

The Ritual Space of Patients and Traditional Healers in Cambodia

Maurice Eisenbruch

Résumé

L'espace rituel des patients et des guérisseurs traditionnels au Cambodge

par Maurice Eisenbruch

Le guérisseur cambodgien traditionnel, le kruu, est un spécialiste rituel qui traite les gens souffrant de *ckuet*, terme vernaculaire pour les désordres comportementaux. La maladie provient de trois sphères: celles des divinités, en haut ; des démons, en bas ; et des hommes, au milieu. Le kruu obtient son pouvoir de guérisseur des gourous de sa lignée et emploie une combinaison de théories et de techniques bouddhiques, brahmaniques et tantriques. Le kruu commence par faire appel aux puissances d'en haut, puis expulse la maladie et protège le patient d'une réinfection avec des outils rituels, tels le yantra ou le mantra. Son langage est tantôt parfaitement compréhensible à son patient, comme lorsqu'il ordonne à la maladie de quitter le patient, tantôt très technique, voire ésotérique, quand il détermine et traite le désordre au niveau cosmique. Par ses pouvoirs d'origines diverses, mais conçus comme étant de « gauche » ou de « droite », le kruu prend place avec son patient dans un espace culturel qui englobe tous les aspects de la situation de celui-ci - sa maladie, les racines morales, sociales, cosmologiques et physiques de celle-ci - et ainsi l'aide à guérir et à retrouver le chemin de la communauté.

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The Ritual Space of Patients and Traditional Healers in Cambodia

Maurice EISENBRUCH

The traditional healer, known as the *kruu*, treats people who suffer from *ckuət*, the vernacular term for behavioural disorders and insanity. His healing rituals show him to be physician, psychiatrist, pharmacist, social geographer, and cultural archivist. In this paper I will examine how the worlds of the *kruu* (his source of healing power, and healing rituals) and his patient map the Cambodian social space.¹ Condominas (1977) argues that social space is that space determined by the ensemble of relations in a social group, and should include not only the social relationships in a conventional sense but also the relationships between the social sphere and “l’espace mythique” of Cassirer and the “total social fact” of Mauss, with its centre not on the individual but on the society².

My arguments are based on work with *kruu* and their patients in Kandal, Siem Reap, Battambang, Kompong Speu, Takeo, Prey Veng, Svay Rieng, Stung Treng and Ratanakiri provinces. My fieldwork focused on the healers’ diagnostic and healing skills, encompassing their physical and spiritual interventions, ritual performance, and knowledge borne in narrative and legend. I studied the position of the *kruu* in their community, and their accounts of their apprenticeship and healing powers. I observed the healing rituals: how the healers embarked on procedures, made objects such as amulets and applied them to the patient, and helped the patient’s integration back into their village.

1. In analysing the political and moral aspects of social space, there has been a tendency in scholarship on Southeast Asian cultures (see Taillard, 1977 in Laos and Formoso, 1990, in Thailand) to position social relationships in the horizontal plane and political and power relationships in the vertical one. The concept of space is deeply ingrained in Cambodian folk life, as shown by the folk tales. Space is ranged in tiers in three interpenetrable worlds, underground, celestial and terrestrial, corresponding with the three worlds of the Trai Phum. The worlds are inhabited by beings traveling from one to the other; the earth is a bipartite division into the domestic world of cultivated fields and villages, and the world of forests and mountains (Thierry, 1978). The Ramakerti, and the Jataka stories used by the *kruu*, also show up this interpenetration of vertical traffic across the three worlds. But this division into horizontal and vertical, itself an idea rooted in Western geometry or geography, may not necessarily hold true in Cambodia.

2. This paper is framed by Condominas’s diverse relationships in social space: those between space and ecological time; with the environment; with economic and technological exchange; with written and oral communication; with parentage and neighbourhood; and with supernatural community. These types of relationships are mixed.

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Ritual agents

Cambodian society has several groups of healers whose rituals have been well described in French scholarship on Cambodia.³ They include the *kruu* and the Buddhist monk, who are always men,⁴ and female mediums known as *ruup*.⁵ In my fieldwork I found at least one *kruu* in every village and several in larger villages. There are no figures or estimates of the total number of *kruu* in Cambodia.

The *kruu*, like the monks, are an integral part of the community, highly respected by most villagers. I found few regional differences in the *kruu*'s rituals except that those far from the provincial towns were freer in their use of methods known as *moən ?aakum* (which I loosely translate as magic); they were not so easily intimidated by the authorities in the capital who wanted to modernise medicine at the expense of the *kruus*' traditional methods.⁶ At the village level, the *kruu*, although not exercising political power, are tacitly powerful because of their healing ability.

The *kruu* work in their homes, where they grow their medicinal plants, see their patients, and teach their disciples; the monks work collectively in the Buddhist pagoda.⁷ As in Laos (see Condominas, 1968 and 1987), the *kruu* may go to the Buddhist pagoda to make an offering to the monks or to help them before they carry out their own ceremonies. The *kruu*, as laymen, and the monks, can treat the same patient independently if patients have consulted each of them, but they work separately, and it is rare to see any kind of interaction between *kruu* and other groups of healers such as mediums.⁸ As is true everywhere in mainland South-east Asia, there is an overlap between local folk beliefs and the *kruus*' versions of Hindu and Buddhist ideas of illness.⁹ Many rituals contain an element of sacrifice showing a similarity with Vedic sacrifice on the one hand, and the offerings to village and neighbourhood spirits, on the other.¹⁰ If monks

3. The *kruus*' rituals were first described by Moura (1885) and Leclère (1894 and 1895). Ritharasi Norodom (1929) first described the evolution of Cambodian medicine, and Menault (1930) *materia medica*.

4. This gender difference is similar to that seen in Thailand where it is believed that only men have the necessary four elements in sufficient strength and can obtain lower knowledge (Formoso, 1992).

5. These healers who specialise in calling spirits into their bodies on behalf of the patient allow their bodies to act as a vehicle through which the force could act by directing them for the benefit of the patient.

6. Some *kruu* are afraid to use *moən ?aakum* openly and claim only to know only how to administer traditional herbal medicines similar to Western medicine. By professing to take this position they do not challenge socialist and Western politics that favour modernisation of the people at the expense of their "primitive" Khmer rituals.

7. Some *kruu* participate in ward rounds at local hospitals, where they try to maintain practices laid down in their code of conduct.

8. If the *kruu* enters the pagoda for a short time to help the monks, he takes on the role of a Buddhist *acaa* and relinquishes his healing power as a *kruu*.

9. There are varying opinions about the position of local folk culture in the development of healing rituals. It is evident that the rituals, whatever their derivation, include a strong local folk element. There is considerable literature showing this in Thailand and Laos, as well as in Cambodia. See Condominas (1987) on an analysis of this syncretism among the Dai Lu in Yunnan and the Lao in France. In Laos, for example, there are rituals for the spirit cult, such as possession performed by mediums, and shamanic rituals among the indigenous minorities. These healing rituals, according to Pottier (1973), are archaic and in opposition to the magical rituals known as *moən* (the same term as is used in Cambodia) and include exorcism of spirits performed by healers; this is a dichotomy similar to that in Cambodia. Lim Siv Choan (1967) went so far as to say that it is an error to consider that magical rituals in Cambodia came from Brahmanism at all, and instead were derived from local folk beliefs.

10. The *kruu* confirms the link between folk belief and Brahmanism when he makes objects such as the *pee* (a basket of food for the local gods) for the sake of his patient's health, just as the Tumpuen

and *kruu* carry out similar healing rituals, the monks are seen to be spiritual, the *kruu* medical healers. The monks are ordained in a specific monastic ceremony, the *kruu* are initiated in the course of a long apprenticeship; the monks study Buddhist texts, the *kruu* learn from palm leaf manuscripts and old masters; the monks follow the Vinaya code that forbids them owning to or showing their power; the *kruu* are known to have power and can use it publicly.

The *kruu* can be at once pharmacists and practitioners of magic, and most have skills in some specialised aspect of healing: some are renowned, for example, for treating children's diseases or illnesses brought on by sorcery; many are experts in pharmacological treatment, gathering plants outside their houses which they sometimes mass-produce in elaborate pharmacies. Whatever their areas of expertise, most treat *ckuət*.¹¹

Some boys – many are sons, sons-in-law, or grandsons of *kruu* – are destined from birth to become *kruu*.¹² A few are born with signs of their destiny. Baby boys born feet first, for example, and boys born in a caul, or with the umbilical cord draped crosswise across the shoulders, are ritually separated with ordinary children.¹³ These boys start their training in the family, before setting off to study from famous *kruu* in the mountains, where they may continue to learn in a long and rigorous apprenticeship. Some spend years in meditation and study with a single master, others with several of them. Those *kruu* whose apprenticeship took place at least two decades ago studied aspects of healing from the palm leaf manuscripts, which set out details of particular yantra, verses of mantra, and botanical preparations for healing.¹⁴ The manuals provide details of the botanical formulae and list verses of mantra.¹⁵ Most disciples read from their masters' manuscripts and copy them during their long apprenticeships. Some masters, concerned to preserve their knowledge, particularly since Pol Pot, copy their manuals into exercise books.

Once a boy or young man becomes a *kruu*, he must observe his code of conduct scrupulously, showing respect to each of his past gurus (from Sanskrit *upadhāya*),

tribe do when offering a water buffalo as sacrifice for the health of the village (see Matras, 1973, for description among the Brou), or the royal Brahman in calling Indian deities.

11. In different parts of the country I found *kruu* with different ranges of theoretical allegiances and practical skills. I worked with a *kruu* in Kandal province renowned for his treatment of *ckuət*, one, in Siem Reap province, initiated in Phnom Kulen mountains, an expert on the influence of Siva on ritual objects, one, in Battambang, trained in the mountains of Pailin, a specialist in the influence of Visnu on healing ceremonies, one in Kompong Speu, an expert in invoking the previous incarnations of the Buddha, one in Takeo, well versed in *skən*, the most common behavioural disorder described by the *kruu* among children and named according to metaphorical cause, one, a specialist in spirit possession of women, and another in the mountain tribes of Ratanakiri, where I also observed an *?aarak*, the equivalent of a *kruu* among the tribal Tumpuen. In this paper I am focusing, however, on those *kruu* who invoke knowledge of supernatural forces to treat conditions.

12. Unlike the monks or the *kruu*, some ritual agents including some mediums, enter their healing career through a personal traumatic episode.

13. The parent guides the child's hand to go through the steps normally performed by an adult *kruu* in healing; even though the child does not understand what is happening, he rehearses passively the repertoire of his future role as healer. Their parents mix the objects which symbolise the child's anomalous position with his porridge to build the invulnerability needed in later life as *kruu*.

14. The *sattraa*, Buddhist palm-leaf manuscripts collected in monasteries, have long attracted attention (see Ong, 1967, for a report on the *sattraa* in Phnom Penh before the civil war, when there were 1,647 housed in the library of the Institut bouddhique), but those used by the *kruu* that set out his ritual formulae have never been documented and analysed. Some manuals are available as paperbound booklets in the markets, and these deal with *tiey* (astrology and prediction) rather than magical interventionist healing rituals.

15. Unlike a pharmacopoeia, the manuscripts cannot be used as recipes unless the *kruu* invites the *whole* ritual pantheon.

passing on his knowledge, and not dabbling in black magic.¹⁶ The *kruu*, unlike the Buddhist monk, is free to marry.¹⁷ Every *kruu* I met had a family. Healing techniques are passed on naturally.¹⁸ Their code is governed by a ritual that shows the *kruu* to be connected to cosmic cycles: even the days on which a *kruu* may learn healing magic are linked to the cosmic cycle of the week.¹⁹ The calendar, the organisation of the cosmos, can modify almost any ritual, from the simplest, such as where to bury the placenta after childbirth, to the most complex, such as preparing elaborate offerings. Their code also prevents them from using privileged knowledge about their patients for personal power or spiritual power over others.

The patient's sphere

To understand the interaction between patient and *kruu* in a healing ceremony it is useful to regard the patient's body as if it were a representation of a series of universes. The universes here include not just the human who live in the same plane as the patient, but the deities from above and the demons from below, which are all part of the patient's social space; his relationships with all of them are disrupted when he becomes ill and in need of the *kruu*'s healing rituals. There is also a moral dimension to these relationships. Illnesses stemming from spirits, moral violations, and some maternal ancestors are depicted in the *kruu*'s rituals as stemming from below him, illnesses from sorcery from the middle human world, and illness from ancestors from the upper world. Illnesses from the world of humans are straightforward and include disorders of brain and body, and those brought on by human intervention. The disorders in the other two worlds are more difficult to ascribe to the upper or lower worlds since there is some ambiguity between ancestors, for example, who might usually be considered as belonging to the world above but, in some cases, may more properly belong to the world below, in the company of the evil spirits.

In this view of the world (see Figure 1), some sorts of *ckuət* develop because of an upward movement of forces from worlds below, which are inhabited by spirits, as well as from unfavourable quadrants in the world of humans inhabited by the patient. The body of the patient is a metaphor for the cosmos, the head representing the upper worlds inhabited by the deities and the anus the nether world inhabited by illness-inducing spirits. A vertical axis connects the world inhabited by humans with worlds inhabited by deities in higher levels and with demons in lower worlds. At each level the deities or spirits aggregate in eight cardinal directions, influencing the behaviour of people in different quadrants around the village.

16. The *kruu* vehemently distances himself from the sorcerers and stands morally opposed to black magic, but he can turn into a practitioner who commits evil deeds. If a *kruu* cannot succeed in casting a love spell on someone who is desirable to a suitor, for example, he can transform the woman who spurned the suitor into a person literally broken up with illness.

17. Yogis in ancient Cambodia were also free to marry. Sharan (1974: 271) refers to an inscription, *Sri Mahidharavarman*, that mentions a Yogi who married Uma the daughter of a man named Sangrama.

18. The knowledge is generally passed down family lines rather than through the community, as in the Buddhist monastery, where celibacy is essential.

19. According to one manuscript, on Monday afternoon a *kruu* should study botany, on Tuesday afternoon the mixing of compound medicines, on Wednesday afternoon how to deal with sorcerers, on Thursday afternoon medicine at the clinic, on Friday afternoon his manuscripts, and on Saturday he should confer and deliberate with all the other *kruu* in the area.

When deities attack a person they induce *ckuət* that are acute in onset, triggered by something between the victim and another person but which, after the *kruu*'s intervention, are self-limiting. The person's own ancestral spirits, the *cuə cambuə*, may induce *ckuət* when they invade a person or withdraw their protection against spirits from the lower world. It is often brought on by a lapse in conduct, and the patient may know it. If, for example, a young single woman commits a sexual indiscretion, she is violated, but so is her family, including her ancestors. In retribution, her *cuə cambuə* makes her or her father *ckuət*. The *kruu* diagnoses it as caused by the ancestral spirits and, although the *ckuət* may be aborted in the course of the treatment, the transmission of *ckuət* from the ancestral spirits may go on to the next generation. In this way ancestral *ckuət* serves to preserve the society's moral code.

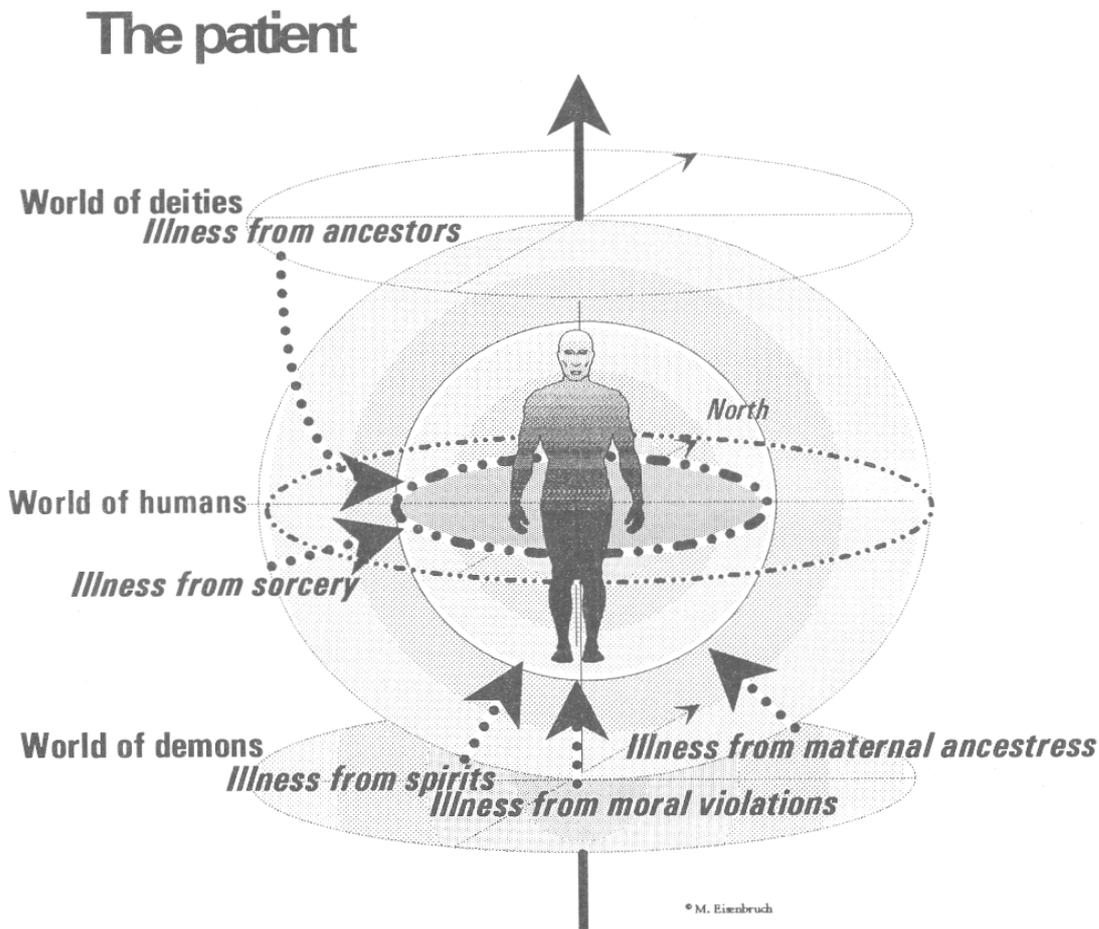


Figure 1: Three worlds that make the patient vulnerable to illness.

Children in Cambodia can suddenly develop catastrophic states that resemble Western diseases such as epilepsy. The rural people and the traditional healers identify most of them as *skan*.²⁰ There are twelve types and each is caused by a creature that attacks and enters the child from the head, arms, trunk, or legs: if the particular case of *skan* is caused by the pecking of a bird of prey on the child's head, for example, he develops headaches and related symptoms.

20. Children have always had a special place in Indian medicine, with legends describing the diseases that befall them and the protective rituals from birth onwards. Rituals to protect the new-born are elaborated in texts such as the *kumarabhṛtya* (Stork, 1983).

Patients are sometimes vulnerable to illnesses from the human world. *Ckuət cruuk* (which means *ckuət* of the pig) appears as a sudden and progressive illness with features resembling epilepsy. The diagnosis is obvious from the patient's history and the *kruus'* observations of an attack and has a clear organic picture. Some *kruu* attribute the brain pathology to bad action in a previous life, or consider it to be inherited from parents or from an unresolved childhood disease called *skəm*. There is no absolute cure, and the treatment, usually medicinal, is directed towards alleviating symptoms and preventing further complications.

Another insidious disorder that affects a patient is a *ckuət* brought on by thinking too much known as *ckuət sa?te? ?aaram*. It is a chronic illness which the *kruu* attribute to burnt and damaged tubules running inside the brain. Its onset is often related to the stresses of the Pol Pot years. When the bodily elements are not functioning properly, they effect the three pebble-like structures distributed in the brain, ascending from their source in the heart through the *sαα say* to lodge in these parts of the brain, and there are also points in the brain which have been burned by thinking too much.²¹ The person becomes defective (from Sanskrit *vikala*). This *ckuət* comes from the derangement of the blood or water element and the patient becomes confused by the provocation of *?sa?te? ?aaram* elements.²²

Women are expected to observe particular codes of conduct associated with pregnancies and childbirth.²³ If women violate these codes, their bodies are invaded by ancestors or spirits. They suffer from a *ckuət*, known as *ckuət krōlaa plēəη*, that reflects a catastrophic disruption in the mother's spirit world and her body.²⁴ This *ckuət* is caused by what is regarded as unripe bad blood remaining in the mother: after the birth, the placenta, umbilical cord and umbilical blood should descend, and the woman can become *ckuət* if they do not and she then acts wrongly in some way.²⁵

The category of *ckuət* known as *ckuət ?ampəə* illustrates the ambiguity between the world of humans and spirits. The *ckuət* in this group are a consequence of actions, whether by the wrongdoing of the patient, in this or a previous life, or of a third party, such as a sorcerer. This illness seems to be framed by the mode of entry of the spirit or foreign substance to the body and by the effects of the invading spirits on particular organs in the body. *Ckuət* brought on by *snae* (*snae* means a love charm) appears to be the one most commonly seen by the *kruu*. When a malevolent person hires a sorcerer to inflict harm on a rival or a person, usually a women who has rejected his amorous advances, the sorcerer induces an illness called *ckuət tmup* (*tmup* means the sorcerer). The sorcerer intends to make the victim die a horrible death, and the patient's symptoms often suggest catastrophic physical injury such as shattered bones and dangerous foreign bodies projected as missiles into the patient.

Monks and *kruu* become *ckuət* when they violate their codes and are themselves turned into patients. Unlike a lay person who contravenes a code of behaviour and becomes *ckuət*, the *kruu* develops a malignant form of *ckuət* known as *koh kruu* (literally, wrong *kruu*) and does not recover. In this process, the *kruu*'s own guru has taken his errant disciple out of the intergenerational chain. This protects society against

21. The heart and brain together are designated linguistically as *cṅ* (heart-mind).

22. The Khmer term *?aaram* (from Pāli *aramanna*) means the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, physical and emotional attraction.

23. Like the violations affecting healers, who maintain the society's codes and structures and give it a future, the violations affecting women show their special role as sentinels, as child bearers and childrears, of the culture.

24. The newly delivered mother is prone to the illness known as *toah*, which arises when she violates a dietary taboo or prescription.

25. During the three days that the mother carries out the ritual of resting on a heated bed she must take hot medicine, to help the *sαα say* restore itself.

corruption of the social system by the very people who are charged with preserving it. Monks who deviate in their thinking about the dhamma, possibly by trying to meditate prematurely to higher planes, suffer from *ckuət* of the dhamma, which is reminiscent of *ckuət* brought on by thinking too much: there are biological changes in the elements of the brain and the body brought on by wrong thoughts. The monk's intellectual faculties are changing and unstable because he has deviated from the meditation code.

There are spirits who inhabit particular quadrants around the village and in the forest, usually arriving from the lower worlds, which cause illness in which patients show disturbed behaviour and characteristic body changes such as red eyes when affected by *neak taa*, or blue eyes from *priey*. Some people are prey to spirits that exert influence in successively bigger spheres – the *neak taa*, for example, the guardian spirits of social groups such as the village or the pagoda, live around the village, and those of more extensive spheres such as the whole nation.²⁶

The *kruu*'s sphere

Let us turn now from the origins of illness in the three worlds to their use in healing. Patient and *kruu* alike are situated in the world of humans, with the world of deities above and the world of demons below them (see Figure 2).

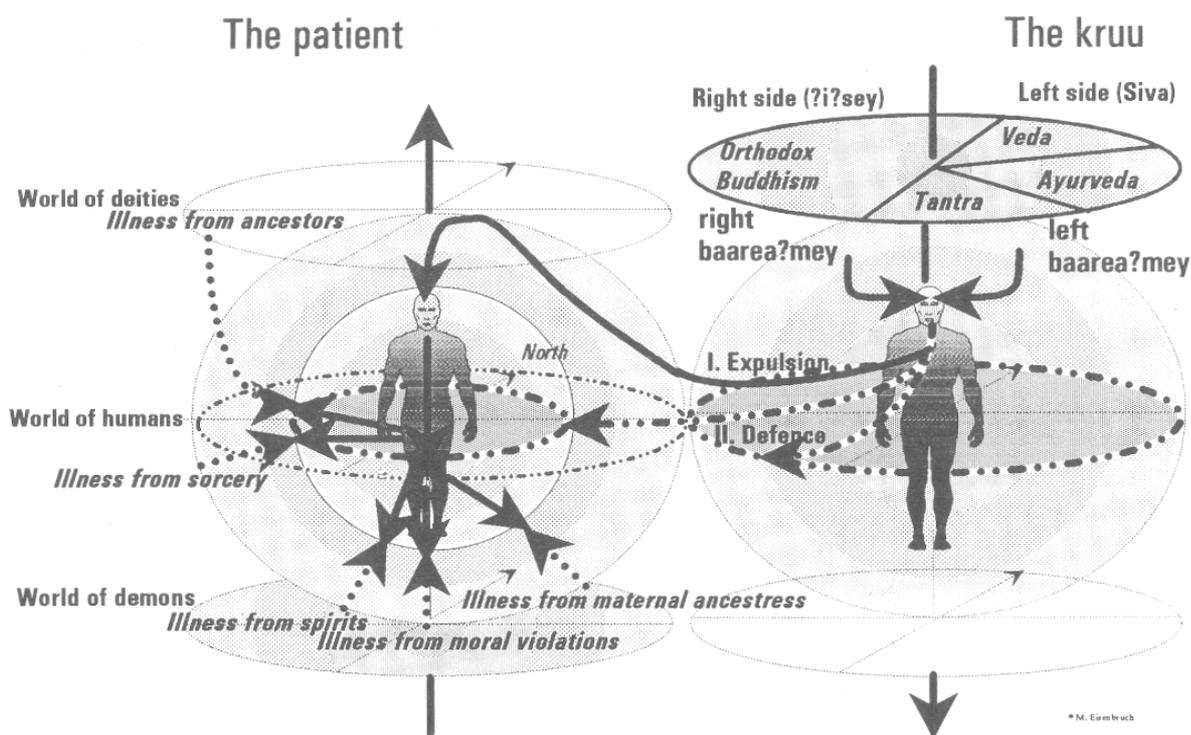


Figure 2: Social space of the patient and *kruu* showing mechanisms of ritual healing.

26. There is a remarkable similarity between many of the spirits that the *kruu* expels and their counterparts in Indian medicine (*bəysaac* = *pisaco*, for example).

The axes of the *kruu* and the patient run parallel, and each occupies a point along a vertical axis, but they do not always sit at the same point along it. The *kruu* derives his power to heal from the world above his head represented by a disk, divided into right and left, and encompassing orthodox Buddhism, Tantra, Veda, and Ayurveda. His gurus are said to occupy the space above his head, and the *kruu* may not walk under a clothes' line, for example, or put the ladle over the top of mixture lest he become *ckuət* and suffer from wrong *kruu*. One healing path, expulsion, is shown as emerging from the *kruu*'s mouth and entering the patient's head. A second, involving protection and defence, acts on annuli around the patient's body.

Sources of healing power

The *kruu* use Buddhist doctrines, largely drawn from the Abhidhamma, and perform the rituals in which they set out the body elements in maps of Buddhist cosmology. The *kruus*' explanations of embryological development, in which cosmic entities from maternal and paternal ancestors combine, show strong Buddhist influences. They combine these with Ayurvedic healing rituals, used to correct derangements in the body.²⁷ The Ayurvedic origins explain the disturbances in the body associated with every sort of *ckuət*, especially those to do with the brain and the body. Combined with Vedic and Brahmanic rituals, derived from the Atharvaveda, but also from Tantric influences, it is apparent in the preparation of sacrificial offerings for healing.²⁸ The Brahmanic and folk origins, as well as explaining the supernatural forces that produce illness, reveal how the *kruu* derive their healing power.

On one level, it could be said that the monks and *kruu* represent respectively Buddhist and Brahmanic systems. Monks identify karmic predestiny as the cause of disease; *kruu* see it as stemming from interference by spirits or sorcerers. Monks see one of the incarnations of the Buddha and the forest monk Mahārishi as the sources of healing; *kruu* see Siva, known as *preah ?i?so*, as the main source of healing power. Monks use ritual objects, such as statues, that represent the Buddhist cosmos; *kruu* use ritual objects connected to Hindu deities. Monks meditate and use *Samaddhi* yoga methods to come into contact with *baarea?məy*, which refers to the ten states of perfection of the Buddha; *kruu* use Vedic and Tantric methods to call on their gurus to receive *baarea?məy*, meaning charisma or power, from their past guru and from Hindu deities. Monks use a narrow repertoire of rituals influenced by Buddhism (often the Abhidhamma) to bring about restoration of the patient's karmic state²⁹; *kruu* perform rituals influenced by Brahmanism to expel diseases. The monks set up a protective cord around the village, and call upon a particular prince or disciple of the Buddha in each direction.³⁰ Their cardinal directions reflect the Buddhist canonical sources. When the

27. The Ayurvedic healing rituals are related to the Caraka Samhita.

28. But there is no one-to-one link between theory and ritual, for any ritual, such as yoga meditation, whether by the *kruu* who emphasise the Veda or Tantra, or the monk who focuses on the Abhidhamma, draws on a vast theoretical body of work.

29. Buddhist monks have been called bare-headed doctors because of their role as healers (Gosling, 1986). There are manuscripts showing them sitting alongside doctors and together treating patients, and they recite special parittas such as the *unisavijaya* or *unhissavijaya* (von Hinuber, 1990) for terminally ill patients.

30. There is a north-south axis. There is a pair of disciples: Sariputta, one of the great disciples of Buddha who ranked second to the Buddha and occupied his right side, to the north, and Mugalina, the second disciple on the left of the Buddha, to the south. In the centre is Ananda (younger brother of Buddha, the most learned of the Gautama Buddha's disciples). The healer asked the Tevada to come and bring victory. This arrangement is not far removed from those set out in ancient texts such as the Mahābidhamanta, although there are small differences with what has been reported in neighbouring

kruu perform protective rituals, such as preparing a cord to tie around the patient's waist or sling around his neck, they pay homage to deities from the "left" side of the cosmos.

These apparent contrasts in the ritual style suggest an opposition between Brahmanic (Siva) and Buddhist (Mahārishi) systems of healing.³¹ But the stereotype – the mainstream, the monks, as Buddhist, and the marginal, the *kruu*, Brahmanic – is false. Monks and *kruu* both prepare ritual objects and perform magical rituals, including exorcism, officially forbidden by the Vinaya code of the Buddhist order. Many monks have been *kruu* in earlier life. Most *kruu* have been monks in their youth and are at liberty to carry out the full range of healing rituals only when released from the Buddhist Order.³² Later in life some teach the monks Pāli, and some *kruu* (and monks) have studied healing from masters of esoteric healing, including forest monks.³³ In day-to-day life some *kruu* also work as *acaa*, or ritual assistants, in the monasteries, and some give the monks formal lessons in Pāli at home.

The *kruu* (and the monks) call upon the five incarnations of the Buddha, known as *preah pram preah ?αη*, and the ten *baarea?məy* (from Pāli *parami*), to engage the good deeds of the Buddhas. The representations of these Buddhas are often present in the drawings of yantra and in the five Pāli letters, *nea? moo put thie yea?*, which are ubiquitous on the yantra and in the mantra verses. These letters stand for the five Buddhas and also for the five parts of the human body: the head, two arms and two legs, which bud in embryological development (Bizot, 1988). As the *kruu* often call upon groups of the five incarnations of the Buddha, it appears that each incarnation has its own contribution to treatment. Some healers pay much attention to the embryological development of their representation of the patient, which they associate with the *guna* from each of the Buddhas and from the patient's ancestors.³⁴ The *kruu* also use elaborate accounts of the births and rebirths of the Buddhas, which reach their culmination in the detailed Jatakas.³⁵ The Jatakas are most commonly used by the *kruu* in *cak kumpii* in which the *kruu*'s hand is guided by power from his own gurus to place a knife into the pertinent leaf of his folded manuals which he holds over his head; and they are also recited during the twelve days leading up to the annual ceremony known as *pcum bən*, held around October, when the whole community gathers to venerate and transfer merit to deceased relatives.

countries. In Bali, for example, the monks use a square mandala occupied by the images of the eight chief disciples. In the set mentioned in *Suddhammavativajavamsa*, Moggallana is in the north, Sariputta in the south (Jaini, 1965).

31. Cœdès (1918) was the first to identify the importance of Siva in invocations used in the time of Jayavarman. He described Siva as used in the Phimanakās inscriptions, the first bilingual text, a mélange of Buddhism and the Trimurti of Brahmanism. The Sanskrit Çiva was transformed into the Old Khmer Vrah Içvara and then into Práh Eisór in modern Khmer. Solange Thierry described the stage characters of Cambodian folk theatre: on the one hand, divinities and mythical beings from the Indian pantheon, transposed and integrated in the local belief; on the other, physically abnormal human beings being treated in a typically popular style, with a mixture of mockery and compassionate kindness.

32. During the time they were monks the Buddhist pagoda would have provided their elementary schooling in Pāli (Martin, 1983).

33. These monks practised the *dhutanga* or code of austerity as forest monks in hermitage monasteries in the Kulen mountains (Bureau, 1968). Some monks become famous for their healing power. But this is not institutionalised as it is in north-eastern Thailand and Laos. In those areas the monks who have a high reputation as ascetics and healers qualify for a ritual bath which the villagers perform. The first bath of a monk's career gives access to the title of Sandet, the second to the grade of Sa, and the third, and last, to the highest grade of *kruu* (Formoso, 1992).

34. This association can be found in texts such as *Dhammatrai*, which Bizot (1988) has analysed.

35. The Jataka stories from the *Khuddaka-nikaya* of the Pāli canon were very popular in Cambodia after Theravada Buddhism was established (Saddhatissa, 1980).

Healing ritual

The nature of the *kruu*'s intervention to treat *ckuət* encompasses what in Western therapeutics is called prevention, diagnosis, and treatment, and the *kruu* will at once "treat" a condition and defend the patient against its recurrence.³⁶

Healing rituals are nearly always carried out at the *kruu*'s house. The altar is organised in a series of "staircases" to reflect the universes. Various images of the Buddha and other Hindu deities such as Brahma, Siva, Ganesa, which help the *kruu* to assemble the healing forces and sustain his concentration, are arranged on the rungs of the altar.³⁷

The components of ritual healing follow a sequence. Whatever the individual ritual act – short and simple or protracted and complex – there must be an introduction or an entry into sacred healing space during which the *kruu* obtains his gurus' permission to begin. Most start when the *kruu* faces his altar, bows before it, thinks of his guru, and makes offerings to him and to various combinations of deities.³⁸ He lights five incense sticks in honour of the five Buddhas and their good deeds, all of his gurus and the other deities on whom he calls for healing power. He also offers a bowl containing five candles, five incense sticks, five areca nuts and five betel leaves, for the Buddha, the dhamma, the sangha, the mother and the father.³⁹

Some *kruu* call on their healing power, known as *baarea?məy*, in the brief introductory part of the ritual moment when they light incense sticks. Others go through profound mental preparation according to *Samaddhi* or *kammattathan* techniques. The *kruu* sits in a foetal position, concentrates on his breath as it ascends up his back and then to the tip of the nose and the top of the head.⁴⁰ In this way he is guided in how to transform and empower his ritual objects, none of which in itself has healing power.⁴¹ Even the pharmacological substances are useless until they have been invested with healing power. Some *kruu* hold elevated between their palms a wooden sculpture, such as that of the Brahma with four faces, or of the forest Mahārishi, as embodying the deity transmitting the power to heal; and later in the procedure, when empowering lustral water, they dip the statue in the water to transfer power to the latter.

The *kruu* makes multi-levelled pairs of cylinders or cones, called *baaysəy*, and places these on the altar. The way he calls through them for healing power suggests that some *baaysəy*, which are sometimes decorated with yellow flowers, represent the levels of the Buddhist universe and others, with red ones, portray the heavens, which some

36. A yantra prevents and treats illness. A *kruu* can reactivate an amulet, even one made by another *kruu*, long after it has been made, to treat another illness or to prevent further attacks of the first illness.

37. As in India (Brunner, 1990).

38. Some *kruu* usually call upon Siva, some on Narayana, others on the Mahārishi of the high mountains.

39. The same process occurs when the medium sings and dances to her *kruu* to enter her body and is accompanied by musicians in the traditional *pin pheat* group, or when the *?aarak*, among the indigenous tribes, enters trance to the accompaniment of the musicians. The process is seen in reverse at the end of the ritual.

40. The techniques used by the *kruu* are similar to the methods of yoga used in India in which the yogin is detached from both his own conscious personality and from the external world (Filliozat, 1946). The Indian yogin uses the spine as the microcosmic equivalent of Mount Meru, and the breath runs through three vertical channels which meet at the nostrils (Filliozat, 1963). In this process the healer not only receives the *baarea?məy* from his masters and the deities who inhabit universes higher along the vertical axis, but also transcends the plane of the physical world, ascending closer to celestial domains.

41. Ang (1986) provides the most comprehensive account of the ritual objects. See also Martin (1983).

kruu say are related to the *linga* used in Saivism.⁴² There are also special cones (known as *kron piellii* and *slaa coom*) containing offerings of areca in a piece of banana tree trunk, carefully shaped and placed on the altar to invite the deities from each cardinal direction around the *kruu* and patient.⁴³

Whether the yantra are drawn on cloth, inscribed on metal foil or tattooed on the person's skin, there are common features in their design and in the manner that the *kruu* makes them. Although the *kruu* do not need to, they can consult their manuals, which contain diagrams of each yantra and the accompanying mantra to be recited. The manuals are not prescriptive in the sense that they do not categorise yantra by disease but according to the general mechanism by which each yantra works. The *kruu* buy the cloth or the metal foil in the local village market. If the *kruu* inscribes on metal foil, he usually draws a simple linear design with a few Pāli letters. The more complex designs are drawn on yellow, white or red squares of cloth; most *kruu* use the colours interchangeably, but some *kruu* strictly use yellow for Buddhist and red for Brahmanic yantra. Sometimes the *kruu* starts by methodically ruling up columns and grids, or by outlining the positions of the circles, and goes on to draw the central panel and the peripheral design. Sometimes, as in treatment for *ckuət* of love sickness, for example, the *kruu* draws several simple linear designs onto one cloth, but usually he draws only one complex yantra on each cloth. He varies his design according to whether he is calling on the power of the Buddha and the Mahārishi from the right side (the motif usually consists of a central rectangle with the five incarnations of the Buddha and the Triple Gem), or the powers of the Brahmanic deities from the left. The *kruu* draws Pāli letters on each yantra, distributing these carefully, at least in the case of the more elaborate ones, with letters at the centre usually signifying the underlying disorder to be recited and those around the periphery as empowering the mechanisms of defence and protection against the enemy, that is, the source of illness.

For many illnesses the *kruu* may make *ksae*, a length of braided cord of two or more strands for holding a series of yantra. Some *kruu* designate the cords as male and female pairs. The *kruu* prepares a pile of squares of lead or tin or copper leaf, engraves each square, usually about six or twelve pairs, without pausing. He rolls each square along the length of the cord, and separates each with a knot. As he ties each knot he blows on it and recites a short mantra to invest it with healing power.⁴⁴ The *kruu* passes the cord around the patient's waist or, in the case of a child, his neck, and tells him to leave the cord in place for a long time to act as a barrier against the invasion of disease-bearing spirits. In doing this, the *kruu* protects the patient's body from outside attack in the same way he (or the monk) protects a house or village from the peripheral dangers lurking in the forest when he performs the ritual of *poət səymaa* of marking the periphery with stone or string.

There is no rule about who may be present during a healing ritual, apart from the *kruu* and patient; the family members will usually observe the ritual, and other patients waiting to see the *kruu* may also watch it. No one seems to be restricted from attending. Some patients who have already been treated remain at the house to serve the *kruu* for as long as a month after certain treatments. They sleep under his house and take no interest in the work going on above them. These patients assume the temporary role of disciple and, while they live with the *kruu*, take on some of his code of conduct. If they

42. Similar objects known as *baay si* are found in Thailand; see Phya Anuman Rajadhon (1964).

43. Some *kruu* chant mantras while performing a dance towards each of the quadrants, in which obeisance is paid to the *kruu*'s gurus in the direction of the Hindu deities who lived around the central axis of the world.

44. This "waking up" or transformation is reminiscent of Tambiah's description of waking up new Buddha images in Thailand by passing the string from an old image to the closed eye of the one being initiated.

violate them, it is as if the *kruu* himself had done so and he becomes vulnerable to *ckuət*.

Ritual healing performances can be dangerous for the *kruu*, the patient and onlookers. In exorcism the *kruu* drives the spirits out of the patient's body through the anus and will warn people sitting behind the patient to move away before he begins so that the spirits do not contaminate them. In those rituals in which the *kruu* pours lustral water from an earthenware pot over the patient's head and body, he marks the end by smashing the pot on the floor; the water must not be gathered as it runs away through the bamboo slats and the fragments of the pot must not be collected because they would transmit evil, which must be allowed to drain safely away.

The public performance of the *kruu*'s healing ritual helps puts the patient back into the wider social community. The community accepts about two-thirds of patients once they have undergone their treatment for *ckuət*, even those who have been rampantly destructive. Some patients, however, such as those with the *ckuət* brought on by *sa?te? aarəm*, for example, continue to be shunned by the community forever.

In healing rituals the healers define what is safe inside the patient, what may be dangerous around him, and what happens when the spirits or other forces violate the person's boundaries. The thrust of the healers' diagnosis is to detect what has transgressed the boundaries to make him sick; treatment is about restoring them.⁴⁵

The *kruu* makes his diagnosis based on symbolic structures in the patient's body, especially the *sαα say*, the meridian tubules that transmit substances through the body. They connect the vital organs such as the uterus and abdominal structures through the heart to various centres in the brain, from where they flow to the arms and legs). When the *kruu* treats a patient externally his treatment follows pathways along the *sαα say* down from the patient's brain; the *kruu* scratches wax he has gathered and spreads ointment around the patient's neck, shoulders, wrists, elbows, waist, chin, knees and ankles, and finger and toe nails. The medicine is spread downwards, beginning at the hairline on the forehead, down the nose, lips and right down the centre of the chest to the stomach along the path of the *sαα say*. Many of the *kruu*'s procedures involve driving the diseases out of the body along these tubules. He makes it clear that these so-called tubes are at once solid and immovable and have moving essences that flow within them.⁴⁶ The *kruu* reinforces his treatment by giving the patient medicine to swallow or to inhale by squatting under a small tent fashioned from a mat.

Diagnosis merges into treatment when the *kruu* examines the patient's pulse and eyes, pays attention to the *chakra* points, especially the one located at the crown of the head; and by giving botanical or mineral emetics.

In one ritual the *kruu* enters a dialogue with spirits that cause illness: he ties a cotton thread around the patient's wrist and elbow, points at the forearm and demands that the spirit reveal its identity and location. He threatens to annihilate the spirit by squeezing on the pressure point or by reciting mantra while marking the patient's skin where the spirit is supposed to be, using white deposit from betel nut. The terrorised

45. The healer diagnoses the illness by detecting the strange properties and clinical effects of the agent and extracts it using magically imbued pharmacological methods. As in neighbouring Thailand (Van der Haak, 1987) or Laos (Condominas, 1968; Halpern, 1963; Zago, 1972), where rituals similar to those in Cambodia to combat spirit invasion are well developed, the patterns associated with each type of invading spirit underlie the *kruu*'s concepts of mind and body and choice of ritual treatment.

46. Here the warning issued by Zimmerman (1979) is apt, that in an attempt to integrate modern anatomy into the traditional system of Ayurvedic medicine, the process of drawing a map comprehensible to the Western eye loses the essential part of the concept. The idea of an organ makes no sense in Ayurvedic physiology, which was unacquainted with the Aristotelian distinction between tissues and organs (Zimmerman, 1988); a Western functionalist analysis of the ritual's effect on the body is not how the *kruu* think about ritual.

spirit pleads to be released and promises not to invade anyone else in the village. Some spirits are so stupid that, once detected, instead of making a run for it, they stay and plead. The spirit hates to go out through the lower part of the patient's body, especially the anus, because in the process it is made powerless. And if the *kruu* insists that the spirit leave through the anus, it begs to be allowed to leave through the patient's legs.

The *kruu*'s precise understanding of pathogenesis leads to his choice of treatment. In the *ckuət* of lovesickness, for example, the victim develops five patterns of disturbed relationships, each determined by the route through which the suitor administered his love philtre, and the *kruu* modifies the rituals to deal with each intruder. Love sickness can lead to secondary *ckuət* caused by sorcery. The *kruu* assails the cause. When the brain is overtaken by maternal or paternal bodily elements, the healer tries to right the imbalance. When there is a dominance in the body of one invading spirit, the healer tries to expel it: a spirit is broken up and spat out of the body, subjugated, ordered out, commanded to melt or chased away. Some spirits are so difficult to expel that they must be dealt with using multiple means.⁴⁷

If the *kruu* suspects that the patient has been afflicted by spirits or sorcery he might administer diagnostic and therapeutic substances on betel leaf, to detect and eject the offending force. The leaf, which is rolled up and given to the patient to eat, is prepared with ingredients such as tobacco, lime, bark and copper sulphate, which particular spirits cannot tolerate, and they are vomited or passed out of the patient with other foreign bodies. Missiles projected into the patient by a sorcerer are also detected this way. Either the patient is under the spell of a sorcerer or they have a disease in their own right. If the vomitus is yellow or white, the patient is suffering from *?ampəə priey*; if he is suffering from *?ampəə monuh* (caused by a spell), the patient vomits foreign bodies such as a pin or bolt or charcoal.⁴⁸

Sometimes the *kruu* has difficulty in preparing the medicines because of the scarcity of some ingredients. Medicines to treat victims of sorcery call, for example, for a loris, blood of a woman at menarche, bee's wax, white sesame oil, and chicken excrement, which are made into a soup; but any loris will not do. In cleansing the patient's body in this way the *kruu* is also cleansing the contaminated universe.⁴⁹

Ckuət caused by disturbances in equilibrium of the patient's brain tissue must be set right by rituals that use metaphoric identity. In these the *kruu* must rearrange the *guna* or virtues derived from the maternal and paternal ancestors and the Buddha and the *thiet* (Pāli *dhatu*), the main body elements in the brain.

To treat *ckuət cruuk* (literally, *ckuət* of the pig), the *kruu* may burn the patient's skin at certain points on his body with a cotton wick or pith. Pigs always use their snouts, and their demeanour is like that of the patient with *ckuət cruuk*. Burning the patient's nose while he is convulsing may be useful in making the patient regain consciousness,

47. The exhaustive proscriptions and prescriptions might tempt us to think that the *kruu*'s ritual practice is utterly regulated, and so it is, but perhaps there is another side to this: some *kruu* admit to performing certain rituals such as calling the *baarea?məy* in the evening after the patient has gone home, which seems inconsistent with the popular view that the *kruu* must call his *baarea?məy* before getting started.

48. In one case a young unmarried pregnant woman who had *ckuət ?ampəə* vomited the tufted hair of a mat, the bark of a fruit tree, a piece of cloth, a chicken feather, an intertwined pin or bolt, a large nail, a piece of hide from a water buffalo, the lining of a pig's belly, a three-sided offering to spirits and a rectangular offering. The amount brought up almost filled a chamber pot. The dangerous substances in taking such anatomically impossible forms showed that the illness arose from an unnatural penetration of the body.

49. A patient affected by love sickness, for example, can be treated by the root of the rose apple tree and the *ksuəh* (kind of vine, liana) boiled in water. If this does not help, the *kruu* can make another medicine from a parasitic plant; the bark from several specific large trees, including one with sour fruit, which is used in sauces and another using wood from the bathroom or lavatory staircase.

but the point at which it is applied also has symbolic meaning. People with *ckuət cruuk* have damaged *sαα say* because their junctions inside the brain have been burned, and there is a damaged connection with the lungs and heart; so the *kruu* burns the tip of the nose where the *sαα say* meet. The *kruu* say that the burning threatens the cause of *ckuət cruuk*, which no longer dares to menace the patient.⁵⁰ In performing such transformation rituals, the *kruu* use a ritual complex, using yantra, mantra, blowing, spraying, and pouring lustral water, and administering medicines.

The *kruu* also use a ritual in healing known as *?u?pa?kεc* or transformation and deviation.⁵¹ In this ritual the *kruu* transforms the pig into an image of the patient, and the patient metaphorically becomes the pig. The *kruu* may use pigs trotters as an ingredient in medicine, or ask the patient's relatives to wash a pig and collect the water to use in the healing water ritual.⁵² Or the *kruu* may take the bone of the pig's snout and the earth and dung that sticks to the tip of the pig's tail, wrap them up, and boil them to make medicine.

In this ritual, the *kruu* has one incense stick and beseeches the "*kruu*" from the pig's tail to get into the cooking pot. Then he recites a mantra and boils the mixture. The *kruu* may retrieve the bar on which, suspended, the pig cries out and struggles to free itself. The *kruu* may take the bar and the rope and use them as the ingredients in his medicine so that the flavour of the pig enters the rope and the bar and increases the healing potency of the medicine.

In treating the childhood illness of *skan* the healer transforms the child's identity, making an image of the child from earth, which he changes in form, so that the image represents the child. This representation is inserted into the first basket containing an offering of food to the spirits, and a second image is prepared of the maternal ancestor carrying her child in her arms. The *kruu* tells the second image, "The first image is your child. Now don't come any longer to fight and compete for your child. Come for this one." The *kruu* then points to the sick child and asks the real mother of the sick child, "Is this your child?" and when she replies that it is, he asks her, "And what about the child in the basket with the offerings?" and she says "That is not my child."

If a new-born at risk of dying is brought to the *kruu*, he may examine the mother's breasts to detect any tell-tale imbalance in her nipples. The *kruu* transforms the deviated breast, burning incense sticks and pretending to burn the breast and reciting mantra and declaring that the structure of the breast has been corrected. In another ritual the *kruu* changes the child's name soon after delivery (worried parents with a family history of childhood death bestow this name with greater urgency than the official registered name some time later).⁵³ In the ritual of transformation of gender, a baby, if a boy, has his ears pierced and an earring inserted. A ritual that dispossesses the parents of the child and works for both sexes, is called "transforming or deviating in disguise". In this

50. The *kruu* explain that people inhale through the nostrils and the breath flows into the lungs. Bizot (1981) has noted this link between the three component sounds of the mantra OMA (for inspiration and expiration).

51. The term comes from Pāli *upakicca* and, according to Ang (1986), is made up of two parts: the Sanskrit or Pāli *upa* which means "vers" or "contiguity" and *kicca* (Sanskrit *krtya*), an artifice.

52. Some *kruu* select the front trotters because these lead the pig when it walks and touch the earth. The *sαα say* in the pig move with its front trotters and, when its snout digs into the earth, its trotters kneel. They are the powerful part of the pig because the *sαα say* meet in a junction in the snout, ears and head. It is an idea that reflects Buddhist theory about the relationship between inspiration and expiration in yoga. Some healers mix the pigs trotters with roots of plants designated as "north-south" and boil the mixture while reciting mantra to impart healing power to the medicine so that, when taken by the patient, it acts as a laxative to eject the disease.

53. The parents, in an effort to avert the death, may choose the name of their child carefully – often Aruh (the one who is alive) or Achie (the one who is healthy). But usually the *kruu*'s transformation ritual is needed to impart full protection.

process the child is given to the monk, who then returns him to the parent, giving the child a yellow robe, and saying, "Take the child from me, and look after him on my behalf." The parents cut up the cloth to make it into clothes for the child.

In the ritual known as *sraoc tk* the patient arrives at the *kruu*'s house and the *kruu* lights a candle and incense sticks to think of the goodness of his gurus to invite them to come to help him. The patient offers the *kruu* a small donation such as flowers or incense sticks but never money. Then the *kruu* makes his diagnosis. The *kruu* waits until the patient has gone outside and, changed into a cotton loincloth, kneels near a large pitcher containing water. The *kruu* must invest the water with healing power, which he does when he stirs it with incense sticks while reciting a mantra, even if it be but a small amount in a small tin which can be added to the larger pitcher.

The *kruu* stands above the patient's head with a flat bowl in one hand and the burning incense sticks in the other. He vigorously scoops copious quantities of this water over the patient's head and, as he ladles it out over the patient's head, he recites stanzas of appropriate mantra.⁵⁴ He adds stanzas in which he calls upon deities such as Dharani (the earth maiden whose long hair produced water that fell to protect the people). The mantra can be varied and selected according to the *kruu*'s manuals of healing.⁵⁵ He often starts with stanzas that invoke the Buddha, then modifies the mantra by adding elements from the "left side". The patient, meanwhile, helps the *kruu* to ensure that the whole body is immersed, distributing the water on the face with their fingers, eyes closed, absorbing the sensation of being purified. When the water is spent, which may take a couple of minutes, the *kruu* signals the end by a light slap on the patient's head and walks away. The patient gets dressed, and the *kruu* may give the patient bottles of the lustral water to be used at home to refresh the healing and protective power of the patient's amulets.

The *kruu* usually starts treatment with rites to rid the patient of the disease. He follows them with protective procedures to prevent the patient from being reinfected. The *kruu* treats the patient using *sdoh*, or spraying saliva, and *plom* or blowing air. The patient sits alongside or in front of the *kruu*, both of them in front of the altar, until the *kruu* has sought permission from his past gurus. The patient lights incense sticks and passes them to the *kruu*, and the *kruu* warns onlookers to get out of the way, telling them they must not sit in the path of the spirit he will evict. The *kruu*, who has been chewing betel leaf and accumulating saliva, starts to recite a particular mantra and suddenly sprays a wide jet of saliva over the patient or blows air over and along his body. First he may spray the head, then the right shoulder, then the left, reciting mantra all the while. The patient sits as the *kruu* performs *sraoc tk*, eyes closed, head slightly bent, holding the burning incense sticks.

The *kruu* also performs rituals to protect the patient against reinfection. He may make a protective braided cord to wear around the waist or neck or prepare a yantra for the patient to carry. Or he might use a variation of any of these procedures, such as *cak kumpii* in which the *kruu* holds the *kumpii*, his manuscript, over his own head while his gurus' *baarea?məy* guides his hand to a leaf in the manuscript that tells him about the patient's condition and destiny. He might draw a yantra and recite a mantra. More

54. He recites *neak moo tah sa?* three times, followed by a various mantra such as one called *?a?thap* (the Brahman who created the fire for the sacrifice). Pāli *athabana* is one who is familiar with the magic formulae of Atharvaveda and is the name of the fourth treatise of the Atharvaveda which formulates all the mantra used to chase away the spirits.

55. To illustrate the variations, the *kruu* may recite another mantra called *?ae he? tuə ?akha?raayoantaŋ* while he inscribes a yantra and, when it is completed, he recites the mantra calling on the monkey god Hanuman from the Ramayana to strengthen the yantra. He may also invoke a mixture of deities from the "right" and "left" sides: the Tevada, Indra, Narayana, and the Brahma, *kəncəay* (the supreme chief from Mt. Kailasa in the Himalayas).

often, however, the healing ritual is made up of a collection of procedures applied in a particular order, such as the drawing of the yantra or magic designs.

The *kruu* carries out the ritual in the cardinal directions at increasing distances from the patient's body. Closest to the patient are the braided cord around the waist. The *kruu* also rings the house, or the village, by carrying out the ritual in which a cord is set up around markers skirting the house or village.

The case of *skan* in children shows how the *kruu* modifies his treatment ritual according to the metaphorical cause.



Figure 3: *Skæn* caused by dog; pain and twitching right side; treatment by blowing and spraying across body from left side.



Figure 4: *Skæn* caused by tiger; abdominal pain and twitching limbs; treat along body from above, then reversed.



Figure 5: *Skæn* caused by monkey; left-sided symptoms; treat from below up to head.



Figure 6: *Skæn* caused by bird called owlo; left shoulder pain and trembling; treat from below

The *kruu* depicts the metaphorical cause of *skæn* in his drawings (see Figures 3-6). Three types of *skæn* are caused by invasions of ancestral mothers who, through violence, starvation or war, have lost their children, and in anguish and grief bring illness upon them. The healer can pinpoint this scourge from the past and gear his treatments to free the children from these maternal ancestors.

Children suffer from another form of *skæn* caused by their maternal ancestors, the *mdaay daəm*, and known as *skæn mdaay daəm*. The *kruu* classify it according to the lunar year and month of the child's birth and evoke metaphorical images of the cause in explaining symptoms. When each type is examined beside the metaphorical image drawn by the *kruu* or depicted as the cause in his manuals of healing, the clinical picture starts to make sense. The *kruu* in drawing his homunculus – the three maternal ancestors with long tresses flowing into the child's brain – shows the shared beliefs of patient and healer about how the maternal ancestors enter the child's body. In these three subtypes of this childhood illness the mother's hair flows into the child through his brain. The disease starts in the brain, which is why the child often experience headaches or other symptoms related to the head, eyes or ears. When he moves his hands wildly, it is because he sees his former mother coming and tries to repel her. The maternal ancestress comes like this because, as the child's former mother, she has nostalgic longing for her child who died in a previous life.

The mantra and yantra, however, are the most complex of the *kruu*'s ritual procedures. Some of the *kruu*'s procedures are miniature depictions of the cosmos: in *bool*, for example, a ritual in which the patient kneels before the *kruu* on a plank which is balanced on a bell and objects representing the five incarnations of the Buddha are laid out spatially in the cardinal directions around the bell, each representing the one of the four continents around Mount Meru, the *baarea? məy* derived from his own guru makes the plank swivel, showing the *kruu* to which ancestors or spirits and directions the family must make offerings. The *kruu* recites mantra known in Khmer as *kiethaa* (from

Sanskrit or Pāli *gatha*).⁵⁶ Usually there is an opening stanza taken from a Buddhist *paritta*, followed by stanzas addressed to Brahmanic deities or intended grammatically to transform *paritta* into stanzas with magical power. The *kruu* has hundreds of mantra at his disposal, from which he selects only one or two that are most effective for a particular illness. Palm leaf manuscripts also set out an exhaustive list of mantra to be used in the treatment against invasions of spirits. If the patient has yellow eyes, for example, the *?aap* has caused the *ckuət*; if the patient has red eyes, the *neak taa* caused it; if the patient has white eyes, the *cuə buə* caused it; if the patient has opaque eyes, the *priey* caused it; if the patient's eyes are unchanged and the patient is of a gentle demeanour, the *ckuət* was caused by abnormal *səə say*; if the patient becomes violent, *?əmpəə* or *tmup* have interfered.

Most of the recitation is in a combination of vernacular Khmer, Pāli and other esoteric syllables.⁵⁷ Sometimes the language seems to have Thai or Vietnamese elements in it. Occasionally there are fragments of other languages which appear to be related to Sanskrit, or which can sound like Bengali or Orissi.⁵⁸ The pseudo-language may also be combined with vernacular languages, and there are fragments that may be pseudo-language created by the *kruu*.⁵⁹ The language is often abbreviated to single letters: the *kruu* say that each letter of the alphabet represents one of the thirty-two deranged body elements which they must reorganise to heal the patient.⁶⁰ The mixture of sacred language with vernacular Khmer is governed by rules known to the *kruu*. It includes where to insert monosyllabic fragments such as *baŋ*, *laŋ*, *kaŋ*, and *aŋ*, and how often to recite stanzas, some of which he recites in verse.⁶¹ The *kruu*, for example, often must recite a particular mantra 108 or some other specific number of times.⁶²

In the mantra the *kruu* calls on deities related to Buddha, with figures from the Ramayana legend, and with the Mahārishi known in Khmer as *?i?səy*, from what he calls the right side; and on those from the left encompassing Brahman deities. In one mantra, for example, the *kruu* recites the OMA mantra to terrify specific spirits. This mantra opens with a Vedic affirmation: "I am Hanuman the menacer. I go to ravage and destroy all death. Mrityu, the headless demon who walks at noon and tries to kill everyone, is in the middle of the atmosphere. I have the power to break up the clouds, all seventeen levels, to vaporise them into tiny particles of dust." The *kruu* goes on to

56. They resemble the Indian mantra, which are supports for concentration and which, like the yantra, are divine symbols (Chenet, 1986).

57. Some *kruu* explain the Pāli and Sanskrit derivations of their mantra in terms of the links with local geographic landmarks in Cambodia and with their cosmological sources in India. Sometimes there is a literal fusion between the two countries, as if India and Cambodia were not geographically separate: some *kruu* told me that the Kamcay mountain, which is located in Kampot province, and representative of the old *?i?səy* as the great pharmacist, has the same name as Mount Kailasa located just south of Mount Meru in the Himalayas.

58. There is only circumstantial evidence at best of any connection with India: there were refugees around the time of Angkor from Orissa and Bengal, which were the home of the greatest concentration of Tantra, mantra and yantra in India.

59. The *kruu* also write mantra into their yantra using the same mixture of languages and sometimes using what appears to be pseudo-script which, some *kruu* claim, is ancient pre-Angkorian.

60. It is difficult to identify many of the sources of the mantra through the magical transformations. The language is reminiscent of those recorded in various Khmer, Lao and Thai *paritta* (Saddhatissa, 1980; 1981) and, in particular the *Mahādibbamanta* which, according to Jaini (1965), is probably Khmer in origin.

61. Those in metrical stanzas are like the Indian mantra. According to Rosu (1986), the Indian mantras are reminiscent of Vedic charms and those in prose reminiscent of Tantric formulas. See Alper (1989) for a discussion of Vedic mantras.

62. This is the number of letters inserted as the acrostic in the *gatha* of the Triple Gem in the *Ratanamala* (Bizot, 1981) and is associated with the *attuttarasatam*, the 108 marks on the feet of the Buddha (Jaini, 1965).

ask the *tevada* to descend and salute him. He refers to objects such as the ancient discus of power from Visnu and concludes by addressing *Isvara*, the Sanskrit name for one of the forms of Siva. The *kruu* recites this mantra at the same time he pours the lustral water over the patient's head.

In the mantra used in the ritual involving lustral water, the healer seems intent on dealing with each of the offending spirits in just the right way. After invoking the string of deities in the usual way, the *kruu* asks the deities to destroy their influence on the sick person by using specific terms.

The *kruu* draws the yantra designs on cloth, engraves them on thin square leaves of lead, silver or gold, or tattoos them on the skin.⁶³ The yantra carried or worn by the patient defends or protects against a particular *ckuət*. The *kruu* inscribes Khmer characters in the *khom* script that stands for Pāli words.⁶⁴ Many yantra include Buddhist elements described by Bizot and by Becchetti (1992). One yantra prepared for treatment of the brain derangement causing *ckuət* brought on by thinking too much illustrates how the theory of the relationship between body elements, the patient's ancestors and his embryological development is applied (see Figure 7).

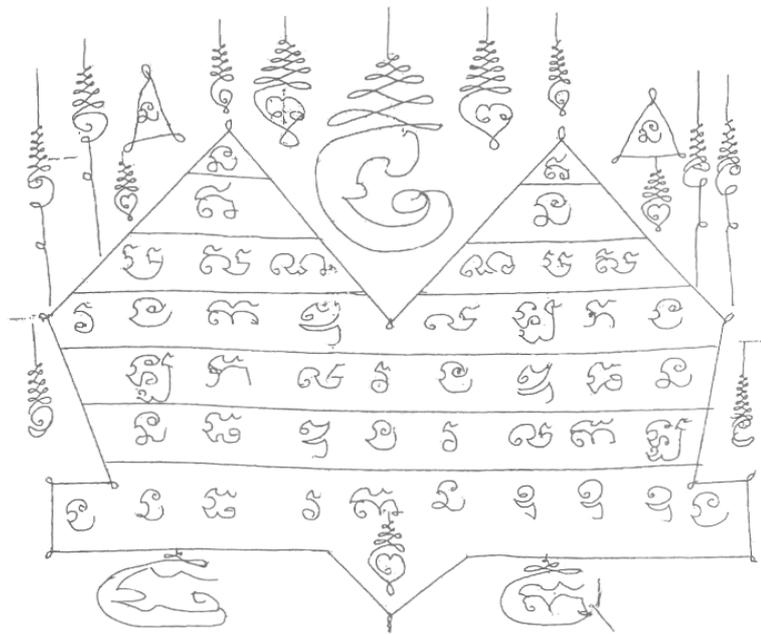


Figure 7: Yantra drawn for treatment of *ckuət* caused by brain derangement.

63. The yantra of Indian medicine, drawn from both the Vedic and Tantric traditions (Rosu, 1981; 1986; 1989), has its Cambodian counterparts. These yantra were presumably derived from Vedic yantra, as represented on archaeological monuments in India (Rosu, 1989). They were used in Angkorian Cambodia. The *yoan*, based on Indian yantra, are similar to those seen in Thailand and Laos and described by Lefèvre-Pontalis (1900). Chou Ta-kuon reported that the king was made invulnerable by inserting beneath the skin a small iron fragment (Pelliot, 1951), and a yantra was found in a paving stone at Bat Chum (Cœdès, 1952). Little is known about the yantra in early Cambodia. In India the yantra are symbolic representations that render present one or more divinities at an exact point in a ritual (Vergati, 1986), and the same is true in Cambodia.

64. Bizot (1981) has pioneered the analysis of these letters in Cambodia, and has shown how to break the cipher to discover how, for example, the characters M A and U, the characters NA MO BU DDHA YA symbolise the embryo and the characters CA DHA BA VA are the initials of a mantra for protection; he has shown how the lines connecting the letters spell out the hidden verses from the Buddhist canons: mantras with the nine names of the Buddha, six names of the Dhamma, and nine names of the Sangha.

The *kruu* uses his understanding of the causes of *ckuət* brought on by thinking too much to prepare this yantra. The yantra names the *guna* of the elements that must assemble and regenerate the patient's neural senses. The *kruu* say that they extract the *guna* from the thirty-two characteristic elements (from Sanskrit and Pāli *akara*) of the embryo from the letters they have drawn on the yantra.⁶⁵

The Pāli letters representing the constituents of the brain are counted from left to right across two pyramids. The first twelve letters are derived from the *guna* of the mother, the second twenty-one from the *guna* of the father. Further letters extracted from the Abhidhamma that signify the embryo's development from seven days until the tenth month are added. The last twelve letters are also *guna* of the mother that nourish the foetus and create its form. To protect the patient the *kruu* symbolically creates a frontier or barrier around the brain. The large letter at the top centre of the yantra represents the border or frontier around the edge of the yantra.⁶⁶ It flanks or escorts the *baarea?məy*, safeguarding the inner areas of the yantra beneath the line bordering the pyramids and making it potent.

The mantra recited from the "left" also combat the derangements of body elements. As one *kruu* expressed it, they allow Brahma to play hide and seek with the patient's deranged mind. In a common opening invocation the *kruu* uses the Vedic stanza *?ooma? sethi? svaahaayea*, the exclamation of affirmation before the Vedic prayers, and then calls upon deities such as Indra, Yamaraja and Brahma, and includes some, such as Rama and Ananda, from the Buddhist pantheon. He uses the second person: "I call you, such-and-such gods, from all the worlds, please would you come and accept this sacrifice which is prepared for you." Once the *kruu* has called, placated and honoured the gods, he orders them to drive out a list of spirits and evils.

The ritual for *ckuət* caused by the patient's own ancestors seems to engage them directly. The family plays quiet music to the ancestors of the family line. But before they do this, the *kruu* have to find out from a knowledgeable elder in the village who was *ckuət* what sort of music they should play in a process called *prəkum kruu* (to satisfy or make the *kruu* happy). Each family line has a special *kruu* whom they invite to listen to the music and, if the *kruu* is happy after listening to it, he makes lustral water, which he sprinkles on the patient and then on all the members of the family.⁶⁷ Then the *kruu* draws a yantra to defend his patient against his ancestors.⁶⁸

The left side of the yantra (shown in Figure 8) has the five letters *noo moo put thie yoo*; they are reversed on the right side: *yoo thie put moo noo*. The *kruu* call the reversal technique "sewed backward" or "reversed length of something" to fix the relationship with the ancestors.⁶⁹ The *kruu* is linking the treatment of the ancestral *ckuət* with the ancestral line of the Buddha, and recapitulates what went wrong in the patient's intra-uterine life when his ancestors literally became him.⁷⁰ The *guna* or good deeds of the

65. The yantra is not from Buddhism or, for that matter from Brahmanism or Siva, but from *mea?haa ?i?səy*, the Khmer term for the ancient Mahārishi, who deviated from Buddhism in order to use his power for healing, and who is said to be even more powerful as a healer than the Buddha.

66. This letter is known as the *?aakah thom* (literally the large air).

67. Sometimes the ancestors can be pinned down by hammering teeth from a rake or an old nail into special place such as tree or a hill, or from a place where the patient has urinated.

68. The yantra is also used for *ckuət cruuk* transmitted through the ancestral line.

69. These letters remind the person of the good deeds of the five Buddhas. In reciting or drawing the letters *nea? moo put thie yea?*, the *kruu* symbolises the five Buddhas and the five stages of embryological development of the person, as Bizot (1981) has shown.

70. One interpretation is that each of the four Buddhas is itself an ancestor of the next and each is linked by a line which the *kruu* has drawn on the yantra. If each Buddha acts with *guna* and not malice, he cannot cause or be the recipient of *ckuət*-making mischief from the *cuə cəmbuə* and that is probably why in this type of *ckuət* the *kruu* only uses the first four of the five Buddhas, inasmuch as the fifth, Maitreya, is not yet born.

four Buddhas (represented by four letters at the base of the yantra) veil the spirits that came from the maternal or paternal family line and prevent them from emerging into the patient's life to cause illness.

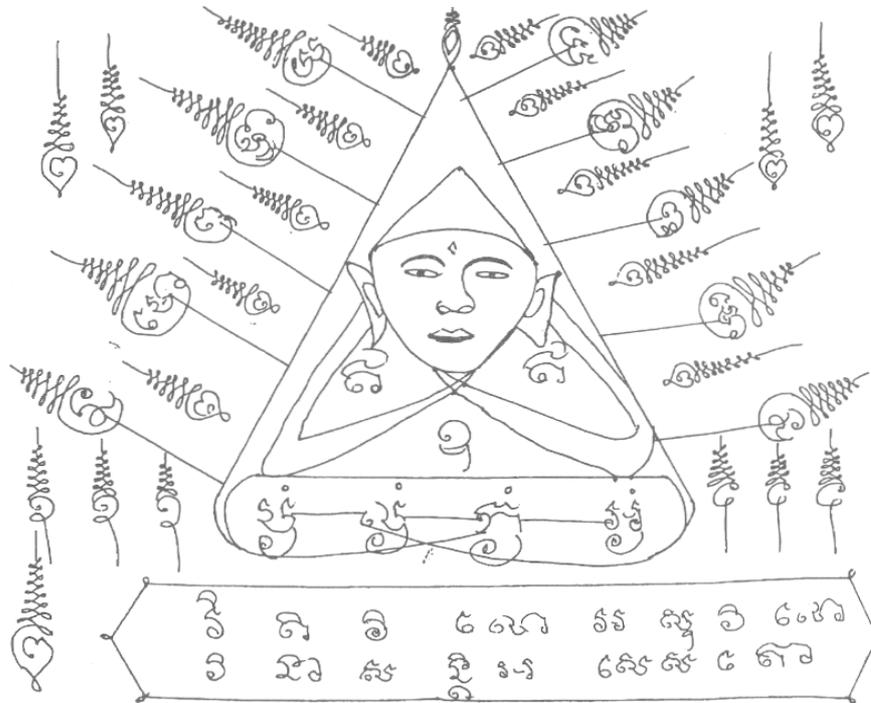


Figure 8: Yantra drawn for treatment of *ckuṣ* caused by maternal or paternal ancestors.

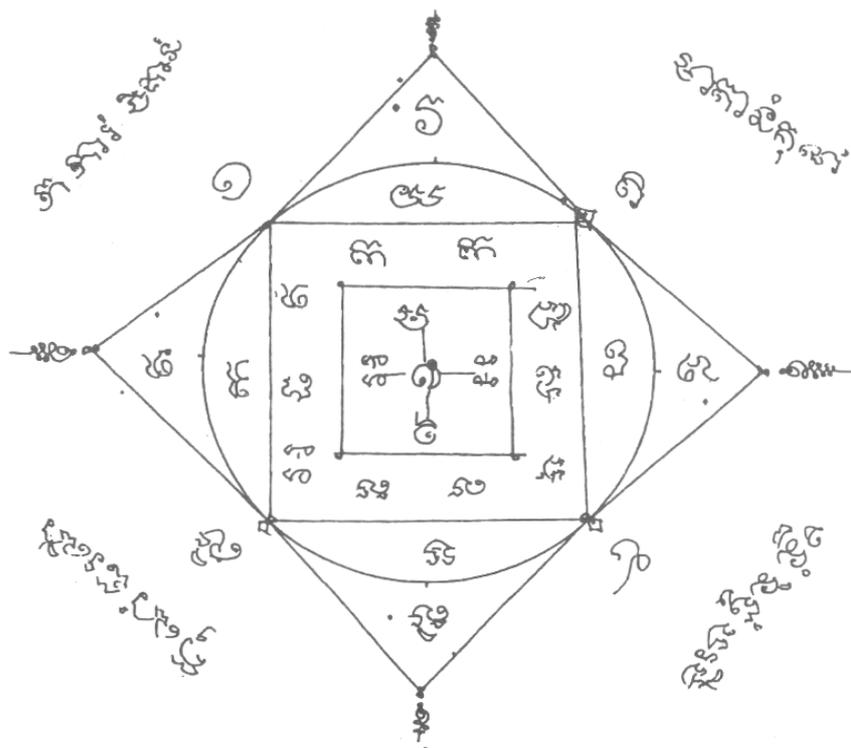


Figure 9: Yantra used for treatment of *skan* caused by maternal ancestress.

It is unusual for the *kruu* to use only one ritual. One *kruu* from Kompong Thom, in treating *skæn* caused by the maternal ancestor, for example, starts by reciting a mantra and spraying the child to quieten the maternal ancestress. Then he makes a yantra and puts it near the child's head (see Figure 9). In this yantra the four sides of the diamond are labelled the *guna* of the father and mother along the top left and right respectively, the *guna* of Dharani along the lower left, and the *khanda* or Aggregates of the *baarea?møy* along the lower right. The yantra seems especially apt for fixing the deranged relationship of the child with the "other mother" because it integrates the *guna* from the child's parents with the Aggregates of his body and with the *guna* of the deity of the earth.⁷¹ The motif is the central design inside the diamond: a set of five letters in a cross surrounding the letter *po* in the very centre, which stands for fertilisation and development of the child in the mother's womb.⁷²

When the maternal ancestor comes to attack her former child she sees the *baarea?møy* from the *guna* of the mother and the *guna* of the *baarea?møy* of the Buddha. And then all the *guna* of the earth and the water and the mother and father are combined, all of the *guna* from the *baarea?møy* of the Buddha are effective, and the maternal ancestor does not dare to come closer to the child.

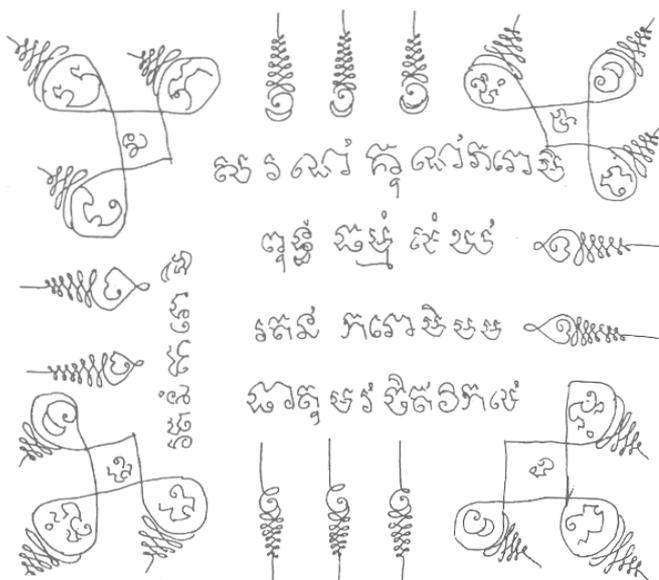


Figure 10: Yantra drawn to treat *ckuət* of monks.

The yantra used by the *kruu* to treat *ckuət* affecting monks who deviated in their study of the Dhamma shows how the power of the Dhamma is used to heal. The yantra used to treat such monks (see Figure 10) has the letters that set out how the *kruu* takes the *guna* of the Triple Gem of Buddhism written in the centre to help to gather the deranged body elements. The lines in the centre of the yantra beseech the Buddha to provide refuge for the sick monk. The second and third lines say, "Please invite the *guna* of the Triple Gem to come to support [the monk], and I seek refuge for all the *guna* that I have honoured. Please give the *guna* of the *baarea?møy* help in order to

71. Each of the four letters in the apex of the corners and the letters inside the circle but outside the inner square comes from a *guna* of the Buddha that seems to represent the *guna* of the ten *baarea?møy* of the Buddha. These are the *baarea?møy* called upon by the *kruu* to heal this disease.

72. The swirling lines around the central letter are the same as those used in Indian yantra for similar disorders to do with children (Rosu, 1992).

stabilise the consciousness (Pāli *santana*) that is now unstable. Please help to straighten it out so that the patient will recover.” The corners of the yantra seem to draw on those parts of the Abhidhamma used to right the dhamma disrupted by the monk. The Pāli letters on the fourth line are about holding on to and supporting the thinking of the person whose heart has become defective and who, according to the *kruu*, allowed his thoughts to stray down the left-hand road, away from the code of behaviour required of those in the monastic community. The ritual of preparing the yantra recapitulates the patient’s deviation; the mantra is recited forwards in a clockwise direction around the yantra, starting in the top right corner; then the *kruu* recites it counterclockwise. The top left-hand corner includes letters that stand for protection against non-human spirits or wild animals who often live in trees or other natural features in the wild and who inhabit particular quadrants around the village. The key to the yantra’s function seems to be the central panel: for *skan*, the core consists of the birth of the child, and reflects the developmental derangement that gave rise to the illness; for *ckuət* of the dhamma, the core consists of the Buddhist Triple Gem, and seems to reflect the derangement in the monk’s conduct.

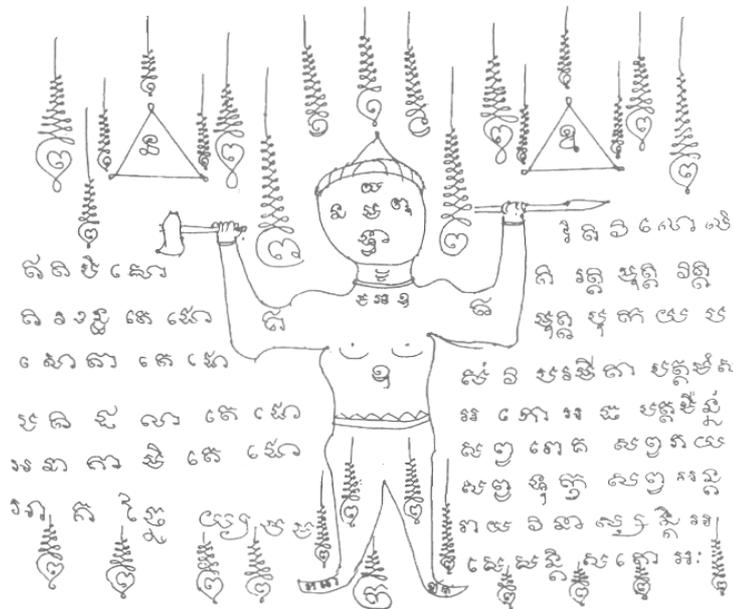


Figure 11: Yantra drawn for treatment of *ckuət* caused by spirits.

The yantra used for treatment of *ckuət* caused by spirits shows the combined force of the right and the left. This yantra (shown in Figure 11) has a figure armed with weapons in the centre. The five Buddhas are on the face of the body of the yantra. The *kruu* points to the left eye and says the letter *noo* is inscribed on it, *put* on the right eye, *yoo* on the forehead, *moo* on the nose and *thie* on the mouth. The letters *noo*, *?aa ?u?* are on the lower part of the neck. The letters on either side of the body crush the spirits. The lettering at the top represents the boundary of the yantra and retains the *baarea?mɛy*, and in this way replicates the protective circle performed in *poət səymaa* around the village. The left hand of the figure holds an axe and the right a spear – signs that the enemy should not come too close to the healer.

The yantra is activated by the mantra on either side of the figure.⁷³ On the left side are mantra that state that the Buddha has reached full power and so nothing, including

73. On each arm are mantra called *deekcoo deekcoo* which mean “power, power”.

the causes of illness, can menace a patient. The mantra on the right side asks that all disease in the body be scattered, dislocated or chased away. The mantra calls on the power of the Buddha's *guna*: "Please give the heartwood of the Abhidhamma, the one that is the greatest, please cause the *baarea?mɔy* of the Abhidhamma to come and take away the anger (from Sanskrit *krodha*.) of the serious disease, to cause the disease and the anger to become quiet and tender. Come and stay and help to chase away all disease, all the fear and terror and dread and dismay, all sorrow associated with old age; destruction is to be destroyed, none is to be left over (from Sanskrit *vinasana*, causing to disappear). All illness has gone from the family and from the feeling and consciousness of the patient." The *kruu* places the yantra on the head of the patient, or on a shelf above the patient's head so that they can see it; it may also be wrapped around the body.

This range of mechanisms in reality is a continuum. The *kruu* may perform a number of rituals in an ensemble. When the *kruu* has finished a procedure, such as the betel leaf diagrams, for example, he may recite mantra and then spray saliva and blow on the apex of the patient's head to drive the spirit down the patient's body, or erect a protective cord around the house or neighbourhood. If the patient is suffering from particular forms of bad action the *kruu* will recite in reverse order. The *kruu* might then recite mantra and then spray and blow on the apex of the patient's head to drive the spirit down the patient's body.⁷⁴ When the *kruu* recites mantra, after invoking the string of deities in the usual way, his phrasing intimates which deities he is calling upon to act on the spirits. The *priey*, for example, are broken up and spat out of the body. The *priey* and *?aarak* are subjugated. The *priey yeak*, the *?ampɛɛ*, the *?aap* and the sorcery of the *tmup* are ordered out of the body. The *priey*, the *priey yeak*, and the *?aarak* are commanded to melt down. The eight-headed *yeak*, the ordinary *yeak*, and *?aarak* are chased away. Spirits such as the *priey* need to be dealt with using multiple means, and that is why even if the *priey* are the only identified cause of a *ckuɛt* the *kruu* might use several mantra. Others, such as the *?aap*, although no less vicious causes of *ckuɛt*, can be dealt with using only one means. In *sraoc tik*, some mechanisms are used only for a specific type of spirit; others are used for several; and the ceremony takes on its meaning according to the healer's idea of the underlying spirit cause of the *ckuɛt* rather than the type.

Language levels

The pseudo-script of some yantra and the pseudo-language of some mantra suggest that the patient does not understand any of the words uttered or the symbols drawn, and in many cases neither do most of the *kruu*, even though they know a good deal about the rules for making verbal transformations and can explain how their grammatical transformations bestow healing power. Nonetheless, like words uttered or drawn from a cryptic language, so is any one complex ritual "spoken" along a scale from indexical to referential language. When the healer is faced with a sick patient before him whose condition must be treated literally, specifically and rapidly, his rituals use indexical language. The ritual treatment is understood by the patient and the family for what it is.

74. When I set out to establish how the *kruu* regarded *ckuɛt*, I found that there were discrepancies among the *kruu*. A list of say thirty characteristics could be assembled by one *kruu*, for example, as representing thirty specific types of *ckuɛt*, and by another *kruu* as representing five. Analysing the treatments did not clarify the taxonomy. A ritual such as *sraoc tik*, for example, seems to be woven into nearly every healer's treatment of *ckuɛt*.

When the healer treats the patient's affliction in the light of the disturbance in the universe, the ritual treatment is reflected in more referential language, is more esoteric, and nobody may actually comprehend what is actually at work in the healing ritual, although they will recognise the healing mechanisms at work.

The most indexical language is used in rituals such as those which use spraying to drive out spirits: the *kruu*'s language is straightforward and dramatic. Everyone recognises it as a form of purification and exorcism. When the *kruu* makes the patient vomit missiles that caused his illness, his rituals shade into others, and his language becomes more complex and metaphorical: "You have a spirit in your brain, and I am blowing it out of there." In rituals such as those involving transformation and substitution, in which the pig stands for the patient, or in which the identity of the child is altered, the *kruu*'s language becomes symbolic. In those that make use of Jataka legends, in the ritual of *cak kumpii*, for example, the language is mythological. The yantra are at a great remove from the patient's immediate illness, and are the most abstract and theoretical of all, and are complex maps of the whole universe.

The treatment of *ckuət cruuk*, by which the patient and the cause of the disease are fused, points up the metaphorical in the *kruu*'s healing rituals. The treatment of *skan*, which also involves metaphorical language, is directed at the ancestral world. The ritual deals with distortions not just along any one axis but across two or more axes; in the case of the *skan mdaay daəm*, for example, where there is a double mother, there is a convulsion of the topographic and time axes, and the ritual healing ceremony aims to restore the equilibrium of both. The treatment of *skan* shows how metaphor works to put the child safely back in the cosmic system and to consolidate the barrier with the alien double mother. This cures the child of the *skan mdaay daəm*. Not only does the healer make the child safe from the persecuting double mother but, by transforming the child's identity, he reaffirms his place in *this* world and saves it from departure to the other.

We see the ritual use of metaphorical language in another childhood illness known as *?aarih* (from Sanskrit *aresha* which means *roga* or disease). Left unprotected, these children die at a young age. The ritual is called "divide or split the *?aarih*" and is an example of *?u?pa?kəc* which is used to treat people with *ckuət cruuk*. This ceremony is performed after birth.

The metaphor of hair flowing to or from the brain is striking.⁷⁵ The *kruu* see the maternal ancestor, whose long hair transmits *skan* to the child, the hair mixed in the bolus of the missile launched by the *tmup* to cause *ckuət ?* caused by bad action; and the long trailing locks of the spirits as causing *ckuət* after childbirth or *ckuət priey*. These images have strong moral connotations. If the long hair serves as an image of transmission of disease like *ckuət*, it also serves as an image of healing and goodness and is given expression across the society.⁷⁶ Several *kruu* invoke deities such as Dharani, from whose dirt man emerged at the beginning of creation, calling on her to vanquish the

75. Note the imagery in Laos of hair thrusting through the head like the herbs on the earth (Hahn, 1978).

76. In Cambodia a child used to have his top-notch cut in a ceremony called *kao sak prəy*; royal princesses underwent a similar ceremony at puberty; boys had their hair shaved on entering monkhood, women on the day after their husband's death, and those who become nuns shave their heads. There are women in Cambodia with hair that stands upright, seemingly of its own accord, because, in the wake of some moral indiscretion, small children-spirits have offered to guard them if they stay on the moral path. The strange behaviour of a woman's hair in the wake of indiscretions is also described in Medusa's hair in Sri Langka (Obeyesekere, 1981).

Mara⁷⁷. The *kruu* recreates the action of the Dharani, by flooding the patient with lustral water to purify them of illness.⁷⁸

Some of the *kruu*'s healing rituals function at theoretical levels in which the patient's illness and its treatment is represented in the cosmos. The yantra and mantra are the two best examples. Some yantra and mantra used against brain and body derangements, for example, depict the four elements and the way they interact in the body. The healer calls on the power represented in this set of maps to rectify the derangement in the patient's body.

When the *kruu* prepares a yantra, he does for the patient what the monk in preparing a yantra does for the community. In calling on the *baarea?mɛy* to extract the illness from the brain, for example, the *kruu* must adhere to the *guna* of the maternal and paternal elements, by meditating on the good deeds of the mother and father, which he may do in the course of reciting a mantra. The *kruu* links their good deeds to those of the brain's elements to enable their elements to support the patient and stop the brain disorder.⁷⁹ In treating the spirit aspect of *ckuɛj* the *kruu* inscribes the yantra with Pāli formulae that drive out the spirits that inhabit the world around the patient. The yantra shows the whole ritual that frames the patient and *kruu*: the centre literally represents the patient, around which there is an annulus of protection acting as a barrier against the source of the disease which is drawn somewhere in the periphery of the yantra. This little map depicts the whole cosmos, as indeed they do in India, where the lines are likened to elements of the body (Bäumer, 1986).

Ritual space

The *kruu* understand the body as a spatial map of the universe, but they also see it as a chronological chart of the person and the universe that links the person's existence through epochs in this and previous lives with the lives of the five Buddhas.⁸⁰ The

77. Dharani is a particularly Cambodian and Thai Buddhist motif unknown to the canonical texts (Cœdès, 1918), and her image is a standing figure wringing her long hair, the floods pouring down it to drown the hosts of Mara (Jaini, 1965).

78. The induction of each ceremony calls the celestial worlds down, but the *kruu* who may go into states of deep meditation using Samaddhi methods, alters his relationship with his own body for a time: by adopting the embryonic posture himself, the *kruu* aligns himself like the foetus in the mother's womb (head near the clean food in the stomach, feet and anus near the excrement of the large bowel), the new-born baby lying by its mother on the ritual heated bed, the person sleeping in the hut, and the cadaver before and during the cremation (head facing the east until the inversion at the moment of cremation). It is possible that, like the Indian yogis who transcend their bodies (Filliozat, 1963), the *kruu* ascends this vertical axis – some imply that they do – and this needs further clarification. Despite some apparent similarities with the shaman, however, the *kruu* is more like the Indian yogin. If we apply Filliozat's criteria we see that, unlike the shaman, the *kruu* is not entirely qualified by predestination but by qualities that he must develop in his training, and his vocation does not come through a psychic crisis but by his long apprenticeship.

79. The *kruu* recites the letters along the row right up to the last one that represents the fully developed foetus. He recites forwards and backwards, starting with the bottom row to do with the birth of the foetus from the seventh day, the letter representing the embryonic blood, then the letter from the fifteenth day, representing the thick blood in the placenta, which is the origin of the blood.

80. The *kruu* tries to rearrange the boundary between the patient and beings that stumbled into the world of the patient from other worlds and times. His healing rituals show that he is not simply dealing with visitations from the past, but realigning a time-warp. Little is understood of the *kruu*'s idea of time, which is not a linear one but shows features seen in India (Filliozat, 1969). Meanwhile, it seems wrong to graft a time axis on to the three-dimensional spatial representation.

spatial axes are difficult to define. There are three: right and left, horizontal, and vertical. On both the “right” and “left” sides the Buddhist monks and *kruu* perform sacrificial rituals of defence in which the healer addresses the deities and spirits in each of the quadrants around the village. But the right and left systems confer a different set of names on the beings. The *kruu* and monks make their offerings to these eight, nine or sometimes ten directions and recite mantra to each.⁸¹ Many healers regard their healing powers as belonging to the “right” and “left”, and their healing rituals straddle both sides.⁸² Some *kruu* are at pains to say that they restrict themselves to the right tradition; most *kruu* say their rituals come from the left. Their linguistic terms show up the left and the right sides of their work: their term *moən ?aakum* (*moən* means mantra; *?aakum* is derived from the Sanskrit *agama*, that is, Tantra), and also their term *?athap* (from the Sanskrit term for the Atharvaveda), and also early pre-Theravadin Buddhism of Cambodia, which was associated with the Mahāyana Tantra.⁸³

The *kruu* do not categorise the source of their healing power as if there were powers from the right and the left in opposition. They describe their rituals as either repairing derangements stemming from the body, based on Ayurvedic concepts, or attacking agents such as spirits outside it. These spirits seem to owe their origins to a mixture of Vedic and Brahmanist beliefs from India and local folk beliefs; and those from cosmic forces such as predestiny and the organisation of the universe, which come from Buddhist doctrine.⁸⁴

Before the healer invests or transforms his ritual objects he strengthens them with *baarea?məy*, showing up the interplay between the “right” world, where *baarea?məy* is invested with the good deeds of all the former Buddhas, the “left” world, where the

81. There is a striking resemblance between the layout used by the *kruu* and the *vasus*, the Indian spheres of existence described in the Unadi Sutra 1.11 and in various Puranas and the Mahābaharata (see Daniélou, 1963). The deities include Surya, the sun god arising in the eastern quadrant, and Agni, the fire god associated with ritual sacrifice, who mediates between men and gods, and who inhabits the south-eastern quadrant. Some *kruu* also invoke Adityas which, in the Puranas, is taken as the name of the sun but which in the Rig Veda and other Brahmanas are linked with the solar months and represented as the spokes in the wheel of time, which is consistent with their roles as deities but also as astrological markers.

82. The fallacy of two distinct and purely Brahmanic and Buddhist ritual systems in Cambodia is something like that in ancient Indian medicine, where it was thought that there was a dichotomy between the earlier magico-religious healing of the early Vedic period, exemplified in the medical charms of the *Atharvaveda* and the healing charms of the *Rigveda*, and the empirical-rational medicine of *ayurveda*, which took shape later. Zysk argues that “this traditional account of Indian medicine is merely the result of a later Hinduization process applied to a fundamentally heterodox body of knowledge in order to render it orthodox. There were heterodox mendicant ascetic renunciants, particularly Buddhists, who contributed to the developments in Indian medicine in the period of transition. Medical healers were denigrated by the Brahmanic hierarchy and excluded from orthodox ritual cults ... These healers wandered the countryside performing cures and acquiring new medicines, treatments, and medical information, and eventually became indistinguishable from the ascetics with whom they were in close contact ... A vast storehouse of medical knowledge soon developed among these wandering physicians ... Fitting into the Buddha’s Middle Way between the extremes of world indulgence and self-denial, healing became part of Buddhism ... Portions of the repository of medical lore were codified in the early monastic rules, giving rise to a Buddhist monastic medical tradition” (p. 3-6). Orthodox Brahmanism of the Vedic tradition lost its hegemony with the ascent of Buddhism and the emergence of mendicant ascetics who functioned as healers (Zysk, 1990).

83. For evidence of the links with Buddhism there is, for example, an image of the *Hevajra*, a Tantric Buddhist divinity discovered at Angkor Thom (Sharan, 1974: 270).

84. I found, as Martin (1974) did when she examined the taxonomy of botanical substances in Cambodia, that the qualities of each type and the prescribed healing rituals shows the shortcomings of this Western linear Linnaean logic. Every type of *ckuət* has properties shared with the others, and the ritual treatment is not determined strictly by the sort of *ckuət*. All types of *ckuət* stem from disturbances in both the brain or body and the patient’s spirit world.

baarea?mæy is more naked Vedic and Tantric power from the deities inhabiting various quadrants in each of the celestial planes. The attention to astrology shows up the influence of the whole universe beyond the mundane scope of the immediate environment: practically all the rituals change according to the day of the week and where in the monthly cycle the patient became ill and receives treatment.

There is some linguistic and epigraphic evidence that the Tantric influences in the *kruus*' rituals came to ancient Kambuja and influenced the Brahman priests.⁸⁵ If the purported links between Tantra in Kambuja and India are correct, this suggests that at least two of the topographic features shown by the *kruu*'s rituals: there is a division of the Tantric currents into right, middle, and left, the right and left of which match the *kruus*' division of rituals.⁸⁶ The second link between the *kruus*' rituals and ancient Tantra is the way that the *kruu* organise their offerings to the five directions.⁸⁷ The ritual patterns support the proposition that these Tantric rituals, interwoven with the Vedic rituals and local folk customs, and later influenced by Buddhism, were the forerunners of the *kruus*' practices.

The theme of left and right is also found in Vedic literature.⁸⁸ In Cambodia the counterpart is seen in the *kruus*' calling in their mantra on strings of Hindu deities sometimes as pairs.⁸⁹ This prominence given to Siva is not found in Thailand where,

85. See Chatterji, 1928; Bagchi, 1929; and Sharan, 1974. During the 1920s there was some interest in the Tantric influences in ancient Kambuja. Although the methodologies have been called into question because of the hazards in reconstructing history from comparison of old texts between Cambodia and India, we can cautiously support the proposition that Tantra was introduced into Kambuja and influenced the priests. Chatterji (1928) cites Finot's notes on the epigraphy of Sdok Kak Thom, showing that during the reign of Jayavarman II (ascension 802 CE) the Brahman named Hiranyadâma came from Janapada in India and in his ritual to protect the kingdom recited the Vinâçika, the Nayotara, the Sammoha, and the Çiraçcheda which, according to Chatterji, were Tantric texts, and this ritual was adopted by the other priests (p. 78-9). Finot deciphered the inscription at Prah Khah: following the short reign of Suryavarman I (1002 CE), the first Buddhist king of Kambuja, "Homage to the Buddha ... I salute the feet of my guru, which are like two boats for traversing the Tantras of the paramis, and whose knowledge has sprung from the favour of the three-eyed god" (p. 167-8). According to Chatterji, there is a relationship between the Tantras in Kambuja and those specific to three regions of northern India each with its special Tantras.

86. According to Bagchi, the Tantric literature is classified according to the *srotas*, the *pithas*, and the *amnyas*. The Tantric *srotas* (current or tradition) are divided in the *daksina* from the right, *vama* from the left, and *madhyama* from the middle, which are the three forces or currents that issue from Siva.

87. The *kruus*' use of five directions in ritual echoes the Tantric notion that there are five mouths of Siva. Siva has four faces turned to each of the cardinal points and one turned heavenwards: the eastern mouth spoke the Vedas and the others spoke the four different kinds of Tantras. There are said to be five *amnyas* issuing from the five mouths of Siva. Siva's eastern face (*purva vaktra*) spoke with Vedas, the western (*pascima*), southern (*daksina*), northern (*uttara*), and the upper (*urddhva*) mouths spoke the different kind of Tantras. The five faces of Siva represent his five different aspects, known as *Vamadeva*, *Tatpurusa*, *Aghora*, *Sadyojata*, and *Isana* facing the north, east, south, west, and top and representing the aspects of *Isa*, *Isana*, *Isvara*, *Brahman*, and *Sadasiva* respectively.

88. The Vedic deities are commonly set up in pairs which, according to Gonda (1974), played an important part in sacrificial rites which belonged to more than one deity at the same time. This pairing is consistent with an Indianised past of cults such as Hari-Hara, in which deities were combined.

89. The *kruus*' placing of *?i?soo*, that is Siva or Isvara, as the supreme deity on the left side, confirms the popularity of Saivism in ancient Cambodia. The main influence was from Saivasiddhanta, the Saivagamas and the Pañcaratra tradition (Filliozat, 1984). Saivism is said to have been the religion of the common people in India (Daniélou, 1964), and Siva was known as the prince of the yogins (Filliozat, 1946). In Cambodia, Siva was the most prominent Brahmanic god, known in post-Angkorian times as *Isur* and, according to Pou (1987-88), he was the divine king of Mount Kailas, and chief of all the *rsi*-s, now called *isi*-s. Pou's linguistic analysis extends our understanding of the *kruus*' views about Siva and Mahārishi, and suggests that, rather than a dichotomy, there was a transition from Siva to Mahārishi.

according to Formoso (1992), the folk tradition does not show complementarity between deities of right and left.⁹⁰

If we assume that the *kruu* and the monks are espousing two different systems, albeit with some overlap, we are left with the problem that most of the formulae uttered or drawn by the *kruu*, and even some by the monks, are made up of letters that spell out Vedic or Tantric and not simply Buddhist verses. As a result it seems impossible to decode the letters used in the ritual by understanding their origins in the Abhidhamma and other Buddhist texts. The puzzle in delineating what is Buddhist from Vedic and Tantric ritual is that, the more one studies the rituals, the more one realises the degree to which the systems overlap.

The mantra also show a division into those that pay homage to the Hindu gods and those that seem to invoke magic power to manipulate the universe.⁹¹ Unorthodox meditation practices have survived in Cambodia and are passed down from teacher to disciple.⁹² This practice, according to Bizot, is “Theravada Tantrism”, and no apparent terminology derived from Tantric Buddhism has been found in India.⁹³ The palm leaf manuscripts also show a Pāli canonical base embellished by magical verses that are taken up by the *kruu* (and by monks) for healing power.

Some areas of ritual emphasise the vertical axis, others the horizontal, and it seems that the *kruu* recreate a harmonious relation between them. The yantra, fashioned in a two-dimensional plane, shows up the horizontal arrangements around the bindu or central point representing the origin of the patient’s life in the past; and the *baay səy*, fashioned in three-dimensional space, the vertical axes of these stacked horizontal cosmic plates. This depiction of the universe in ritual objects gains its fullest expression in these cylinders, which show up the *simultaneous* double system in which the vertical axis traverses orthodox Buddhism, Veda, and Tantra.⁹⁴ These objects emphasise the

90. Even if the terms used in the two systems seem the same, this could complicate the already messy picture of the ritual used on the “left” side by the *kruu* because Saivite cosmology differed from the more orthodox Vedic. It seems likely that the Saivite influences in Cambodia, rather than the Vedic practices, carried the Tantric aspects of what later became the *kruus*’ rituals. On the surface it appears that the mantra follow the same pattern as the formulae of the Saivite Puranic stotras (including the Skanda Purana), which identify these deities in India, but further study is needed.

91. In his analysis of Hindu ritual, Daniélou (1963), citing several Puranas and Tantras, argues that the internal or external rituals can be divided into the Vedic (right hand) or Tantric (left hand). According to the Kularnava Tantra, Rudra shows that in the left-hand doctrine spiritual advancement is achieved by those things that are the cause of man’s downfall. Daniélou notes that this Tantric way can be dangerous but can bring results. The left-hand worship uses five supports which in yogic practice include “drinking wine that flows from the petals at the summit of the head”.

92. These have the objective of creating a new body based on dhamma, symbolised by the crystal globe that appears in the centre of the body around the navel. The disciple symbolically returns to the womb, where the embryo with its five buds symbolises the fig tree with five branches and the personification of the dhamma (Bechert, 1988). Until recently, anyone could symbolically re-run time by crawling through the uterus-shaped grotto at Phnom Sampau in Battambang province (Bizot, 1980). And this is what is said to happen for some monks and *kruu* when they meditate.

93. Cambodia retained the *pubbajja* of the Mon type and a ritual ensemble dominated by initiation and Tantric practices, in association with a symbolic system borrowed from Vedic Brahmanism. This tradition was taught in the monasteries. Tantric Buddhism is found among the older strata of Buddhism, the Mahānikaya and not the Dhammayuttinikaya, although in modern Cambodia, according to Bizot, most Buddhists, of either sect, practise orthodox Buddhism and not Tantric rituals. Bizot (1988) shows how orthodox Theravada is identified with the Mahāvihāra tradition of Anuradhapura (who were also known to have their own esoteric rituals). Their rivals, the Abhayagirivasins, were said to have developed concepts of Tantric Buddhism. As these concepts were adopted to Theravada states the terminology of Mahāyanist Tantrism went undeveloped.

94. The *baaysəy* echo the shape and function of the Angkorian *linga*, which were used in Saivistic ritual. Similar objects known as *baay si* are found in Thailand; see Phya Anuman Rajadhon (1964).

vertical axis, but they also show the position of the various deities in each quadrant, as the offerings in each direction acknowledge.⁹⁵

When the *kruu* makes a ritual object, he pays great attention to what he is doing in certain directions. The main reference point is the patient's body. The *kruu* places the patient's body carefully in accord with his understanding of the cardinal directions. Nearly everything he does, such as where he calls on particular deity or casts the spirits that are expelled, or buries the placenta, is dictated by these cardinal directions. And the way he fashions objects such as the offerings of banana leaves are also made with three or four points, and the *kruu* puts the necessary food on each spike.

On the vertical axis, the healing rituals show up the healers' concepts of the structure of the person's body, with the head as the highest point (seen in everyday behaviour throughout Theravadin states such as Thailand).⁹⁶ The assemblage of the *kruu*'s healing rituals in Cambodia reflects a similar hierarchy. It is forbidden to touch a person's head, and postural arrangements (seen clearly when sitting before and beneath the monks) and sleeping arrangements prescribe the gradient of respect. Again there is the hint of a vertical axis in the transformation ritual used to treat people suffering from *ckuət cruuk*, with the gradient from the pig's snout to its foul tail.

Every time that the *kruu* performs a ritual to evict a spirit from a *ckuət* patient, he replays the drama in which the topography of the patient's body represents the moral axis of good and bad, virtuous to profane, just as the cosmological universes are stacked on top of one another along a vertical axis, with Mount Meru at the top and the hells at the bottom. There is a similar ritual arrangement within each plane, the sacred area being to the north-east and death to the south-west. The rituals such as blowing or spraying spirits out characteristically follow this symbolic representation. The *kruu* turns the moral drama on its head to drive the evil out in a cephalocaudal direction, from good to bad. This evocative reversal is what is seen again and again in the treatment of all *ckuət*.⁹⁷ It seems to be the anus, rather than the feet, that represents the other end of the body.⁹⁸

Conclusion

By analysing the rituals used for several groups of *ckuət* I have shown how the healers use a ritual grammar and play out in each healing ritual the society's concepts of

95. Some *kruu* chant mantras while performing a dance towards each of the quadrants, in which obeisance is paid to the *kruu*'s former *kruu* in the direction of the Hindu deities who lived around the central axis of the world.

96. Among the Isan of Thailand Formoso (1990) describes a structural homology between the body and the social group, the head having the highest social status, the most intimate part of the individual, signifying a person's spiritual integrity and the unity of his soul, and opposed to the feet, which symbolise the opening to the outside world and to others. This head/feet opposition occurs in a hierarchical fashion in the house, the rice barn, and the whole village. This kind of hierarchical model is also seen in Isan at the village level through the opposition *hua/thaay*, *hua* means "head", *thay* means "rear", "end", "back", or "tail". See also Tambiah (1984).

97. According to the Taittiriya Upanisad (3.10), Divinity dwells in different parts of the body such as the in-breath or the out-breath as the power to take or give, the feet as the power to move, or the anus as the power of riddance.

98. Each of the twelve types of *skon*, for example, has a special relationship with the world of the deities, the human world, or the world of the spirits (Porée-Maspero, 1962), and these relationships are set by the planets. The *kruu* in performing his ritual treatment for each type affirms a three-dimensional map with a moral axis.

the body. There is a relationship between the spatial map in the yantra as a symbolic representation of the totality and the movements in the physical space of the *kruu* as he goes about his healing in the sacred area where the ritual is being done. It would seem that in village rituals the community is positioned into a symbolic weave which is not unlike that of the yantra. There seems to be a parallel between the spaces of the yantra, the patient, the *kruu*'s ritual arena, the village space, and the universe: all these spaces are addressed in healing rituals.⁹⁹ I am not suggesting any separation or privileging of a vertical axis (biologically based and focused on the integrity of the individual rather than the social group). The *kruu* makes no distinction between what has to do with the patient and what has to do with the society, for the society is arranged as a sphere around the *kruu* and his patient. The ritual work of the *kruu* aims at restoring the relative order and the harmony of these two axes.

It is not possible to determine whether the *kruu* are the embodiments of pre-revolutionary Cambodian culture, let alone ancient Angkorian culture.¹⁰⁰ It could be argued

99. The tendency to understand healing ritual in terms of body space as a microcosmic reflection of the macrocosmic universe around the person runs the risk of squeezing ethnographic fieldwork into Western assumptions about Euclidean geometry and space in which mathematically a plane such as a yantra has one degree of freedom and a cylinder or cone such as a *baay səy* or a string wound around the patient's waist has two.

I have proposed a preliminary model in which the *kruu* and the patient form a paired origin in a three-dimensional space, making up fluid and bipolar rather than Euclidean co-ordinates. One of the difficulties with this is knowing whether the laws of geometry work in the same way when you get inside the sphere and join the *kruu* and patient. A yantra is a two-dimensional structure, but that does not mean that the *kruu* draw their map in only two dimensions. In the Cambodian case the horizontal space is important but, at least for healing rituals, the vertical space – of the body, the house, the village, and the universe – is the main one. There is something to suggest that, unlike Westerners who think of the treatment as centred on the patient's body with an inner self separated by a skin from an outer world, for the *kruu* the geometrical origin of healing rituals is not at the centre of the patient and may be at the periphery of the world. You see images, such as the metaphorical dog biting the patient on the right side of a *kruu*'s diagram and similarly depicted on the right frame of a Jataka painting, and it is more important that they are on the right of the frame than of the patient's body itself. If anything, the ritual healing space seems to be divided into left and right rather than inside and outside. These proposals put into question the reliability of neat Western hierarchies often used to interpret healing rituals.

100. Some of the links between the spiritual aspects of healing and the Veda and Brahmanism are understood (Bhattacharya, 1970; Daweewarn, 1982), but the links between the pharmacological rituals and Ayurvedic medicine are not. The Angkorian kingdom had 102 hospitals staffed by physician-priests (Cœdès, 1959), and some *kruu* described ancient Khmer hospitals where they said that their ancestral *kruu* had worked, implying that they were their descendants, and spelled out their lineage as *kruu* from the Brahma through the old Mahārishis. Norodom Ritharasi (1929) also notes this in the legend of the leper king. The stèle at Say Fong describes Angkorian hospitals, mentioning some thirty-three pharmaceutical products (Jacques, 1968; Hahn, 1978), some of which are the same as those used by the *kruu*. The staff included pharmacists, sacrificers, and astrologers. Although there is no information on whether the staff, or visiting priests, carried out similar rituals to those of the *kruu* or monks in Cambodia today, the names and details of some of the *kruus*' sacrificial rituals suggest that they are derived from those practised by the Brahman priests and Tantric ritual. For details of the Brahmanic and Tantric rituals practised in ancient Cambodia, see Sharan (1974: 270-7). During the reign of Isanavarman, Jayavarman and Harsavarman sacrifices were performed. Jayendravarman was the guru of king Udayadityavarman, and he performed *Bhuvandhava* and *Brahmayajña*. He also performed the *Mahotsava puja* which was a function of *Tantravada*. According to Sharan, citing Majumdar, there is evidence that the rituals were not at all confined to royalty and that the people of Cambodia also believed in *Papa* and *Punya*, and many types of sacrifice were performed in the country. The *Yajñas* were also performed by the public. But the inscriptions give us no clue if, or when, the royal gurus started to teach other priests around the countryside to carry out rituals for ordinary people. It has to be said, however, that there are traps in attempts to place Cambodian healing ritual in some historical context: if the *kruu* are atavistic remnants of the Angkorian priests, and if Angkorian medicine was derived

that the *kruu* today are not as well versed as his counterparts of forty years ago, but they still hold the ritual in their bellies and bring it to life every day in every village. At the same time, the fieldwork observations need to be measured in the light of analysis of classical texts on ritual and healing – if these are yet available – and to be interpreted linguistically. Through careful juxtaposition of ethnological fieldwork and textual analysis it may be possible to map the meanings of healing myth and ritual in Cambodian society.

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from India, it does not imply a relationship between the *kruus*’ rituals and those set out in classical Indian medical texts.

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