Yoga expert George Feuernstein (2000:81) observes that ‘the authorities of Yoga are agreed that it is of acute importance how a person dies. Only complete control of the death process, as effected by full awareness during and after the dropping of the body, guarantees a benign postmortem existence.’ In this sense, all yoga might be understood as a preparation for death, although of course according to popular Western understandings, yoga consists of physical and mental exercises to enhance health and longevity. Eliade (1969:362), eminent historian of comparative religion, has characterized yoga as an anticipation of death. He traces the relationship between yoga and the process of cosmic reabsorption thus:

After describing the process of creation by Śiva … the Śiva Samhitā describes the inverse process, in which the yogin takes part: he sees the element earth become ‘subtle’ and dissolve in water, water dissolve in fire, fire in air, air in ether, etc., until everything is reabsorbed into the Great Brahman. Now, the yogin undertakes this spiritual exercise in order to anticipate the process of reabsorption that occurs at death. (Eliade 1969:272.)

In this article I argue that Balinese death rituals, or rituals for the ancestors (pitra yadnya), including the public spectacle of cremation, involve instructing and assisting the dead person in performing the yogic art of dying. In doing so I will attempt to show how the ritual actions parallel the steps of Kundalinī or

1 I would like to thank two anonymous readers for Bijdragen for their challenging but very constructive critiques. Their comments have importantly shaped the final presentation of my arguments. I also thank I Gusti Nyoman Mirdiana for his invaluable help in collecting the ethnographic data discussed here.

Note on orthography: Except for direct quotations, where I follow the original, I use Feuerstein’s simplified Sanskrit spellings (2000) for Sanskrit terms and the Kamus Bali-Indonesia (1978) for Balinese words.

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Laya yoga\(^2\) whereby the yogi seeks to achieve the reabsorption of the cosmos in precisely the manner just described. Eliade (1969:272, 362) also refers to a link between Tibetan mortuary rituals and yoga. Although completely different in nature, I would suggest that the Balinese rites have a similar underlying aim to the Tibetan practices – that is to provide the dead person with the yogic knowledge necessary to achieve enlightenment or liberation at the time of leaving the body and failing that, to guide the spirit to the best rebirth possible.

Balinese death rituals are extraordinarily complex and rich symbolic productions and have, of course, important ramifications – social, psychological, political, and economic – that will not be dealt with here.\(^3\) This article does not pretend to be a comprehensive treatment of all aspects of the *pitra yadnya*, but focuses specifically on the similarities with Laya yoga. Ostensibly such an enterprise seems to involve imposing a foreign framework of interpretation on totally unrelated data. I did not in fact set out with the intention of making such a comparison; it was suggested to me only in the course of collecting general information about cremation (*ngaben*); but as I pursued the similarities they seemed to become more and more persuasive. A single small detail, a representation of the dead person termed a *pangawak* (Figure 1), an item which might easily go unnoticed in the hurly burly of ritual performance, first suggested to me the idea that when approached from the perspective of the dead person, the death rituals might be understood as an instruction in yoga.

In this article I present a. an ethnographic description of the *pitra yadnya* based upon observation, interviews with Balinese and textual research and b. my interpretation of the symbolism of these rituals based largely on understandings drawn from the accounts of modern, Western scholars and students of yoga. It might be objected that to establish my argument, I need to do so by reference directly to the Sanskrit traditions of yoga, Advaita, and Shaiva teachings. As a cultural anthropologist, my attention was drawn not by similarities between the rituals and a specific text or body of texts, but rather by a general resemblance to the Kundalinī or Laya yoga familiar to me from Western studies. Such expositions, of course, are not the source of

\(^2\) See Woodroffe (1974:1-2) for a definition of Kundalinī yoga. Woodroffe (1974:48) makes it clear that Kundalinī and Laya yoga are one and the same. Goswami (1999) also treats the terms as synonymous. Feuerstein in his Foreword to Goswami’s book (1999:xiii) explains ‘Laya refers to the absorption of the elements (*tattva*) constituting the body, which occurs when the Kundalini power rises from the psychenergetic center (*cakra*) at the base of the spine toward the center at the crown of the head’. This absorption or purification of the *tattva* is also referred to as *bhūta-shuddi* (Goswami 1999:127), a term which, as Feuerstein (2000:57) observes, is also often used synonymously with Kundalinī yoga.

\(^3\) In previous publications (Stephen 1998a, 1998b) I have discussed Balinese cremation from a comparative perspective, focusing on psychoanalytic interpretations of mortuary ritual. These psychoanalytic interpretations represent another level of analysis and will not be taken up in this article which deals only with the cultural logic of the ritual symbolism.
the Balinese rituals, but they provided me with a basis of understanding on which to consider the possible meanings expressed in the rituals.

Anthropological understanding involves moving beyond the observer’s cultural categories, attempting to identify and explicate the modes of thought and experience of the observed. Yoga is concerned with inner mystical experience, something purely philological scholarship cannot capture. Thus to explicate the classic Indian texts on which Balinese ‘yoga’ might be based is in itself a task that requires an investigation of the inner experiences involved. Furthermore, the early colonial scholars who studied the Sanskrit and the Balinese texts and observed the mortuary rituals did not have available to them the results of modern scholarship in comparative religion, popular Hinduism, anthropological studies of shamanism, trance, possession, and meditation, nor the understandings of Western students of yoga and meditation which have burgeoned in recent years. We are now in a position to read the texts – and the rituals – from a very different perspective, so that what previously was regarded as theology and religion can be now be understood in the context of kinds of inner experience which were not only little known but completely foreign to most earlier scholars. For these reasons I do not offer here a comprehensive review of the literature (Stuart-Fox 1992); nor have I sought to comb the early sources in support of my arguments for to do so would involve me in endless arguments with their outdated, culture-bound interpretative frameworks. My aim is to provide a reading of the symbolism of the *pitra yadnya* from the perspective of more current understandings and based primarily upon my own detailed observations of present ritual practices. Identifying the original Indian sources which might have given rise to the Balinese rituals and texts is a separate task not attempted here.

Had the resemblance I noticed proved to be a trivial or minor one, I would not have bothered to pursue the matter. As I began to follow my hunch, however, I was amazed how close a relationship could be traced between the actual performance of the Balinese rituals and the descriptions of Kundalinī yoga to be found in modern Western studies. Indeed the correspondence proved to be so striking that I would have been prepared to argue for it even in the absence of any direct evidence of an explicit textual knowledge in Bali of Laya yoga. Only after completing the first draft of this article did I come across Palguna’s study of the *Dharma Śūnya*, which pointed me to another text, the *Wṛhaspati tattva*, revealing that the philosophy of the emanation and reabsorption of the *tattva* which forms the basis of Laya yoga, was and is explicitly known and expounded in Balinese texts. This served to clinch the argument in my view. However, I discuss these texts only briefly later in this article as they did not contribute directly to the interpretations developed here (although they are evidently consistent with them); furthermore to fully examine their implications would have resulted in an essay of unmanageable length.
The pangawak, Balinese yoga, and cremation

In August 2006 I was invited by the organizer, well-known Balinese artist, I Ketut Budiana, to participate in a workshop being held for Balinese artists on the role of art in religion. This was a practical workshop not concerned with theory or philosophy of religion, but an opportunity for young artists in particular to learn techniques for producing artworks required for cremation rituals. As it turned out I was unable to attend, but I urged my research assistant to do so and he brought me back photos of objects made at the workshop. These consisted of various items usually made by the household of the officiating Brahmana priest. What immediately caught my attention was the pangawak, a symbol of the physical body of the deceased. It consisted of a thin flat rectangular sheet of palm leaf (as used for lontar) on which was inscribed a naked human body and various mystical formulae (Figure 1).

At the time I was involved in researching Balinese concepts of dreaming and was led to several philosophical texts (tutur) that dealt with different states of consciousness, including dreams. When I saw the photo of the pangawak I realized that the inscription on it was connected with these texts. Such texts, of course, constitute esoteric knowledge available only to the tiny elite who are permitted to read them, in essence Brahmana scholars and high priests (Rubinstein 2000:31). The inscription on the pangawak, however, gave me the idea that this esoteric knowledge might perhaps be used on behalf of every dead person. Might the pangawak be not just a symbol of the body of the deceased, but also a means of showing the deceased the correct way of leaving the body at death?

Although not referring specifically to the pangawak, Hooykaas (1976a) notes several similarities between the ritual actions of the pedanda in the cremation rituals and his daily ritual of Surya-Sevana – a practice wherein the soul of the priest is caused to unite with the god Siwa (Shiva). The idea that the pedanda is employing some kind of yogic meditation at the cremation rituals might therefore not be regarded as such an outlandish idea.

I have discussed elsewhere (Stephen 2005:104-9) the nature of yogic practices described in many Balinese texts, drawing attention to their similarities with Kundalini yoga, especially with regard to what Hooykaas (1973a:49) refers to as the ‘thrilling mystery of the marriage of fire and water’ – symbolized by the scared syllables, ANG and AH, that in turn stand for Uma and Shiva, pradana and purusha, cosmic female and male principles. These meditative practices involve the collapsing of the ten sacred letters (dasaksara) into one, the sacred syllable OM, thus symbolizing the returning of the multiplicity of the universe to the unity from which it emerged (see also Zurbuchen 1987:52-8; Hobart 2003:218-9). The ten letters – Sa, Ba, Ta, A, I, Na, Ma, Si, Va, Ya – are based on abbreviations of five names of Shiva coupled with the famous mantra Om
Figure 1. The pengawak
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Namah Shiva Ya. The ten letters are dissolved into five (panca aksara), the five into three (triaksara), then into two (ANG and AH, the cosmic duality or rwabhineda), and finally into one, OM.

The Balinese texts explain that in yogic practice during life, the adept strives to unify ANG and AH, Uma and Shiva, pradana and purusha, to obtain amerta, the water of eternal life. At death, however, the two must not be allowed to meet, therefore ANG, fire, must be placed above AH, water, reversing their usual position. These positions we should understand as being visualized by the adept. ANG, fire, naturally rises and AH, water, naturally moves downwards, but by reversing their positions, they move apart from each other. Several Balinese texts refer to this reversal as the key to achieving freedom from the cycle of births and deaths. Indeed a published Kawi text from Bali, the Jñānasiddhānta (Soebadio 1971:87-107), devotes a whole long chapter to the proper yogic practice of dying.

If we return to the pangawak symbol used in the cremation rituals (Figure 1), we can see that placed over the abdomen of the figure is a circle of Balinese letters constituting the dasaksara, with the symbol AH placed below them; the triaksara are written on the chest, an ongkara (OM) symbol on the throat, and above the head is written the symbol ANG. The pangawak thus appears to provide no less than a kind of diagrammatic summary of the yoga described in the texts with which I was familiar. I also discovered that in short article on cremation Hooykaas (1976a) describes several lontar texts revealing that the separation of ANG and AH forms the basis of the pedanda’s preparation of tirta pangentas – a special type of holy water of key importance in the cremation ceremonies. Thus it seems evident that in the pitra yadnya, the Brahmana priests, at least, are employing a form of yoga on the behalf of the deceased – and it is similar, or linked, to Kundalinī yoga.

In this article, however, I will focus on the symbolism of the observable ritual actions performed by the relatives of the dead and other lay participants, rather than the esoteric understandings of the Brahmana priests. Certainly it is my view that the two are closely related, but the rituals performed by the pedanda and their precise meanings consist of closely guarded esoteric knowledge. I found that pedanda were expert and helpful informants but invariably they diplomatically sidestepped my questions when I touched too closely on certain matters; some explained that they could not discuss such things further with an uninitiated person. It was useless, therefore, if not offensive to attempt to elicit information about esoteric meanings by direct questioning of the very few persons who might be expected to know. Pedanda undergo strict initiation in order to attain their position and only those of Brahmana caste are eligible even to try to qualify. According to Rubinstein (2000:31), only pedanda

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4 I have discussed these texts elsewhere (Stephen 2005:104-9, 158, note 67).
5 The pangawak is illustrated in Wirz 1928: Figure 3.
are permitted to read the *tutur* texts; and since it is in the *tutur* texts that yoga is described (Zoetmulder 1974:179), evidently only *pedanda* traditionally had access to such knowledge. My most important guide in my early fieldwork, *Brahmana* scholar Ida Bagus Sutarja, emphasized from the beginning that in terms of understanding the rituals there are those who can do the work, the majority, those who know what needs to be done, the community leaders, and those who know why the ritual actions are performed, the *Brahmana* priests. The longer I spend in Bali, the more I appreciate the truth of his words.

For these reasons I focus here on publicly observable rituals and published texts. Where I discuss the role of the *pedanda* it is on the basis of observable actions, what ordinary people say about it, and what can be gleaned from various published works. In the process of writing this I have certainly come across information that helps to illuminate further for me the role of the *Brahmana* priests. However I shall not attempt to deal with this issue here, but address it in a separate publication. Although many Balinese would blanch at the thought of carrying out the rituals for the dead without the help of *Brahmana* priests, in some regions their participation is not required. Howe (1969), for example, observed in the community he studied that *Brahmana* priests were never called upon to carry out the death rituals. Thus for some Balinese the public rituals are complete in themselves.

As the argument that follows is lengthy and intricate, I think it appropriate to explain at the outset the manner in which it develops. I begin by outlining the Shaiva philosophy of the 36 *tattva* and its relationship to *Kundalinī* yoga. This provides the necessary conceptual background against which to consider the ritual performances. I then describe step by step an actual cremation I observed. Next I attempt to relate each of the actions described to the yogic process of reabsorbing the first 25 *tattva* of Shaiva philosophy. The three phases of the rituals, *ngaben*, *nyekah*, and *segara-gunung*, are described in turn and each is interpreted as expressing a specific stage of reabsorption. These three phases are also related to the three ‘bodies’ postulated by Tantric philosophy – the *sthūla-sharīra* (the physical body), the *sūkṣma-sharīra* (the subtle body), and the *kārana-sharīra* (the causal or body of bliss). Finally, I consider textual evidence demonstrating that the philosophical basis of *Kundalinī* or *Laya* yoga is, or was, well known in Bali. I conclude with some comments on the metaphor of the journey as representing the obtaining of inner, mystical experience.

### The 36 *tattva* of Shaiva philosophy

In order to trace precisely how *Kundalinī* yoga might relate to the Balinese *pitra yadnya* we need to be familiar with a. the Shaiva system of the 36 *tattva*

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6 Feuerstein (2000:305) defines ‘tattva’ as ‘thatness’, ‘Reality; also, a category of cosmic existence’.
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According to which the world emanates from a single source and might be collapsed back into it, and b. the manner in which the practice of Kundalini yoga is connected with the lowest 25 of these tattva. The concepts need to be outlined in some detail as they are essential to the argument that follows and may not be familiar to all of my readers. The following account is based primarily on Woodroffe’s classic study, The serpent power; it is one of the clearest accounts I have come across, it is the source of many later accounts, and furthermore it matches very closely the Balinese material. However, I also draw on several other writers, including Eliade (1969), Silburn (1988), Daniélou (1992), and Feuerstein (1998, 2000).

According to Woodroffe (1974), Tantric Shaiva philosophy conceptualizes the universe as emerging through a process of emanation of the 36 tattva, beginning with Parama-Shiva and ending with prithivi, earth (matter in solid state). This system was based on the 25 tattva of Samkhya philosophy, to which Shaivism added another 11. The creative process begins with Parama-Shiva, the first tattva, consisting of Pure Consciousness. Within the absolute unity of Pure Consciousness arises a desire to express and experience itself as form, a desire which leads to the duality that ultimately gives rise to material creation. The potential to create form emerges within Parama-Shiva as Shakti (energy, power) and thus brings about the second tattva, shiva-shakti-tattva. Woodroffe (1974:31) observes that Shiva and Shakti are both Consciousness but that ‘the former is the changeless static aspect of Consciousness, and Śakti is the kinetic, active aspect of the same consciousness’. At this stage of incipient dualism, the distinction between ‘I’ (aham) and ‘This’ (idam) comes into existence but is still contained within the one unity (Woodroffe 1974:33). From this state of unified potential duality, Shiva and Shakti gradually become differentiated as Consciousness and Energy. It is Shakti, the energetic aspect of Pure Consciousness, mythologically represented as the Goddess, consort of Shiva, who creates, or rather emanates, through various stages, the physical universe.

A second transformation in Consciousness leads to the third tattva, known as Sadā-Shiva, wherein the ‘This’ component of the duality becomes emphasized. Sadā-Shiva gives rise to another transformation known as ishvara-tattva, where the ‘I’ is stressed, and in turn leads to shuddha-vidya-tattva, where both elements have equal emphasis (Woodroffe 1974:33). These first five tattva are known as the Pure Principles (shuddha-tattva), where dualism exists as a potential but the essential unity of ‘I’ and ‘This’ is maintained. With the emergence of Shakti as Māyā, the sixth tattva, the process of veiling and limiting Consciousness begins. Māyā’s general function is of veiling or contracting consciousness, so that

7 The serpent power is extensively used by Pott (1966) in Yoga and yantra, a study often referred to in the Balinese literature.
Pure Consciousness, in its desire to experience itself as form, takes on various limitations (Woodroffe 1974:52). The five kancuka represent these limitations (Woodroffe 1974:39-40). The first is kalā, part, by which the unlimited nature of the Absolute becomes particularized, or divided into parts (Feuerstein 1998:64-6). The second is vidyā, knowledge, whereby the all-knowing Consciousness becomes finite knowledge. The third is rāgā, attachment, the principle by which Consciousness is drawn to particular experiences rather than existing in plenitude. The fourth is kāla, time, whereby the eternal, timeless nature of Consciousness is now measured and limited in time. The fifth, niyāti, necessity, denotes the gradual limitation of the independence and pervasiveness of Consciousness as it takes form. The 11th tattva, or level of emanation is purusha, the Self, the conscious subject which experiences the body and the world, in other words, the individual soul. It is Pure Consciousness which has undergone the limitations placed upon it by Māyā and the five coverings, but it does not yet possess embodied form. In purusha develops an awareness of another, prakṛti, first as part of, and then as separate from itself. Finally, through the action of this ‘other’, the material world is brought into being.

The first five tattva constitute the pure categories (shuddha-tattva); Māyā, the five kancuka, and purusha constitute the pure-impure categories (shuddha-ashuddha-tattva). The remaining 25 tattva from prakṛti to the lowest, earth (prithivi), constitute the impure categories (ashuddha-tattva) which comprise the physical world (Woodroffe 1974:39). For the purposes of this article, it is the emanation of the material world from purusha and prakṛti via the remaining 23 tattva that is of primary interest, for as I shall attempt to show, the Balinese death rituals aim to bring the dead person back to the point at which embodied consciousness began, that is with purusha and prakṛti (or pradhāna, the term more usually found in Balinese texts).

Prakṛti is the ‘ultimate “material” cause of both Mind and Matter, and the whole universe which they compose’ (Woodroffe 1974:51). As a finitizing principle, she contains three primary characteristics, the guna, which serve to make finite form in the infinite formlessness of Consciousness. These three are tamas, which suppresses or veils consciousness, rajas which serves to make it active, and sattva which acts to reveal consciousness (Woodroffe 1974:52-3). Different combinations of the three guna give rise to all the multiplicity of the physical universe, from apparently inert matter (dominated by tamas) to the most elevated consciousness of the human sage (dominated by sattva).

Prakṛti exists in a quiescent and an active state (Woodroffe 1974:53-4). From the active state issues the 23 tattva that compose mind, senses, and matter, which emerge in that order. First of the three tattva that constitute mind is buddhi, consciousness of being but without awareness of an ego; the second is ahamkāra, the personal consciousness aware of being a particular ‘I’; and finally manas, which as the seat of the desire to perceive or act, gives
rise to and is the organizing principle of the senses. The senses, the *indriya*, of which there are ten – five of perception and five of action – are the faculties of the mind which enable it to perceive and act. They are not physical organs, ‘but the faculty of mind operating through that organ as its instrument’ (Woodroffe 1974:59). The five senses of perception, in descending order are: hearing, touch, sight, taste, and smell. The five capacities for action, the actions the self makes in response to sensation, are: mouth (speaking), hands (grasping), legs (walking), anus (excretion), and genitals (procreation). At this stage however, the physical organs have not yet come into being, and we are dealing with potentials to realize the desires of mind. As the *indriya* unfold to act upon a material world that does not yet exist, so they bring it into being, since the existence of the senses implies there is something to sense, that is an object of sensation (Woodroffe 1974:58). The five *tanmātra* emerge next, these are the basic potentials or organizing general principles for physical matter, and thus what gives rise to it. They in descending order are: sound, touch/feeling, colour/form, flavour, and odour. From the five *tanmātra* emerge at last sensible matter, the five gross elements, the *panca-mahā-bhūta* which consist of ether (*ākāsha*), air (*vāyu*), fire (*tejas*), water (*apas*), and earth (*prithivī*) and with the emergence of the final element, *prithivī*, the world of physical matter as we perceive it has come into being (Woodroffe 1974:69).

Woodroffe (1974:70) emphasizes that the five *mahā-bhūta* are not elements in the sense of different forms of solid matter, they are rather five different forms of motion in which the potential for physical matter is differentially realized. In the etheric state, motion is unlimited in all directions; in air motion is transverse; in fire motion is upward and expanding; in water downward motion leads to contraction; and finally that motion which produces cohesion, thus leading to the solidity of earth. Each level of motion is perceived through an appropriate sense. The etheric is perceived as sound; aerial motion is perceived through touch as resistance and feeling; the fiery is perceived as colour by sight; the fluid as flavour through the action of taste; and the earthy or solid state is perceived through smell as odour.

It also needs to be understood that in the process whereby *purusha* (spirit/soul) becomes an embodied consciousness, three stages and three different ‘bodies’ are involved.8 The embodied, individualized soul is termed ‘*jīva*’. It is the limited and bounded form which the *ātman* (the soul) takes when it assumes bodily form in the vegetable, animal, and human worlds (Woodroffe 1974:55). From *prakriti*, the 24th *tattva*, emerges the causal body (*kārana-sharīra*), sometimes called the ‘body of bliss’, and also the *Paraśarīra* according to Woodroffe (1974:54). This body lasts until liberation (*mokshsa*) when the soul is freed from its limitations as *jīva* and is returned to the universal

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8 Woodroffe 1974:54. In some teachings, five bodies are included (Feuerstein 2000:157; Govinda 1969:147-50).
soul. The jīva inhabits this body in dreamless sleep, wherein one is aware on waking that one has had a good sleep but remembers only the fact of the experience, of being in a particular state. From this causal body emerges the subtle body (sūkṣma-shāriṇa) which is composed of mind (made up, as we have seen of buddhi, ahamkāra, and manas). The subtle body is inhabited by jīva in the dreaming state. From the subtle body arises the gross or coarse body, sthūla-shāriṇa, composed of material substance. This is the body experienced by the jīva, or self, in the waking state.

From the perspective of this emanationist philosophy, the whole universe in all its diverse forms has been projected forth from an original, undivided Pure Consciousness, and these forms may in turn be collapsed back into it. The individualized, embodied consciousness which is ‘I’ is in this view precisely the same Pure Consciousness that is the source of all, the only difference being that in order to take physical form and experience itself in action, the original Pure Consciousness must submit its self to the contracting, limiting, and finitizing principles that produce material form. To achieve freedom from this bound, embodied state, one needs only to reverse the process by which it came about in order to realize one’s true nature as Brahman or Parama-Shiva. This is precisely what the yogi attempts to do.

Kundalinī yoga and the first 25 tattva in ascending order

In essence, Kundalinī yoga involves the awakening of the Kundalinī force in the human body and raising it through the six cakra (which are located at the base of the spine, the genitals, the navel, the heart, the throat, and between the eyebrows) until she is united with Shiva in the highest cakra at the crown of the head. The six lower cakra are identified not only with psycho-energetic centres in the body, they also represent the stages or tattva of the emanation of the material world just described. The lowest, the mūladhāra-cakra, represents earth (prithivī); the svādhishthāna-cakra, water (apas); the manipura represents fire (te-jas); the anāhata represents air (vāyu); the vishuddha, ether (ākāsha); and the ājnā, represents mind or mental faculties (manas) (Woodroffe 1974:141). Each of the first five levels is associated with the appropriate tanmātra, and indriya of perception and action (Woodroffe 1974:142). Thus the mūladhāra-cakra is earth and the tanmātra of smell, and the indriya of smell (perception) and feet (action). The first five cakra constitute the panca-mahā-bhūta, the five states of matter in motion, from the lowest and coarsest to the most refined, in ascending order.

When Kundalinī moves up through the cakra, a reversing of the process of emanation takes place, so that earth is dissolved back into the tattva from which it emanated, that is earth into water, water into fire, fire into air, and air into ether (Woodroffe 1974:241-2). At this point the components of the
The yogic art of dying, Kundalinī yoga, and the Balinese pitra yadnya

physical body have been dissolved, along with the respective tanmātra that gave rise to them and the indriyas that enabled the world to be perceived and acted upon. The material body (sthūla-sharīra) is finally dissolved back into its origin, the subtle body (sūkshma-sharīra), located with mind (manas) in the ājnā-cakra. Then mind is taken back to its origin – the causal or body of bliss (kārana-sharīra) – when Kundalinī rises to the sahasrāra-cakra and there unites with Shiva. To return to the mundane, the yogi must bring Kundalinī back down to the mūladhāra-cakra, thus effecting a re-emanation of the physical world as each cakra is passed through in descending order.

Woodroffe (1974:82) summarizes the nature of Kundalinī yoga thus:

The Yoga-process is a return-movement to the Source which is the reverse of the creative movement therefrom. The order of production is as follows: Buddhi, then Ahamkāra, from the latter the Manas, Indriya and Tanmātra and from the last the Bhūta. As the seat of the Source is in the human body the cerebrum in which there is the greatest display of Consciousness, the seat of Mind is between the eyebrows and the seats of Matter in the five centres from the throat to the base of the spine. Commencement of the return movement is made here and the various kinds of Matter are dissolved into one another, and then into Mind and Mind into Consciousness.

In brief, Kundalinī yoga involves the 25 tattva from prithivī to purusha, the aim of the practice being to dissolve each of the tattva, starting from the bottom, into the element above it; so that earth is dissolved back into water, water into fire, fire into air, and air into space. Thus all physical matter is transcended and returned to its mental origin, mind (manas). The final step is to transcend mind also and thus unify the remaining duality into one to produce the divine amrita. Each of the first five tattva, the pancha-mahā-bhūta, correspond in the human body with cakra or energetic centres. When the yogi wishes to return to normal consciousness the Kundalinī must be directed back through the six cakra in descending order, thus bringing the material world back into being. At the approach of death, the yogi can use the same techniques to leave the body and achieve liberation (Woodroffe 1974:411, 280-1). Essentially, Kundalinī yoga involves a process of dissolution (laya) whereby the embodied soul (jīva/atman) is returned to the original unity from whence it came. Woodroffe (1974:23) explains:

when dealing with the practice of Yoga, the rule is that things dissolve into that from which they originate, and the Yoga process here described is such dissolution (Laya).

All the 25 elements just described involved in Kundalinī yoga – the five māhā-bhūta, the ten indriya, the five tanmātra, manas, ahamkāra, buddhi, purusha and prakritī (pradhāna) – are not only commonly encountered in Balinese texts,
they are specifically mentioned and symbolized in the Balinese *pitra yadnya*, as we shall see.

Although the three stages of the *pitra yadnya* about to be discussed involve only the lowest 25 *tattva*, in order to appreciate the logic of the whole system, and to understand how yet further mortuary rituals, such as *maligia*, might be added to the basic three, we need to be aware of the existence of several higher *tattva* (the precise number varies, but a total of 36 is usually included in Shaiva systems).

*The Balinese pitra yadnya*

Merely to describe what the *pitra yadnya* observances involve is in itself no easy task. Furthermore my analysis requires more than a brief summary of the rituals, such as are to be found in general and popular accounts. The rituals are complex and extend over a long period of time so that it is very difficult for one person or even a team to observe them all. There is always variation from region to region or even from village to village in Bali. There are many different kinds of cremation depending on the age and status, and mode of death of the person concerned (Howe 1980:318-21; Hooykaas 1976a). Furthermore Balinese rituals are constantly changing over time and what happened in the past is by no means a reliable guide to present practices. Obtaining a definitive ethnographic description is thus a virtual impossibility. Hooykaas (1976a:35) has ruefully drawn attention to these and other difficulties in the way of any comprehensive investigation of the *pitra yadnya*.

For these reasons I have felt it preferable to base my account on my own observances during three separate performances of the rituals in the same Ubud community. I had access to these events as a family with whom I have built up a close relationship over the last decade was involved in all three. The first, held in 2001, was an individual cremation performed for three members of the same extended family belonging to the *Wesia* class. The second, held in 2006 was a communal ceremony performed for a whole *banjar*, in which 36 persons were cremated, including one member of the same *Wesia* family. The third, performed in 2008, was for a single individual of the same *Wesia* family, in this instance, a direct cremation where the body was not, as is usually the case, buried for a period of several months or more prior to the rituals. I have thus been able to observe variations in different types of ceremonies, while

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9 For example, the communal rituals I witnessed in 2006, began on 6 July and finished on 28 August. Planning the events had, of course, commenced months beforehand. The direct cremation described here began on 15 January and the first two stages were completed on 29 January, but due to the family using up its available resources, the final stage had to be postponed for several weeks.
benefiting from the constancy provided by the same location and the same family. I have also had the opportunity to witness parts of several sequences of the *pitra yadnya*, in various locations, but not to follow them systematically.

All the *pitra yadnya* (2001, 2006, and 2008) that I have observed closely comprised three stages: the first is referred to as *ngaben*, the second *nyekah* or *ngasti*, and the third *segara-gunung*. Although Balinese writers Kaler (1993) and Arwati (2007) treat *segara-gunung* as part of *nyekah*, my observances indicate that three different ceremonies are involved and are organized as such. These three basic units may be held separately, although this must be sequentially, and not all three are always included, furthermore other additions are possible. At present in the Ubud area and Gianyar region this threefold sequence seems to be the usual practice; and because of the expense involved, there is a tendency at present to hold them together where appropriate and possible. Although he uses somewhat different terms to refer to the segments, Howe (1980) describes the same threefold sequence as being carried out in the 1970s in Pujung, Teggallalang, indicating a consistency in practice over the last several decades.

Each of the three components will be discussed in turn. My intent is to present the rituals as they are actually performed and might be observed by anyone today, and to offer my interpretation of the possible symbolic significance of these actions. In order to distinguish as clearly as possible between emic and etic perspectives, the discussion of each component is organized into two parts: first the ritual performance is described then following in a separate section is my interpretation. The ethnographic description thus is intended to stand independently of my interpretation. Although this format inevitably involves a degree of repetition, I ask for the reader’s patience since a failure to distinguish between the two would result in a blurring of the parallels with Laya yoga I seek to elucidate.

**Ngaben: The dissolution of the five maha-bhuta**

As is well known, Balinese cremation usually takes place several months or even years after the death of the person, who in the interim is interred in the village cemetery. The first important step in the cremation rituals, after the in-
Attention to hold them has been announced, is to go to the grave site and call the spirit of the deceased back to be united with a symbolic body, which is none other than the *pangawak* described earlier. This opening stage of the rituals, after the lengthy preparations are complete, is termed *ngawangun* (awakening). Up until cremation the spirit of the deceased is believed to continue to stay around the grave and graveyard, and thus is thought to cause trouble for the living if it is left too long in this state. The post-mortem condition of the spirit is like the state of dreaming, people say, so the deceased must now be woken up and called to participate in the rituals about to be performed on her or his behalf.

*Ngawangun* involves the relatives and a priestly officiant bringing to the grave a litter on which are placed symbols of the spirit and the body, the *adegan* and *pangawak*. The spirit of the deceased is then called to enter the symbolic container provided for it, and the litter is carried home where it is welcomed by waiting relatives as if the deceased were returning after a long absence. The symbols of body and spirit are then placed in the *bale dangin* and relatives come to offer food and drink to the deceased. In the case of a direct cremation, where the body of the deceased is kept in the house compound until cremation, *ngawangun* is omitted, as an actual body is being processed. The cremation about to be described is such an example. It begins with calling the spirit from the *pura dalem* (the village temple associated with the spirits of the dead) not the grave; but from this point on the rituals are hardly different, the body symbol being treated as if it were an actual corpse although on a miniature scale.

*A ritual performance of ngaben*

A direct cremation performed in 2008 is described here. I have used the written programme prepared by the organizers (the family of the deceased) as a guide to the many events that took place over several days.  

**Preparation (15-28 January 2008)**

The death took place on 15 January 2008. As the deceased, a woman in her late 70s, was the wife of a village priest (*pemangku*) and thus herself a priest, it was decided by her family that she should have direct cremation. The body of a priest should not be buried prior to cremation as is usually the case with other persons; furthermore, her family was sufficiently prosperous to be able to afford the costs this would involve.

These programmes, although not always reliable in every respect, provide important information concerning the sequence of events, the places they are to be held, the participants, and the offerings required, as well as giving the names of each step in the complicated proceedings. As many as possible of the steps listed were observed and photographed. However, I do not discuss the offerings (*banten*), unless these are specifically mentioned, or their symbolism, as to do so would involve an article of unmanageable length. My account is based on my own observations; the organizer’s programme of events; photographs and notes of the events taken by a member of the family; and comments and explanations given by participants.
Following death, the body, which had been preserved with formalin, was placed in the *bale dangin* in the family house compound. The burning of the corpse took place two weeks later on 29 January. Almost immediately preparations began. These included building various temporary bamboo structures in the house compound, constructing the tower (*bade*) on which the body would be carried to the cemetery and the elaborate animal-shaped sarcophagus in which the body would be burned, and making the large quantity of offerings that would be required. The family, helped by neighbours and the village community as a whole, quickly set about these tasks. The official opening of the rituals (*nyambut karya*) took place on 24 January and was performed by the priest (*pemangku*) of the village *pura dalem* at three o’clock in the afternoon in the house compound of the deceased. Four days later, on 28 January, the next important events took place with the family going to numerous temples in the morning to collect holy water (*nunas tirta*), and in the afternoon to the houses of two Brahmana priests to collect and bring home the *piranti*, consisting of several elaborately constructed symbolic objects said to symbolize various physical, mental, and spiritual components of the deceased (*mendak piranti upakara ke griya*).

The day of burning or ‘throwing away’ (*pengutangan*)

The actual burning of the body, preceded and followed by a number of important rituals, took place on 29 January. The nine steps to be described are not always, as in this case, performed on the same day. Depending on the time available, some may be held the day prior to or subsequent to the actual burning; however, they need to be understood as a connected sequence, performed in the following order. The numbered actions listed here and the times are based on the organizers’ programme; and all the actions listed for the days in question are discussed.

1. *Mendak ke pura dalem* – 8.30 a.m., 29/1/08
At about 8.30 in the morning the rituals got underway with members of the family going to the *pura dalem* to collect the spirit of the deceased,\(^\text{12}\) which was asked to enter a special container termed an *adegan* or *sanggah urip*.\(^\text{13}\) It was then carried back in procession to the house and placed next to the corpse on

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\(^\text{12}\) In the case of persons already buried before cremation (the usual situation), the day of the actual burning begins with the relatives going to the grave very early in the morning before daybreak and exhuming the remains, usually just bones by this stage. The bones are taken one by one out of the grave by the close relatives, carefully cleaned and then placed together in the form of a body, covered and wrapped with cloth, and placed on a specially constructed stand in the cemetery to await cremation later in the day, along with the various symbols of the body and spirit of the deceased which are brought from the house.

\(^\text{13}\) According to my Balinese informants *adegan* means ‘house post’ or ‘support’; *urip* means ‘life’; and *sanggah* means ‘shrine’ or ‘stand’. Thus the object referred to is not simply a symbol of the spirit, but a place for it to reside during the ceremonies.
the *bale dangin* (where it had been lying since death). The soul and the physical body of the deceased having been brought together again, the relatives felt that the dead person was actually present. Relatives said that they felt a strong sense of her personality being there with them at this point. She was welcomed as if returned from a long absence and offered food and refreshment. This welcoming back of the dead person is termed *penyapa* (greeting). Soon, however, the relatives who had just welcomed her home, started to mourn the deceased, who was said to have just died (that is after coming to life for a few minutes, she dies again).

2. *Melaspas petulangan, penyelang margi* – 9.30 a.m.
About an hour later a *melaspas* ritual was performed for the sarcophagus and the tower in which the corpse was to be carried to the cemetery. These structures had been placed on the main road in front of the gate to the deceased’s house compound where the consecration was performed by a *pedanda* *Siwa*. The priest, seated on a special dais nearby, prepared the holy water, essentially involving a process of inner visualization and the recitation of mantra, which usually lasts about 50 minutes.¹⁵ The men who would soon carry the tower and sarcophagus prayed briefly in front of the priest and received holy water when it was ready.

3. *Mandusan* – 10.30 a.m.
Following *melaspas*, relatives inside the house compound removed the corpse from the *bale dangin* and placed it on a specially constructed bamboo couch nearby. The naked body was then cleaned, washed, and decorated. This ritual cleansing is performed by a Brahmana priestly functionary (given the title *ida bagus adji*). First the body was doused in copious quantities of scented holy water (*toyakumkum*), the finger and toe nails were scraped clean, the hair washed, oiled with scented oils and combed. The body was then further decorated with jewellery and flowers. During the procedure the relatives crowded around touching the body and placing money and gifts on it. Finally male relatives wrapped the corpse in yards of white cloth, tied it up in mats, placed it in a plain wooden box, closed the lid, and returned it to the *bale dangin*, where the *adegan* (the symbol or vessel for the spirit/soul) had remained during the bathing.

¹⁴ *Melaspas* is a ritual performed for a new building or structure and is, according to my informants, intended to bring all the elements composing the new structure together to form a new whole and to infuse life or spirit into it.
¹⁵ The nature of the *pedanda*’s rituals are indicated in the text of his daily meditations and preparation of holy water (Hooykaas 1966). Several parallels between these rituals and those of cremation have been noted by Hooykaas (1976a:44, notes 16-18 and 46-8).
Mandusan completed, the box containing the body was placed back on the *bale dangin* along with the *piranti* brought from the *griya* – an assemblage of ritual objects symbolizing different components of the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the deceased; these include the *angengan*, the *pisang jati*, the *tukon*, and other items, including the *kadjang*, white cloths painted with mystic symbols and formulae. The relatives then prayed (*natab*) in front of the *bale dangin* and waited for the *pedanda* to arrive.

*Ngaskara* was performed by a *pedanda buda*. According to the relatives, the intention of this ritual is to re-unite the body and spirit of the deceased, actually bringing the person back to life at least for a few minutes. The ritual involves the *pedanda* making holy water in a manner that to the outside observer is little or no different to making holy water at the temple festival (*odalan*). As at the temple festival, this ritual takes about an hour, and it is accompanied by the gamelan orchestra playing and various ‘entertainments’. As well as the gamelan, there was in this case *wayang lemah* (a shadow puppet performance) and *topeng* (masked dances).

When the *pedanda* finished his rituals, the tiny lamp on the *angenan* (one of the many symbols of the body and spirit of the deceased) was lit to show, according to those present, that the dead person had come to life again. The priest then took his leave. The relatives must wait until the lamp goes out, indicating the spirit has finally left on its way to the other world. In this case, the lamp continued to burn for almost two hours, causing all to wonder anxiously what was wrong and why the spirit refused to leave.

*Pemerasan* involved the grandchildren or descendents of the deceased praying together in front of the *bale dangin*, and this took place after the lighting of the *angenan* lamp while waiting for the spirit to depart.

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5. Kesetra/pengutangan – 2 p.m.

The procession to the cemetery is a highly dramatic affair and the most available to public scrutiny. It creates an intense emotional climax, although it comes towards the middle rather than at the end of *ngaben*. Various authors have described this impressive spectacle, and in popular understandings it is what constitutes cremation, although in fact it is but one episode in the midst of many other less dramatic rituals (Covarrubias 1994; Eiseman 1990; Howe 1980).

In particular it is the emotional tenor of the event that strikes even the casual observer as remarkable. There is a rush of excitement and energy as the body is taken from the house compound out into the road to be placed in the tower. Dozens of strong men are required to carry the tower and animal sarcophagus. Rousing music is played by a gamelan orchestra, and many offerings composed of meat are required for the *buta kala*, or chthonic forces, which are said to be attracted by the excitement. The carriers themselves...
seemed almost possessed by these forces as they push and shove amongst themselves and twirl the tower and sarcophagus around in such a way that it seems that both will inevitably fall onto and crush the surrounding crowd of spectators. One or more relatives ride with the body to prevent it from falling out. Eiseman (1990:122-3) describes the horseplay, struggling, and fighting that break out at various points amongst the participants:

The empty sarcophaguses are snatched up by the shouting *banjar* men and spun and whirled as they are carried in a crazy melee to the cemetery. [...] It is said that unpopular members of the *banjar* who have died are treated to more violent handling in their cremation processions. Someone in the family generally rides on the back of the sarcophagus, and he has to hold on for dear life as it is tossed and rocked to and fro, up and down. If the procession passes the sea, the sarcophagus may even be taken out into the water, amid much horseplay.

Eventually the wild procession reaches the cemetery, where the body is brought down from the high tower, often as Eiseman (1990:123) notes being ‘roughly handled down or carried down the ramp, often fought over to the extent of tearing the bundle apart’. In our case the procession to the cemetery was marked by the usual boisterous behaviour, but no rough handling of the corpse took place.

6. *Ngemargiang tirta ring setra* – 3 p.m.

Once at the cemetery, the corpse was placed in the animal-shaped sarcophagus and the coverings cut open to reveal the face. These actions were performed by male relatives of the deceased. The body was then treated with more holy water – quantities from different sources and types are poured over the face of the corpse and into its opened mouth: to the extent that at least one author (Covarrubias 1994:376) has observed that it seems it will never be possible to set the wet corpse bundle alight. The several different kinds of holy water are poured from small earthenware vessels (*coblong*) which must be immediately broken after use. This treatment with holy water, like the ritual cleansing of the corpse, was performed by an *ida bagus adji*. The body was then covered again with many layers of new cloth. Finally the *piranti*, all the various symbols of the physical and spiritual components of the dead person that had been placed with the body on the *bale dangin*, were put in or underneath the sarcophagus, the lid was closed, and at last the funeral pyre was ignited. In this case the eldest son of the deceased lit the flame.

7. *Nuduk galih lan ngreka* – 5 p.m.

When the cremation fire died down, the next step was to go through the ashes and retrieve any bone fragments that remained. These were arranged as a
human body again. The relatives then carefully ground up some of the bone fragments, reducing them to a paste. This takes some time and as many as possible of the close relatives, both male and female, participate. The bones were ground in a special earthenware container with an *ongkara* symbol in the centre. Finally a little of the paste composed of bones and ashes was placed in a container referred to as a *suku tunggal*.

8. Pamralina – 6 p.m.
At about 6 p.m. a *pedanda buda* began his ritual to make holy water. When ready, the *suku tunggal*, carried by a female relative, was brought in front of the priest and sprinkled with holy water while the assembled relatives also received holy water and prayed. Then in procession the relatives carrying the *suku tunggal* circumambulated three times in a clockwise direction (*purwa daksina*) around a pile of offerings, and then around the temporary altar (*pelenggeh*) for Surya. The procession then proceeded to the *mrajapati* temple.

At the *mrajapati* the family of the deceased placed food on *dapdap* leaves, and holding this in their hands offered the essence of food to the departing spirit. Then they prayed in the *mrajapati*, and then again at the crossroads, carrying with them the *suku tunggal*, representing the deceased, and finally all departed for the sea in hired buses.

9. Nganyut – 7 p.m.
The last step was to carry the *suku tunggal* to the beach at Sanur where it, along with the rest of the ashes, was cast into the ocean. Two final rituals took place back at the village after the ashes had been taken to the sea. The first was *mapepat* to cut the ties with the deceased and finally a *caru* ritual was held to cleanse the areas used during *ngaben* to rid them of negative forces.

Interpreting *ngaben*

*Why is the spirit called back to be reunited with the dead body?*
Before considering how the actions just described relate to the reabsorption of the *panca-mahā-bhūta*, we need to deal with the question: why does the day of burning begin with the spirit of the dead person being called back from the *pura dalem*, invited to enter the *adegan*, and then carried home? Paradoxically it seems, if, as many Balinese would insist, the aim of *ngaben* is to return the components of the dead person to their origins, why should it begin by calling on the spirit of the deceased to return to a body that it has already left? We have seen that the spirit is brought back to the house compound in the *adegan* and placed with the body on the *bale dangin*, whereupon the dead person is greeted as if alive and offered food and refreshment. Next the person, so recently returned home, is said to have died. The corpse is then taken down
from the *bale dangin* and given a ritual bath (*mandusan*). Finally it is wrapped in white cloth, placed in a box and returned to the *bale dangin*, where it awaits the ritual (*ngaskara*) performed by the high priest to re-unite body and soul again. Then for as long as two hours, or at least a few minutes, the deceased is considered by those present to be alive yet again. Why is all this necessary?

The answer, I suggest, is because the spirit needs to be shown how to leave the body in the correct manner in order to achieve the best possible post-mortem state. The Balinese yoga texts I described earlier explain that when death nears the yogi must prepare for the event, meditating in a particular way and conducting the soul through the body until it reaches the appropriate place of exit – in some cases the mouth, the heart, but most often the fontanel, the *siwadara*. Depending on the place of exit, the spirit might go to one of several different heavens or abodes. It is most important not to leave the body while in a state of distress or while thinking of wife, children, or all the worldly things one is leaving. Body and spirit are felt to be very closely attached and that it is very difficult for the spirit to leave its body. Thus the spirit needs to be brought back to the body in order to be instructed in the proper way to leave it. Having been brought back to life, the person is then given another opportunity to leave the body in accordance with the yogic practice of dying.

*Instructing the dead – the kajang, oral instructions, and the ‘entertainments’*

The theme of ‘instructing the dead’ is evident in the mystic diagrams inscribed on various items, such as the *pangawak* (which was not used in this case as an actual body was present), and the *kajang*, lengths of white cloth which are draped over the body. The *kajang* are inscribed with mystical formulae, the meaning of which is not known to ordinary persons, nor have I come across any explanation of their meaning except in very general terms. However a book published by the Pusat Dokumentasi Denpasar (2005), which contains over a hundred line drawings of different kinds of *kajang*, reveals that the majority illustrated are variations on the diagram described earlier incised on the *pangawak*. Although there are differences in decoration and framing devices, and only some diagrams place the letters in relation to a human figure, most are representations of the ten *aksara* arranged in a circle (eight on the periphery and two in the centre), the *triaksara* above the circle, above them an *ongkara urip*, with AH at the bottom of the diagram and ANG at the top. The *pangawak* seems to provide the most basic formula, with some of the *kajang* showing variations on the symbols placed above the *triaksara*. For example Number 63, where above the *triaksara* are placed a rectangle, a six-sided star, and then two *ongkara urip* placed head to head, while above this, at the top, is the ANG symbol.\(^{16}\) Thus it seems evident that the *kajang*, like the *pangawak*, provides

\(^{16}\) The *kajang* illustrated in Wirz (1928: Figures 16, 17, 20, 21, 24, and 25) also conform to this general pattern.
the dead person with a summary of the yogic knowledge necessary to leave
the physical body in the yogic manner, collapsing back the multiplicity of the
physical world to the duality of \textit{AH} and \textit{ANG}, but this time separating them
so that the union of \textit{purusha} and \textit{pradana}, spirit and body, is reversed, thus
freeing the spirit from material embodiment.

The relative positions of the letters and symbols in ascending order, and
the relationship made to the human body (as in Numbers 111, 112, and the
\textit{pangawak}) indicate that the process of collapsing the letters relates to places in
the body – the \textit{dasaksara} at the base of the trunk, moving upwards to the base of
the throat, where the \textit{ongkra urip} is placed. This points to the system of \textit{cakra} in
the body, moving from the \textit{mūlādhāra} to the \textit{vishuddha-cakra} (the throat \textit{cakra}).\footnote{I suggest that the \textit{cakra} can be correlated with the Balinese \textit{aksara} thus:
a. The \textit{mūlādhāra-cakra} (earth) – the \textit{dasaksara} and the five directions;
b. The \textit{svādhisthana-cakra} (water) – the \textit{panca aksara};
c. The \textit{manipura-cakra} (fire) – the \textit{triaksara};
d. The \textit{anāhanta-cakra} (air) – \textit{ANG} and \textit{AH}, however they are placed outside the line of ascent – at
the top and the bottom respectively, to indicate the reversal that must take place at death;
e. The \textit{visthuddha-cakra} (ether/space) – the \textit{ongkara urip}; at this point the \textit{panca-mahā-bhūta} are
absorbed and above this is mind.

The \textit{dasas} and the \textit{panca-aksara} can be counted on the same diagram, thus there is no need to
represent the \textit{panca aksara} separately, which would obviously prove difficult in terms of space.}

Furthermore, in view of the correlation of the \textit{panca-mahā-bhūta} with the \textit{cakra}
referred to earlier, this represents the collapsing back of the \textit{panca-mahā-bhūta} to
the most subtle state, \textit{akasha} (ether). Thus by reaching the throat \textit{cakra}, the five
states of matter have been dissolved. By virtue of the yogic knowledge now
imparted to him or her, the dead person is able finally to leave the physical
body, for this has been reabsorbed back to its origins through yogic concentra-
tion – earth into water, water into fire, fire into air, air into ether.

The theme of instruction given by the high priest is continued in the actual
performance of the rituals. Following \textit{ngaskara}, the ritual to bring the dead
person to life again, the \textit{pedanda} performs \textit{upadesa} (this is not noted on the pro-
gramme but did take place), which consists of whispered advice or instruc-
tion given to the deceased. According to Kaler (1993:65) it consists of instruc-
tions given by the \textit{pedanda} to the deceased concerning the way to perform
yoga in order to take himself/herself to the other world. He further notes that
people are more familiar with the term \textit{upanisad}, to which he gives the mean-
ing ‘whispered instruction from the guru to his disciples’. Presumably the
\textit{kajang}, which is prepared by or under the instruction of the \textit{pedanda}, is an aid
to or a re-enforcing of the verbal instructions. Obviously these instructions
are intended to be secret and are not divulged publicly.

Hooykaas (1976b) has emphasized the role of the \textit{pedanda} in giving advice
and instruction to the dead and has translated extracts from several texts,
but the excerpts he quotes appear to relate to the conclusion of \textit{ngaben} and
reveal little about what might have been divulged at *upadesa*. Various authors have noted the didactic intent of the ‘entertainments’ offered during *ngaben*, such as *topeng*, *wayang kulit*, and the singing or reading of *kekawin* and other sacred texts (Hobart 1987; Zurbuchen 1987; Covarrubias 1994; Eiseman 1990). Elsewhere I have also touched upon the importance of these performances as serving to make both human and supernatural beings aware or conscious (Stephen 2002:77-9). Whether at *ngaben* the themes and morals expanded in these entertainments are intended primarily for the living or the deceased is arguable and worthy of fuller investigation, but this would lead us away from the main topic at issue here. However what is clearly evident is the theme of instruction for the deceased.

The role of *tirta pangentas* (*holy water for ‘shipping over’*)

Many different kinds of holy water are employed in the rituals of *ngaben* and only some of them are prepared by *Brahamana* priests (Howe 1980). My focus in this article is on the ritual actions of the participants, rather than the esoteric procedures of the *pedanda*. However I have already drawn attention to the symbolic items prepared under the supervision of the *pedanda* – such as the *kajang* and the *pangawak* – and the esoteric knowledge revealed therein. In this context, it is necessary also to consider one of the most important forms of *tirta* (*holy water*) used in cremation – *tirta pangentas* – since it is connected with the yogic knowledge imparted to the deceased. In the eyes of many Balinese, *tirta pangentas* is a sine qua non for *ngaben*.

Hooykaas (1976a) has given a tantalizingly brief account of *tirta pangentas* and its preparation that reveals something of the yogic philosophy underpinning it. He interprets the term *pangentas* to mean ‘ship over’; ‘the Holy Water shipping the soul of the deceased from here to the desired side’ (Hooykaas 1976a:46). He also notes it is often referred to as *toya panglepas*, meaning ‘freeing, liberating; presumably from the last bonds chaining it to existence here’. He quotes the following text describing the priest’s actions (Hooykaas 1976a:47):

MENTALLY he must be AWARE that AH (death) is at the underneath end, AM (life) in the middle, and OM at the point, embodying the fire of Pasupati...

THINK that the soul of the dead man relinquishes the corpse and recite the *Dharma-jāti-mantra*, (25) paying homage to the union of the two polar principles of *pradhāna* and *purusha*, matter and mind.

The separation of AH and AM, which are also *purusha* and *pradhāna*, and the position of the OM reflect the inscriptions on the *kajang* and the *pangawak* described earlier. Clearly the same or very similar yogic practices are involved.
Thus via these objects the deceased is instructed in the yoga the priest uses on his/her behalf to free the spirit from the body through the medium of holy water (tirta pangentas).

Balinese author Kaler (1993:31) emphasizes the power of tirta pangentas to separate the spirit of the deceased from the body. He notes that such is the ritual power of this holy water to ‘cut or separate the soul from the human body’\textsuperscript{18} that pregnant women must avoid all contact with it for fear of the baby being separated from the womb, and a miscarriage resulting. Thus separation of body and spirit, rather than ‘shipping over’, seems to be the main effect of tirta pangentas – a separation achieved by reversing AH (purusha) and ANG (pradhāna) in yogic meditation.

\textit{Dissolving the panca-mahā-bhūta – From prithivī to akasha}

We can now turn to the public rituals of ngaben enacted by the relatives and neighbours of the deceased. It is well known, in fact, that ngaben is associated with processing the \textit{panca-mahā-bhūta}. Many Balinese have expressed this idea to me and it is noted in published accounts of the \textit{pitra yadnya}, for example Arwati (2007:1), and Kaler (1997:19). Western authors likewise stress this theme. Eiseman (1990:116), for example, explains:

But the soul of someone who dies cannot immediately leave the body. At first, the \textit{atman} hovers near the body, sometimes as a ghost that can bother the deceased’s family. Only after the body’s five elements have been returned to the macrocosm by burning can the soul completely detach itself from the body. The series of ceremonies that are involved with returning the \textit{panca maha butha}, the five elements, is called, in common Balinese, \textit{pengabenan}.

Howe (1980:304) also refers to the aim of cremation being to return the five \textit{mahā-bhūta}, the gross substances of the physical body, to their origins. But Balinese and Western writers alike generally assume that this means decomposing the body back into its physical components and thus returning the material body to the natural world.\textsuperscript{19}

The idea of decomposing the material elements that compose the dead body so that they are returned to nature is one that is readily understood by Western minds and thus easily accepted. However, as mentioned in the previous section, the \textit{panca-mahā-bhūta} are not discrete elements of which physical entities are composed, but in fact five different states in which matter exists

\textsuperscript{18} Translation of ‘\textit{memotong atau memisahkan atma dengan jasad manusia’}.

\textsuperscript{19} Hooykaas (1976b:40) quotes a Balinese text which suggests a return to the natural world: ‘Thy hair will return to the bushes, thy skin to earth, thy flesh to stone, thy blood to water, thy sinews to roots, thy bones to wood, thy eyes to Sun and Moon, thy head to the sphere [akasa ...], thy breath to the wind. Thy voice returns to earthquake and thunder, thy soul returns to Taya.’
(Woodroffe 1974:70), earth representing the most solid state and ether the most refined. Thus earth – solid matter – can be returned to the state from which it originated – water or a liquid state, and water can be returned to the state from which it is considered to have originated – fire, a less dense, less heavy state. The fiery state returns to air, from which it originated, and air returns to akasha – space, the least dense and most refined state of all. In this manner, physical matter can be collapsed back into its original, most refined state.

Silburn (1988:9) stresses the fact of reabsorption which she likens to rods sliding into each other, or Russian dolls one fitting into the other. Eliade (1969:272) describes the process of cosmic reabsorption wherein earth is dissolved into water, water in fire and so on. Satyasangananda (2005:56) emphasizes:

These tattwas should not be mistaken for physical or chemical elements. Prithivi is not the earth we see around us. Water is not the water we drink or bath with. Nor is fire that which we burn to keep warm and so on. Rather they should be regarded as a consequence of light and sound emanations which are created by different energy or pranic vibrations.

From this more esoteric perspective, the dead body is not reduced down to its elements to become part of the material world, but ceases to exist at all on a physical plane after ngaben is completed. However, if the body were simply left buried without further ritual treatment, the panca-mahā-bhūta would of their own accord individually return to the macrocosm, thus remaining part of the material world (Satyasangananda 2005:63).

If we approach ngaben with the understanding that the panca-mahā-bhūta are being ritually reabsorbed, each into its origin (beginning with earth or solid state matter and ending with ether), and recall that each of these five ‘elements’ is linked to a corresponding cakra in the human body, we can perceive an underlying symbolic logic in the sequence of ritual actions comprising ngaben – one which precisely parallels that described in the quote from Eliade earlier concerning the cosmic reabsorption the yogi experiences at death, as well as that described by Woodroffe as taking place in Kundalini yoga.

After welcoming the spirit home and placing it (now residing in the adegan) beside the corpse, the ritual of mandusan is performed. This is the third event on the programme and takes place inside the house compound, while simultaneously melaspas (listed as the second event) for the sarcophagus and the tower take place outside on the road. Mandusan is the first step in the treatment of the corpse itself (or its substitute). Evidently the washing, cleaning, and decorating of the corpse constitute a process of purification. According to popular explanations, the ritual intent is that the dead person will be reincarnated in a
stronger, healthier, and more beautiful body. However I think there is another aim involved. The process of cleaning and improving on the body (which of course is in fact now in a state of decay) is in my view intended to provide a purified vehicle for the spirit of the deceased to re-inhabit. Mandusan, as we have seen, directly precedes the ritual of ngaskara, which involves the spirit being re-united again with the body and then being instructed in how to leave it, this time in the proper yogic manner. Mandusan, I suggest, ritually creates a perfected body with which the spirit can be re-united briefly; without it the spirit would be compelled to return to a decaying corpse.

It may also be that the first stage of dissolving the panca-mahā-bhūta begins here. The physical body as a whole constitutes the coarsest and most solid state of matter, according to the system of the 25 tattva. It is earth (prithivi; Balinese, pretiwi). Its tanmātra is the potential for smell, its karmendriya is the nose. This ritual cleansing might thus be understood to set in motion the process of returning the body from its solid state to a liquid state – a transformation from earth to water. (Bodies kept a long time before cremation would naturally be liquefying and emit strong odours as they decayed.) From this perspective, mandusan may also be understood as a means of purifying the first cakra, the muladhara (corresponding with earth), ready to begin the process of raising the psychic energy in the body known as Kundalinī.

The climatic procession to the cemetery (Step 5, Kesetra/pengutangan), with its wild energy, rousing music, and offerings for the buta kala, the twirling around of the heavy tower as it is carried with great excitement along the road by dozens of straining, sweating men, is clearly intended to, and indeed does, generate a sense of great energy, heat, and power – one which affects even casual onlookers and tourists. Indeed this is the central spectacle provided by ngaben. A sense of great force and elemental power is tangible to all – a clear manifestation of the power of earth, the first and coarsest of the panca-mahā-bhūta. At an inner yogic level of understanding, we can see that this parallels in the human body the arousing of the Kundalinī energy in the first cakra, the muladhara-cakra.

The tower (bade), as has been pointed out by various scholars and writers, represents the cosmos and its several levels (Howe 1980:311; Covarrubias 1994:371-2; Eiseman 1990:119-20). As the cosmic mountain is twirled around frantically by the horde of competing bearers, it is surely evident that it has the further symbolic reference of the churning of the sea of milk by the gods and demons to obtain amrita, the elixir of immortality. In turn, the cosmic mountain in the human body is represented by the spine (Silburn 1988:xiii) and the churning of the sea of milk to obtain amrita points to the raising of the Kundalinī in the yogi’s body to unite with Shiva in the sahasrāra-cakra to produce amrita. As always in Tantric and Balinese philosophy, macrocosm and microcosm are con-

Covarrubias 1994:364-5. Participants made similar remarks to me about the mandusan ritual.
tained in each other. I would further suggest that the bade is not only a symbol of the cosmos but also of the body of the deceased; and further that its components can be identified with the five yantra, or geometric shapes, associated with the five mahā-bhūta – the square, the crescent, the inverted triangle, the hexagram, and the circle, in ascending order. Each yantra corresponds with an area of the body, from the feet to the head. Compare, for example, the diagram Covarrubias (1994:369) gives of the bade with the diagram Satyasangananda (2000:114) gives of the five yantra in relation to the human body.

Kaler (1993:106-7) explains that the bade should be turned in an anticlockwise direction (prasawya) symbolizing that material energy of the earth (from an esoteric perspective, Kundalini) is being raised up and refined but admits that many people do not understand this and that often the bade is turned in a clockwise direction (pradaksina), which in fact inappropriately symbolizes divine power descending to the earth.

To summarize so far, the process of dissolving the first of the panca-mahā-bhūta begins with mandusan (earth into water), while just prior to that the melaspas ceremony was performed to bring alive the tower and coffin – that is to arouse the Kundalini energy in the mūlādhāra-cakra, the earth center. This earthy energy is then intensified with the dramatic actions of carrying to the cemetery. There the dissolving of earth into water continues with the pouring of many kinds of holy water into the mouth of the exposed face of the corpse (Step 6, Ngemargiang tirta ring setra). Next the cremation fire is lit and the element of water is transmuted into fire in a veritable explosion of fiery energy. This represents the inner movement upwards from the svādhishthāna-cakra to the piercing of the manipura-cakra, symbolized by fire in inner yogic practice.

After the funeral pyre dies down, the relatives extract from the ashes any remaining bones and these are carefully ground up with the ashes. This action of grinding the bones and ashes (Step 7, Nuduk galih) can be identified with the next stage of transformation of the panca-mahā-bhūta – from fire to air. Now all the originally solid substance of the corpse has been reduced to the finest possible particles, ash so light it can be carried on the wind. In the inner yogic process, the heart cakra has now been pierced.

Finally, the ground ashes are placed in a container referred to as a suku tunggal. Along with the tightly wrapped bundles of the remaining ashes, the suku tunggal is thrown into the sea. With this action the process of dissolution or laya of the five mahā-bhūta is brought to its conclusion as the airborne ash is dispersed in the vastness of the ocean. In symbolic terms, the airy state is

21 I found that some participants were aware of the symbolism of the ongkara written on the inside of the vessel in which the ashes were ground and the strings of pes bolong (Chinese coins with holes in the centre) worn on wrists of those persons doing the grinding. Both represent a return to one or zero.

22 For a description of vāyu tattva, see Satyasangananda 2000:66.
transformed into space (ether, *akasha*), and no identifiable physical substance of the corpse remains anywhere on earth. In the inner yogic process, the throat *cakra* has been reached and air/wind is absorbed back into ether or space. The Kundalinī energy then rises to the *ājnā-cakra*, between the eyebrows. No physical substance of the body remains, only mind (*manas*) located in the *ājnā-cakra* exists. *Ngaben* has come to an end, having achieved its aim of reabsorbing all of the five *mahā-bhūta*.

Before the ground ashes are taken to be thrown into the sea, however, a final ritual is performed by the *pedanda*. This rite is termed in Balinese *pralina* or in Old Javanese, *pralaya*, meaning ‘dissolution, reabsorption, annihilation’ (Zoetmulder 1982:1391). Ostensibly the ritual involves the making of more holy water with which the *sukū tungal* is treated. This it seems is the final step, aided by the *pedanda*’s mystical actions, in effecting the dissolution of the *panca-mahā-bhūta*. Furthermore, the use of the term *pralina* seems to explicitly recognize the intent of the rituals.

*The ten indriya, the five tanmātra and the ten vāyu – Reabsorbing the 6th tattva to the 20th tattva*

Before moving on to the next phase of the *pitra yadnya*, I want to return to those objects constructed at the house of the Brahmaṇa priest that are said to constitute symbols of various mental, emotional, and spiritual components of the deceased and are referred to as a group as the *piranti*. These are placed with the body (or its substitute) on the *bale dangin* after *mandusan* and they are included in the *ngasakara* ritual performed by the *pedanda*. Later they are carried with the body (or its substitute) to the cemetery and placed inside or beneath the animal-shaped sarcophagus and burnt with it. I have so far found it very difficult to obtain precise information about these items by direct questioning of informants. I will therefore discuss the scattered hints one finds in the published sources. These suggest that the ten *indriya*, the ten *vāyu*, and the five *tanmātra* are symbolized in the *piranti* and thus are ritually dissolved at *ngaben* along with the *panca-mahā-bhūta*, precisely as is specified in the rituals of Laya yoga.

In describing the decomposition of the body achieved through cremation, Balinese author Kaler (1993:19) refers to the loss also of the *indriya*, *manas*, *buddhi*, and the *ahamkāra*, thus indicating a knowledge of the components of the self as specified by Laya yoga and Samkhya philosophy. He attempts to explain how these aspects of self are not only symbolized in the *piranti* but

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23 *Akasha* is usually translated as ‘ether’ or ‘space’. The essential quality of akasha is, according to Satyasanganada (2000:64-5), that it ‘provides the space for matter to become existent’, it is ‘limitless and pervades the entire cosmos’. The ocean, in the sense of its vast, seemingly limitless space, thus provides a suitable symbol for *akasha*. The ocean, I suggest, is seen as a space or realm rather than as water.
are actually ritually invested into them by the pedanda at ngaskara. Thus when
the piranti are burnt with the corpse, all these components of the deceased
are also ritually decomposed. However, Kaler does not make clear which
ritual item is associated with which particular aspect of the self. Furthermore
he implies that manas (Balinese, manah), buddhi (Balinese, budi) and ahamkāra
(Balinese, ahangkara) are symbolized in the piranti and destroyed at ngaben,
which does not quite match with system of collapsing back the tattva accord-
ing to Laya yoga. So although he is aware of the technical terms connected
with the reabsorption of the tattva, he seems not entirely sure how such relate
to the specific symbolic items and ritual actions of ngaben.

I will focus here on three important items referred to by various authors
– the tetukon, the pisang jati, and the angenan. Other important items compris-
ing the piranti – the pangawak, the adegan, and the kajang – have already been
discussed.

The tetukon and the pisang jati

The tetukon consists of a large cylindrical container made of palm leaf and
filled with many different kinds of seeds, plants, and other materials. Accord-
ing to my informants it symbolizes all the contents of the human body, an
explanation also given by Balinese writer Ida Ayu Putu Surayin (2005:59). In
view of the parts of the body listed by Surayin as represented in the tetukon, I
suggest it symbolizes the ten indriya, comprised of the five organs of percep-
tion and the five organs of action. The following parts are mentioned: the
head, the eyes, the ears, the nose, the prerai, the neck, the body and its contents,
and hands and legs, which I count as ten items. The five organs of perception
(jñana-indriya) consist of: taste, sight, hearing, smell, and touch, correspond-
ing, I suggest, with head = tongue and thus taste; eyes = sight; ears = hearing;
nose = smell, leaving only touch which may pair with prerai or with ‘neck’.
Prerai is a term used to refer to a thin sliver of sandalwood inscribed with a
face (of the deceased) and thus might be used appropriately to symbolize any
faculty belonging to the face – for instance, speech. The organs of action (kar-
mendriya) consist of the organ of speech, which thus might be matched with
the prerai, the organ of reproduction (the genitals), and the organ of excretion
(the anus), which could be represented by ‘the body and its contents’, and
finally the hands and feet, both of which are explicitly listed by Surayin. Only
the neck, which by default would represent touch, seems hard to explain.
The parts of the body chosen for symbolization (they could have been, for
example, fingers and toes, arms, shoulders, hair, teeth, cheeks, heart, lungs,
muscles, bones, blood, and so on) and the fact that they represent 10 different
entities indicate to me that the ten indriya are intended.

According to Surayin (2005:67), another item termed the pisang jati has the
same contents as the tetukon but the container is different, and it is decorated
The yogic art of dying, Kundalini yoga, and the Balinese pita yadnya

with a banana shoot with leaves attached. Kaler (1993:61) is of the opinion that the pisang jati symbolizes the ‘true self’ or ego (keakuan) on account of its name, but does not use the term ahankāra (the ‘I’ maker). However, I think that the ten vāyu (Balinese, bayu) (ten winds or breaths) might be represented here, since like the tetukon it has ten components. Although Kaler (1993:64) refers to the dasa bayu, he indicates that they are represented on the kajang. Clearly the ten prana or breaths in the body would be very difficult to symbolize in a concrete manner, so it would be easier just to follow the symbolism of the body as represented for the ten indriya. The dasa bayu are often mentioned in Balinese texts, and although they have not been mentioned specifically earlier in the article as part of the process of dissolving the tattva in Laya yoga, the concept of the ten breaths or life forces is a classic yogic one. The breaths belong to the body and therefore it seems entirely appropriate that they are symbolized and dissolved along with the physical body.

The angenan

The angenan, also included in the piranti, is a curious little structure with a half coconut as a base and an arm holding a small lamp, while at the top is a four sided, diamond shaped structure composed of four different coloured strings. According to Covarrubias (1994, 1937:367), the coconut symbolizes the heart, the upright stick with the structure of coloured strings represents the brains, and the little lamp, the soul. As a whole it ‘is supposed to commemorate the love and remembrance of the dead person’ (Covarrubias 1994:367-8). According to Kaler (1993:61), angenan means hati (the seat of the emotions) or manah (mind). Zoetmulder (1982:96) confirms this, giving the meaning of angenan as ‘thoughts, reflections; the seat of thoughts, intellect, mind, heart, spirit’. Similarly Surayin (2005:18) notes that angenan represents mind or the spirit (batin, atau jiva). She further notes that the four sides and the four colours of the string structure stand for the four directions.

The symbolism of the four directions in Bali always indicates in fact five directions, since it always includes a centre, the fifth point; Hooykaas (1974:3) has discussed in detail the prominence of fivefold symbolism in Bali. Accordingly, I suggest that the symbolism of the angenan is five in number and refers to the panca-tanmātra – the five subtle elements, the ideas, or mental forms that give rise to the five gross elements. In Laya yoga reabsorbing the five tanmātra is an essential part of dissolving the tattva as they constitute the next five tattva above the panca-mahā-bhūta. The concept involved is a difficult one

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24 Feuerstein (2000:224) notes that ten types of breath in the body are described in the classic yoga texts: prāna; apāna; vyāna; udāna; samāna; nāga; kūrma; kri-kara; deva-datta; and dhanam-jaya. The Wrhaspati tattva (1995:71), a text well known in Bali, gives precisely the same names to each of the ten wayu (bayu). This is another clear indication of the familiarity of Balinese texts with classic yogic concepts, especially those related to Kundalini yoga.
for Westerners since it proposes that coarse, physical matter arises from mental forms. Each of the five mahā-bhūta has a tanmātra or subtle principle from which it emanates. For example, the lowest, prithivī (earth) arises from the jñāna-indrya of smell (that is, the mental capacity to experience smell) which in turn creates the tanmātra of smell, that is to say the subtle element or principle that gives rise to physical matter (something that can be smelled). Explaining the precise nature of the five tanmātra is clearly no easy matter. They are thought forms or subtle elements, not physical experiences, just as the jñāna-indriya are not the physical organs possessed by the body, but mental principles that underlie the capacity for sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste. However in attempting to explain them, or indeed in trying to understand them, it makes sense that people might describe the tanmātra as the seat of emotions and thoughts, even if this is not quite accurate from an esoteric perspective.

Howe (1980:303) in his detailed analysis of death and cremation makes reference to the tanmātra and admits his difficulty in getting any clear account from his informants as to what the tanmātra constituted. His account is particularly interesting because the community in which he carried out fieldwork traditionally perform their death rites without the presence or assistance of Brahmaṇa high priests. One might expect, therefore, that their rituals owed little or at least a minimum to the abstract philosophies of the literati. Yet the tanmātra, which derive from Samkyha philosophy and Laya yoga, are specifically symbolized in their rituals. Furthermore, the rituals described by Howe consist of the three basic phases described here, which as we shall see later, clearly follow the order of the dissolving of the tattva. Howe (1980:303) notes that the tanmātra are elsewhere described as the invisible essence of the panca-mahā-bhūta, but suggests that his informants’ statements might best be summarized as meaning ‘thoughts and feelings’.

I suggest that the angeinan represents the tanmātra – since they are indeed the thoughts or mental forms that give rise to physical substance. Kaler, in my view, is mistaken in stating that the angeinan represents ‘mind’ (manas, Balinese, manah). Manas is not directly connected with the panca-mahā-bhūta, indeed it is the purely mental tattva from which evolve the indriya. As we shall see in the next section, it is not until the second phase of the pitra yadnya, nyekah, that manas is dissolved. The angeinan, I would agree with Howe, does represent thoughts and feelings, in the sense of those mental forms that give rise to the existence of material substance. I disagree with Covarrubias, however, who believed that the love and remembrance or individual feelings of the deceased were symbolized by the angeinan, although such was clearly a reasonable interpretation on the basis of the explanations he had from his informants.

Regardless of the exact location of each element – and it may be that my identifications need to be revised – the symbolizing at ngaben of the ten vāyu, the ten indriya and the five tanmātra, as well as the five mahā-bhūta, clearly
indicate Balinese knowledge of the components of the self according to Laya yoga and the ascending order of tattva that it postulates. With the processing of each of these components through the rituals of ngaben, a re-absorption of the first 20 tattva is achieved, precisely in the manner prescribed for the yogi at death (Woodroffe 1974). However, at the completion of ngaben five tattva still remain to be processed.

Nyekah: The dissolution of the subtle body and of manas

Although the throwing of the ashes into the sea brings ngaben to an end, there are still two more phases of the pitra yadnya to follow. One might well wonder why it is that after such an elaborate treatment of the physical body any further rituals are necessary. Yet as we have seen, according to Tantric philosophy (Woodroffe 1974) the individualized soul (jīva-atman) possesses three bodies – the material body (sthūla-sharīra), the subtle body (sūkshma-sharīra), and the causal or body of bliss (kārana-sharīra). The physical body dealt with in ngaben is only the first, coarsest, and outermost of these three shells. The second phase, nyekah, as we shall see, is devoted to the subtle body.

Today nyekah usually follows directly on ngaben. Some scholars have called nyekah a second cremation, since it subjects the spirit of the deceased to further ritual treatment that in many ways seem to parallel closely with that of ngaben. In the case of the cremation I have been describing here, nyekah followed directly. After the ashes from ngaben were cast into the ocean at about seven in the evening, relatives waiting back in the village were informed by phone that they could now complete the final two steps, mapegat (to cut the ties with the deceased) and a caru ritual (to cleanse the area used), so that ngaben could be brought to a close and nyekah could begin.

A ritual performance of nyekah

1. Nganget don bingin – 9 p.m. (of the same day)

On the way home from the beach, having consigned the ashes of ngaben to the ocean, relatives stopped at the village crossroads to cut leaves from the huge banyan tree growing there. The leaves are cut down with a knife tied to a long stick and must be caught on a bamboo litter such as that used to carry a body. The leaves were taken back to the house temple of the deceased, where three
leaves were selected to be placed in two specially prepared containers termed *puspa* (flowers). The *puspa* resemble the *adegan* symbols used in *ngaben* and likewise serve as receptacles for the spirit of the deceased occupy. No physical substance of the deceased, however, is now present. The *puspa*, which are made at the *griya*, contain flowers and fruit, and the banyan leaves are added to them by the officiating *Brahmana* priest.  

2. *Pasegeh – 9.30 p.m.*

The two *puspa*, now containing the banyan leaves, were carried out of the house temple and welcomed with a *segehan* offering (used for ritual greeting before entry to the house or temple) in the *natah* (the central ground of the house compound).


Following the *segehan* offering, the *puspa* were carried in a *pradaksina* (turning from left to right) direction around a large group of offerings placed in front of a stand (*petak*) specially constructed for the occasion and located next to the *bale dangin* (where the body of the deceased lay during *ngaben*).


The *puspa* were then placed on the *petak* with various offerings. Also placed there was the *benko*, a miniature version, about a metre and a half high, of the *bade* (tower) used to carry the body to the cemetery at *ngaben*.

5. *Katuran pangider-ider – 10 p.m.*

When the *Brahmana* priests were ready to start their rituals, the signal was given and music began to play, while masked dances (*topeng*) and the shadow puppet performances (*wayang lemah*) commenced.


A *pedanda buda* and a *pedanda siva* prepared holy water and consecrated (*melaspas*) the *bengko*. According to participants, the spirit of the deceased was then summoned by the priests and asked to enter the *puspa*, and a candle was lit to signify that the spirit was now united with the *puspa* and thus actually present, as at *ngaben*. After giving whispered instructions to the spirit, the priests

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26 There were two *puspa* used in these rituals. They appeared to be treated identically, but there may have been minor yet significant differences that went unobserved. It seems likely that one represented the subtle body and the other the spirit of the deceased. There is no doubt, however, that they are symbols of the deceased. I have yet to collect more detailed information about the *puspa* and have so far come across no explanation of why there are two. Howe (1980:314) in his very detailed description of the *pitra yadnya* notes that in the community he studied, two *puspa* were used, but does not offer an explanation why.
departed, leaving the relatives and guests to wait until the candle died out, signifying the spirit had finally left on its journey to the other world – again much as had been done at ngaben.

7. Penguttruan – 10 p.m.
Two Brahmana scholar/priests (walaka) read kekawin (religious poetry) related to the theme of the occasion. This occurred simultaneously with the other performances.

8. Pralina – 12 p.m.
When the candle finally went out at about midnight, the pemangku of the village pura dalem performed pralina, involving the recitation of mantra and sounding his bell (ghenta). This according to participants signified that the remaining symbolic substance of the deceased, the subtle body (Balinese, suksma sarira) represented by the puspa, could now be ritually decomposed.

9. Nguyeg sekah – 1 a.m.
The puspa were taken down from the petak and the relatives pulled them apart and burnt a small amount of their contents. But unlike ngaben, this took place not in the cemetery but in the natah of the house compound, and the burning was done with sticks of incense. Furthermore it needs to be kept in mind that no actual physical substance of the deceased is present throughout these rituals – the contents of the puspa were leaves and flowers.

After the material from the puspa was reduced to ashes, the ashes were ground in an earthenware vessel by the relatives, with as many as possible participating, similar to ngaben. Finally, a little of the ground ashes was placed in two yellow coconuts (bungkak gading) which formed the base of new containers referred to as suku tunggal. These were then placed on the petak. Relatives offered food one last time to the deceased, placing two leaves of dapdap with offerings containing food on their hands, and waving the essence (ngatab) toward the suku tunggal. The suku tunggal were put in the benko and carried three times in a clockwise direction (purwadaksina) around a group of offerings and leave was taken (mapamit). Next the benko was carried to the crossroads, where leave was taken again (mapamit). Finally the benko was loaded onto a truck and taken to the beach.

10. Nganyut – 2 a.m.
At the beach of Goa Lawah, offerings were made to the sea, holy water was sprinkled over the suku tunggal; the participants prayed and received holy water. Finally, the ashes in their containers were thrown into the sea and everyone returned home as it was now nearly daylight.
Interpreting nyekah

In nyekah we see the spirit of the deceased summoned back yet a second time and asked to inhabit a symbolic body, which is then ritually decomposed through fire, grinding and finally throwing the ashes into the ocean, in much the same manner as at ngaben. However, there are significant differences. The decomposition takes place not in the cemetery but in the natah of the house compound, and it begins with fire, not water. The puspa, the new symbolic body, is placed on a specially constructed new stand (petak) not the bale dangin. The vehicle used to carry the suku tunggal, the benko, is but a miniature version of the tower used in ngaben and is decorated in white, yellow, and blue, in contrast with the colourful bade. Most remarkably, no actual substance or even a symbol of the physical body is present. The puspa, the receptacles the spirit is summoned to enter and vivify, are made from flowers and fruits, and the term itself means ‘flower’. As at ngaben, the presence of the spirit is indicated by a light, however this time there is no angenan but only a simple candle and when it dies out, the spirit is thought to have left again. What has been achieved?

Dissolving the subtle body

Knowledgeable Balinese state that the puspa represents the subtle body of the deceased and that the banyan leaves that are placed in them represent karma – the accumulated deeds of the deceased and the moral force they contain (Kaler 1993:126-9). The aim of nyekah is to separate the spirit of the deceased from the subtle body and to destroy the negative karma which the subtle body carries.

Kaler explains (1993:115-6; my translation):

In the cremation ritual the body or the stula sarira (the physical body) constitutes the subject of the ritual. But in the atma wedana (nyekah) ritual what is being dealt with is the suksma sarira or the subtle body.

The suksma sarira has subtle form … it is to this body that karma of the dead person is attached. This karma constitutes dirt which soils the subtle body. With the disappearance of the subtle body and the karma that adheres to it, it is to be hoped that the soul of the dead person will be completely purified.

Likewise, Arwati (2007:2) observes that in nyekah the subtle body (suksma sarira) is dissolved. This is entirely in keeping with Woodroffe’s account of Laya yoga, as we have seen. Once the material body is dissolved back to its origins and thus ceases to exist, the spirit inhabits the subtle body (sūkshma-sharīra), which contains mind (consisting of manas, ahamkāra, and buddhi) and also carries the person’s karma. The next task for the yogi is to pierce the sixth cakra, the ājnā, containing mind (manas).
From this perspective, the reason for calling back the spirit and asking it to inhabit another symbolic body (as in *ngaben*) can be understood as offering an opportunity to the spirit of the deceased to participate consciously in the yogic process of dissolving the subtle body. This involves nothing less than transcending mind (*manas*), ego (*ahamkāra*), and higher intellect (*buddhi*), and if achieved, also means freedom from the consequences of karma.

The *pedanda*, I suggest, brings the spirit back to show it how to pierce the sixth *cakra* through the mental concentration of yoga. The completed *puspa* symbolizes the subtle body, containing mind and karma. The spirit is invited to enter the *puspa*, and then shown how to dissolve this second sheath. The relatives act out destroying the subtle body by burning with incense the contents of the *puspa*, grinding the ash, and finally throwing the ash into the sea – as is done with the coarse material elements of the corpse at *ngaben*. Water is not used in this process, the material is directly set alight and to indicate the more subtle level involved, bundles of lighted sticks of incense are used to do the burning. Furthermore the whole process takes place in the house compound, not the cemetery. All this indicates that much more subtle, pure entities are being dissolved than at *ngaben*.

*Reabsorbing manas (mind), ahamkāra (ego) and buddhi (higher intellect)*

However the actions of burning, grinding and throwing into the ocean are still present. This might suggest, in view of my previous arguments, that the subtle body consists of fire, air, and space. Indeed Kaler (1993:116) states that the subtle body is composed of *teja*, *bayu*, and *akasa*. I think, however, that this may not be accurate since all the symbolism of *nyekah* indicates that another, higher level of ritual processing is taking place. Furthermore, the system of the 25 *tattva* requires that all physical substance has ceased to exist at the level of *manas* (mind) and the subtle body. I suggest that the threefold decomposition at *nyekah* involves *manas*, *ahamkāra*, and *buddhi*, the three components of the *tattva*, *manas*. Arwati (2007:2, 92) in fact refers specifically to the *antahkarana*, meaning ‘the inner instrument’, a Sanskrit term used to refer to *manas*, *ahamkāra*, and *buddhi* as a unit (Feuerstein 2000:26), although she does not refer to them separately. Kaler (1993:19) does mention *‘manah, budi, ahangkara’* but with reference to *ngaben* not *nyekah*. Both authors give the impression that they are employing terminology they do not fully understand, yet the fact that they are acquainted with these terms at all is significant in indicating Balinese familiarity with the system of the 25 *tattva* and its connection with the *pitra yadnya*.

With the transcending of mind, ego, and higher intellect, all sense of individuality is extinguished and the effects of karma are also left behind. The logic of the *tattva* system further suggests that if five provided the symbolic number significant for *ngaben*, referring to the *panca-mahā-bhūta*, then three provides the motif for *nyekah*, referring to *manas*, *ahamkāra*, and *buddhi*. I
believe that this is symbolized in the bade used to carry the physical body at ngaben, and the benko, the smaller structure used at nyekah. The first, I have already argued symbolizes the physical body of the deceased, composed of the panca-mahā-bhūta. It thus consists of five parts and is decorated with five colours, and usually has a photo of the deceased attached to it. The benko is much smaller, it consists of three parts and is decorated with three colours (white, gold, and blue), representing the subtle body, which as we have seen is composed of three parts. It carries no photograph of the deceased, indicating, I suggest, that the ego (ahamkāra) has now been dissolved.

Dissolving karma
A difficulty with which both Kaler and Arwati attempt to grapple is that if the dissolution of the subtle body results also in the dissolution of karma, then it is hard to understand how it is that most people in fact are believed to reincarnate back on earth, usually within their own family. Arwati (2007:2-3), once again indicating a somewhat imperfect understanding of the tattva system, suggests that even after the dissolution of the subtle body, the purusha atma is still covered by the antahkarana as a form of prakṛti. In her view this link to material existence means that the karma of the deceased still exists and compels the spirit to reincarnate. In contrast, Kaler emphasizes the role of nyekah in removing karma. However he modifies his position by stating that no one really knows but we hope this is the case, and that the level achieved will depend upon the sincerity of the participants and the level of spiritual development of the deceased (Kaler 1993:143-4). In other words, the majority of people will not in fact be freed of their karma. I will return to this apparent difficulty in the next section.

Despite the problems of interpretation and points of disagreement I have discussed here, it is nevertheless evident that the aim of nyekah is understood by knowledgeable Balinese as the ritual dissolving of the subtle body and karma, and of mind, ego, and the higher intellect. In all these key respects, it clearly follows the dissolution of the tattva as practised in Laya yoga.

Segara-gunung: Dissolving the final sheath, and the return to pradhāna and purusha

The third stage of the pitra yadnya, which for reasons of length I shall discuss only briefly, is referred to as segara-gunung (ocean/mountain) or ngajar-ajar (meaning ‘teaching or guidance’ according to Kaler 1993:145). It involves calling back the spirit of the deceased for a third time. This time the spirit is summoned from the ocean close to Goa Lawah. It is requested to enter a tapakan constructed primarily from flowers and similar to the tapakan used
at temple festivals for the visiting deities to occupy. The tapakan are carried to the temple at Goa Lawah, where they receive holy water from the pedanda who summoned the spirit from the ocean. Following this, they are taken to various places to receive holy water in Besakih Temple, located on the slopes of Mount Agung, Bali’s highest mountain. Finally, they are carried home to the house compound of the deceased. The now purified spirit, considered to have become a divine being, is formally installed in the house temple as a deified ancestor where it will in future receive worship along with the other ancestral spirits, however not as an individualized soul but as an undifferentiated part of the ancestral host. Strangely enough, although it has lost all individual characteristics, it is still differentiated on the basis of sex as there is one place for males and one place for females at the house temple. Yet Balinese believe that men may be reincarnated as women and likewise women as men. Nevertheless, the deified ancestors worshipped at the house temple are referred to as bhatarabhatari – gods and goddesses. Furthermore, people expect that these ‘deities’ will before too long reincarnate in children born into the family.

At this point it might appear that my arguments concerning the ritual process of dissolving the tattva associated with Laya yoga now break down. However, we need to look more deeply at the symbolism involved in segara-gunung.

Interpreting segara-gunung

Pradana and purusha
Many well-informed Balinese can explain that the cave, Goa Lawah, represents pradana (Balinese spelling), the female cosmic principle, and the mountain, purusha, the male cosmic principle. During my early fieldwork, long before I formulated the arguments developed here, one of my key Brahmana informants, the late Ida Bagus Sutarja, a famous mask maker and scholar, explained to me, in fact much to my astonishment at the time, that the cave, Goa Lawah, represented female power, and the mountain, Mount Agung, male power, or indeed Uma and Shiva. Since that time I have heard many Balinese express similar ideas. Thus to take the spirit of the deceased to Goa Lawah and then to Mount Agung is to return it to its origins, to the lingam-yoni from

27 Tapakan is a term used in general to refer to an object which temporarily becomes the vehicle for a spirit entity to enter and thus manifest in the physical world. There are two tapakan for each deceased person but I am at present unable to explain this dual symbolism.

28 I state this on the basis of actual examples known to me of this being determined in seances to ascertain the identity of the reincarnating spirit of a newborn child.

29 Stephen 2005. The erotic, Tantric significance of mountains and oceans in Niratha’s poetry has been emphasized by Rubinstein (2000:125–6). The cave and the labyrinth (many Balinese say that Goa Lawah is connected to Mount Agung by a labyrinth of passages) have in general the Tantric significance of symbols of the Mother goddess (Daniélou 1992:126–7).
which all creation issues.

This precisely matches with the Tantric system of dissolving the 25 tat-tva. Once manas, ahankāra, and buddhi are dissolved into each other, the next ascending tat-tva, the 24th, is pradhāna, the feminine principle which gives rise to matter. Pradhāna is the origin of the causal or body of bliss (kārana-sharīra, para-sharīra), the highest and most subtle of the three bodies assumed by the individuated soul. Thus from the perspective of Laya yoga to return the spirit of the deceased to pradhāna is to effect the dissolution of this most subtle body. Finally to bring the spirit of the deceased to purusha, the 25th tat-tva, is indeed to return the individualized soul to the pure spirit/soul from which it originated. The first 25 tat-tva have now been collapsed back into each other and the soul has been completely freed from all material ties. It has become pure consciousness possessing not even the subtest trace of a potential for material existence, however it is not yet one with the Ultimate. In the Shaiva Tantric system described earlier the first 25 tat-tva represent the emanation of the physical world only; above that are 11 increasingly subtle tat-tva, finally culminating in Parama-Shiva.

In terms of Kundalini yoga, once mind is dissolved, the remaining duality of Kundalini (Shakti) and Shiva is transcended in their union in the sahasrāra-cakra. From this union issues the water of immortality (amrita) – new life – which brings bliss to the yogi experiencing it in inner concentration. Following this climax, the adept allows the Kundalini energy to descend through the six cakra, thus re-establishing the material world. However, when facing death, the practitioner follows instructions to enable the soul to leave the body at this point and thus directly attain liberation.30

The third body (kārana-sharīra)

Although many Balinese are aware of the esoteric significance of Goa Lawah and Mount Agung as pradana and purusha, I have found that few know or admit to knowledge of the third body postulated by Tantric philosophy. According to Woodroffe (1974:54), Shaivas refer to it as the Paraśarīra. Kaler (1993:145) in his description of segara-gunung uses the term para-suksma-suksmasing-idep which in my view might refer to the third body (parama-suksma – or the very most subtle), but which he interprets as saying thank you to those that performed the ritual.31 Hobart, Ramseyer and Leeman (1996:121) refer to a Balinese concept of trisarira (three bodies) connected with the pitra yadnya

30 Woodroffe 1974:412. When the yogi is aware death is close, he or she is instructed to lead the jīva-atman in the heart to the mūlādhāra-cakra and then rouses the Kundalini, leading it with the jīva-atman upwards through the cakra to the ājnā-cakra, ‘there he dissolves all the diverse elements from gross to subtle’ in Kundalini, and then unites Kundalini and the jīva-atman with the Bindu. Finally the adept pierces the crown of the head and leaves the body to merge in the Brahman (Woodroffe 1974:412).

31 In Bali, suksma is a word used to express thanks – matur suksma (Kamus Bali-Indonesia 1978:547).
but give no further details or source for their information. Lovric (1987:81) refers to a concept of three bodies tri-sarira, composed of a sthūla, sūkshma, and kārana-sharīra, but also quotes no source. The Kamus Bali-Indonesia (1978:602) lists a concept of trisarira, composed of the sthūla sarīra, the suksma sarīra, and the antakarana sarīra. The antahkarana meaning the ‘inner instrument’ is a term used to refer to the three components of mind – buddhi, ahamkāra, and manas (Feuerstein 2000:26), while the third body is usually referred to as the kārana-sharīra. Thus it would appear that in Bali the terms may have become conflated and that the kārana-sharīra, the third body, is referred to as the antakarana sarīra. However, this would require more extensive textual evidence to establish; the Jñānasiddhānta (Soebadio 1971:125), for example, uses the term correctly to refer to ‘the three internal organs’, thought, intellect, and mind.

The symbolic logic of the rituals in calling the spirit back for a third time, after having dissolved the coarse body and then the subtle body, strongly suggests that the concept of a third body, whatever the term used for it, underlies the ritual performance.

From the perspective of Laya yoga, the aim of segara-gunung in calling back the spirit of the dead person for a third time to occupy a third symbolic body (the tapakān) is to show the dead person the yogic means of dissolving this third and final body, and thus having been freed from all material ties, the spirit returns to its origin, the 25th tattva, purusha, pure spirit.

Opportunities for achieving final release
We now need to return to the apparent anomaly noted earlier in respect to removing the karma of the deceased during nyekah. As both Kaler and Arwati indicate, this creates a problem in explaining how it is that the majority of people are thought to reincarnate. If, as I have argued here, by the end of segara-gunung the third and final body has been dissolved and the spirit has now become pure soul or consciousness, then how is it possible to take it back to the house compound and install it in the house temple?

I suggest that in terms of esoteric yogic understandings, the spirit taken home to install in the household temple is not thought to have achieved liberation from the cycle of births and deaths nor to have been finally freed from karma and all worldly influence. Rather it has been assisted to reach the highest level of which that person is capable. If we look at what people say about themselves and others, all speak as if everyone possesses karma. So the processing of karma in the pitra yadnya is evidently not considered to be complete in most cases. The deified ancestors still retain some karma which necessitates them to undergo rebirth. However, from the esoteric point of view, all the efforts of the pitra yadnya are not in vain, as the dead person will have many rebirths and deaths through which the yogic art of dying can be studied and finally perfected. While for ordinary people, satisfaction
is brought by the conviction that they have done their utmost to help their beloved dead to reach the highest post-mortem state possible.

In arguing this I have in mind also the Tibetan Tantric Buddhist rituals for the dead, wherein the monks and priests instruct the soul of the dead for several days, attempting to guide it through Bardo, or other world, showing it how to recognize and face the ultimate truth, which appears shortly after death; and then, when it fails to do so, as is usually the case, they continue to guide it until it finds a womb in which to reincarnate (Evans-Wentz 2000). Although the priests do their best to show the spirit the correct way, how much it is able to benefit from their guidance depends on its own state of spiritual development. A few may be ready to recognize the Pure White Light of Truth, the rest flee from it, eventually reincarnating in various worlds, or hells, or on earth, according to their individual propensities. Tibetan instructions concerning the yogic art of dying begin with the dissolution of the *panca-mahā-bhūta* as in *ngaben*; at the moment of death (Evans-Wentz 2000:235):

(8) Then earth sinketh into water: the body loseth its prop [or power of coherence as a unit of organic matter].
(9) The water sinketh into fire: the mouth and nose become dry and parched.
(10) Then fire sinketh into air [as a vital force]: warmth disappeareth [from the body].
(11) Then air [as a vital force] sinketh into consciousness [or ether].

We see here in the Tibetan texts also that the *panca-mahā-bhūta* are dissolved into each other and not returned to the natural world.

In a brief article entitled ‘Counsel and advice to the soul of the dead’, Hooykaas (1976b) quotes several excerpts from texts used by Brahmana priests. Although not sufficiently complete to provide a clear idea of the rituals undertaken by the *pedanda* at *ngaben*, they reveal that the soul is given guidance leading it to liberation, and failing that to various heavens; finally it is shown how to achieve a good rebirth on earth. There are interesting parallels with Tibetan Buddhist death rites, where immediate illumination can be obtained by those who recognize it, while the majority progress through the Bardo region until they finally find new birth on earth. In both cultures, careful priestly instruction is provided for those who are capable of receiving it.32

I think that the *pitra yadnya* offers several opportunities for the deceased to achieve liberation. The advanced spirit might well do so when surrounded by the fire of the funeral pyre. The ‘wall of fire’ (*dindin api*) is depicted in

32 Soebadio (1971:17) has noted similarities with Tibetan texts. This is likely to be more than a trivial resemblance since the Vajrayana Buddhism found in Tibet was also historically present in Central Java. Furthermore the rituals and texts of the *pedanda buda* in Bali combine Vajrayana Buddhism with Shaivism. I have often heard it said by Balinese that the *pedana buda*’s rituals are especially important for cremation (*ngaben*).
rather gruesome paintings of tortures in hell that are affixed to the sides of the stands on which the animal sarcophagus is carried to the cremation ground. This linking of the cremation fire with hell – and although no Balinese seems ready to admit that his or her relative has been consigned to hell, the idea of many hells is certainly elaborated in art and mythology and literature – suggests to me that the impure spirit, burdened by negative karma, is believed to fall into hell at this point. From a yogic perspective, for the advanced soul the cremation fire is purifying, it is Shiva-Agni, an aspect of Shiva; thus some rare spirits may achieve moksha or liberation at this point.\(^{33}\)

When I first came to work in Bali I often heard tales of a priest or sage who directly achieved moksha, leaving behind no physical body. This made little sense to me at the time, except as a popular legend, but now I would interpret it as reflecting the idea that through yogic practice, the adept through his or her own meditation might achieve the dissolution of the panca-mahā-bhūta, as indeed the yogi is said to do in Kundalinī yoga, thus leaving no physical remains whatsoever. So we can see that for some persons the rituals that follow ngaben are not necessary, or indeed are useless, since either they have already fallen into hell or else achieved moksha. But who apart from the deceased themselves are to know this? For this reason, the relatives – and the priests conducting the ceremonies – wish to carry the rituals out as completely as possible, showing the spirit the way back to its origins as purusha, the individualized soul, even though the spirit may not need this or may not yet be able to achieve this level of purification. The important thing is that everything possible has been done to help the dead reach the highest spiritual goal that they are capable of achieving.

The fact that there are yet further rituals, such as maligia, aimed at achieving even higher levels of purification for the dead indicates that the process of purification is not yet thought complete.\(^{34}\) Above purusha, the individualized soul, there are still further and higher levels before the ultimate union is reached. Final liberation is achieved only through unification with Parama-Shiva. Between purusha and Parama-Shiva there are still several more tattva to be transcended.\(^{35}\)

\(^{33}\) Davis (1992:110) emphasizes the purifying role of fire in medieval Shaiva rituals, describing how for advanced adepts the cremation fire is seen as the final purification before achieving liberation.

\(^{34}\) These higher levels are not performed for ordinary persons, but only those of very high status such as royalty (Howe 1980:315).

\(^{35}\) The total number of the tattva tends to vary according to specific teachings, some mentioning as many as 96 (Feuerstein 2000:305-6).
Textual confirmation of the knowledge of Laya yoga in Bali

Whether or not Balinese today, including the Brahmana priests, are in fact aware of it, the pitra yadnya have demonstrably close parallels with the emanation and reabsorption of the world revealed in Laya yoga as described by Woodroffe and others. Furthermore, I have come across no less than three published Balinese texts that outline a philosophy almost precisely matching Woodroffe’s (although I did not recognize their significance until I was close to finishing this article). Even if the explicit connection between ritual and philosophy is lost today – which it may not be – these texts indicate that the knowledge existed in the past. At this point in an already overly long and complicated argument, I do not propose to engage in the comprehensive discussion which these texts merit, but will attempt only to make a few concluding comments. Moreover, I am confident in the knowledge that any one perusing these texts will have no difficulty in recognizing the similarities with what has been described here, so evident are they.

The Dharma Śūnya, translated with an extensive critical commentary by Balinese scholar Ida Bagus Dharma Palguna (1999), is a kekawin text, one of the comparatively few composed in Bali.36 Bali traditions in fact attribute it to Sang Hang Nirartha and there can be no question that the text was and is well known in Bali (Palguna 1999:6-8). The Dharma Śūnya clearly describes the emanation of the tattva from Parama-Shiva to the pāṇca-mahā-bhūta (Palguna 1999:53, 142-5). It also provides lengthy instructions to the yogi as to collapsing the world back to its origin, and even links the process with the seven cakra in the body (Palguna 1999:108-9, 157-8) of Kundalinī yoga, indeed Palguna explicitly identifies the cakra described in the text with the system outlined by Woodroffe.

Palguna (1999:139) also observes that the same philosophy of emanation and return is described in detail in another published text, the Wrhaspati tattva.37 This is a tutur text, a philosophical rather than a literary work like the Dharma Śūnya. It is structured as a series of instructions given to the Sage Wrhaspati by the deity Sang Hyang Iswara, and it consists of nothing less than a disquisition on the emanation of the tattva from Parama-Shiva to pṛithivī, providing extensive definitions and descriptions of each of the tattva. Although there are some minor differences in the tattva listed above purusha, the 25 from purusha to pṛithivī are virtually identical with Woodroffe’s list. It also lays out the yoga practices to be used to return from the lowest tat-

36 Palguna’s work was submitted as a doctoral thesis to the University of Leiden in 1999 and subsequently published the same year in Indonesian.
37 Mirsha 1995. A translation and commentary in English was published by Singhal in 1957. A text and translation into Indonesian was prepared by the Kantor Dokumentasi Budaya Bali in 1995 (Mirsha 1995), indicating the continued interest and importance of this text for Balinese.
tva to union with the highest. Further, it links the different states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep with meditative states (Palguna 1999:152) in the same manner as the Tantric texts (Woodroffe 1974:79-81). There are many more parallels, too numerous to discuss here. Overall it demonstrates beyond doubt a detailed understanding of the Tantric philosophy of the emanation of the tattva and the yogic practices based on it.

A third text, the Jñasiddhânta, published with a commentary in English in 1971, reveals how the 25 tattva from purusha to prthivi are related to parts of the sacred syllable, the Om (Soebadio 1971:149-61). Once again the parallels with the Indian Tantric texts are striking. These three texts alone can leave no doubt that Laya yoga was precisely known in all its philosophical complexity to Balinese priests and scholars. In view of this, I think there can also be little doubt that such is the philosophical foundation of the pitra yadnya (although none of these three texts explicitly make such a connection). Indeed, the parallels between the systems as demonstrated here seem especially remarkable given the lack of knowledge of how and when such a precise understanding might have been brought to Bali, and in view of the usual scholarly assumptions about the nature of Balinese religion (Stephen 2005:2). Although all three texts deserve much fuller discussion, I think enough has been said to demonstrate my points with respect to the pitra yadnya.

The journey as a metaphor for inner experience

The final issue I want to raise, without attempting to resolve it, is the question of popular understandings. Full treatment of the topic would of course require at least another paper. If in the past ordinary people were not expected to understand or question such matters, it is clear that in an ever-changing world many are now eager to do so and others are motivated by their contacts with foreigners to try to offer explanations and justifications for their actions. One enduring metaphor, however, which is also developed in art, literature, and myth, is the notion of the pitra yadnya as guiding the deceased on a long and perilous journey.

In the rituals described earlier there are several indications of this motif in the frequent leave takings, the final offerings of clothes and food, the offerings to be given to various beings to be encountered in the other world, and the statements that the spirit has departed on its journey. Hooykaas (1976a:46) has stressed this element, referring to the idea of ‘shipping over’ contained in the holy water used especially for cremation, and the symbolism of ships and canoes in the shapes of coffins. Covarrubias (1937:368) also refers to the offerings for the soul to take on its journey ‘food for the soul, for its retinue, and for presents to give out along the way’. Howe (1980:308) also refers to these
offerings. The same theme is continued in the ‘entertainments’ considered suitable for *ngaben*, such as a shadow puppet theatre performance of *Bima ke swarga* (Hobart 1987:63), the story of how the hero Bima journeyed to the land of the dead to bring back the souls of his parents. Jacoba Hooykaas (1955) has explored the motif in Balinese folktale and literature, comparing it with beliefs from other Indonesian cultures where it is found widely, as among the Toraja, Kaharinan, and others (see also Hobart 1978). Evidently the symbolism of death as a journey to another world is one which might be found in many cultures, including those of the West.

In Bali, however, we can look to an underlying esoteric significance as well. I am not the first to draw attention to the journey as a metaphor for inner experience. Pott (1966:122-3) observes that in Javanese refashioning of Indian texts, ‘seeking and finding of supreme mystical understanding is described as the undertaking of a more or less dangerous journey’. Rubinstein (2000:100, 125-6) has described in detail the mystical significance of Nirthartha’s journeys ‘that symbolize his search for the Divine’ described in *kekawin*, and she explicitly reveals their Tantric elements. I have discussed elsewhere a Balinese artist’s interpretation of the tale of *Nawaruci* as a journey symbolizing spiritual attainment (Stephen 2005:57-8). Thus to suggest that the prominent symbolism of a journey in the *pitra yadnya* holds the deeper significance of attaining inner, mystical experience seems entirely appropriate.

In Bali more generally I have found that myths and stories mask deeper esoteric meanings relating to yogic philosophy (Stephen 2001, 2002, 2005). The narratives make available understandings suitable for ordinary people, who, we must remember, in the past were in the majority unlettered peasants and farmers. Yet in carrying out the prescribed rituals, ordinary people participated in the yogic process and thus were influenced by it at some level, regardless of the fact that they lacked explicit intellectual understanding of the esoteric aspects.

**Conclusion**

Shaivism postulates a magnificent vision of the unfolding of the universe, beginning with absolute, pure emptiness. From the unknowable reaches of the Void gradually emerges an energy, a force striving to take form; and as it

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38 Kaler (1993:73) refers to the reading of specific *lontar* that forms part of the cremation rituals, referred to as *manutru*. According to him the term is based on the title of a well-known *lontar*, *putru*, which recounts the journey of the soul to the other world, describing the terrifying creatures and other obstacles it will meet, giving advice as to how to overcome them, and on which directions to take. This ‘journey’ also needs to be understood metaphorically on another level as a description of yogic processes.
reaches out towards what yet does not exist, so it brings it into being. In this way pure consciousness eventually takes on physical form, and the limitations imposed by this, and becomes an embodied being. The yogi who understands the secrets of the emanation of the tattva and knows that body and spirit are the products of this process also knows the secret of return. Following the same path back to origins, the yogi can return to pure spirit, purusha, or even ultimately to Parama-Shiva, the final release. It is this subtle philosophy, I have argued here, which underlies the extraordinarily complex Balinese mortuary rituals and provides the conceptual framework which structures them. If the arguments presented here are correct, then we might understand that by means of the pitra yadnya every Balinese man or woman is given the opportunity to learn the yogic art of conscious dying and thus to achieve whatever spiritual destination their innermost desires are fixed upon. For most this will be rebirth, for others loftier goals – each will learn from the experience in accordance with individual levels of spiritual development, and thus on into the countless lives and deaths to come.

When ngaben, nyekah, and segara-gunung are considered separately the overall pattern does not emerge clearly. However, if we view the three as parts of a whole, close parallels with the dissolving of the first 25 tattva become evident. It is well known to many Balinese that ngaben deals with the panca-mahā-bhūta, that nyekah deals with the subtle body and karma, and that segara-gunung involves a return to pradana and finally purusha. Even so, I have found that when offering explanations of specific symbols, most Balinese tend to provide ad hoc explanations unrelated to any overall pattern of significance; thus disjointed and contradictory accounts emerge. In view of my arguments, one important question still left hanging is the relationship of the yoga symbolized in the public rituals of the pitra yadnya with the yoga being performed by the Brahmana priests on behalf of the dead. The numerous complex issues involved here must await another article.

Western scholars have tended to assume that because Balinese cremation rituals are so different from possible Indian prototypes and in themselves very distinctive in nature, they can owe little to Hinduism and much to pre-Hindu or indigenous animistic practices. I have argued elsewhere that Balinese religion as a whole is based upon Tantric Shaiva philosophy but expressed in the specific idiom of Balinese culture. From the perspective argued here, the pitra yadnya provide a dramatic illustration of this broader position, Kundalinī yoga and the emanation of the tattva being quintessential expressions of Shaiva philosophy and practice.

40 Current popular notions about Kundalinī yoga perhaps tend to obscure the fact that it is a key and classic element of Shaivism – even the refined philosophy of Abhinavagupta was grounded in it (Silburn 1988:4, notes 1 and 6). See also Feuerstein 1998:67-9.
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