

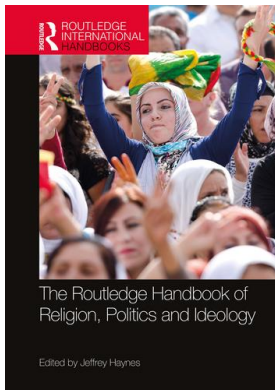
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 27 Mar 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Handbook of Religion, Politics and Ideology

Jeffrey Haynes

Religion and ideology in Sri Lanka

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780367816230-27>

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Published online on: 15 Aug 2021

How to cite :- Peter Friedlander. 15 Aug 2021, *Religion and ideology in Sri Lanka from: The Routledge Handbook of Religion, Politics and Ideology* Routledge

Accessed on: 27 Mar 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780367816230-27>

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RELIGION AND IDEOLOGY IN SRI LANKA

Buddhism

Peter Friedlander

Introduction: religion and ideology in Sri Lanka

This chapter investigates how diverse religious ideologies and political visions of the relationship between the state and religion have developed in Sri Lanka. The main focus is on the interaction between Buddhist conceptions of the state and Sri Lankan politics, but in order to understand the development of Buddhist ideologies in Sri Lanka, it is also essential to consider the ways in which Hindu and Muslim minorities in Sri Lanka have conceptualised the possible relationship between the state and religion in Sri Lanka.

Following Rachik, I shall consider a religious ideology as being ‘a set of ideas that refer to religious and secular tools and accompany political actions and processes in a sustained and systematic way’ (Rachik, 2010: 357). However, Rachik’s definition is potentially problematic in relation to studies of Buddhism and politics. Harris (1999: 1) suggests that there has never been a firm separation between Buddhism and politics since its origins in ancient India. Rachik also makes another vital observation about the circumstances that led to the use of the term ‘ideology’ in relation to religion: ‘Religion is turned into ideology when an elite is in a situation of defending its religion against a political power’ (Rachik, 2010: 357). Following this definition, in pre-modern societies, we may characterise religions as having doctrines, concepts or world views, but, in situations where there are unequal political power struggles between groups who follow a religion and political powers, the use of the term ‘ideology’ becomes increasingly common. In the case of Sri Lanka, examples of the explicit use of the term ‘Buddhist ideology’ have only started to appear since the start of the 21st century, for instance, in relation to Sinhala Buddhist nationalism and development studies (Hennayake, 2006: 48–49), Buddhist–Muslim conflict in Sri Lanka (NuhmCan, 2016: 38–40) and the impact of Marxism on the Sri Lankan monastic tradition (Deegalle, 2017). In order to explore how religion becomes ideology, in this chapter, I focus on key instances where aspects of religion interact with political power struggles in Sri Lanka. This either created systems of knowledge that are now regarded as Buddhist ideologies or were precursors to later Buddhist ideologies.

Central to these discussions has been the role played in Sri Lankan history and politics between contested visions of the relationship between Buddhism and the state, as a focus for Sri Lankan identity. Buddhist visions of this relationship have existed alongside notions of how

Hindu, Muslim, and Christian identities are also integral aspects of Sri Lankan identity. A central issue has been whether Buddhism, the Sinhalese language and Sinhala identity should be the sole central feature of the Sri Lankan state or whether an inclusive Sri Lankan identity should embrace the country's Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities.

Discussions also need to be situated within the context of the colonial period. From the 16th century, Portuguese and Dutch colonialism challenged the status of the Buddhist faith in Sri Lanka. However, British policy was somewhat different. When in 1815 they annexed Kandy, the last independent state in Sri Lanka, they took from its independent rulers the role of the patrons of Buddhism as a state religion. They then created a unified constitution for the whole of Sri Lanka in 1833 and in 1931 adopted a constitution with no separate representations for different religions. In the post-independence period from 1948 to 1956, an inclusive Sri Lankan nationalism was advocated, but from 1956 onwards, there was a shift towards adopting a Sinhala Buddhist nationalism whereby the role of Buddhism became more central in both 1972 and 1978 constitutions. The latter is the current constitution of Sri Lanka.

Buddhist models for religion and the state in India and Sri Lanka

The history of early Buddhism in India shows a complex relationship between Buddhism as a doctrine related to spiritual practitioners searching for spiritual liberation and as a set of practices related to the worldly well-being of people and the state.

One important formulation of this was described by Reynolds (1972) as the 'two wheels of dhamma' (Reynolds, 1972). According to this, the Buddhist *sangha*, the community of renunciate monks, nuns, and male and female novices, played three roles. First, the *sangha* supported its own members in their search for spiritual liberation; second, it supported the *upasikas*, its male and female lay followers; and third, it supported the state as the protector of the followers of Buddhism. The lay followers of Buddhism supported both the Buddhist *sangha* and, via their support for the state, provided Buddhism with state support. This resulted in a synergy, whereby the *sangha* supported the state, and the state supported the *sangha*. Their mutual support provided for the well-being of both the lay and monastic members of both the Buddhist community and the state (Reynolds, 1972: 6–30). However, whilst most Buddhist states followed this model for state and *sangha* relations, there were three models for state governance. Some Buddhist *suttas* presented a model for the state in which it would be governed by a leader elected on the basis of the ability to run the state, called the *mahasamat*. However, a second state model was presented in other *suttas*, which became the dominant model for later Buddhist states. There, the state was governed by a divinely ordained universal ruler called a *cakravartin* (Harris, 1999: 2–6). This model posited a reciprocal relationship between the Buddhist *sangha* and the ruler, where the latter protected the *dharma* through royal patronage of the *sangha*, and the *sangha* provided spiritual guidance to protect the state. Harris argued that a third model for governance was implied by some *jataka* stories, that is, accounts of the previous lives of the Buddha: if a ruler did not follow the Buddhist *dharma*, then the people could overthrow that ruler so as to establish a state run in accordance with the Buddhist *dharma* (Harris, 1999: 7–9). It should be noted that the Sanskrit word 'dharma' (or Pali 'dhamma') has multiple meanings, including ethics, duties, responsibilities, characteristics of phenomena, and religion. Consequently, it is not entirely clear that discussions of *dharma* refer to religion alone or to broader meanings of the term 'dharma'.

A second issue to examine is whether the ruler should patronise one religion or all. Early Buddhist texts describe both instances in which individual rulers favour particular religions and persecute others and where rulers patronise all religions. Overall, from epigraphic evidence, it appears that early Indian state models did not regard it as normal for a ruler to patronise only

one religion, such as Buddhism or Hinduism. Instead, the model was that a ruler should, in a manner analogous to a modern secular state, patronise all *dharma*s, including Buddhism. The strength of this view in the early historical Indian Buddhist governance model can be deduced from epigraphic evidence provided in rock edicts made by Emperor Asoka (268–239 BCE). In these, he had himself depicted as a patron of the *dharma* and of Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and other Indian religious traditions, such as the *Ajīvakas*. However, this clear indication of this early Indian model for how a ruler should patronise all religions was only discovered in the Asokan edicts when they were translated in the 19th century. This historical persona for Asoka was sharply at odds with popular legendary accounts of his life, which had circulated in South and South-East Asia. They depicted him as having been an ideal Buddhist monarch, a patron solely of Buddhism (Gombrich, 1991: 127–136). Roberts (1994) argued that it was the latter notion of the legendary Asokan persona based on the legends of Asoka that was a key element in Sri Lankan Buddhist understandings of the relationship between the state and the *sangha* throughout its history (Roberts, 1994: 57–72).

It is also vital to consider whether the term ‘empire’ was understood at the time of Asoka in the same way as it is now. Thapar (1998) argues that rather than Asoka having ruled over a unitary empire reaching from Afghanistan to South India, his polity included a centrally administered state in Northern India, as well as dependent states and independently governed states (Thapar, 1998: 130–135).

Buddhism, religion, and the state in pre-colonial Sri Lanka

The history of Sri Lanka has often been described as having fallen into a number of periods when different dynasties ruled Sri Lanka from a succession of capital cities. The earliest period is often called the Anuradhapura period (6th century BCE to 11th century CE). This is now seen in Sri Lanka as having begun in the 6th century BCE when a king called Vijaya (the ‘Victorious’) arrived in Sri Lanka along with other settlers from Northern India. This led to the conversion of Sri Lanka to Buddhism when a mission from Asoka converted the Sri Lankan king, Devanampiya Tissa (307–267 BCE), to Buddhism. This account of the history of Sri Lanka is based on 4th- to 6th-century CE Buddhist chronicles, called *vaṃśa* (‘lineages’), including the shorter 4th-century *Dīpavaṃśa* and the 6th-century *Mahāvāṃśa* attributed to Mahānāmā (Gombrich, 1991, 140–142). Scholars such as Wijeyeratne De Silva (2014) have argued that this history was one that represented, in part, 4th-century projections back into the past of Sri Lanka that need to be seen alongside parallel projections based on archaeology, epigraphy, and external accounts of Sri Lanka that reflect other possible views on the island’s history.

Just as the Indian Emperor Asoka has two sets of stories connected with him, based on legends and on archaeological and epigraphical evidence, so too do histories of the establishment of Buddhism in Sri Lanka reflect two different accounts. On the one hand, archaeological and epigraphic evidence, and later accounts by external Chinese sources, present a picture of Sri Lanka as made up of a composite of smaller states. These included followers of both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhist traditions, Jainism, and Hinduism. They also included many settlers from South India who followed Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu traditions and were part of maritime trading communities in the Indian ocean that included North and South Indians. On the other hand, the *vaṃśa* traditions describe the population of the island by North Indian immigrants who were all then converted to Buddhism when a mission was sent to Sri Lanka by Asoka in the 3rd century BCE. A key feature of this latter history is that it provides a model for the establishment of a centralised unitary state in Sri Lanka along the lines of the legendary model provided by Asokan Buddhism. Kemper (1991) argued that the latter model was based on pro-

jections back into the past from a 4th-century viewpoint based on the state then flourishing at Anuradhapura. These accounts in the *Dīpavaṃśa* and the *Mahāvāṃśa* were intended to establish the legitimacy of the Anuradhapura royal court by arguing for ‘two intertwined institutions – the *rajaṅgama* (line of kingly descent) on one side and the *theraṅgama* (line of monastic descent on the other) – that reach back to North India’ (Kemper, 1991: 33).

De Silva Wijeyeratne (2014) reinforced Kemper’s arguments whereby whatever evidence existed about the actual pattern of settlement of Sri Lanka and its conversion to Buddhism was side-lined by the 4th-century version of the history of Sri Lanka in the *Dīpavaṃśa* that became central to Sri Lankan notions of history. Key to this was the notion of establishing a linkage between the Asoka legend, of Asoka as a universal ruler of a unitary central state, to the lineage of the Anuradhapura kings as heirs to a legitimate right to be rulers of a centralised Sri Lankan state (De Silva Wijeyeratne, 2014: 17–18). We can also suggest that this nexus in the relationship between the *vāṃśa* traditions and the politics involving governance from the Anuradhapura royal court matches one of the characteristics for the development of a Buddhist ideology suggested by Rachik, where elites are anxious about threats to their status.

A key element in the *vāṃśa* tradition is accounts of Sri Lanka’s past, and in particular in the *Mahāvāṃśa*, with accounts of the conflicts between the Sri Lankan king Dutṭhagāmaṇi (101–77 BCE) and the Tamil king of Anuradhapura Eḷāra. This story became a key feature of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism in the modern era and now acts as a kind of palimpsest on which different perceptions of identity are overwritten by supporters of different forms of Sri Lankan nationalism.

The next stage in the evolution of Buddhist views of Sri Lanka’s history developed during the Polonnaruwa period (11th–14th century). The evolution of these ideas of the state can also be seen from later Sinhala versions, such as the 13th-century Sinhala Thupavaṃśa (De Silva Wijeyeratne, 2014: 45–48). A notable change is that the key incident in which King Dutṭhagāmaṇi’s victory over the Tamils is justified in the Pali *Mahāvāṃśa* by them not being Buddhists. In the Sinhala Thupavaṃśa, the king is told that merit accumulated in former and future births outweighed his acts of war (Berkwitz, 2004: 248–249). Berkwitz argued that attempts to identify ‘the ideological content of Buddhist histories’ by scholars such as Heinz Bechart and David Scott suggest that in the Sinhalese language versions of the *vāṃśa* histories, the earlier Buddhist model for the relationship between the state and Buddhism underwent a transformation. The *dharma* model with two wheels was displaced by a model with three elements in it, the Buddhist *saṅgha*, the Sinhalese people as an ethnic community, and the state as a patron of Buddhism (Berkwitz, 2004: 147–148 and Scott, 1994: 193).

There were also interactions during the 9th to 13th centuries with Hindu notions of kingship as practised in the Chola dynasty empire in South India and Sinhala notions of kingship during the Polonnaruwa period. In these Buddhist notions of the *cakkavati* (Pali for ‘universal ruler’), ruling through upholding the *dharma* was mingled with Chola Hindu notions of the *cakravartin* (Sanskrit for ‘universal ruler’) and the ruler as *rājadhīrājā* (‘king of kings’) who became supreme ruler by force (De Silva Wijeyeratne, 2014: 50–51). This pattern of cross-relations with South Indian notions of polity also points to the ways in which Sinhala notions of governance and kingship were during this period of emerging ideas about governance in India and South-East Asia.

During the Kandyan period (1476–1815/15th–19th century), there were significant developments in ideas of how Sri Lanka was conceived of as a centralised ideal state. The arrival of colonial powers, including the Dutch, Portuguese, and then the British, heavily disrupted Sri Lankan states and the Buddhist order. On the one hand, this disruption led to the loss of the ordination lineages of the Buddhist monastic community, and, on the other, it must have led to Sri Lankans

becoming aware of colonial conceptions of the state. De Silva Wijeyeratne (2014) argued that the idea of the capital as a microcosm of the state was a dominant feature during the Kandyan period. This concept was also a model for polity in India and South-East Asia during this period. A key element was that there was a strong interaction between the Kandyan kingdom and South-East Asian Buddhist nations. Eighteenth-century South-East Asian Buddhist ideas about the relationship between the state and the *sangha* also impacted the interchange of ideas between Sri Lanka and South-East Asia. A key element was the way in which the Kandyan kingdom re-established Buddhist monastic ordination lineages from Thailand in Sri Lanka in 1753.

Gombrich (1991) argues that the interchange between Kandy and the Thai kingdom of Ayutthaya should be regarded as the last vital development in Sri Lankan Buddhism prior to the British annexation (Gombrich, 1991: 166–169). I would suggest that in relation to Buddhism and Buddhist ideology, it was also a vital stage in the development of Buddhist proto-ideologies in Sri Lanka. This is because it answers both of Rachik's criteria for the characteristics of a religious ideology: it is based on religious teachings and part of a conflict between a religious elite and political power. However, as it was still not part of a process of political negotiations of power, it remains a Buddhist world view not yet developed into a fully-fledged Buddhist ideology.

British colonialism and Sri Lankan polity (1815–1900)

British domination of the kingdom of Kandy began in 1815 following its annexation. To gain local support in Kandy for intervention in the state, the British agreed to continue the tradition of the state acting as patrons of Buddhism. This was the fifth article of the convention following the British takeover. The article guaranteed that 'the Religion of the Budhoo, its rites, ministers and places of worship are to be maintained and protected' (de Silva, 2003: 231). This situation continued until the 1840s when missionaries persuaded the colonial office to sever connections between the colonial administration and Buddhism. However, there was no rapid implementation of this policy due to recognition at local levels in Sri Lanka that the legal positions of the property rights of temples and their lands were unclear (de Silva, 2003: 268). Moreover, dissatisfaction with British economic management and alienation due to the interference with the relationship between the state and Buddhism encouraged riots in Kandy in 1848. This led to a compromise in 1852–1853 when the colonial office formally disassociated Buddhism and the state, but in practice, continued to supervise aspects of state support for Buddhism (de Silva, 2003: 281).

Emphasis on Buddhism as a protector of the state continued to be part of how inhabitants of the former Kandyan Buddhist kingdom saw the relationship between the state and Buddhism. Anna Blackburn's (2010) study of the life of Hikkaḍuve Sumangala (1827–1911) examines how Sri Lankan Sinhala-Buddhism responded following the annexation of the kingdom of Kandy and the unification of Sri Lanka. She argues that monks such as Sumangala maintained involvement in diplomacy with South-East Asian Buddhist states. He and other members of the *sangha* sought to continue the former kingdom of Kandy's linkages with such states. A key feature of this continued pattern of patronage of the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy was that participation in state protection rituals by South-East Asian Buddhists on pilgrimage to Kandy, seen as offering protection to Buddhist states when they returned to South-East Asia in the second half of the 19th century (Blackburn, 2010: 143–196).

Sri Lankan Buddhist nationalist ideology in the 19th century

Buddhist nationalism developed rapidly in Sri Lanka in the latter half of the 19th century. A key issue was debates between Christian missionaries and Buddhist monks during 1848–1873,

which culminated in a meeting in Panadura in 1873. There, traditional Buddhist monastic leaders responded to missionary attacks on Buddhism by articulating arguments against Christianity and the British ideas of the state. Young and Somaratna (1996: 115, 226) argue that a feature of these debates was that Buddhist leaders, such as Migeṭṭuvattē Guṇānanda (1823–1890), focused attacks on Christianity rather than expressing anti-British, anti-Tamil, or anti-Muslim sentiments.

A second phase of debate then took place in response to colonialism which combined anti-Christian rhetoric with attacks on the British, Tamils, and Muslims. This is often associated with Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933), whose birth name was Don David Hewavitarane. Roberts (1997) argues that Dharmapala's writings and rhetoric incorporated strong rhetoric, attacking British colonialists as barbarians and singling out Hindu and Muslim communities as opponents of Buddhism. He discussed two possible causes for this. First, the degree to which it was at that time an aspect of anti-Hindu and anti-Muslim sentiments. Second, it may have been a part of how Dharmapala came to understand how Buddhism had declined in India due to Hindu and in particular Muslim attacks on Buddhism and Buddhist monuments in India such as the Bodhgaya temple in Bihar, the sight of the Buddha's enlightenment (Roberts, 1997). In addition, due to his attempts to get the Bodhgaya temple returned to the Buddhists he came into contact with Japanese Buddhists. Some of their nationalist rhetoric may also have influenced him. Kemper (2015) has also shown that his understanding of Buddhist nationalism and the development of a Buddhist ideology in relation to nationalism were to some extent influenced by his various visits to Japan and his interactions with Japanese Buddhist clerics (Kemper, 2015: 116–186). Roberts also points out the ways in which Dharmapala specifically objected to Muslim and Hindu involvement in traditional Buddhist practices in Sri Lanka. He cites an instance when Dharmapala literally drove a party of Muslim musicians out of a procession that was part of a ceremony in the Kelaniya temple in Kandy in 1905. This was part of his rejection of the religious syncretism, which had been part of traditional Buddhism in Kandy and in Sri Lanka (Roberts, 1997: 1024).

Should Dharmapala's views be regarded as the first representative statements on Buddhist ideology in Sri Lanka? Sri Lankan Buddhists, and some other Buddhists and scholars, do not support such a view. They maintain that Dharmapala was a champion of Buddhism itself and not a formulator of a distinct Buddhist ideology. Against this, scholars such as Roberts and others have shown ways in which Dharmapala's views could be regarded as a political ideology, in particular in his later activities and writings where he views Hindus and Muslims as expressing the espousal of a Sinhala Buddhist nationalism linking Sinhala ethnicity to the need for the state to support Buddhism.

Pre-independence Buddhist nationalism and ideology (1900–1948)

The relationship between Buddhism and the state during this period took many forms, but one prism through which it can be seen is to investigate how scholar monks and social reformers like Walpola Rahula (1907–1977) agitated for the Buddhist *sangha* to take an active role in social reform and engage in political activism. In a study of his life, Raghavan (2011) argues that Rahula played a critical role in redefining the role of the Buddhist *sangha* in Sri Lanka. After being the first Buddhist monk to ever enrol in a lay university, he went on to publicly campaign for reform. He did not do this by preaching in temples but rather by distributing pamphlets he wrote advocating reform in the *sangha*. Then, in the 1940s, he became involved in the struggle for better rights for workers in plantations, which led to his imprisonment (Raghavan, 2011: 119). After his release, he continued to campaign for reform in the *sangha*

and against the role played by rich property-owning monks, and this led to the publication in 1946 of a work in Sinhalese called the *Bhikṣuvāgē Urumaya* (*The Heritage of the Bhikkhu*). It became a fundamental text for reformists in the Buddhist *saṅgha*. He began by stating that ‘Buddhism is based on service to others’ (Rahula, 1974: 3). Raghavan points out that there was an ambiguity in this, and in effect, he was arguing that the role of the *saṅgha* should become service to society, including active engagement in civil society. The 1971 English translation of this book also included the Declaration of the *Vidyālañkāra Pirvena* on ‘Bhikkhus and Politics’ of 1946, which states that

it is nothing but fitting for bhikkhus to identify themselves with activities conducive to the welfare of our people – whether these activities be labelled politics or not – as long as they do not constitute an impediment to the religious life of a bhikkhu.

(Rahula, 1974: 132)

This points to the fact that at the time Walpole Rahula was working on his *Bhikṣuvāgē Urumaya*, the Buddhist *saṅgha* in Sri Lanka was undergoing radical reform. As a result, it became possible for monks to be active in politics. He remained an influential figure throughout his life, and Raghavan points to the way that his active intervention in politics led during 1995–1997 to the defeat of attempts by the Chandrika government to make constitutional amendments to accommodate Tamil grievances about their situation in society (Raghavan, 2011: 128). Raghavan’s conclusion is that Walpole Rahula’s work and his *Bhikṣuvāgē Urumaya* were key points in the development towards ‘the secularisation of the *saṅgha* and its interpretation of Buddhism as exclusively Sinhala’ (Raghavan, 2011: 129). It is also clear that in Rahula’s work at this time, there was a consistent body of articulation of Buddhist concepts in relation to a struggle for political power within an emerging democratic political system clearly developing. This suggests that we can see in Rahula’s work the emergence of a distinct Buddhist political ideology.

Whilst Sinhala nationalism during the pre-independence period was moving towards nationalism based on race and religion, Tamil nationalism’s response was focused on language and culture and the rights of minorities. Perhaps the most outstanding Tamil political leader of this period was G. G. Ponnambalam (1902–1977), who is remembered to this day in Sri Lanka for his advocacy for fifty-fifty representation for minorities and the majority Sinhalese in the government of Sri Lanka. He was from the Jaffna district and, after studying in Colombo, got a scholarship to study at Cambridge University before returning to Sri Lanka and then practising as a lawyer and advocate. He entered politics in 1931 and was first elected as a councillor from Point Pedro Jaffna in 1934. In 1939 he gave a famous speech in the State Council arguing for equal ‘fifty-fifty’ representation for minorities and the majority Sinhalese. From excerpts from this speech, it is clear that whilst he was a Hindu, he was not proposing founding a Hindu state but rather was concerned about the rights of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka.

And what is the position of the Tamil community? I want to repeat that our position is this. We are inhabitants of this country. We have lived here and a branch of the Tamil community has lived here possibly longer than our brethren the Sinhalese. This is our home.

(Vinayagamoorthy, 2003)

He then founded an All-Ceylon Tamil Congress Party in 1944 to further the struggle for equal representation for the minorities in Sri Lanka. He was also able to argue this viewpoint during three days of hearings of the Soulbury Commission on reforming the Sri Lankan

Constitution in 1946. His basic argument to the commission was that equal representation was the only way to avoid the danger of discrimination against minorities in Sri Lanka (Ponnambalam, 1983).

It is clear from this that whilst Buddhist political ideologies were developing in the pre-independence period, views from the Hindu community in Sri Lanka did not represent a Hindu political ideology. Rather they indicate how Tamil Hindus in Sri Lanka were becoming increasingly concerned about their civil rights as a persecuted minority under future majoritarian governments.

Post-independence politics and Buddhism, 1948–1982

Sri Lanka became independent in 1948, with D. S. Senanayake as prime minister. His supporters in government included the party he founded, the United National Party (UNP), S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike's Sinhala Maha Sabha (SMS) and the Tamil Congress under G.G. Ponnambalan. D. S. Senanayake was a strong advocate for the concept of Sri Lanka as a secular state with concessions for the minorities, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians alike. There were constitutional guarantees preventing discrimination against minorities (de Silva, 2003: 489–491). However, there was strong pressure from all sides challenging the kind of consensus politics D. S. Senanayake advocated. On the one hand, there was D. S. Senanayake's Sri Lanka nationalism that advocated reconciliation of all communities within a secular all-island polity. On the other, there were advocates of Sinhala nationalism that advocated a view that there was a relationship between the island of Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese language and ethnicity, and the Buddhist religion (de Silva, 2003: 496–497).

Sinhala nationalism developed out of the figures associated with the *Vidyālaṅkāra Pirvena*, including Walpola Rahula. The relationship between Buddhism and politics in the ideology of this movement were vividly depicted in two contemporaneous works. Both laid out Buddhist political ideologies for Sinhala engagement with governance and the role of state patronage by a Buddhist government.

First, a report called *The Betrayal of Buddhism* was written and published in 1956 by a committee of monks and laypeople. It argued that government support for Christian educational institutions was part of a plan to undermine and betray the Buddhist heritage of Sri Lanka. Stanley Tambiah (1992) argues that this was a key document showing how the Sinhala nationalists were organising their opposition to D. S. Senanayake's inclusive vision of Sri Lankan nationalism (Tambiah, 1992: 31–37).

Second, D. C. Vijayawardhana wrote a work called, in Sinhala, *Dharma Vijaya*, which could be translated as 'Triumph of Righteousness'; however Vijayawardhana also provided an alternative English title for the work, *The Revolt in the Temple* (Vijayawardhana, 1953). The author argued in favour of Sinhala nationalism, with complete identity between what in Sinhalese are spoken of as *raṭa*, *jātiya*, and *āgama* (country, race, and religion, respectively). Key to this vision of religion and politics was the equating of the people of Sri Lanka exclusively with the descendants of Vijaya, the legendary leader of the first Sinhalese to settle in Sri Lanka who arrived there on the very day of the Buddha's passing. Vijayawardhana began his book by asserting in the prologue that 'The history of Lanka is the history of the Sinhalese race'. He also equated the exact date of this arrival of the Sinhalese in Lanka with the Buddha's passing, which in India and Sri Lanka was celebrated as having taken place exactly 2500 years before 1956, and due to this, he said 1956 must be celebrated as a festival of the 'the Land, the Race and the Faith' (Vijayawardhana, 1953: 25). In Vijayawardhana's vision of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, he also incorporated both critiques of the secular state as found in Marxist states and also ideas about how it was a duty of the state to

foster Buddhism. In a section on the 'Harmony of Religion and Politics' (Vijayawardhana, 1953: 551–559), he argued for a system in which

The task of any government, in any country, the population of which is predominantly Buddhist, is to harmonise the Buddha's way of life with the every-day life of the community; or, in other words, with the functions of the state.

(Vijayawardhana, 1953: 551)

He also created a chart mapping out of the three Buddhist factors in awareness, *lobha*, *dosa*, and *moha*, now often translated as 'attraction', 'aversion', and 'delusion', corresponding to state functions. Attraction (*lobha*) related to the protection of the citizen from external and internal threats, aversion (*dosha*) to justice in the legal sphere, wealth distribution, and social services, and delusion (*moha*) to the education of children (Vijayawardhana, 1953: 553). It is notable that nowhere in this vision of an ideal state is there provision for discussing minorities' rights or of how they contribute to governance. In sum, what he is arguing for, Tambiah suggests, is the active intervention of the *sangha* in governance and their political leadership (Tambiah, 1992: 39–40).

During the period 1948–1956, Sri Lanka also experienced difficult economic challenges and growing tensions between communities. D. S. Senanayake lost power in 1956, and a government led by SWRD Bandaranaike took over. Bandaranaike and his Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) rejected Senanayake's Sri Lankan nationalism and adopted populist policies chiming with the aims of Sinhala nationalism. There was a decisive move in favour of the Sinhalese via a bill to make Sinhalese Sri Lanka's only official language, effectively excluding non-Sinhalese speaking communities, such as Tamils and Muslims, from most areas of government service (de Silva, 2003: 510–515).

In response to this, the Tamil community, as represented by the Tamil Federal Party, held a convention in Trincomalee in 1956 in which they argued for autonomy for the North and East of Sri Lanka and a federal constitution within which there would be parity of status for Sinhalese and Tamil languages (de Silva, 2003: 513). It is important to note that as G. G. Ponnambala argued, the Tamil Federal Party was not arguing for a Hindu state, but one recognising the rights of the Tamil community in terms of its 'cultures, habits, customs, religions and language' (Oberst, 1988: 183).

Buddhism and conflict with the Tamils 1982–2009

In relation to the Buddhist conflict with the Tamil community, it is important first to consider whether Hindu conceptions of the state impacted Tamil aspirations for a Tamil state within Sri Lanka. We noted above that in 1956, the Tamil Federation Party advocated not a Hindu but a Tamil secular state. After the 1983 anti-Tamil riots, the main focus of the Tamil community's struggle was the Tamil Tiger movement led by Velupillai Prabhakaran (1954–2009). In public statements on religion and politics, the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) publicly advocated a form of secular state, and many have concluded that the key issue was not a desire for a Hindu state, but a response to 'Buddhist revivalism affect[ing] public policies'. This 'threatened the interest of the predominant Tamil minority, including its religious élite' (Mainuddin and Aicher, 1997: 38). Scholars, including Michael Roberts, have argued however, that it needs to be acknowledged that their ideology reflected elements in the folk Hinduism of Sri Lanka's Tamil community (Roberts, 2005a, 2005b). However, Roberts' arguments for the use of religious symbolism in the campaigns waged by the Tamil Tigers do not show any direct call for a Hindu state.

During the period when the Tamil struggle for independence reached its heights, Muslim demands for recognition of their rights continued to develop. Some aspects of this were in response to overall political changes in Sri Lanka, such as the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress party leaving the People's Alliance coalition government and joining the UNP. This was done as part of a demand for a separate Muslim-administered district in the East (Bandarage, 2009: 176). Moreover, such demands were accelerated by a sense amongst younger Muslims in the East that anti-Muslim tendencies were developing in the LTTE. This led to the issuing of a separatist resolution, the Oluvil Declaration, by Tamil students in 2003 seeking Muslim self-determination in the Eastern region (Bandarage, 2009: 185).

The eventual military suppression of the Tamil separatist movement, which was complete by 2009, raised a number of issues for Sinhalese Buddhists about how they could justify the use of violence in order to protect the Buddhist dharma. Tambiah (1992) addressed the issues which came to the fore in the military campaigns between the Sri Lankan government against the LTTE from 1983 onwards. His feelings about the challenges reflected how many lay Buddhists and Buddhist monks felt about the violence: 'a profound misgiving, even consternation' about being caught up in political violence (Tambiah, 1992: 101). He also focused on what he described as the documentation of the 'ideological work of certain modern monks (and their lay associates)' aiming to create a 'democratic, righteous, welfare-orientated Buddhist state' (Tambiah, 1992: 169). However, he also argued that discussions of the state in Sri Lanka should acknowledge that the concept of galactic (or mandala) polities he had himself developed for South-East Asian states also applied to pre-modern Sri Lankan states. The key issue here is similar to discussions of early Indian states above: we should not project back onto the past modern notions of a unitary centralised state, but rather earlier state formations were based on central states surrounded by multiple polities, each running their own affairs (Tambiah, 1992: 172–175). The trajectories in Sri Lankan politics from the colonial period onwards were conditioned as well by projecting back onto Sri Lanka's history the vision of it as always having been a unitary state. Prior to colonialism, there was a galactic state which allowed for difference in its regional forms in a way that the centralised state model introduced during colonialism did not.

Tessa Bartholomeusz (2002) makes a notable contribution by focusing on the development of the notion of a Buddhist just-war as a way to legitimise the Buddhist violence against non-Buddhists. In her work, she traces the genealogy of these ideas from the *vamsa* chronicles through the ideas of the Sinhala Buddhist nationalists to the conflict between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE. She argues that in Sri Lankan Buddhism, a just or holy war was seen by many as legitimate if the use of violence was in order to protect Buddhism itself (Bartholomeusz, 2002: 155–163).

After the defeat of the LTTE, Kent (2010) wrote a study of how individual soldiers serving in the Sri Lankan armed forces were able to reconcile their own Buddhist beliefs with their use of violence against the Tamils in the war against the LTTE. In this, he argued that Bartholomeusz's analysis of just-war ideologies also need to be seen in relation to how individuals explain to themselves having to undertake acts of violence. He also argues they balance the Buddhist notion of intentional action (*cetanā*) with good intention to protect the dharma against the Buddhist understanding that such actions would result in negative karma for those that undertook them. He points out that this then led to individuals questioning how this kind of behaviour could be understood. He then shows how some then rationalised their actions by remembering examples from Buddhist stories of similar incidents in which individuals accepted negative karma for violent actions done to achieve positive goals, but others argued that violence, if carried out without anger and for positive goals, does not produce any negative results for the *karma* of an individual (Kent, 2010: 164–165). In terms of Rachik's discussions of the

ways in which religious teaching becomes ideology, it may be relevant to inquire whether individual and varied responses to having to commit violent acts can be called ideology. It could be argued that whilst Bartholomeusz's study of just-war does show how a Buddhist ideology supporting just-war developed, at an individual level, many of those involved in armed conflicts still experienced difficulty in reconciling just-war ideologies with their own understandings as Buddhists.

Post-conflict dialogues and debates (2009–2014)

One fundamental issue that Sri Lanka has faced since the end of the Tamil secessionist movement is the focus on the unitary state in Sri Lanka. Welikala (2016) argues that this is the central issue: insistence on a single unitary centralised state as opposed to the formulation of a state incorporating federal elements. Welikala asserts that there are 'normative and historiographical arguments of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, for which the unitary state constitutes a central and non-negotiable constitutional postulate'. In his analysis, he shows how the constitution of the independent state of Sri Lanka enshrined this doctrine and how subsequent court cases upheld the validity of this position despite arguments for some devolution of power. His argument is that the basis of this includes both the British colonial period's establishment of a unitary state in Sri Lanka and the deployment of the values of the pre-colonial Sinhala Buddhist kingdoms in contemporary Sinhala Buddhist nationalism (Welikala, 2016: 36–37). In conclusion, it may be that in the period following the war with the LTTE, a systemic factor derived from Sinhala Buddhist ideology is a clear obstacle to Buddhist and Hindu communities' reconciliation.

A second possible Buddhist ideological issue is the continued growth in Buddhist ethnicity-based politics expressed in anti-Hindu and anti-Muslim movements. Mahinda Deegalle (2006a, 2006b, 2016, 2017) has written extensively on the rise of the political party the *Jathika Hela Urumaya* (JHU), founded in 2004, and on the activist group the *Boda Bala Sena* (BBS) established at about the same time. The BBS came to prominence after it apparently stoked riots and violence against Muslims in Aluthgama in 2014. One approach to considering the ideology of the BBS is to look at the public pronouncements of its founder, Gnanasara Thero (b. 1975). In an interview with an Indian magazine in 2019, he said, 'The Buddha said that there is no sin more terrible than *mythia drushtiya*' (Pali *miccā ditti* 'false views') and implied that his motivation was to counter the terrorism practised by believers in false views. He denied instigating anti-Muslim violence and riots that occurred after his public speeches. In terms of a specific ideology, whilst he spoke about the importance of Buddhism, his focus was firmly on the Sinhalese as an ethnic community. When questioned about reports that at a Buddhist convention in Kandy on 7 July 2019, he argued for a Sinhala parliament, he objected and said that he advocated for a parliament 'that does not undermine in various guises the country and rights of the Sinhala majority' (Balathasinghala, 2019). It is this kind of presentation of the ideology of the BBS which leads to questions about whether its ideology is actually a new form of Sinhala Buddhist ideology or a form of racial, or ethnicity-based, ideology.

Some Sri Lankan authors have also argued that the BBS might be better seen as a form of ethnic identity politics than as an ideology based on Buddhist ideas. Izeth Hussain (1927–2017), a prominent former Sri Lankan diplomat and civil servant, wrote in the Colombo Telegraph that 'that the BBS and other extremist groups can best be understood in terms of a paradigm of racism' (Hussain, 2014). Many of the actions of the BBS also seem to be so fundamentally at odds with Buddhist ethics that it is difficult to see them as expressions of Buddhist ideology. However, the same just-war rationalisations for Buddhist violence against Hindus discussed in Bartholomeusz (2002) may now be an explanation for anti-Muslim developments in Sri Lanka.

What is unclear is whether the ideology of groups such as the BBS is a new form of Sinhala Buddhist ideology or further development of Sinhala ideologies related to the equation of Sinhala ethnicity, language, and religion as forming the basis of the Sri Lankan state.

The situation in Sri Lanka further evolved with the strengthening of the power of the Rajapaksha family after the 2020 election resulting in the two Rajapaksha brothers being prime minister and president of Sri Lanka. However, I will not discuss this new dimension in intra-Sinhalese politics in this chapter as it is so far unclear whether this represents the start of a new phase in Buddhist ideology in Sri Lanka or a consolidation of existing Sinhala Buddhist nationalist politics.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered how Buddhist teachings and doctrines have become Buddhist ideologies in Sri Lanka. Following Rachik, I suggested that three phases of this process need to be considered. First, the *vamsa* chronicle traditions of Sri Lanka acted as a kind of primary ground for and precursor to post-contemporary Buddhist ideology in Sri Lanka. Second, how the circumstances of state formations and maintenance in the kingdom of Kandy refined the centralised concept of the relationship between the state and Buddhism that British colonialism encountered when it annexed the kingdom of Kandy. Third, how the debates between Buddhist monks and lay Buddhist practitioners, such as Dharmapala, led to the development of a form of nascent Buddhist ideology in Sri Lanka in the second half of the 19th and in the early 20th century. These earlier developments then led, when reformers such as Walpole Rahula rose to prominence, to modern Sinhalese Buddhist ideologies becoming fully developed. Subsequent conflicts inside the Sinhalese community and between it and the Hindu and, more recently again, Muslim communities, helped crystallise how Buddhist ideologies developed from the mid-20th century onwards. This acted as a crucible that forged the current identity of Sri Lanka from the tensions inherent in Sinhala Buddhist ideology of equating Sinhala ethnic identity, the Sinhalese language, and Sri Lanka as a Buddhist state.

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