/or white paper. Foods are the size of an areca nut.<sup>4</sup> Besides this small coins of 5 or 10 cents are put. Food is either put inside the well between stones under the water level or I think more rarely outside the well. Some said that water gets dirty if put inside. Coins are thrown separately into the well. After this a little water is taken from the well into a bottle. Water taken in this manner in the previous year is either poured outside the well or back inside the

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<sup>1</sup> In Sinhala this is "ganudēnu" meaning give-and-take.

<sup>2</sup> A special mixture of juices of bodhi leaves, other leaves and oil.

<sup>3</sup> *Garcinia cambogia*.

<sup>4</sup> About the size of a walnut.

well.<sup>1</sup> This habit is done for prosperity, in which water is associated:

(1) "New water is taken to protect. Water is available everywhere. It is the same with our life, money, and everything. If water is taken, money comes and happiness, too, because it is similar to money."

(2) "Water bottle is a symbol: somehow there always is money in the pocket, never without it."

This symbol of prosperity is also seen in the habit of glancing at the bottle of water, usually kept on a kitchen rack. If in this bottle of water during the year the water level seems to go down, it is reckoned as a sign of waning prosperity.

"Money, grains, food, clothes, are also going down when water level is going down."

#### 4.4.2. Water in Other Customs and Beliefs

An occasional visitor to Sri Lanka easily gets the impression that people must be bathing everyday, if not several times a day. This is not true in all parts of the country with all people. Many people in this village do not bathe every day. Some even do not bathe every second day. Some may be bathing as rarely as once in a week. The reason for this is always just not lack of time but also a belief that there are good and bad days for bathing. Tuesdays and Fridays are not considered suitable days for bathing. And many people said that they did not bathe on those days. These days are believed to belong to gods and gods can get angry and cause illnesses if people bathe on those days. The diseases that can be got are so called gods' diseases:

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<sup>1</sup> Sometimes old water can also be poured on paddy fields and gardens.

chicken pox, measles, mumps, sometimes eye diseases.<sup>1</sup> Not all pay attention to these do's and dont's. One woman said:

"I agree with gods, but when I go to pick dirty grass for cows then I must bathe. What to do!"

The time of day for bathing is also important. Early morning before noon is considered best. In the afternoon water is considered too cold and sometimes dirty, too. From cold water one can easily get ill.

A short reference was made earlier to a ritual bath during Sinhala New Year. Symbolic meaning of it is clear: rebirth of a new man for the new year. This was also said: "One becomes like a new man." It is also believed that when one bathes at auspicious time one remains healthy during the coming year.

Both men and women use a piece of cloth (sarong)<sup>2</sup> when bathing. It is wrapped around the waist by men and over the breasts by women. People use soap or on some special occasions mixtures of herbs. Some rub their bodies with a stone or coconut husk. A lot of water is usually poured on.

Usually clothes are washed when going to bathe, too. Clothes are dried on the grasses, stones, bushes and trees. Rarely one sees any ropes. Dry clothes are changed into at the well, by women bashfully if there happens to be men around.

There are also interesting omens relating to water. A vessel full of water is considered a good omen, if one sees it the first thing in the morning.<sup>3</sup> All the hopes

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<sup>1</sup> Also cowdung used on the floors of some houses is not put on floors on Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays because of the same reason.

<sup>2</sup> Actually this word is used only about man's garment.

<sup>3</sup> Other auspicious omens are businessman, someone carrying a milk bottle, a beggar, milk cow, elephant, smiling people.



relating to whatever done is about to do that day are believed to come true.

A pot full of water - a pot to the brim - is a symbol of prosperity. Throughout history full vessels have been most common of all auspicious symbols in India. It is also a symbol of plenty, a life symbol expressing wealth and long life. It is believed to belong to ancient life cults of fertility and fruitfulness.<sup>1</sup>

Respectively empty water pots or vessels are considered bad omens when seen early in the morning.<sup>2</sup> Then accidents can happen and hopes go down or one loses one's prosperity:

"When early in the morning we see empty bucket, whole day our hand is empty."

It is nevertheless possible to avoid bad consequences by stepping aside before meeting these things or if met, going through running water like a stream.

When one goes visiting houses and is offered food or tea, often glasses filled with water, too, accompany them. It is not just to quench the thirst, because sometimes one is only supposed to touch the glasses to express the acceptance of the invitation to have a cup of tea or whatever. The rationale behind the offering of water to the guest is to provide him/her the water to rinse off the mouth and cleanse him/herself. In addition water is a symbol of prosperity and long life. It was also suggested that in former times betel was offered first before the meal and the mouth was then washed with this water.

When it comes to wells, villagers believe that open wells are good.

(1) "Water needs sunlight. Sunlight is good for water - it makes the water clean."

(2) "Sunlight gets into the well and germs are killed."

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<sup>1</sup> See de Silva 19 , 139-140.

<sup>2</sup> Others are people carrying mammoti, knife or axe, empty bag, monk, black cat, plough or firesticks.

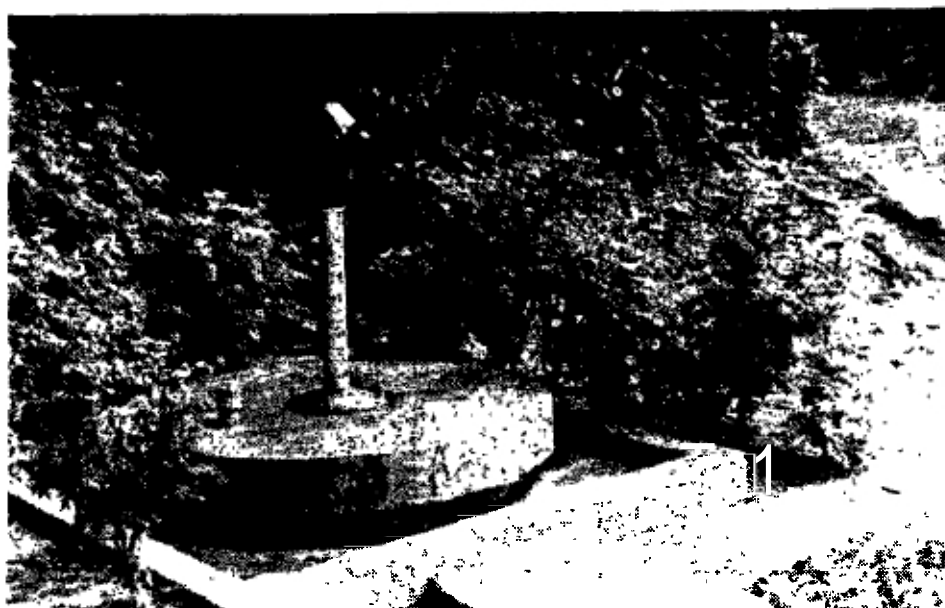
There are two traditional wells covered with a lid. The other one is covered only for the night, the other one has the lid on all the time. Reason for the cover is to protect it from dogs and other animals which may drink at the well.

## 5. HAND PUMP WELLS

Seventh type of wells in the village are the new hand pump wells. They differ in many ways from the traditional wells. That is why it is important to see how they adapt into culture and how they are accepted by the villagers.

In the village studied there were ten hand pump wells.

Fig. 22. New hand pump well



These wells are much deeper than traditional ones. Their depth varies between 10 feet and 26 feet. In general the wells were less than 17 feet. The construction of these wells was started in February and March 1982. The work was completed during May-July.<sup>1</sup> The exact location of them as well as that of the traditional wells is to be seen on my map<sup>2</sup> (Appendix). These wells were called by villagers

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<sup>1</sup> They are not the very first hand pump wells.

<sup>2</sup> Drawing of which was done by H.M. Weerasinghe.

as alut linda, which means 'new well'.

From Tables 15a - 15b we can see that only half of the wells are used for drinking. The main reason is the taste of iron in the water.<sup>1</sup> This is not a problem in traditional wells. The iron content in both wells has been studied by Auli Keinänen in her report. Oil layer was also considered as a problem. Whether it really is oil or not is not important. The main point is that there may be an association in people's mind to a possible poisoning. Oil (kaberoi oil) was one of the poisons used or better believed to be used for this purpose. Bad access to well can also be the reason for non-use. Obstacles may be physical (steep descent and slippery road) or "social" (fences built by neighbours). Last one is important: some villagers do not want other people to walk through and around their gardens.

Hand pump wells like traditional drinking wells are also used for washing of face, hands and feet. Dish wash water and water to garden is also sometimes taken from them. Sometimes bathing and washing of clothes has been also observed.

Even though half of the wells are now not used for drinking, villagers said that they would be used during the dry period. But they also supposed that they would return to their traditional sources of water as soon as the dry period would be over.

Villagers were puzzled of the iron in the wells. They thought it might be due the the exceptional depth of the new wells. Some put the blame on not using auspicious time or rituals when constructing the wells.

Clenaning of the new wells was also problematic to the villagers. They seemed to be ignorant about how they were cleaned. Villagers have tried to empty them by pumping the water out.

This also relates to the fact that the wells are closed. It is believed that wells must be open so that sunlight

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<sup>1</sup> Consultants are now trying to construct a filter for iron.

Table 15a. Use of the hand pump wells in the village

No. of well	No. of families using the well for drinking	Purpose of use	Playing with wells	Complaints
8		Drinking Dish wash water	-	Very good water, but when water is boiled some oil layer is to be seen
10	0 (8-10 families used earlier)	Drinking, washing & bathing, water for toilet	Children are playing with hand pump	After rainy days the well is not used for drinking. In the beginning was used. Chlorine was put into water. Now the well is not used for a week due to taste of chlorine and iron. Now people are using traditional wells.
13	0 (Occasionally for washing purposes)	Bathing, washing of feet	Children are playing with hand pump	- Difficult to use, no proper road to the well. Water is rusty. - No roads to well (DDC)
14	0.	Bathing, water to garden, water to latrine	-	- Clothes cannot be washed because of the smell - Iron taste
15	7 families	Drinking, bathing, washing, kitchen water, no clothes washed	Children are playing with hand pump	- Slight iron taste - Too close to 13 (District Development Council)

Table 15b. Use of the hand pump wells in the village

No. of well	No. of families using the well for drinking	Purpose of use	Playing with wells	Complaints
16	0 (10 used earlier)	Washing and bathing	-	- Water is undrinkable - Iron taste
12	10-15	Washing dishes, toilet water	Children playing	- Iron taste in water - Rainy days people do not use because enough water everywhere around - Enough wells around already (DDC)
20	0	Only dish washing water Washing of faces	Children played before the well caretakers were nominated	- Little muddy taste, no roads to the well, no more used for drinking
21	5-6	For drinking purpose After October no more used due to heavy rains. Water got brown colour	-	- Muddy water - No good road to the well, the path is too narrow, impossible to walk with water pots
22	8	Drinking	-	- Good

gets into them. It is supposed to kill germs. Some nevertheless figured that chemicals put into the wells would have the same effect. People would like to have open wells but on the other hand they see that closed wells have advantages as well. Safety of the children is considered important. In the newspapers one can read about people drowning in wells (p. 76).

The villagers said that with the new wells they did not have to fear that children would fall into them.

The clear colour of the water was also appreciated. That people could not put their dirty buckets into the wells was also considered a good thing. Maybe the sign of appreciation is the planting of flower bushes around the wells (see Fig. 22). These kinds of bushes are also to be seen around the traditional wells, where their purpose besides decorative one is to protect children from falling into them.

In traditional wells filters of rags are used. Also in two new wells these "filters" were to be seen.

## They drowned in wells the same day *15.11.82 D.N.*

**Bulathsinhala Corr.**  
A BOY, a girl and an old man living in three villages in Horana police area died after falling into wells on the same day, recently.

The deceased were G. Welunsihgo (60) of Moragahena, P. V. Rupa Jayanthi (9), Meevanapalana and Jayantha Abeysinhha (7) of MeeWana, Pokunuwita.

Mr. G. I. L. Gunawardhana, Inquirer into Sudden Deaths, Horana who held the inquest into the deaths of the two children and the old man said the deaths of two children happened mainly because of their parents. "When children went anywhere for bathing, parents should be vigilant about their children". "If Parents of these two children were

watchful their lives could have been saved. The Inquirer recorded verdicts of deaths due to drowning.

~~Horana police~~ led evidence.

Daily News 15.11.1982

## She saw her pal drown *11/11-82*

A child just twelve years old was the only eyewitness to the death of her friend.

This little girl, N. Renuka Adams, told the Coroners Court that she had seen her friend P. D. Nirosha Dilrukshi the nine year old victim come to the unprotected well in their compound at Kadawata, Enderamulla to draw water.

She added that Nirosha had drawn a few buckets of water when she lost balance and fell into the well.

Renuka *saw* said she had shouted out as loud as she could to the neighbours who then rushed to the scene.

"One of our neighbours, Lalith went into the well with a rope in a frantic attempt to save her but it was too late" she said.

City Coroner Walter D. Perera returned a verdict of accidental death due to drowning.

Sun 11.11.1982

## Drowns while drawing water

*Jaffna* (Jaffna Corr.)  
A youth who went to draw water fell into the well and died.

This occurred at Punalai Padduvan Eliyathamby Sathananthan aged 15 was the victim.

It is said that Sathananthan went to fetch water for his brother

who was working on a stone grinding machinery.

Mr. N. Thambirajah Inquirer into Sudden Deaths after the Inquest returned a verdict of accidental death.

Mr. T. Gunasingam, Police Constable from Chunnakam Police station produced the witnesses.

Island 2.11.1982

## Mother jumps into well-but infant dies *14.7.82 Island*

(By Our Chilaw Corr.)

How a panic stricken mother jumped into a well to save her infant son who had accidentally fallen into the water at Panibala, a village four miles off Chilaw, was related before Mr. Latif Khan, Inquirer into sudden Deaths, Chilaw recently.

Madurapperuma Mudiyansele Gnanawathie having heard that her son Santha Christopher Anthony

(one year and 4 months) had fallen into an unprotected well, jumped in a frantic effort to save him

She was, however, too late, and the infant was drowned

P. C. Chandratilaka of the Chilaw Police led evidence. The Inquirer into Sudden Deaths returned a verdict of accidental death due to drowning

Island 14.7.1982

## Youth's *local wells* courage

*30.7.83* POINT PEDRO, Thursday.

*Daily Mirror*  
A three-year-old boy who was bathing at the well with his mother at Kalvayal, Chavakachcheri accidentally slipped and fell into it.

K. Scoriyakumaran a 19 year old youth, who happened to be around the spot heard the cries of the distressed mother.

He jumped into the well and out he came successfully with the little boy in his hand.

The youth was highly commended by the mother for his pluck and courage and a large number of people visited his parents to pay their compliments for their son's brave act.



Fig. 23. "Filter" used in a new hand pump well. On the slab is a daranuwa, which is a circular pad to hold the water pot



Of course the traditional cleaning ceremony with flowers is no more possible. It is not necessarily so with New Year customs. Some were of the opinion that nothing could be put into new wells, only the water bottle could be taken. Some claimed that one way or another they would put the coins inside the well. Some had been already experimenting this with stones. Some said that they would put the food outside the well. What really would happen, would be interesting to see during the new year.

These examples are not very disturbing but they give

some clue that the new technology affects also cultural patterns.

The value of traditions has been appreciated and upheld by Sri Lankan government: kohomba kankariya, an ancient ritual has been revived to mark the inauguration of work done in the Randenigala water project. This is the fourth major reservoir project under the accelerated Mahaweli program. This ritual has also been used for the division scheme at Polgolla.<sup>1</sup>

### 5.1. Construction of Wells

I shall first shortly explain the process of building hand pump wells.

Building starts by siting of wells. Three methods have been used:

(1) With villagers the possible sites were discussed. After that several sites for wells according to the visual field survey looked prospecting were selected.<sup>2</sup>

(2) As a source of information gramasevaka officers were used. A meeting for them was organized and they were asked to prepare a list of 15 proposed well locations and give them in order of priority as well as give the reasons for the priority. After that there was a visual field survey of location and discussion with villagers.

(3) After the establishment of co-ordinating committee in 19.4.1982 the committee has been responsible for selection of well locations together with agas, gramasevakas and village committees. Besides this, consultants still use the list of gramasevakas and take suggestions from the villagers.

After the initial siting a local team of lightdrillers,

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<sup>1</sup> Daily News 13.11.1982.

<sup>2</sup> Harispattuwan water supply project, Monthly Report. April 1982, p. 30.

employed by the Finnish consultancy firm go to find out the technical feasibility by auger drilling or other soil tests.

For one well several lightdrillings must be done. The following things are observed: "The depth of the rock, water bearing layers and types of soil at different depths. In those parts where the hole keeps open, even the depth of water level has been observed."<sup>1</sup>

After that a Finnish well construction engineer and a sanitation engineer go for a subsequent investigation of sites marked by the local team. They can then suggest some new sites for lightdrillings, too. Besides the technical aspects (storage capacity of water, soil, level of rock etc.) other important aspects in locating wells were the following: distance to the lavatory, number of houses, nearness to paddy field and costliness of building. Even though it was not directly suggested the accessibility to the site by roads may have also played some role.

After the final sites have been selected they must be approved by the co-ordinating committee. The actual building of wells has been given to two Sri Lankan subconstruction firms, whose work is checked by the above-mentioned two engineers. They approve the needed amount of labour, materials and phases of work according to investigation file and keep dug well reports. Final number of wells will be decided only after certain number of wells have been built on the area and when their use has been observed.

The Finnish consultancy firm has now started its own production of cement cylinders and villagers in constructing wells are used, too. The material, money and know-how is given to gramodaya mandala.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

### 5.1.1. Problems Related to Decision Making in Locating Wells

The first procedure mentioned above in locating new wells has been used in the village. This is because the wells were the first ones (though not the very first) to be built on the area. Although this procedure has now been abandoned it will be discussed here, as it illustrates how the local decision making works. Speaking simply about villagers' role in deciding possible sites one can easily conceal the power structures operating in the village.

Most of the wells have been constructed near the roads. Not a single one was built on the hilly areas where the biggest need for new wells was.

Even though there will be more wells to be built in the village one can still ask why the wells were not built on the hilly areas in the first place. It seems that often active members of the leading party happened to be around when the sites for the wells were discussed with villagers. Other villagers claimed that rural party leaders decided where to construct wells.

"Some men in this village chose places for hand pump wells. (Laughter.) This is the truth. If somebody hears this we will be harrassed. In L.-side there are no wells. 'Rough man', 'rich man', and 'some forces' have wells."

Nowadays gramodaya mandala has an active role in siting wells but as we have seen, this organization is also connected to party politics. One can assume that belonging to a "wrong" party might result in not getting any well. Another problem is that people from the hilly areas do not attend the meetings of village societies. The berawa caste lives also on the hilly areas and is not at least participating in the boards of the village societies.

Rich and otherwise influential people in the village are competing to get the wells on their lands. They do not necessarily want these wells just for themselves but

they want them to emphasize their influential position in the village.

"I, A. and B. we are all relatives and we are the richest people in this village. Majority of the wells is in our premises, but all the villagers are angry with us, they are only smiling in front of us. This anger affected the location of one hand pump well, so that I could not get it on my land."

It was also claimed that subconstructors were reluctant to construct wells where there were no roads. It was claimed that no materials could be transported there. Thus the most underdeveloped area was put into a magic sphere: its underdevelopment (lack of roads) keeps it underdeveloped (lack of wells). The same happens also on larger scale. The gramasevaka area includes four villages out of which one is the village being studied. It is, however, not the village which would most urgently need new wells. Colony area - most in need - has so far not got any new wells. This area has also the road problem and probably right connections to right party as well as some influential people are missing there, too. The same problem exists also on the national level: Harispattuwa is not necessarily the area with biggest water problems. But foreign minister is from the area. Sarvodaya has paid attention to this problem:

"Government would put priority to more advantageous villages or towns which in return is another reason for the villages in question to be in a neglected status."<sup>1</sup>

Sarvodaya is because of this in their well construction programs concentrating on the poorest part of the population.

It is also revealing that in the map made of the gramasevaka area in question by NWSDB people working for consultancy, the hilly areas were left out!

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<sup>1</sup> Sarvodaya: Rural technical service. Shallow dug wells for village drinking water supplies, p. 4.

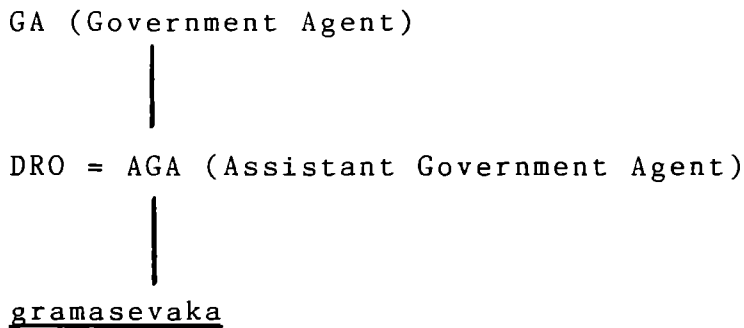
It is not necessarily the best solution to use gramasevaka in siting, especially if he happens to be an outsider in the village. This was not the case in the village studied. He had suggested sites which really would have been urgently needed. Unfortunately his suggestions came too late. The wells had been completed before he could influence the decisions. To use gramasevaka together with a village organization as now is the case is probably the best solution. But the role of politics as well as castes must be kept in mind.

Villagers also directly contacted the foreign minister about the locations of new wells:

"I told the constructors not to build a hand pump well near the school but to repair the old school well instead, because it would benefit the children and the school. But constructors did not listen to my words. (Did you speak to engineers?) White engineers don't know the language. (But they have a translator with them?) I said this to the translator, too. I went to minister H. He said to gramasevaka: 'You go and see all the things.' When gramasevaka went to talk to constructor wells were already completed."

Gramasevakas send their suggestions to AGA office. All this may also take too long a time and tempt constructors to build wells on their own. That is why the decision-making should not be too complicated a process.

"We tried to get the land with gramasevaka's assistance. He said we should ask G's gramasevaka. But he asked us to go to P's AGA. (Did you go to P.?) We went to P. and sent a letter, too. (What did AGA say?) AGA said that they will write about this problem to gramasevaka. And he wrote. Gramasevaka gave the letter to mau haule and asked to give it to G's gramasevaka. G's gramasevaka was not in his office. (Laughter.) (How long did this take?) One month. Finally we dropped the whole matter."

Fig. 24. Administrative levels

How the gramasevaka and gramodaya mandala are integrated in the decision-making in general can be seen in Fig. 24a. To this must be added the Harispattuwa co-ordinating committee which finally approves the sites of wells. It consists of the following officials:

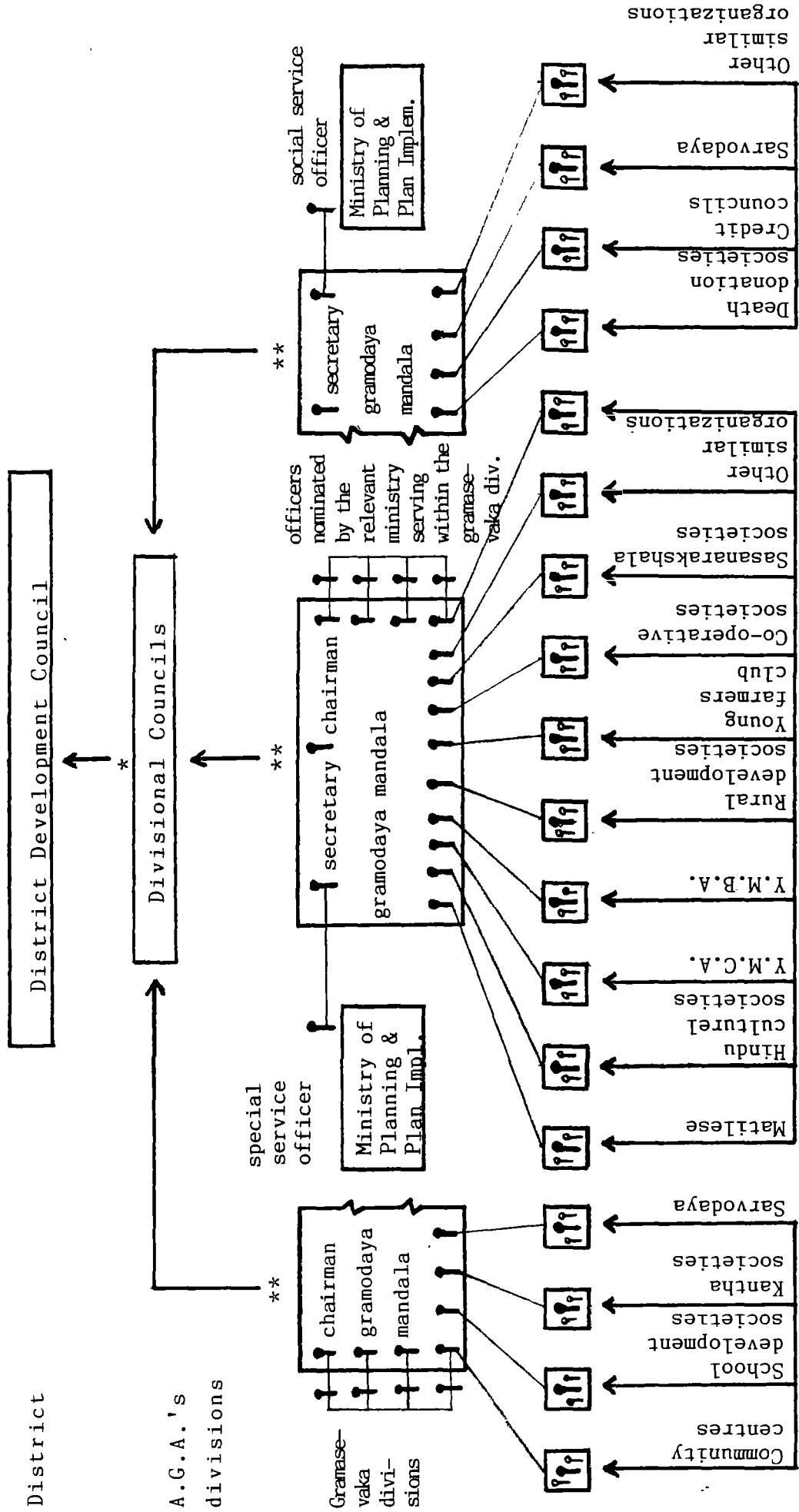
- Additional Commissioner of Local Government, Kandy
- Medical Officer of Health
- Regional Manager, NWSDB, Kandy
- AGA Katugastota
- AGA Poojapitya
- AGA Akurana
- A representative from the National water supply and drainage board.

A representative of the Finnish consultancy firm also attends meetings. The committee which was established on 19.4.1982 is subordinated and responsible to the district development council. The chairman of that council is also the chairman of the committee.

"The main functions of the Committee are -

- (a) To select on behalf of the D.D.C. the Villages and sites for community wells according to well-defined criteria;
- (b) To make arrangements for community participation in site selection, provision of Voluntary labour, maintenance of the wells and hand pumps and other related activities, with the Community Centre

Fig. 24 a.. Gramodaya mandala in administrative hierarchy



non-political voluntary organization nominated by the minister of local government

Ministry of Local Government, Housing & Construction, Dept. of Town & Country Planning

\* recommendation; \*\* representative



- as the leading voluntary organisation for the sector;
- (c) To make arrangements for training of Caretakers of wells;
  - (d) To make arrangements for training of Health Volunteers from Community Centres and other voluntary organisations;
  - (e) To provide necessary assistance in the formulation and implementation of a sanitation programme;
  - (f) To make any other suitable arrangements for the proper implementation of the community wells and sanitation programmes under the project."<sup>1</sup>

The consultants do not necessarily have to approve the committees's statements. In fact there have been complaints that some sites have been selected without the committee's approval.<sup>2</sup>

There is not a single woman represented in the Harispattuwa co-ordination committee even though water and household projects are of utmost importance and relevance especially to women.

The need for establishing a community center for the local level has been emphasized in a meeting of Kandy kachcheri:

"(c) Need to organise community participation. It was pointed out that the Community Centre has to be the leading voluntary organisation for community participation in this water supply and sanitation sector. Thus the Community Centre will perform the following and other related functions.

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<sup>1</sup> Harispattuwa water supply project including also water resources potential study for Kandy district and Udunuwara water supply feasibility study. Monthly Report, April 1982. 30.4.1982. Kandy. Appendix 3.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to counsellor (development co-operation). Embassy of Finland, Colombo on 15.7.1982 signed by the secretary for Ministry of local government, housing and construction.

(i) Collecting relevant information concerning the sector - e.g. the number of wells, their water quality, the use of wells, whether water quality tests have been done, the number and kinds of latrines, their use by people etc. (ii) Functioning as channel through which policies and programmes in respect of the sector are communicated to other voluntary organisations involved in the sector. (iii) Directly handling the instruction and maintenance of any community wells, appointing the caretaker for the wells and having a group of Health Volunteers in the village."<sup>1</sup>

No such organization seems to exist in the village that was studied.

In the technical siting of wells villagers have no role: they are mostly passive on-lookers, women even more so.

#### 5.1.2. Problems with Land Permits

Not everyone in the village is willing to get wells on his or her land. This may be more probable when the size of land is small. Thus the size of land of the villager is owning should always be taken into consideration when siting wells. It seems that villagers are not sometimes informed about what kind of well is to be built on their land and how much land is required.

Because of land problems Unicef is building wells along the roads. This practice is not to be recommended due to the reasons mentioned earlier. Local organizations when constructing traditional wells have also had land problems.

Sometimes it seems that gramasevaka has not properly contacted land owners, who really can be furious when finding markings on their lands. Usually a written permission

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<sup>1</sup> Meeting of Kandy kachcheri on 19.4.1982.

from the land owner is taken for the site of the well or for investigations. But sometimes this permission is asked in such a haste that I wonder if the landowners exactly know in what they have committed themselves.

Fig. 25. A villager reading the form used to get permission to do investigations



If the land owner wants any compensation for the damage done to his land, it will be negotiated together with agricultural or cultivation officer as well as a surveyor from NWSDB. Gramasevaka is also taking part in these negotiations. About 10 compensations have been paid so far. For careful study these negotiations would have been important as well. But there was no time for this here.

### 5.1.3. Problems in Constructing Wells

Construction of wells is actually done by subconstructors. Villagers have had no role in it. As pointed out earlier this situation has somewhat changed now.

Villagers expressed their dissatisfaction with the subconstructors. One of them dealt with locating wells, as pointed out earlier. The other complaint dealt with the claimed substandard of their work. Whether these complaints have some real base was not possible to probe here. The complaints may also arise out of other factors. Villagers said that subconstructors asked them to go away from the building site:

"Constructor put some cheaper goods. We saw ourselves. They did not fill the small holes. We complained. Afterwards they broke the well, but there was not enough cement. Cylinder was put there the first week, carpenters and masons came the second week. Cement mixture was put into holes, but it did not hold and fell down. After we went to see when subconstructors were working. Subconstructors said to us: 'Go away! What are you looking!' Then we went away and they worked on their own. We did not understand why we were asked to go away. Now we understand!"

Actually nothing else besides the high iron concentration in the wells would be needed for some suspicions to arise. It must also be borne in mind that the subconstructors were Muslims, for which some antipathies in general had been expressed by the villagers.

Interaction in building and negotiating between different castes when using local staff must also be taken into consideration. Villagers felt some inferiority relating to their caste and often gave an appearance of belonging to an upper, usually govigama caste. Some of the consultancy's local workers belonged to the govigama caste.

Consultants claimed that what they called "spirit of opposition" was due to jealousy: villagers would have liked to join the working team. This I think is a normal and legitimate reaction. They have after all always built their own wells. Now they are made passive onlookers for their development, a development which is coming from above. And their traditional knowledge and expertise is completely

discarded. This may still happen even though villagers are involved in construction work. That is why this, too, should be further studied.

## 5.2. Maintenance of Wells

Maintenance is now completely different from the way it was done traditionally. Now men are mostly participating in it. Formerly it was a job for women and children to do. Also no complicated technological tools were needed. Maintenance involves now also checking of the quality of water. A government official had the following to say about maintenance:

"Earlier wells which were taken care of were open wells. Now they are closed wells. Only maintenance work was when walls were breaking. When we speak of maintenance now it is very different from earlier maintenance. Community well maintenance is a new thing.<sup>1</sup> Now common well maintenance needs technology."

Maintenance is now a direct responsibility of the district development councils and other local authorities concerned. National water supply and drainage board will provide technical assistance and advice to local authorities. Following workers are needed on different levels:

(1) The well caretakers are the first level responsible persons selected by a voluntary organization. He/she is a voluntary village level worker who is normally residing near the well. His/her duties are: security of the well and general cleanliness of the surrounding area, simple maintenance activities, maintenance of necessary records, informing voluntary organization regarding the maintenance of the well.

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<sup>1</sup> Not necessarily so.

The caretakers will be trained by NWSDB. Consultancy firm is co-operating in this as well. A two days' course including for example information about hydrological cycle and pollution, water and health, technical aspects of wells and the structure of the hand pumps are given (see Appendix 7). Well caretaker is responsible to the community centre or other voluntary organization whose duties are:

"Ensuring that a Caretaker is available for the well. Ensuring that the Caretaker performs his/her duties satisfactorily.

Ensuring that water quality tests are regularly done and necessary follow-up action taken.

Ensuring that water from the well is available to all users in the area.

Promoting the use of safe drinking water in the community.

Liassing with the D.D.C. sub-office, the A.C.L.G., the Regional Manager, NWSDB in matters concerning well maintenance.

Assisting in health work in the community with Health Volunteers and any other methods.

Organising Voluntary Labour when required.

Collecting voluntary contributions from users of well to cover small expenses.

Keeping the Gramodaya Mandalaya and D.D.C. sub-office informed of well maintenance activities."<sup>1</sup>

(2) Pump mechanics are paid employees of the District development council, stationed in the area. They will generally cover 100-150 community wells for the maintenance work. They are given motorcycles, tools and spares. They are expected to go around checking wells, visiting one well at least once a month. They will be also trained by NWSDB. Their duties are the following:

"Regular visits to every community well.

Attending to pump repairs, major ones being done

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<sup>1</sup> Circular letter No. L6/WS/92. Ministry of local government, housing and construction. Colombo 5.10.1982.

in consultation with the R.M., N.W.S.D.B. or the Technical Officers of the D.D.C. or the A.C.L.G. Collection of water samples for water quality testing, and their transport.

Maintenance of proper records.

Maintenance of adequate tools, spares and materials.

Working in close liaison with the Community Centre (or other Voluntary Organisation concerned), and with the A.C.L.G. and the R.M., N.W.S.D.B. through the D.D.C. sub-office."<sup>1</sup>

(3) Technical officers are officers of District Development Councils' sub-office. Their duties are the following:

"Co-ordination of maintenance work with all the Community Centres and other Voluntary Organisations concerned in the area.

Carrying out sanitary surveys where required, in consultation with the M.O.H.

Keeping the Gramodaya Mandalayas concerned regularly informed of well maintenance activities and related matters.

Supervising work of Pump Mechanic.

Having close liaison with the D.D.C., the A.C.L.G. and the R.M., N.W. S.D.G.

Maintaining proper records."<sup>2</sup>

They will be also trained by NWSDB.

(4) Technical officers of assistant commissioner of local government. Their duties are:

"Work connected with planning for the water supply sector in the district. Keeping the persons concerned informed of government policies in the water supply sector. Having a supervisory responsibility on maintenance of community wells,

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

and for this purpose carrying out necessary test checks.

Organising district level training programmes, seminars etc.<sup>1</sup>

(5) Mechanical engineer and chemist are employed by the regional office of NWSDB and supervised by regional manager. The duties and responsibilities are defined followingly:

"Providing assistance for major repairs of pumps.

Testing of water quality.

Organising the training of local government staff and Well Caretakers.

Giving technical advice on maintaining water quality and conducting of sanitary surveys.

Maintaining necessary records in respect of wells"<sup>2</sup>

Gramodaya mandala plays a role in maintenance. Voluntary organizations and DDC sub-office are to inform to it regularly about maintenance activities. It should examine work and "advice on future work to be done both in planning of the sector and in the maintenance activities."<sup>3</sup> The overall responsibility for the maintenance lies with the DDC. Its main duties and responsibilities are:

"Recruitment and maintenance of staff required.

Making the necessary institutional arrangements.

Making arrangements for any water rates or levies to cover maintenance costs.

Making payment for services and supplies connected with well maintenance.

General co-ordination of all well maintenance work in the district.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



Maintenance of records necessary for proper management of maintenance activities."<sup>1</sup>

How this maintenance will work was not possible to observe as it has just been planned and a first course to well caretakers organized only one month ago. It is extremely important for the maintenance to work as the quality of water even in new wells is at times questionable. The viability of household water projects is directly depending on it.

Some points can be taken up, however. In the village 10 well caretakers were chosen by the preja mandala. All of the nominated were males, one of them however transferred the job to his wife because of his many other duties.

The necessity of having women as caretakers has been emphasized by government organizations. Women will only be accidentally recruited. Also in the village nearby only one woman was recruited. This may be due to the emphasis on the respectability of the person to be chosen. Official or public responsibility will be given to men. Whether the women instead of their husbands will practically do the work is open to see. Gramasevaka gave following reasons for why the women were not chosen:

"Women cannot do that work. (Why not?) Women can't protect the wells. Women cannot go out during the night. Women are not going around the village, they are always in the house. (But women go to the wells all the time?) No, they do not go all the time."

Well caretakers do have an important role not only in maintaining wells but also in controlling possible mischief in wells. So far there has only been some playing with wells. Small stones have been put inside the wells. Wells are often pumped without purpose. Children are hanging on the handle. The mouth of the spout is closed with hand when water is pumped and water rushes out of small slit under the handle. These are usually plays by children. There is no reason to expect that women could not control this behavior. Women are besides daily using wells so it

would be in their interest to see that wells are functioning. It could also be assumed that they would more promptly than men report any defects in them.

Some well caretakers have taken their responsibility seriously. On one slab it was written in Sinhalese: "Don't put foot on this slab." Reason for this was:

"Because people spit and leaking dirty water can get inside."

Fig. 26. Writing on a slab of a hand pump well



How committed and how well equipped the workers on other levels will be is to be seen after they have started their work: so far consultant has been doing the maintenance work.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

In introduction some minimum requirements for viable water projects were specified. We shall now look how these conditions are met in this research example.

First of all we have seen that new hand pump wells are not so far functioning properly. The iron content in the water of these wells is too high, as shown by Auli Keinänen in her report. Only half of the new hand pump wells are in proper use now. Further studies must be made also of the bacteriological safety of the wells. That is why the successful maintenance, especially the water quality control is of utmost importance and problems relating to maintenance should be further studied. People are still using traditional wells for drinking purposes and do not necessarily boil the water. Traditionally water is considered sacred, having spiritual values, and this may be one reason that boiling of water is not considered necessary. Summa summarum: The role of the new hand pump wells in providing safe drinking water to villagers is rather small so far. The overall situation in the village has only slightly improved. Education in health and sanitation would have to be integrated in these kinds of projects as well, if some positive results are to be expected. This should be done by professional people who have knowledge of hygiene, culture and society as well as educational methods. Women are of course key groups in this kind of education.

Sarvodaya which is also constructing wells is aware of the fact that the main problem in water projects like in other development projects is to get people actively to participate in them. This participation should not be directed from above as often is the case. Participation must be born out of people's real needs and cultural values. Some power groups may also establish barriers for participation. That is why it is always important to study the role and

structure of these groups.

In our research only meetings were used to get villagers' feedback to the study. This is, however, not sufficient. Villagers should have even more active role in research and other methods, like for example participatory training should be experimented in health education.

One could also ask whether it would be wiser to concentrate water projects like this on the areas where there is not only lack of pure water but quantity of water as well. If the construction of wells or better gravity systems would have been built first in such areas, more benefits would have been reaped. This actually is sarvodayas policy.

In the light of this one example it has been seen that there are problems in siting of wells. One should be critical of such concepts as "people's participation" and study what it really means. Even though local or village societies participate in decision making in siting, they may still not represent all the parts of the area and strata of society. The decision making could have been also made so cumbersome that it comes too late. Whether these societies also have funds and real power is also necessary to take into consideration.

One could also speculate about the role of Finnish-made hand pumps in siting wells. If one is constructing gravity systems on hills, no handpumps are needed. It is important to note how some decisions made outside the project area could have unfavourable consequences if some local factors do not support them. In the future it might be well to consider to build some sealed storage tanks with pipes underground<sup>1</sup> perhaps in the hill areas, which most urgently are in need of water.

Participation of villagers in all phases of development projects is important. In constructing wells they should not only give their labour. People have traditional knowledge not only in constructing wells but also in locating wells. Development projects that show indifference

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<sup>1</sup> Sarvodaya lays them 3 feet underground.

to people's traditional knowledge and make them outsiders to their own development cannot expect people wholeheartedly to participate in them.

"Development should also be 'balanced'. Every practical step we take should be so planned as to achieve development in several aspects at the same time. We should be especially careful not to divorce our development schemes from our spiritual and moral needs and growth."<sup>1</sup>

We have seen that the fear of poisoning may after all give support to the idea of closed wells, like the shallow hand pump wells are which are constructed on the Harispattuwa area. How extensive this belief is should be studied. Some traditions like this one may support the change, others may be in conflict with innovations. Traditions can also function as inhibiting mechanisms, like for example inhibiting personal gain or egoistic profit-making. The social and communal side of people's behaviour is emphasized. It is possible to see the idea of reciprocity in this light. The idea of give-and-take seems to be central in many rites and customs in this particular village. New hand pump wells may discourage this theme: like villagers said, they can take the water bottle but they cannot give anything instead. And still with the new plans people are expected to pay for the water, especially if pipelines with taps are to be constructed. What is more important we have here in embryo the cultural idea that to get something one has to pay something. And as we have seen in offerings coins (!) are used. This idea of give-and-take is probably older than the Buddhist idea of giving (dāna). How it and European welfare ideas have affected and mixed with this rural idea would be interesting to study.

We have also seen that women's role in development has been once again bypassed. When works become socially

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<sup>1</sup> Gramodaya Mandala. Ministry of local government, housing and construction, p. 22.

valued men are recruited instead of women, even though women were traditionally doing these works. Also when technical aspects are emphasized women are left out of the picture.

The purpose of this study has not only been theoretical. Some practical results have also been tried to accomplish. Some very simple participatory methods have been included. Researchers have for example worked as mediators between consultants and villagers. Consultants have been informed about following things.

- Villagers' dissatisfaction with the sites of hand pump wells. Need of wells or gravity systems on hills.<sup>1</sup>
- Dissatisfaction with the work of subconstructors: substandard work, behavior of subconstructors.
- Non-use of certain hand pump wells for drinking.
- Unclean water in hand pump wells during the rainy season.
- Villagers' willingness and needs in participating in construction of wells.
- Importance of auspicious time.
- Possible effect of subconstructor's Muslim ethnicity.
- Children's games with hand pumps.
- Iron inside the well's spout.
- Loose slabs in some hand pump wells.
- Defective map of the village.
- Map of village given to consultants.

To villagers following opinions of consultants have been informed:

- Complaints and petitions relating to new hand pump wells should be sent to AGAs office and a copy of the letter to consultants. Gramasevaka has the address.
- More hand pump wells will be built in the village

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<sup>1</sup> Three wells are now going to be built there.

if necessary. Building of wells has not been completed.

- Villagers should not lose their own initiative in building and just passively wait everything coming only from consultants.
- Villagers should co-operate in getting the permits from land owners for sites of the wells.
- Shramadāna should be used as much as possible.
- Possible defects in hand pump wells can still be repaired. Consultants are, however, always checking the work of subcontractors.
- Possibility to get wells or gravity systems on hills. Consultants are now aware of the problems in hilly areas.

A meeting was also arranged by researchers so that consultants and villagers could discuss their problems. In this meeting which was not very successful (only about 15 villagers attended) following matters were taken up:

- Location of hand pump wells
- Villagers' participation in locating wells
- New hand pump wells which are needed
- Consultants' plan to build a small treatment system for iron in water
- Latrines and sanitation program
- Subconstructor problem

In the future also subconstructors and some other administrators etc. should be involved in these kinds of meetings.

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Glossary

AGA	Assistant government agent
Ande	Share of crop on paddy fields, divided between owner and cultivator
Attam	Reciprocal labour
Auyrvedic Doctor	Traditional physician
Bahirawa pooja	Religious ritual in constructing wells, building houses etc.
Bandana kapima	Exorcism ritual used in healing. Lasting usually whole night
Beedi	Small hand rolled cigarettes
Berawa	Drummer's caste
Binna	A marriage where the bridegroom goes to live in or near the bride's parental home, known in anthropology as a unorilocal form of marriage
Bodhi tree	Ficus religiosa under which Buddha is believed to have attained enlightenment
Bodiwansa	Padu, Ponna a caste between Govigama and Berawa
Brahma Mohoatha	An auspicious time when Brahma is in ascendance
Dāna	Offering of a meal to Buddhist monks
Daranuwa	A circular pad or support for the water pot
Dayaka sabha	Temple Society
Dīga	A marriage where the bride goes to live in or near the bridegroom's parental home, known in anthropology as a virilocal form of marriage
Dispensary	Equivalent to a small clinique not necessarily private, is not equivalent to pharmacy

District Development Council	Established by Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs for each local authority area comprising of nominated representatives of the local authority and state-sponsored societies and organizations
GA	Government agent: Functions as representative of certain ministries and departments, which do not have such District Representatives. GA's duties: security, revenue collection, development works, etc.
Galasiya Pattuwa	One of the ancient Administrational areas to which Sri Lanka was divided. Our study area belongs to Galasiya Pattuwa
Gam Sabha	Traditional village council no more active
Gilanpasa	Light refreshments taken to monks in the afternoon or evening
Gilanpasa pūjava	Evening offerings in a vihāra
Govigama	Farmers caste, the largest and highest caste in Sinhalese caste hierarchy
Govi karaka sabha	Former Agricultural Society
Grama sanwardana society	Village development society established by government
Grama sevaka	Literally "village servant", civil servant representing general administration of village level, in place of the former village head man
Gramaday mandala	Village development committee, functions: (1) To identify felt needs in the area and make recommendations to the development council. (2) To participate in projects
High land	A general term for all cultivable land other than paddy land

Hūniyam	Sorcery: curse, caused by spells and incantations
Jak tree	Relative of bread fruit tree Artocarpus heterophyllus
JVP	Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, a leftist party on the tracks of Fidel Castro
Kachcheri	District administration office
Kapurāla	Priest of gods serving at devale
Kathina	A ceremony at the end of the retreat observed by monks during the rainy season
Kattadiyā	Witch doctor, exorcist, devil priest or dancer
Kohomba kankariya	A ceremony performed in ancient times on state occasions to obtain blessings of the Devas. Also used to seek deliverance from drought and pestilence now revived for inauguration of some water projects
LSSP	Lanka Sama Samaja Party: Sri Lanka socialist party. The largest of the Marxist political parties
Low land	Paddy land
Maha	The largest harvest, the major season for paddy cultivation
Maha vidyalaya	Secondary school, approximate equivalent to US high school
Mahila samitie	Women's association
Mantra	Magical formula, incantations or a formula addressed to a deity or devil
Maranadara samitie	Death Donation Society organized by villagers to assist relatives of deceased in costs
Mau Haule	Sarvoday's mother's meeting
Nakath welawa	Auspicious time

Nakath kāraya	Astrologer
Nayake Thero	Chief monk
Nikaya	Sect
NWSDB	National Water Supply and Drainage Board
Paddy	"Rice" that grows in paddy fields. Only the harvested grain is called rice
Pansala	Living place of monks
Pau	Dismerit, "sin"
Pihilla	Spout or spring
Pin	Merit; "Those who do good get <u>pin</u> , those who do bad get <u>pau</u> "
Pirith	Ceremony of chanting sacred sutters to ward off evil, disease etc.
Pooja	Religious service
Poya days	The days of the four quarters of the moon
Preja mandala	Sport committee on village level
Referendum elections	Peoples opinion whether they want to have general elections or not are inquired. People vote for two symbols: An oil lamp or a water pot. By voting oil lamp no general elections are wanted. This is also the wish of ruling conservative party. Water pot is a symbol for general elections. This is the wish of leftist parties
Rodiya	The lowest caste, a beggar caste
Sangha	Brotherhood of Buddhist monks
Sangha pirith ceremonies	See pirith ceremonies. This is a ceremony executed by Buddhist monks in contrast to Gihi-pirith which is executed by laymen

Sarvodaya	An organization for development according to participatory principles, based on Buddhist philosophy
Shramadāna committee	A committee belonging to sarvodaya. Idea is to make people participate in execution of development works without charge
Singiti Haule	Sarvodaya's children's meeting
SLFP	Sri Lanka Freedom Party, a socialist party
UNP	United National Party. A conservative party, now in power
Vihāra	Means dwelling place and was originally used to mean the dwelling place of a Buddha. Later it meant the dwelling place of monks corresponding to word monastery. Nowadays it means building in which the Buddha statue is housed and the dwelling place of monks is called "Pansala"
Wesak	The anniversary of the birth, enlightenment and Nirvana of Buddha
Wesak Festival Society	Helps to make pandals, huge decoratives telling about Buddha's life
Yala	The lesser harvest, the second and minor season for paddy cultivation
Yovun Haule	Sarvodaya's youth meeting. Function is to integrate youth into development work

Appendix 1.

Ministry of Local Government, Housing and Construction,  
Colombo.

Senior assistant secretary

National Watersupply and Drainage Board, Ratmalana  
Assistant general manager

Water Resources Board, Colombo  
2 engineers

Unicef Office, Colombo  
- Chief of water and sanitation section  
- 2 project officers

Women's Bureau, Colombo  
- assistant director

Health Education Bureau, Colombo  
- health education specialist

Agrarian Service Department  
- divisional officer  
- cultivation officer

Sarvodaya Kandy District Center  
- sarvodaya worker  
- Dutch volunteer

Assistant Government Agencies (AGA)  
- acting assistant government agent  
- assistant government agent

Appendix 2a.Topics asked about traditional wells

- Ownership of land and well
- Name of the well
- Use of the well (observed also)
- Construction of the well
- Rituals relating to wells
- Availability of water in the well
- Depth of the well (observed also)
- Cleaning of the well (observed also)
- Opinion about the well
- Quality of water in the well (observed also)
- Condition of the well (observed also)
- Creatures in the well (observed also)
- Lone using of well
- Water problem
- Empty and full vessels as omens
- Diseases of the family (diarrhea/rash/eye diseases)
- Pirith wells

Appendix 2b.

Topics asked about hand pump wells

- Ownership of the land
- Use of the well (also observed)
- Opinion about the wells
- Quality of water (also observed)
- Rituals relating to wells (also observed)
- Problems relating to wells
- Playing with wells (also observed)



Appendix 3.Socioeconomic background of the village collected by Peradeniya University Research Team for the "Water and Society" ProjectTable 15. Total population

	No. of Families	Males	Females	Total
No. of Person	168	404	460	864
%		46.76	53.24	100

Table 16. Population according to age groups

Sex	Age groups							Total
	0-5	6-14	15-19	20-40	41-55	56-65	Over 65	
Male	52	89	42	126	58	23	14	404
Female	63	95	45	141	70	22	24	464

Table 17. Educational background of the villagers

Educational background	No. of persons	%
1. Illiterate	240	27.78
2. Grade 1-5	300	34.72
3. Grade 6-10 (Ordinary level)	298	34.49
4. Advanced level	22	2.55
5. University degree	4	0.46
Total	864	100.00

Table 18. Marital status

	Never married	Married	Divorce	Widow	Total
No. of person	504	306	1	53	864
%	58.33	35.47	0.11	6.14	100

Table 19. Location of marriage

	Nuclear	Diga	Binna	Total
No. of families	145	28	3	176
%	82.39	15.91	1.7	100

Table 20. Main economic activities - agriculture

	Total	Owner non- cultivator	Owner cultivator	Tenant cultivator	Wage labourer
No. of person	161	30	63	57	11

Table 21. Main economic activities - non-agriculture  
(No. of persons)

Total	Wage labour- er	Gov't occu- pation	Non gov't	Trader	Self employ- ment	Skilled labour- er	Un- skilled labourer	Other
140	57	16	10	77	10	16	7	2

Table 22. Income in rupees of those whose main activity is agriculture

No. of families	Less than 1000	1000-1999	2000-2999	3000-3999	4000-4999	5000-9999	10000-19999	20000 and above	Total
37	36	18	9	6	7	6	1	120	
Total income	22810	50490	42140	30140	25700	55940	66400	27688	

Table 23. Income in rupees of non-agriculturalists

No. of families	Less than 1000	1000-1999	2000-2999	3000-3999	4000-4999	5000-9999	10000-19999	20000 and above	Total
5	16	17	13	5	35	10	6	107	
Total income	2700	23500	39000	42960	24000	235130	125980	175516	

Table 24. Subsidiary economic activities

No. of persons '29	Total	Wage labourer	Traders	Self-employment	Others
		19	5	3	2

Table 25. Income of those engaging in subsidiary economic activities

	Less than 1000	1000-1999	2000-2999	3000-3999	4000-4999	5000-9999	10000-19999	20000 and above	Total
No. of families	6	5	11	1	0	3	0	0	26
Total income	2200	6500	26168	3600	0	19400	0	0	

Table 26. Size of house gardens and other highlands (owned) in acres

Size	H o u s e G a r d e n	O t h e r h i g h l a n d s
Less than 0.25	30	5
0.25-0.49	58	12
0.5-0.99	49	10
1.0-1.99	24	11
2.0-2.99	6	3
3.0-3.99	0	6
4.0-4.99	0	3
5.0 and above	0	5
Total	167	55
		107.675

Table 27. Size of paddy land holdings

Size classes	O w n e d		T e n a n t & R e n t	
	No. of families	Total acres	No. of families	Total acres
Less than 0.25	14	1.68	3	3
0.25-0.49	25	6.56	10	2.5
0.5-0.99	22	12.75	23	14.5
1.0-1.99	11	13.2	5	5.0
2.0-2.99	3	6.0	0	0
3.0-3.99	1	3.0	0	0
4.0-4.99	0	0	1	4.0
5.0 and above	2	12.0	0	0
Total	78	55.19	42	26.3

Table 28. Distribution of total annual income

Income in rupees	No. of families	Total income (Rs.)
Less than 1000	0	0
1000-1999	1	1674
2000-2999	12	29879
3000-3999	10	39180
4000-4999	28	126304
5000-9999	74	514598
10000-19999	30	421014
20000-49999	11	421434
50000 and above	2	186600

Table 29. Ownership of radio & television

	Radio	TV	Radio + TV	No radio or TV	Total
No. of families	116	2	2	49	169
%	68.64	1.18	1.18	29.0	100

Appendix 4. Organizations in the village

Name	Established	Organized by	Meetings	Members	Claimed defects
1) Co-operative society	1944	Villagers, now ruled by Union	Date of last meeting cannot be remembered, probably no more meetings	-	- villagers have no role in society - no implementation
2) Temple Society (Dayake Sabha)	1974	Villagers	-	All the villagers	-
3) Village Development Society (Grama Sanwardana)	Re-established in 1981	By government	- once in 3-4 months - 30-40 people claimed to attend	257 members	- doing nothing - occasional meetings - not enough money received from government - doing same works as Gramodaya Mandalaya, no need of 2 societies for that
4) Village Development Committee (Gramodaya Mandala)	1982	Government, to replace former Village Council	Every month	All the presidents of registered and accepted societies and civil servants (principal of school, gramasevaka, postmaster, weaving teacher & cultivation officer)	- no real works, just programming general village development - no money

(cont.)

Name	Established	Organized by	Meetings	Members	Claimed defects
5) Burial Society (maranadara samithie)	1978	By villagers ("educated leaders in the village")	Once a month 50-80 attend	240	-
6) Sports Committee (preja mandala)	1982 (?)	By government	Once a month	-	No implementation
7) <u>Sarvodaya</u> - Shramadana committee - Mothers' meeting	1978  1980	By monk	Once a month  Once a month	50  over 100 members	-
8) School Development Society	-	-	-	325, i.e. parents and teachers	-
9) Tea small holders association	-	By govern-ment (?)	-	About 7 attended last meeting	-

Appendix 5.Bahirawa ritualI version

Before the well is dug dola (offering to appease desire of demons or gods) is given to bahirawa. This dola has the following ingredients:

- (1) Cardamons
- (2) Cloves
- (3) Cinnamon sticks
- (4) Curry of seven kinds of vegetables (hat mālu)
- (5) Tampala vegetable (Nothsaerua brachiata)
- (6) Jaggery<sup>1</sup>
- (7) Lighting of 8 oil lamps

Dola also includes rice cooked with cloves, cardamons, nutmegs and curry leaves. Rice is boiled in cow milk or king coconut water. After the food is offered 8 coconut oil lamps to bahirawas, one to each of the 8 bahirawas, is lit. Ritual specialist, kapua<sup>2</sup> is giving the offering and calls bahirawa by chanting some verses (gāthas) three times to get bahirawa's attention. Following gāthas are sung:

- |           |              |       |   |
|-----------|--------------|-------|---|
| (1) Dēva  | bahirawayaye | namah |   |
| (2) Rāja  | "            | "     | " |
| (3) Devi  | "            | "     | " |
| (4) Kūta  | "            | "     | " |
| (5) Gini  | "            | "     | " |
| (6) Jala  | "            | "     | " |
| (7) Prēta | "            | "     | " |
| (8) Yaksa | "            | "     | " |

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<sup>1</sup> Sugar made of kitul.

<sup>2</sup> A kind of priest.



Some resin (dummal) is thrown on fire. Coconut water is poured on food.

Bahirawa poojawa, as the ritual is called, has following parts:

- (1) Dēva rajanawa. Inviting the gods.
- (2) Namaskāraye kīm. Saying the benedictions.
- (3) Budu guna kīm. Describing the greatness of Lord Buddha.
- (4) Navak graha ārajanava. Inviting the lords of the 9 planets.
- (5) Bahirawa pūjawa. Offering to bahirawa.
- (6) Vishnu āradenawa. Inviting Vishnu.

In the 6th act Vishnu was invited because he can send bahirawa away. After bahirawa has received his offering he is expected to go away so that well construction or house building can start.

This ritual lasts two hours, with offerings and chanting. If pirith chanting is included, the ritual can last longer.

## II version

This ritual is called deviyan pooja or pol gediya deviyanta pooja. It can be translated the offering to coconut god. This god is Ganadeviyo (Ganesh). Every coconut has three "eyes" (black spots) like Ganadeviyo.

One coconut (pol gediya) and a bottle of cow milk is offered. First the coconut is husked. On the stool flower and coconut are put and coconut oil lamp and joss-stricks lit. Some gathas are sung. One minute before the auspicious time mamoti is taken and the digging of well starts. This ritual is shorter than the former one.

## III version

This offering to bahirawa consists of:

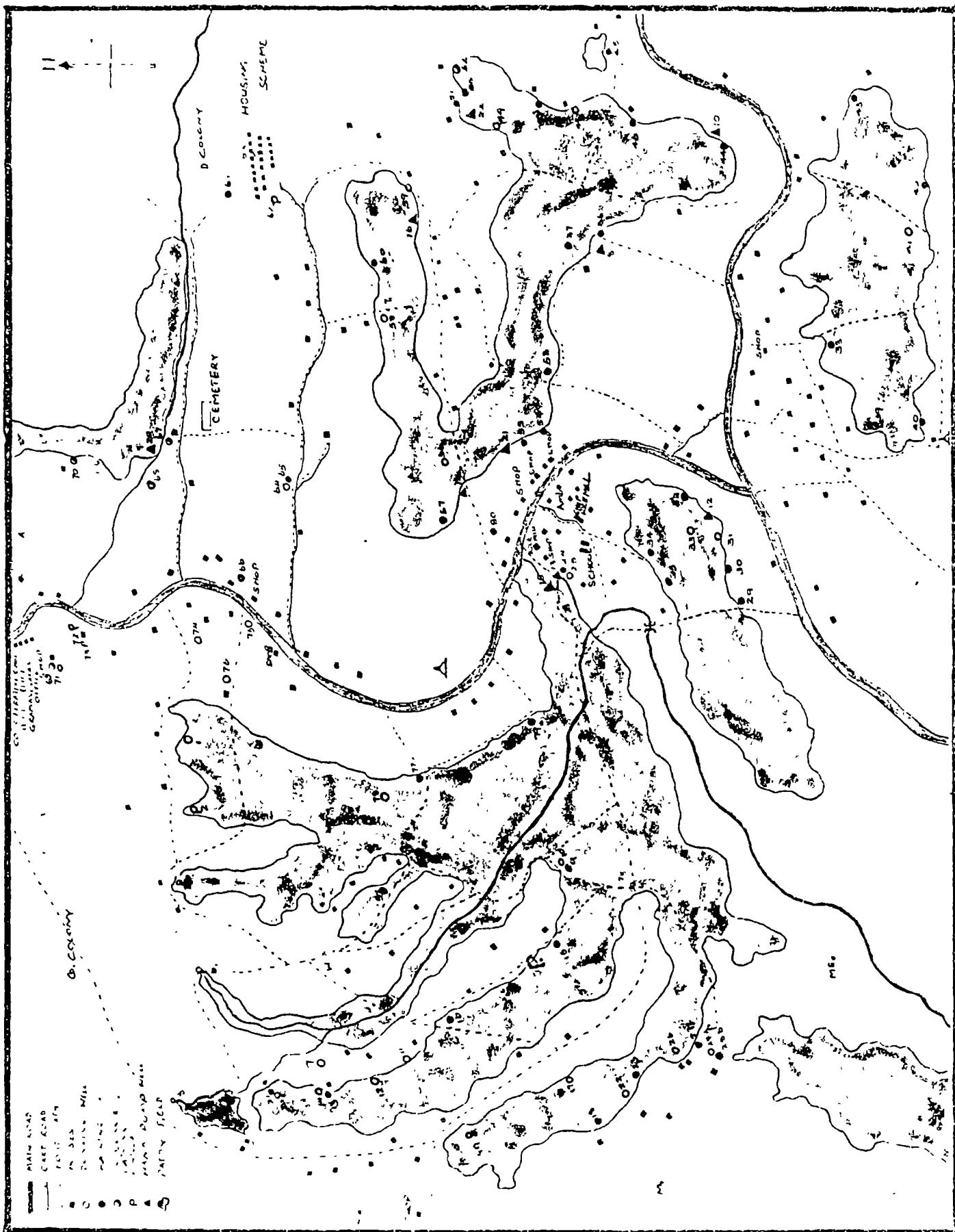
- (1) Limes
- (2) Milk rice (kiribath) prepared with chee
- (3) Atakuna (?)
- (4) 5 kind of fruits
- (5) 8 copper coins
- (6) Lead (eeyam)
- (7) 8 pieces of turmeric
- (8) 8 pieces of white sandalwood
- (9) 8 areca nuts
- (10) 8 betel leaves

All of the ingredients are gathered in 8 baskets (gotu) and limes are put on sticks. Following gatha is sung:  
Bahirawa aṣṭhaka, i.e. verses invoking blessings or benedictions.  
 There are actually 8 aṣṭakas:

- (1) Namaskāre. Benediction.
- (2) Yadīni. Prayer.
- (3) Dīṣṭhiya. Possession.
- (4) Ṣhāntie. Blessing.
- (5) Poojawa. Offering.
- (6) Yagaye. Offering of food.
- (7) Ṣhāntiak. Blessing.

This bahirawa was claimed to start at 9 P.M. and it must end before 6 A.M. Usually it lasts all the night. The ritual specialists who partake in it must not eat meat nor fish before the ritual. When the building of community house (samithie sāla) was started in the village this ritual was held.

Appendix 6. Approximate Map of the Village



Appendix 7.Training programme for the care takers of the wells

Place: Dolapihilla Gramodaya Society Hall

Date: 24-25 November 1982

First day

9.15-9.30	Introducing the participants and guests opening the programme
9.30-9.45	Project Manager's address
9.45-10.00	Tea
10.00-10.30	Project introduction and about the programme
10.30-11.30	Hydrological cycle and pollution
11.30-12.30	Water and Health
12.30-1.30	Lunch
1.30-3.00	Technical aspects of wells and the structure of the Hand pumps
3.00-3.15	Tea
3.15-4.15	Importance of the maintenance and the community participation
4.15-4.45	Duties of the caretakers
4.45-6.00	Film show

Second day

8.00-12.30	Demonstration on dismantling and assembling of a Hand pump at site
12.30-1.30	Lunch
1.30-2.30	Discussion
2.30-2.45	Tea
2.45-3.30	Distribution of certificates and close down

Appendix 8.Table 30. Economic activities of the Board Members in village organizations

Occupation	Male	Female	Total
1. Owner non cultivator	1	0	1
2. Owner cultivator	4	1	5
3. Tenant cultivator	1	0	1
4. Wage labourer	2	0	2
5. Owner cultivator & carpenter	1	0	1
6. Owner non cultivator & high land cultivator	1	0	1
7. Owner non cultivator & Business	1	0	1
8. Housewives	0	4	4
9. Govt. occupations	2	0	2
10. School children (studying)	2	1	3
11. Sarvodaya workers	1	1	2
Total	16	7	23



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