

Black Rituals in Rural Setting: A Socio-Cultural Study of the Black Rituals Related to Rajjuru Bandara in Morawak Korale

Shaini Karunarathna

Department of Sinhala, University of Colombo

shaini@sinh.cmb.ac.lk

Religious rituals are cultural practices that are used to achieve negative or positive results through non-human powers. These rituals are pervasive in most human societies around the world. They are typically divided into two systems: the white ritual system and the black ritual system. Some scholars point out that rural people resort to these systems of rituals because of their psychological needs. However, they do not address why these rituals are practised in contemporary modern societies where scientific means of cure are vastly available. In line with this research problem, this study investigates the black ritual system associated with the deity Rajjuru Bandara, prevalent in the ancient administration division of Morawak Korala in Matara district. It seeks to discover social and cultural reasons that influence the spread of black ethical practices in the chosen field. This study investigated black rituals such as *Avalada Pooja* and *Ridee Kepima*, which are prevalent in the area today, and other rituals such as *Kasi Kepima*, which are presently non-prevalent. Three main methods were used to collect data on these rituals: field visits to gather data through observation, interviews with parties involved in the rituals, such as the main *Kapurala's* who work related to the healing rituals, and the household discussions held with the *Atura* people and their family members. The obtained field data and interview data were subjected to qualitative analysis. The main religious belief system of the historical Morawak Korala is based on the Lord Rajjuru Bandara. It can be argued that black rituals stem from the devotion to the Lord Rajjuru Bandara and continue to operate even today due to the lack of proper legal mechanisms to counter political and social misdeeds in this area.

Keywords: Black Rituals, Concept of God Rajjuru Bandara, Religious beliefs, Rituals, Rural social structure