

Reordering of Post-colonial Sri Pāda Temple in Sri Lanka: Buddhism, State and Nationalism

History and Sociology of South Asia
7(2) 155–176

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SAGE Publications
Los Angeles, London,
New Delhi, Singapore,
Washington DC

DOI: 10.1177/2230807513479041

<http://hssa.sagepub.com>



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Abstract

Historically speaking, Sri Pāda temple is a remarkable place of worship for people belonging to all four major religions in Sri Lanka where they share one particular object of worship—the sacred footprint. However, this pilgrimage site, which was previously considered a multi-religious site, or site of plural worship, has now been transformed, constructed or rather reordered into an ethnic majoritarian Buddhist space, concurrent with the rise of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism in post-colonial Sri Lanka. This article explores the most important historical conjuncture where such Buddhicisation began to view or in other words ordering of Sri Pāda temple came to centrally visible in post-colonial Sri Lanka.

Keywords

Buddhism, nationalism, pilgrimage, state, Sri Lanka

Introduction

My task in this article is to examine the role of non-state actor(s) in the process of reordering a site of plural worship into a hegemonic religious site without the intervention of the state apparatus. Many of the studies on anthropology of religion in South and Southeast Asia have examined the role that the state has played in the construction of ethno-religious identity and religious nationalism in opposition to ‘secular’ post-colonial states.¹ While such studies provide critical perspectives on

¹ See Stanley Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976) and *Buddhism Betrayed: Religion, Politics and Violence in Sri Lanka* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992). See also Jonathan Spencer, ed., *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict*. (London: Routledge, 1990); Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999); P. van der Veer, *Religious Nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1994); Partha Chatterjee, *Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

the multiple transformations of religion in the colonial and post-colonial states, they fail to address the question of agency vis-à-vis the state.

Obeyesekere and others have argued that the post-colonial state's excavation and 'renovation' of 'sacred places' constructs, and are constructed by, the 'nationalist consciousness'.² This is somewhat true of religious sites like Sri Pāda, also known as Adam's Peak, but compared to other sacred sites in Sri Lanka, the reordering of the Sri Pāda temple as a predominantly Buddhist site has taken place with minimal intervention of the post-colonial state. I argue that the Buddhicisation, so to speak, of Sri Pāda is the product of a complicated process that cannot be merely reduced to the state. My argument here, also, is quite different from the arguments made in recent anthropological studies on Sinhala Buddhist nationalism.³ These studies have quite convincingly shown the hegemonic politics of the post-colonial state in the formation of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism within geopolitical locations that lie seemingly outside the reach of state power (for example, Vadda villages, grassroots development programmes and village temple rituals). Yet, in emphasising the role of the state (structure) in the formation of nationalism, they have failed to understand the contexts in which the nationalist agenda can be played out without the involvement of the state apparatus.⁴ To understand

² See Gananath Obeyesekere, 'The Fire-Walkers of Kataragama: The Rise of Bhakti Religiosity in Buddhist Sri Lanka', *Journal of Asian Studies* 36 (1978): 457–76 and 'Myth and Political Legitimization at the Sacred Centre in Kataragama, Sri Lanka', in *The Sacred Centre as the Focus of Political Interest*, ed. Hans Bakker (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1992), 219–33; Elizabeth Nissan, 'History in the Making: Anuradhapura and the Sinhala Buddhist Nation', *Social Analysis* 25, no. 1 (September 1989): 64–77; Steven Kemper, *The Presence of the Past: Chronicles, Politics and Culture in Sinhala Life* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1991); Rohan Bastin, *The Domain of Constant Excess: Plural Worship at the Munnesvaram Temples in Sri Lanka* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002). See also Pradeep Jeganathan, 'Authorizing History, Ordering Land: The Conquest of Anuradhapura', in *Unmaking the Nation*, ed. Pradeep Jeganathan and Qadri Ismail (Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, 1995), 104–36. He argues that Anuradhapura has been ordered (in both a discursive and non-discursive manner) as an authoritative (nationalised) religious site in (post) colonial Sri Lanka.

³ See Jonathan Spencer, 'Writing Within: Anthropology, Nationalism and Culture in Sri Lanka', *Current Anthropology* 31 (1990) and *A Sinhala Village in a Time of Trouble: Politics and Change in Rural Sri Lanka* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990); Serena Tennakoon, 'Rituals of Development: The Accelerated Mahavali Development Program of Sri Lanka', *American Ethnologist* 15 (1988); M.D. Woost, 'Nationalizing the Local Past in Sri Lanka: Histories of Development Program of Sri Lanka', *American Ethnologist* 15 (1990); James Brow, *Demons and Development: The Struggle for Community in a Sri Lankan Village* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1995).

⁴ See Premakumara De Silva, 'Sri Lankan Culture Under the Impact of Globalization: Homogenization or Revitalization', in *Sri Lanka at Cross Road*, ed. S.T. Hettige and M. Mayer (Delhi: MacMillan Press, 2000) and *Globalization and Transformation of Planetary Rituals in Southern Sri Lanka* (Colombo: International Center for Ethnic Studies, 2000). Though outside of the literature on South Asia, see Jean-Klein, whose ethnographic account of 'nationalist production in everyday life' in Palestine during the *intifada* offers a timely criticism to studies that ignore the process by which ordinary people engage in what she calls 'selfnationalisation'. Iris Jean-Klein, 'Nationalism and Resistance: The Two Faces of Everyday Activism in Palestine during the Intifada', *Cultural Anthropology* 16, no. 1 (2011): 83–126. For more general work which identifies everyday habits that contribute to the ideological reproduction of nations and nationalism, see Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

such processes of nationalist formations, we need to pay attention to ‘minute conjunctures’⁵ of discourses in which agency is not reducible to the state. It is within such a minute conjuncture that the post-colonial Sri Pāda changed from a ‘sacred site’ to a ‘Buddhist site’. As we will see, this story is not merely about a particular sacred site. It will help us understand a critical aspect of the emergence of nationalism in post-colonial societies.

Interestingly, this shift has some historical parallels to Gombrich and Obeyesekere’s description of the taking over of Kataragama, which was a predominantly Hindu Tamil pilgrimage site, by Buddhists in the mid-twentieth century.⁶ They recorded the way the resident Hindu priests of a particular site (Sella Kataragama), assisted by powerful Hindu organisations, resisted and filed an action in the courts, claiming the rights of trusteeship, but failed to stop the takeover.⁷ However, Sinhala control of the local institutions is not (at least, not yet) complete. Tamils still control some of the shrines, especially those near the main shrine. But highly visible Hindu practices at the shrine, such as firewalking and *kavadi* dancing, were dramatically taken over by a group of Sinhala Buddhist *sāmis* (priests).⁸ Unlike Sri Pāda, another striking feature of the Buddhicisation at Kataragama is, according to Obeyesekere, the ‘invention’ of a series of Buddhist myths through which a Buddhist deity (Kataragama), a Tamil god (Murukan) and a Sanskritic deity (Skanda) were transformed into a more or less exclusively Sinhala Buddhist(?) god after the middle of the twentieth century.⁹ The new myths are both hegemonic and a defensive reaction against Sinhala perceptions of Tamil hegemonic claims to the sacred site. Kataragama was made a Sacred City in the 1960s, and again in 1987, and is separated from secular space. One can no longer talk of Kataragama as an isolated shrine in the forest. Kataragama now is a modern pilgrimage centre with hotels, rest houses for pilgrims and a network of roads leading to it, built thanks to the Prime Minister, R. Premadasa. With the new town, there has emerged a new sacred geography, constructed by government town planners and architects.¹⁰ Like Sri Pāda, Kataragama has been gradually eased towards an increasingly Buddhist framework but, unlike Sri Pāda, this has happened with maximum use of state power and resources.

Similar situations can be found in other major sacred sites as well. Nissan has shown how non-state figures like Walisinghe Harischandra initiated a campaign in 1899 to rebuild the ‘Sacred City of Anuradhapura’. This city, which served as the capital of the island for over a millennium, is associated with the earliest Buddhist history and polity, from which non-Buddhist elements would be removed. This campaign

⁵ Ananda Abeysekara, *Colors of the Robe: Religion, Identity and Difference* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002).

⁶ R.F. Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 182–89.

⁹ Obeyesekere, ‘Myth and Political Legitimization’.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

was later taken up as a national issue with S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, who became Prime Minister of the Sinhala majoritarian government in 1956. Work of restoration and regeneration in Anuradhapura has continued under each successive government since.¹¹ She explains how in less than a hundred years, Anuradhapura emerged from the jungle to become a centre used by the national government for expressions of state piety and Sinhala Buddhist unity and hegemony.¹² Following the model of Anuradhapura, there are several ‘sacred sites’ which emerged in post-colonial Sri Lanka but surprisingly, Sri Pāda does not come under such state-sponsored projects. It has been ordered into national Buddhist site without much intervention of such state-driven projects. It is this process that I want to explore in this article.

A historian of religion, Jonathan Walters, has also explained how another sacred site, Kelaniya, was reconstituted as a popular place of Buddhist worship under a particular wealthy family in Colombo.¹³ He has described the major events in the emergence of ‘modern Kelaniya’ starting with Mrs Wijewardene, who laid the foundation for the new temple in 1927, and her son, Don Walter Wijewardene, first president of the lay trustee organisation (of which Upali Wijewardene, and afterwards his brother, were presidents), the Sri Kalyani Raja Maha Vihāra Dayaka Sabha, who inaugurated the annual Duruthu Perahāra (relic procession) in that year, and then in 1937, a formal consecration of the Kelaniya temple.¹⁴ We can see parallels in the emergence of a new version of ‘official religiosity’ at both Kelaniya and Sri Pāda with the rise of Buddhist cultural nationalism in the country. But unlike Kelaniya and Kataragama, there is no annual procession at Sri Pāda, nor is there is a powerful *dayaka sabha* (lay trustee organisation). Instead, temple affairs are organised and managed under the centralised authority of the chief priest of Sri Pāda. Hence, unlike Kelaniya and other main temples in Sri Lanka, the lay influence and the state patronage in Sri Pāda affairs are absent. It is therefore under the former chief priest, Dhammānanda, and his successors that Sri Pāda has been constituted as a hegemonic Buddhist site.

Background

From August 2001 to September 2002, and also briefly in 2006, I carried out ethno-historical research on one of the most popular pilgrimage sites in Sri Lanka, popularly known as Sri Pāda, or the ‘temple of the sacred footprint’. It is known to the English-speaking world by the name Adam’s Peak. The latter is still used, which points to the long colonial presence on the island. Sri Pāda is situated at the top of Samanala (butterfly) mountain, roughly 7,360 feet (2,200 metres) above sea level, on the south-western edge of the central hills in Sabaragamuva province.

¹¹ Elizabeth Nissan, ‘Polity and Pilgrimage Centres in Sri Lanka’, *Man* 23, no. 2 (1988): 253–74.

¹² *Ibid.*, 256.

¹³ Jonathan Walters, *The History of Kelaniya* (Colombo: Social Scientists’ Association, 1996).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 99.

This tropical forest mountain territory (*samanala adaviya*) is said to be protected by the God Saman, considered the guardian of Sri Pāda.

Historically, Sri Pāda is a place of religious pilgrimage for people belonging to the four major religions of Sri Lanka. The largest ethno-religious community, the Sinhala Buddhists (69 per cent) maintain that the footprint at the top of the mountain was left by the Buddha during his third mythical visit to the island. Tamil Hindus (15 per cent) claim it is the footprint of Lord Siva (*Sivan-oli-padam*). On the contrary, Muslims (8 per cent) maintain that it belongs to Adam (*Baba Adamalei*), which is exactly the same view held by Christians (8 per cent). However, this pilgrimage site, which has been considered a site of a multi-religious worship, has now been reordered into an ethnic majoritarian Buddhist space in the context of the rise of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism in post-colonial Sri Lanka. This article explores the most important historical conjuncture that made such 'Buddhisation' possible.

Sri Pāda Before Buddicism

The sacredness of Sri Pāda is not only claimed by Buddhists but also by other religious groups such as Hindus, Muslims and Catholics. Sri Pāda is regarded by Hindus as having been made a sacred ground by Lord Siva, one of the supreme gods of the Hindu pantheon. The origin myth of Sri Pāda as a footprint of Siva, popularly known as *Sivan-oli-padam*, is widely believed among Tamil Hindus in the country.¹⁵ The basis for Tamil Hindu belief in the *Sivan-oli-padam*, according to the chief priest (76) of the Kotahena (north of Colombo) Ponnambalam Vanisvaram Siva temple, is this: Siva appeared in his dancing manifestation on this mountain for the performance of certain devotional austerities, at the end of which, in celebration of his abode there, he left the impression of his foot upon the mountain top. Another Hindu priest at the Sri Kadiresan temple in the south of Colombo told me a somewhat different story as follows:

When Siva was living in Mount Kailash, a mountain in the Himalayas, he made a journey from the Himalayas to Rameshvaram in south India where he saw that people were poorer than in Sri Lanka. Siva then left Rameshvaram for *Sivan-oli-padam*, in one of his most popular forms, that of Nataraja (the dancing form), and made his cosmic dance there. As a result, a war broke out, but that war could solve all the malicious things in Sri Lanka because his dance created the sacred footprint for people to venerate that is *Sivan-oli-padam*.¹⁶

The great chronicle, *Mahavamsa*, states that a group of Hindu Saivite priests began to control Sri Pāda under the patronage of the Sinhala King, Rājasinha I

¹⁵ They also call it *Shivanadipadam Mallei* (the mountain of Shiva's footprint) and *Swangarrhanan* (the ascent to heaven).

¹⁶ Both brief interviews were carried out on 12th and 19th of June 2002.

(1581–95) of the Kotte kingdom (Mv. Ch. 93, v. 4–17). They controlled Sri Pāda for nearly 160 years before it was handed over to a Buddhist monk by Kīrtisri Rājasinghe (1747–80), himself a Hindu Tamil king, who later became a pious Buddhist king of the Kandyan royal court (Mv. Ch. 100, v. 221). This account confirms that Hindus made the pilgrimage to Sri Pāda by the fourteenth century, and even before.¹⁷

The Muslims of Sri Lanka believe that the sacred footprint is that of Adam; more precisely, they call it 'Baba-adam-mallei' (the footprint of Adam). Their engagement with the sacred mountain can be traced back to early Arabic writings of travellers and the traders.¹⁸ However, the general belief about the mythical origin of the sacred footprint is that after Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and were expelled from the Garden of Eden, Adam was further punished by being forced to stand on one foot on the mountain top.¹⁹ This long ordeal left the print of Adam's foot on the mountain. A similar story was narrated somewhat differently to me by a Muslim priest (*lebbe*) (65) of a village mosque from Kahattagasdigiliya in the North Central province where I met him, together with two fellow priests, at the Sri Pāda temple.²⁰

Such a claim can be further explored through the knowledge produced by voyagers, missionaries, traders and travellers, who had historically interacted with Sri Pāda.²¹ As I have discussed elsewhere, for Muslim engagement at Sri Pāda, the

¹⁷ See William Skeen, *Adam's Peak, Legendary, Traditional and Historic Notices of the Samanala and Sri-Pāda with a Descriptive Account of the Pilgrim's Route from Colombo to the Sacred Foot-print* (Colombo: W.H.L. Skeen & Co., 1870). Skeen has produced the 'positivist' historiographical account on 'Adam's Peak' and concluded that 'the oldest probable period' from which to date the legend (of *Sivan-oli-padam*) is that immediately following the invasion of the Solians (the South Indian Tamil invaders) in 1023 CE. He says, 'There is no doubt about the fact that the Sivan-oli-padam was resorted to by Hindu pilgrims in the early part of the fourteenth century and as the pilgrimage was then an established custom...' (ibid., 36–37).

¹⁸ There is an Arabic inscription found on a side of a cave inscription (*bagava lena*) of Nissanka Malla (1187–96) at Sri Pāda which is inscribed as 'Muhammad, may God bless him (the father of) man' (Senaveratna: 1950: 17).

¹⁹ But there are several myths about what happened after Adam and Eve had eaten the forbidden fruit.

²⁰ The God Allah told Adam and Eve, 'You do what ever you want to do, but don't eat the fruit (*gedi*) of the Forbidden Tree'. But they did not pay attention to the word of Allah and they ate the fruit. Then Allah said, 'You did the wrong thing so I expel you from heaven to earth (*bimata*)'. When they were expelled from heaven to earth, Adam put his first footstep on this peak [Adam's peak], and his other footstep on the Kuragala. Eve put her footstep on to Mecca [*makkama*]. At the time they came here, no one lived on the earth. They were crying for seven days. Their tears ran down to the sea and some turned into precious gems (*menik una*). They accepted their wrongdoing, and then God Allah brought them together. At that point they felt hungry. Then God Allah sent a messenger (*deva dutaya*) to the earth to explain to them the basic cultivation techniques. After the course of time they had two children; one was a boy and the other a girl. Then they got married and had children; so the human world was created. That is why we believe this footprint is that of Adam, the footprint of the first man on the earth.

²¹ See Premakumara De Silva, 'Hindu and Muslim Connections to Sri Pāda', in *Religion in Context*, ed. J. Uyangoda (Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, 2007).

account given by Ibn Battuta is worth mentioning here.²² Battuta explained that Imam Abu Abdallah (who died in 953 CE) was the first Muslim pilgrim who found the path to the sacred footprint at Adam's Peak. If Battuta was right, it is quite reasonable to accept that the first Muslim pilgrimage to Adam's Peak took place around the tenth century.²³

Such narratives clearly confirm that Sri Pāda was not only a pilgrimage site which attracted local communities but also a sacred site which attracted various diasporic 'communities', unlike other popular sacred sites on the island. These pilgrims not only came from the Middle Eastern world, but from the Far East too; for example, in Chinese mythology, the first created man who impressed the sacred footprint bore the name of Pawn-koo and sometimes the name of Foe (that is, Buddha).²⁴ Robert Knox confirmed that by the mid-seventeenth century, 'the European Nations' had claimed the sacred footprint site as of the Adam.

On the South side of CONDE UDA [*kanda uda*] is a Hill, supposedly the highest on this island, called in the CHINGULAY [Sinhalese], HAMALELL [*samanala*]; but by the Portuguese²⁵ and the European Nations, Adam's Peak. It is sharp like a sugar-loaf, and on the top a flat stone with the print of a foot like a man's is on it, but far bigger, being about two foot long. The people of this land count it meritorious to go and worship this impression; and generally about their New year, which is in March, the men, women, and children go up this vast and high mountain to worship.²⁶

²² Battuta was born into a family of Muslim legal scholars in Tangier, Morocco, in 1304. He studied law as a young man and in 1325, left his native town to make the pilgrimage, or *hajj*, to the sacred city of Mecca in Arabia. He travelled to many parts of the world in 1330 (1332) and he ventured to India to seek employment in the government of the Sultanate of Delhi. In August 1344, Ibn Battuta and the ship crew arrived at the west coast port city of Puttalam in Sri Lanka, where he met the Tamil regional king of Chakkrawartti of the kingdom of Jaffna. Under the patronage of this Tamil king, Battuta went on pilgrimage to Sri Pāda, and later wrote the account of his journey. Battuta, quite fascinatingly, described the rituals practised by Muslim pilgrims at the sacred site; morning and evening visits to the sacred footprint for three days seems to have been an established practice then among Muslims pilgrims.

²³ Premakumara De Silva, 'Hindu and Muslim Connections to Sri Pāda'.

²⁴ Skeen, *Adam's Peak*, 24, says that 'The Chinese books repeat the popular belief, that the hollow of the sacred footstep contains water, "which does not dry up all the year round", and that invalids recover health by drinking from the well at the foot of the mountain, into which "the sea-water enters free from salt".' Today, we don't see such a well at Sri Pāda, but one monk told me there is a place called 'China peela' a few yards down from the temple where water is collected. Such a name of a place clearly shows a Chinese presence at Sri Pāda.

²⁵ Knox says that Portuguese call the Adam's Peak as 'Pico-Adam' (1681: 72).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3. Robert Knox was a British marine captain who was imprisoned with his crew for a period of almost 20 years, under King Rajasingha II (1635–87), in the Kandyan royal court. At that time, Maritime provinces were under the Portuguese or Dutch control. Knox wrote his account after his escape and published it as *An Historical Relation of the Island Ceylon*, under the publisher of the Royal Society at the Robe and Crown in St. Paul's Churchyard in 1681.

Indeed, de Couto,²⁷ another Portuguese missionary chronicler, claims that the sacred footprint at Sri Pāda mountain was not of Adam, but of a Catholic Saint, Thomas. But unlike in the past, Hindu, Muslim, Catholic and Protestant groups are notably absent in pilgrimages these days. Though there is a small Hindu element present at Sri Pāda, it is largely insignificant when compared with the number of Buddhists. Until recently, this site has been considered as an extraordinary place where ethnic and religious diversity in the country was being upheld.

John Still, a civil servant in the British colonial government, reported in 1928 on what we may vaguely call the situation prior to Buddhicisation:

The Peak [Sri Pāda] must be one of the vastest [*sic*] and most widely revered cathedrals of the human race; but the shrine itself is only a little tile roof raised upon four pillars, or it may be eight, open on all four sides to every wind that blows...and the only other building there in my time was a small mud hut of one room, which I was lent by the monk in charge [as he goes on to state] Among the pilgrims I have seen, people of half a dozen races, with as many languages, and at least four district religions beside many sects, and I can testify to their reverence; for the East understands religion, whereas we of the West have made of it a form of warfare...The tolerance of the pilgrims seemed a thing that might well have been studied by Western ecclesiastics with honour and amazement, perhaps even in shame. I mentioned this tolerance once to a bishop, and was told it was a sign of weakness of faith; persecution, I suppose, is a sign of strength.²⁸

Though he says very little about the colonised Sri Pāda, what is important here is that his description provides a picture of the unimpressive temple structure and the clearly multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of the Sri Pāda pilgrimage at the time. As I explain later, this began to fade away in the post-colonial period. In other words, such a description shows how Sri Pāda was reordered from a 'mud hut' to an impressive temple, constructed with a strong Buddhist stamp under rising Sinhala Buddhist nationalism.

The following is an account from a native monk who served at Sri Pāda temple from 1949 to 1954:

I was assigned to conduct the daily ritual at the footprint (*patma*), there were no monks other than me at the *maluwa* (Sri Pāda temple) in charge the religious service. Few lay people (*gihiyo*) were there to collect offerings at the shrine (*patma*). I took up residence at the *maluwa* because my teacher asked me to look after the *maluwa* during the pilgrimage season. He was approached by the then Trustee (*bharakaraya*) of the temple, Sidney Ellawala, who asked him if he would provide a monk to reside at the *maluwa*.

²⁷ See S. Arasaratnam, trans. and ed., *Francois Valentijn's Description of Ceylon* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1978). Diego de Couto served the Portuguese Crown as a soldier, the chief keeper of the records in Goa and official chronicler of India. He wrote the history of the Portuguese Eastern empire from 1526. His *Decadas Da Asia* was written and published intermittently from 1602 onwards. The material on Ceylon by Couto is in his 'Fifth Decada' (cf. *ibid.*, 28).

²⁸ John Still, *The Jungle Tide* (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood & Sons, 1930), 17.

My teacher suggested my name. That is how I ended up at the *maluwa*. Like today not much happened at *maluwa*; no preaching (*bana*), no chanting of *pirit*, no drum offering, no religious festivals. But I used to conduct simple a daily offering to the Buddha (*buddha puja*) at the *patma* (footprint).

Pilgrims came in large numbers but they didn't stay there because there weren't enough facilities for them. Hence, they come and go. There was no electricity until 1950 and no water supply system. There were two persons to supply water from a distant place (*andiya malatanna* about 2 km away from the *maluwa*). The permanent water supply system was started during the Rev. Dhammānanda's period.

In March, particularly *madin* full-moon day, a larger number of pilgrims visited the *maluwa* than in other months. That full-moon day my teacher used to come and stay with me for a few days. The Trustee, Ellawala *mahattaya* visited us twice in the month for inspection. He renovated the dilapidated wall around the *maluwa*, the mud floor area of the *uda maluwa* and the shrine of the deity Saman, and installed a new deity statue of Saman which was made of silver. And he placed a man at the shrine to collect offerings.

In 1954 I had to move from the *maluwa* because Rev. Dhammānanda wanted to replace me with a monk who had supported him in his election campaign. He knew that we hadn't supported him. Certainly, we supported his opponent, Rev. Ratanajothi. But I would say, Rev. Dhammānanda was a clever person (*dakshaya*). He organised Sri Pāda affairs (*maluwe katayuthu*) methodologically (*kramanukulawa*). That made it easy for others to manage Sri Pāda after him. Even today Sri Pāda affairs run under his model.²⁹

This account alludes to the basic nature of facilities at the Sri Pāda temple just before Morontuduve Dhammānanda (1890–70) took control in 1954. It also points to the role of temple politics at Sri Pāda after Dhammānanda became head priest.

It is notable that the present 'internal' organisation at Sri Pāda temple is not 'ancient' in any sense of the word. It was recreated or 'made' ancient during the 'restoration' or 'reordering project' undertaken by Dhammānanda (1954–70). To be brief, since the mid-eighteenth century, the ritualistic functions at Sri Pāda were performed by the tenants of the temple village (*viharagama*), for which they were rewarded with land.³⁰ At the time of Dhammānanda's takeover in 1954, this traditional service system had disappeared.³¹ He introduced a 'modern' form of

²⁹ Interview with Rev. Kelle Kemananda on 30 September 2001.

³⁰ It is important note that Sri Pāda temple was politically recognised by the pre-colonial states for the first time in the early twelfth century, under the royal court of King Vijayabahu of Polonnaruva; see Senarat Paranavitana, *The God of Adam's Peak* (Ascona, Switzerland: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 1958); R.A.L.H. Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough: Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early Medieval Sri Lanka* (Tucson: Arizona University Press, 1979). The affairs of Sri Pāda concerned most kings; see Premakumara De Silva, 'Sri Pāda: Diversity and Exclusion in a Sacred Site in Sri Lanka', Unpublished PhD thesis (University of Edinburgh, 2005), Chapter 2.

³¹ According to the Report of the Commissioners of Service Tenures in 1870, there were eighty-four obligatory services that had to be performed by the tenants of Kuttapitiya oriented to temples belong to Sri Pāda and its incumbency. Those services were registered and the lands attached to them also clearly listed under the Commission; see Omalpe Seelananda, *Sri Pāda Vamsaya* (Homagama: Seneviratne Printers, 2000), 144–207.

internal administrative and service organisation to the temple, entirely outside the hereditary service providers, with new arrangements mainly based on contractual or monetary relationships. Similarly, he also introduced an elaborate form of daily ritual practice claiming that the rituals at Sri Pāda lacked a proper structure compared to other national sacred sites (for example, the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy and Kelaniya temple near Colombo). Before commenting on the dynamics of this new project, let me briefly discuss the ideological and political context in which Dhammānanda undertook the reordering of Sri Pāda.

The Political Ideology of Reordering Sri Pāda

The new administrative and religious reordering of Sri Pāda under Dhammānanda is important not simply because it was the work of a particular non-state actor, a Buddhist monk, but because it echoed the issues and concerns of an emerging 'Buddhist identity' in post-colonial Sri Lanka. In other words, the emergence of 'Buddhicised' Sri Pāda under Dhammānanda cannot be isolated from the larger project of Buddhist 'national regeneration' or Sinhala Buddhist nationalism(s), which came into view just before Sri Lanka's independence from the British Empire in 1948. As we shall see, Dhammānanda explicitly supported, and was himself largely influenced by, this 'national regeneration' project that would have a dominant, devastating impact on post-colonial Sri Lankan politics.

According to Seneviratne, the roots of this project go back to the work and activities of the nationalist reformer Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933).³² As Seneviratne argues, Dharmapala considered that Buddhist monks should spearhead the nationalist regeneration project, which he initially defined in opposition to the supposed Christian cultural encroachment on Sinhala Buddhist culture.³³ In so doing, as Seneviratne puts it, 'Dharmapala elevated the Buddhist monks to a position they never held before, and invested them with a specific secular role, which the "modern monks" have come to believe as their "heritage".'³⁴ Dharmapala, as Seneviratne explains, understood the new task of the monk to be twofold: economic and cultural. The economic project was taken up in the 1930s and the 1940s by a section of the monks, primarily those of the Vidyodaya monastic college, founded in 1873 in Colombo.³⁵ Contrary to the cultural project, which produced a deadly culture of xenophobia as pioneered by the Vidyānkara monks, the economic project of the Vidyodaya monks, following Dharmapala's plan, concerned 'rural development', which accepted diversity as a fact of Sri Lankan life.³⁶ As Dhammānanda was not only a Vidyodaya monk but also a popular

³² H.L. Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings: The New Buddhism in Sri Lanka* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

³³ *Ibid.*, 25–28.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 56–129.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

preacher—of critical importance to those monks who focused on the economic aspect of Dharmapala's message—it should have followed that he would belong to this group of what Seneviratne calls 'pragmatic monks'. Surprisingly, however, Dhammānanda did not.

Instead, he found ideological inspiration in the 'cultural' aspect of Dharmapala's nationalist project. This aspect grew visible in the mid-1940s and became dominant during the electoral victory of the nationalist forces in 1956, during which Sinhala Buddhist nationalism began to challenge the ethno-cultural diversity of the country. Seneviratne argues that, unlike the monks of the Vidyodaya, the Vidyānāyaka monks advocated an exclusivist and hegemonic vision of the country for the majority ethnic group that privileged the Sinhalese, and their religion, Buddhism. These monks borrowed Dharmapala's slogan 'country, nation, and religion' (*rata, jathiya ha agama*) and made it a rallying cry for the Sinhala Buddhists, depriving the Tamils and other minorities of their rights to equal citizenship.³⁷ Seneviratne concludes that this cultural part of Dharmapala's vision sadly triumphed over 'the more sober and benevolent economic part' and prepared the country for social turmoil, economic stagnation and civil war.³⁸ Put more simply, in Seneviratne's view, the Vidyodaya monks were the good patriots, while the Vidyānāyaka monks were the 'narrow nationalists' who perpetuated an ideology that led to the path of moral 'degeneration'.³⁹

While largely sympathetic to Seneviratne's view, I have difficulty locating a figure like Dhammānanda in the category of 'pragmatic monks'. The question is how a reputed monk like Dhammānanda of the Vidyodaya ended up part of the larger nationalist project. Seneviratne's model of pragmatic monasticism, which owes allegiance to a Weberian notion of modernity, does not help us answer this question. It seems to me that the pragmatic theory of modernity, which posits a homogenous concept of nationalism, and which is precisely what we find in Seneviratne's argument, fails to explain the ways in which a figure like Dhammānanda became disenchanted with the 'rural development' project and turned to the 'nationalist' project. We may find part of the answer to this question within the context in which the 'restorative project' of the sacred site of the Sri Pāda took place. Before explaining how Dhammānanda constructed the 'restoration' of Sri Pāda in relation to the larger nationalist project of Sri Lanka, let me provide a biographical sketch of Dhammānanda.⁴⁰

Dhammānanda was a well-educated monk who became a teacher at Vidyodaya at the age of 19 years. He had mastered Pali and Sanskrit, and acquired a working knowledge of English, under reputed teachers such as Hikkaduve Sumangala, the

³⁷ Seneviratne, *The Work of Kings*, 56–129.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 333–48.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁴⁰ The sources for information on Dhammānanda are: (a) oral information provided by his only pupil, Pinnagoda Sumanatissa, and other informants; and (b) *Morontuḍuve Sri Dhammānanda Nayaka Suwamindra Charithaya* (Hunupitiya, Colombo: Sri Gnanesvara Visvavidyala Pirivena, 1970).

founder of the Vidyodaya monastic college in Colombo. Born on 6 March 1890, Dhammānanda was the second son of Kandane Arachchige Don Louis Appuhamy of Morontuduva, Wadduwa, of the Panadura electorate. His lay name was Kandane Arachchige Don John Appuhamy. Dhammānanda was ordained in 1900 at age of 10 years by Deundara Jinaratana at the Hunupitiya Gangaramaya and given the monastic name Mahagoda Nanesvara. At Vidyodaya, he excelled in his academic work and won the coveted **Siyam Thyaga Rajaya** ('Thai king's prize'), the annual award granted to the best student in the final year of monastic studies. His excellent academic career at Vidyodaya continued after he was appointed as a teacher there. He wrote several notable books, among which his *Saddharma Kaumudi* was the most popular. The work became a widely used textbook for beginners in preaching *dharmadesana* (sermon).

In 1928, he was appointed chief priest of Sabaragamuva province by the **Karaka Sangha Sabha** (Sangha Council) of the Malwatta chapter of Siyam Nikaya, which also later awarded him the honorary title of *Tipitaka Vagisvara* (literally, Honourable exponent of the *Tripiticas*). He began to involve himself in what is now called *dharmadhuta* (literally, 'messenger of Dhamma') activities, in particular the registration of the monks of the Malwatta chapter in the province. Under the new resolution passed on 'Buddhist temporalities' in 1931, Dhammānanda was also appointed as coordinator for the registration of the entire body of Malwatta monks. In 1934, Dhammānanda contested for the chief priesthood of Sri Pāda temple, but his campaign was not successful until 1954.⁴¹ During this period, he was involved in two legal cases. First was against the public trustee, to legitimise his position as the chief priest of Sri Pāda temple; and the second one was against the Vidyodaya Management Trust (*vidyadara sabhava*) for rejecting his application for the post of Principal of Vidyodaya (The Trust consisted of fourteen prominent lay leaders such as D.S. Senanayake, D.B Jayatilake and G.P. Malalasekere). He contended that he should succeed his teacher, Mahagoda Nanesvara. However, in 1933, he lost the case against the Vidyodaya Management Trust, with a subsequent appeal filed in High Court against that judgement to no avail. But he managed to win the case for the Sri Pāda chief priesthood and its trusteeship, in a separate judgement. In light of his legal dispute with the Trust, Dhammānanda began to sever his ties with Vidyodaya, shifting his place of residence elsewhere.

Interestingly, some key Buddhist laymen began to ally themselves with Dhammānanda. Among them were Barnes Ratwatte,⁴² the father-in-law of S.W.R.D Bandaranaike, who became the champion of the post-colonial 'Sinhala Buddhist regeneration project', and Don Charles Wijewardene, who later became the Trustee of Sri Pāda. Ratwatte, the Deputy Public Trustee at that time, allocated ₹180,000 from the Sri Pāda temple fund to purchase an 'official

⁴¹ In this election, some of his colleagues at Vidyodaya supported his opponent, Urapola Ratanajothi.

⁴² He was the son-in-law of S.D. Mahawelatanna of Sabaragamuva who supported Dhammānanda's teacher, Mahagoda Nanesvara, in his election for the chief priesthood of the Sri Pāda temple.

residence⁴³ (*nila aramaya*) for Dhammānanda, where he lived as the chief priest of Sri Pāda temple until his death in 1970. This marked Dhammānanda's complete break with the Vidyodaya and its ideological position.

Interestingly, Dhammanada's own ideological position moved closer to that of his ally, D.C. Wijewardene (1893–1956), who came from a wealthy elite family and whose writings and activities were similar to the 'nationalist' monks of Vidyalankara monastic college. Among them, the most notable were Yakkaduve Praguāsara, Principal of Vidyalankara Pirivena, and Walpola Rahula, the internationally renowned monk who wrote *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu* (1946), a work Seneviratne claims 'influenced the monkhood more than any other in the recent history of Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhism'.⁴⁴ D.C. Wijewardene's 'nationalist' position is found in his *Dharma-Vijaya or The Revolt in the Temple* (1953). D.C. Wijewardene was one of seven sons born to Muhandiram Don Philip Wijewardene, who made his fortune as a businessman. D.C. Wijewardene's mother, Helena, was the daughter of Arnolis Dep, a prosperous arrack (liquor) trader of the late nineteenth century. The liquor business laid the foundation for the enormous sums of money spent on the restoration of the temple at Kelaniya Raja Maha Vihara, the site of important religious and political activity in post-colonial Sri Lanka. D.C.'s brother, Don Richard, owned The Lake House company, which published the nation's premier newspaper, the *Daily News*, and its Sinhala version, *Dinamin*. D.C. did not become a public figure like Don Richard, but he continued, together with another brother, Don Walter, the parental interest in the Kelaniya temple and in Buddhist affairs.⁴⁵ After the death of his brother, Don Walter, in 1939, D.C. became the president of the lay trustee organisation in the Kelaniya temple, through which his wife, Vimala Wijewardene, also became an active participant of temple affairs. In 1946, D.C. edited an attractive pamphlet entitled *Here is Kelaniya* (also, in Sinhala, *Menna Kelaniya*). Published in large numbers in both languages, the text is illustrated with drawings and photographs; it contains articles about Kelaniya's 'history', 'legends', art and architecture.⁴⁶ This fused with excerpts from Wijewardene's soon-to-be-published masterpiece, *The Revolt in the Temple*, a work that would become widely influential in Right-wing Sinhala nationalist circles.

⁴³ He bought a house owned by a Tamil gentleman at Park Road in Colombo 7, and this house is still used by the present chief monk whenever he visits Colombo. Dhammānanda not only brought an official residence under the name of Sri Pāda chief priestship but also an official car and a substantial amount of monthly payment for the incumbency. All these arrangements show how Dhammānanda effectively remade the powerful and privileged Sri Pāda chief priestship, which had lost its importance during the management of the Sabaragamuva elites under the colonial regime. Today, the monks who hold the Sri Pāda chief priestship enjoy more privileges than Dhammānanda himself enjoyed during his tenure.

⁴⁴ Seneviratne, *Work of Kings*, 135.

⁴⁵ See Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed*, 38.

⁴⁶ Walters, *History of Kelaniya*, 99–100.

In 1954, D.C. served as a member of the Buddhist Committee of Inquiry that was set up by a resolution passed by the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress at its thirty-third annual conference held in 1953. The Committee's purpose was 'to inquire into the present state of Buddhism in Ceylon and to report on the conditions necessary to improve and strengthen the position of Buddhism, and the means whereby those conditions may be fulfilled'.⁴⁷ The report of the Committee was published in 1956 under the title, *The Betrayal of Buddhism*. In it, D.C. echoes the nationalist position that the country was the 'chosen' land of Buddhism and its followers, the Sinhalese nation. As he says:

[t]hroughout their history, the stimulus to action, for the Sinhalese, was the ideology that they were a nation brought into being for the definite purpose of carrying, 'for full five thousand years,' the torch lit by the 'Guide of the World' twenty-five centuries ago; and the structure of Sinhalese society has been shaped in pursuance of this ideology. Buddhism was the State Religion. The Chosen king was always a Buddhist, and the people supported him with wholehearted loyalty, because he, as the chief citizen of the country, was the leader in shaping and sustaining their ideology, and the protector of the national faith. The temple became the centre from which radiated learning, arts, and culture. The Sangha were the guides of the king's conscience and the mentors of the people, whose joys they shared and whose sorrows they assuaged.⁴⁸

D.C. Wijewardene argued that Buddhism as the state religion, maintained and guaranteed by ancient kings, must be restored to its former glory; a claim that became central to Sri Lankan Buddhist nationalism. As D.C. saw it, the *Sangha* (monkhood) had, throughout the island's history, been critically important to this restorative work. To that extent, *The Revolt in the Temple* did not produce any original arguments and repeated the themes already articulated by nationalist monks (such as Walpola Rahula). Nonetheless, D.C.'s works helped to popularise Sinhala Buddhist nationalist ideology with a wider audience. D.C. Wijewardene's ideological position is important because he was the main architect of Dhammānanda's restorative project, or the Buddhicisation of Sri Pāda, in terms of what might be called its ritualisation. In 1954, Dhammānanda appointed D.C. as the first Trustee of Sri Pāda temple. D.C., in turn, helped Dhammānanda to define and institute the 'official' ritual practices at Sri Pāda identical to 'the daily rituals at Kelaniya temple' which were most probably invented in the 1920s.⁴⁹ D.C. was also involved in the reconstruction, reconstitution(?), of the internal administrative and service staff of the temple, but he died in 1956 just before the completion of that project. Dhammānanda completed the rest of the project with the help of another loyal lay Buddhist, Danapala Attyegalle.⁵⁰ All this is to say that the restoration project undertaken by Dhammānanda was not simply

⁴⁷ Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed*, 22.

⁴⁸ 1954, 513, quoted in Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed*, 38–39.

⁴⁹ Walters, *History of Kelaniya*, 94–107. cb

⁵⁰ Attyegalle was the Chairman of Ratnapura Urban Council and later became the Member of Parliament for Ratnapura electorate.

a 'nationalist' one, but was also a project that threatened the authority of the previous lay temple trustees who mainly came from the landed families of the elitist class of the Sabaragamuva province (*Radala Goyigama*). Indeed, after the mid-1950s, the influence of the elite Sabaragamuva families on the affairs of Sri Pāda temple seems to have completely died out.⁵¹

It is important to note that Dhammānanda began the restoration of Sri Pāda in the context of an ugly nationalism in Sri Lanka, marked by the election of S.W.R.D Bandaranaike in 1956. This period saw the emergence of a Buddhist nationalist identity, particularly in the wake of what is known as the Buddha Jayanti celebrations, marking the 2,500 anniversary of the death of Buddha. In these politico-ideological conditions, Dhammānanda became a key figure in formulating a new, Buddhist version of Sri Pāda. His successors did the rest by bringing their own modifications into the new structure.

Let me now move from political contestation to explain another important religious or ideological 'reform' movement which flourished briefly between 1948 and 1956, and is worthy of note here because it had some impact on Sri Pāda temple affairs, and mostly on the whole monk community in Sri Lanka. One such movement I am concerned with was organised and popularised by the self-ordained monks, popularly known as *tāpasayo*, or ascetic monks, who were highly critical of established monasticism on the grounds of luxurious living and the moral decadence of monks and their monastic practice. In January 1948, they began publishing a magazine called *Sāsana Parihāniya* ('Decline of Buddhism'), but subsequently (in 1949) that name was changed to *Sāsana Araksava* ('Protection of the Buddhist Religion'). The magazine was their main populist weapon against the monastic monks and their contemporary living and practices. Their other objective was tireless public preaching.⁵² Similar 'purification' movements at this point to reform the monastic order of the Buddhist monks also became visible. An important movement was the Vinayavardhana movement which advocated a strict return to *vinaya*, the code of monastic discipline.⁵³ This movement came into prominence in the 1950s, also as a result of laity critiques of the monkhood, particularly on the ground of their luxurious living and moral decadence. It advocated and effected among its supporters an avoidance of monks, where necessary using laymen instead. The Vinayavardhana wished to restrict all monks to isolated hermitages like *tāpasayo* because, as Michael Ames points out, Vinayavardhana claimed that all ordained monks were corrupt and heretical and that they have corrupted the doctrine and the laity as well. The Vinayavardhana movement attempted not only to eliminate monastic 'corruption' but also to 'free' Buddhists from ritualism. But

⁵¹ The power of those families, according to Spencer, began to be challenged only by the advent of mass politics. See Jonathan Spencer, 'The Vanishing Elite: The Political and Cultural Work of Nationalist Revolution in Sri Lanka', in *Elite Cultures: Anthropological Perspectives*, ed. Chris Shore and Stephen Nugent (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

⁵² Michael Carrithers, *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka: An Anthropological and Historical Study* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 104–36.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

their attempt was repulsed by the strong counter-reformation movement that was led by the Buddhist establishment in the country. These reformist and counter-reformist movements that appeared at this post-colonial moment need to be understood as a 'fundamentalist' response to the 'shape' of the emerging 'new Buddhism', 'language' and 'culture' of Sinhala Buddhist majority of Sri Lanka. So far, I have attempted to excavate a politico-cultural conjuncture in which the post-colonial Sri Pāda temple shifted from a 'sacred site' to 'Buddhist site'.

How did this politico-cultural conjuncture impact on the non-Buddhist elements at the Sri Pāda temple? In the mid-1950s, a Tamil Hindu ritual practice oriented to the God Siva, to whom Tamil Hindus believe that the sacred footprint at the temple belongs, began to fade from Sri Pāda. Surprisingly, the historical origin of this particular Hindu practice at Sri Pāda is very ambiguous in its orientation. However, the ritual engagement of Hindu mendicants at Sri Pāda can be traced back to the period of the Tamil king of Ariya Chakkrawarti in the fourteenth century or even before. It is certain that during the period of late sixteenth century to mid-eighteenth century, a group of Tamil Hindu mendicants, popularly known as *āndiya*, controlled the Sri Pāda temple until it was taken over by King Kirti Sri and handed over to Buddhist monks.⁵⁴

A similar kind of Tamil Hindu mendicants used to perform a special annual *puja* oriented to the God Siva on a special day of *Mahasivarātri*,⁵⁵ in the month of March at Sri Pāda temple. This ritual can be identified as the making of their mythical claim on the sacred footprint as God Siva's into practice. Large numbers of Tamil Hindu pilgrims, mainly from the Colombo area, used to participate in the main annual ceremony of the Hindus at Sri Pāda. This special event was popularly known as the 'Cochin Pōya day' among the ex-temple staff of Sri Pāda temple. The name 'Cochin' specified that the majority of the Malayali Hindus who visited the temple on the day largely consisted of the immigrant trading community from the region of Kerala in south India. The Tamil religious leaders who performed special *puja* at Sri Pāda were generally known as *sāmi* ('lord') and some of these *sāmis* resided permanently at the place called *Sāmi Madama* at the northern foothill of the sacred mountain where they built a small temple for God Siva. However, the special *puja* on the day of *Mahasivarātri* was conducted by the senior *sāmi* who came from a main temple in Colombo. Until the early 1930s, the *sāmi* had no problem taking away the offerings made at the footprint shrine on this special day by the Hindu pilgrims.⁵⁶ But the practice was stopped by the newly appointed

⁵⁴ For more detail see De Silva, 'Sri Pāda'.

⁵⁵ See J. Bruce Long, 'Mahasivaratri: The Saiva Festival of Repentance', in *Religious Festivals in South India and Sri Lanka*, ed. Guy R. Welbon and Glenn E. Yocum (New Delhi: Manohar, 1982), for a substantial account on this festival in south India.

⁵⁶ According to a letter written by a temple servant to the trustee of the temple on 7 March 1932, a *sāmi*, S. Ramanatha, had performed the *puja* at Sri Pāda and the value of the offering on the day was ₹143.57; the value of the personal offering given to the *sāmi* for his ritual service by the Hindu pilgrims was ₹47.85. Ramanatha *sāmi* had given a gift (quarter sovereign of gold) to the trustee (Sri Lanka National Archive (SLNA) 37/985).

temple trustee in 1936. However, the chief *sāmi*, known as Ramanathan *Sāmi*, made an appeal to the public trustee on the issue but his appeal was unanimously rejected.⁵⁷ It appears that although the *sāmi* or his fellow *sāmis* lost their share for the ritual service, they continued their annual ritual service at Sri Pāda until the beginning of Dhammānanda's Sri Pāda reordering project in the mid-1950s.

As explained earlier, this period coincided with the emerging political dominance of Sinhala Buddhists and strong resentment against Tamil Hindus. Thus, under Dhammānanda's project, the special *pūja* held by Hindu *sāmis* was brought to a standstill and their small temple at the foot of the sacred mountain was taken over by a Buddhist monk.⁵⁸ The violence against the Tamils around this period would have been a further reason for their absence from Sri Pāda temple on this important day for the Hindu pilgrims. During my fieldwork, I never came across such a ritual taking place at the Sri Pāda temple. Not surprisingly, according to one of my Tamil informants, the presence of the Tamil Hindu *sāmis* in the Sri Pāda temple area had completely died out by the early 1960s.⁵⁹ This example clearly shows how non-Buddhist participation has been eroded in the ritual practices at the temple site under the hegemonic reordering project of the Dhammānanda. Today, we do not see a sacred site where diverse non-Buddhist religious practices are being publicly held and openly accommodated. Instead, we see highly Buddhicised sacred space in which the large numbers of diverse Buddhist pilgrim parties contest and express their Buddhist identity in different manners. The Sinhala Buddhicisation of the internal affairs of Sri Pāda temple, particularly in the 'official' rituals sphere, led to alienation of the non-Buddhists. This was further exacerbated by the increasing political tensions between Sinhala and other ethnic groups,⁶⁰ particularly with Tamils. Today, pilgrims of non-Buddhist religious groups have become onlookers on 'the sacred footprint', rather the active participants of their own ritual practices at the sacred site which had

⁵⁷ Administrative Report of Public Trustee in 1937.

⁵⁸ Interview with the ex-executive monk at Sri Pāda temple on 30 September and 20 October 2001 in which he claimed that he took over the temple of the *sāmis* which is popularly known as *Sāmi Madama*. Today, this place is run by a Buddhist monk, and part of it has been given over to commercial purposes.

⁵⁹ Personal communication with S. Sivanandi (66) on 20 December 2000 and 24 August 2002. According to Sivanandi, in the morning of the *Mahasivarātri* day, one *sāmi* (Bala *Sāmi*) was stationed at the Seethagangula where the Hindu pilgrims used to have 'sacred bath'. Before the sacred bath, the *sāmi* performed a purification ritual in which each pilgrim was given a piece of banana leaf with a handful of white rice and a coin for putting on their head. With those auspicious objects, pilgrims had to take a bath and together with their wet clothes, they use to climb the sacred mountain. Today, such ritual performances at Sri Pāda are not visible. According to Sivanandi, under the 1964 repatriation pact, few *sāmis* of this place returned to India.

⁶⁰ Religiously motivated violence began in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century (for example, Christian groups against Buddhists and Buddhist groups against Christian, and in 1915, the infamous Muslim and Buddhist riots) but by the middle of twentieth century, this violence became ethnically motivated (for example, 1958, 1977 and 1983, Sinhala against Tamil and also later Tamil against Sinhala).

been performed there until recently. By mid-1950s onwards, Sri Pāda temple had become a 'sacred site' almost exclusively for Sinhala Buddhist practices.⁶¹

Temple Administrative Project

The most important aspect of the Buddhicisation of Sri Pāda is the bureaucratic administrative system that Dhammānanda introduced in the temple. This system was not based on a pre-colonial system of administration, but was entirely new.

In order to discuss how Dhammānanda constituted, or reconstituted, the Sri Pāda temple administration as a new project, let me sketch the present administration based, more or less, on his model. There are more than twenty-five lay temple servants and seven Buddhist monks who are part of Sri Pāda and several temples that are officially connected to it. Of these, the chief priest, the temple trustee and the monks in charge at the two associated temples, and their servants, hold permanent positions within the overall temple administration, but almost all the temple staff at Sri Pāda have temporary (six month) appointments. In general, temple officials can be divided into two main categories: monks and lay officials. The monks do not consider themselves 'official', but are paid for their ritual and administrative services at Sri Pāda temple. There are usually four monks in charge of the daily ritual 'service'. This 'service' is usually performed on a shift basis, each monk officiating for six hours a day in the shrine room on top of the mountain. The most senior monk is responsible for the proper functioning of the overall religious affairs at the temple, with the official designation of *agamika sevadhikari* (chief officiating monk of religious affairs). Religious and administrative affairs within Sri Pāda come under the jurisdiction of another senior monk, an 'executive monk' (*kuttrayadhikari*), who also takes part in daily ritual activities and monitors the administrative work of the temple manager. The lay staff are supervised by the 'manager' (*kalamanakara*), who is the chief lay administrator of the temple and has jurisdiction over all the 'secular' activities. Both the executive monk and the manager are monitored by the trustee monk who reports to the chief priest of the temple.⁶² Usually, the chief priest and the trustee monk are not resident at the Sri Pāda temple; instead, they do the administrative work from an office known as 'Sri Pāda office' (*Sripāda karyalaya*), situated at the Dharmasala Pirivena or monastic school in Ratnapura.

⁶¹ See De Silva, 'Sri Pāda'. Interestingly, however, there is a group of Hindu Tamil who live and work in the neighbouring plantation estates around Sri Pāda connect both economically and religiously to the temple but this Hindu Tamil element is subordinate to the highly Buddhicised element.

⁶² The trustee monk is usually appointed for five years and can be renewed with the consent of the chief monk for further periods. In each appointment, trustee is required to deposit the bonded money (the recent value is ₹200,000) at the Buddhist Commissioner's Department, which is known as the Ministry of Buddhist Affairs since 1981. The chief monk and the trustee monk are 'legally bound' with the Sri Lankan state on the financial matters of the Sri Pāda temple.

The present official administrative system at Sri Pāda was created and introduced in the 1950s under Morontuduve Dhammānanda. The new religious and administrative structure at the Sri Pāda temple was entirely different from the structures that had been operating during its long history. So, Dhammānanda's administrative project was not built upon a temple administrative system which reflected a late pre-colonial feudal social order. It was built upon a kind of modern bureaucratic system. Compared to other temple administrative structures as discussed by Seneviratne and Evers, this arrangement is a recent invention.⁶³ Take, for example, the *kapumahattaya*,⁶⁴ the lay priest of the deity, who officiates at the shrine of the guardian deity, Saman. He is not a 'hereditary' servant of the Sri Pāda temple, but usually belongs to the high-caste *Govigama*. Their relationship with the Sri Pāda temple entirely depends on monetary relations rather than hereditary ones. At Sri Pāda, the *kapumahattaya* is recruited on a contractual basis for one particular pilgrimage season (six months). The present chief *kapumahattaya*⁶⁵ is the son of the former *kapumahattaya* who was first recruited by Dhammānanda in the mid-1950s. Interestingly, before Dhammānanda hired them, they were priests for a local deity shrine dedicated to another popular guardian deity in the Sinhala Buddhist pantheon, Kataragama *deviyo* (the God Kataragama). Similarly, the present drummers at Sri Pāda were originally hired by Dhammānanda from a 'traditional' village of the drummer caste (*Berava*) to perform ritual drumming (*hevisi pujava*) on a contract basis.

Under Dhammānanda's administrative project, new categories of temple officials were created and introduced, and their duties and responsibilities were written out.⁶⁶ The following is the somewhat arbitrary hierarchical structure that Dhammānanda instituted:

- The chief monk of Sri Pāda (*nayaka hamuduruvo*)
- The trustee monk (*bharakara himi*)
- The executive monk (*kutrayadhikari himi*)
- The officiate monk of religious affairs (*agamika sevadhikari*)
- The officiate monks of daily rituals (*tevava bhara himivaru*)

⁶³ H.L. Seneviratne, *Rituals of the Kandyan State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978) and Hans-Dieter Evers, *Monks, Priests and Peasants* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972).

⁶⁴ Traditionally, they were known as *kapurala*.

⁶⁵ Two *kapumahattayas* officiate at the shrine today: the chief and the deputy *kapumahattaya*. Interestingly, the service supporter (*tewakaraya*) at the footprint in 1970 was asked, in 1973, to serve at the deity shrine where he learned 'art of ritual practices' from the father of the present chief deity priest; and in 1978, he was assigned as the deputy deity priest at the Saman shrine of the temple (interviewed on 21 November 2001).

⁶⁶ Dhammānanda had worked out a document called 'The Constitution of Sri Pādastana', in which all the duties and responsibilities of the temple staff were explained in detail, but I have never seen it. My effort to get a copy of the document from the trustee monk failed because he did not want to make the detail publicly visible that 'deputy *kapumahattaya* does not come from a family of the deity priest. According to him, he first came to the temple as a ritual constitution.' However, the duties and responsibilities of the temple manager appeared in Seelananda's *Sri Pāda Vamsaya*. There are fifty-one regulations bound with the post of temple lay manager (Seelananda, *Sri Pāda Vamsaya*, 133–39).

- The manager (*kalamanakara*)
- The chief deity priest and the deputy priest (*kapumahattayas*)
- The servants at the footprint shrine and the deity shrine (*Buddha upastayakayo or tevakarayo*)
- The servants of monks (*sangha upastayakayo*)
- The clerks (*lipikaruvo*)
- The kitchen workers (*pratya samPādakayo*)
- The drummers (*berakaruvo*)
- The watchers (*murakaruvo*)
- The cleaners (*kamkaruvo*) or scavengers (*pavitra karuwo*)⁶⁷

Compared to the ‘traditional’ temple organisation based on the complex division of labour within Kandyan temples,⁶⁸ Dhammānanda’s model at the Sri Pāda is remarkably modern in its simplicity. As further evidence of this modernity, the caste-based ‘hereditary’ temple service is not found at Sri Pāda. Instead, the Sri Pāda administration operates in the form of ‘tradition’ (*sampradaya*) established by Dhammānanda. In other Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka, the majority of temple staff are high-caste *Goyigama*. Traditionally, they are landowners and farmers. The drummers belong to the low caste, *Berava*, a numerically smaller caste who are popular ritual specialists, best known for their planetary rites⁶⁹ and rites for demonic affliction.⁷⁰ However, compared to other major Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka, caste does not play a vital role in the internal social organisation of the ‘modern’ Sri Pāda.

Although the system of administration that Dhammānanda introduced is still dominant, the ‘official’ system of rituals has been contested and modified by his successors.

‘Official’ Rituals

Dhammānanda instituted a new kind of ‘official’ ritual with the help of D.C. Wijewardene.⁷¹ D.C. helped to propose a new order of rituals to be practised at the

⁶⁷ Except chief *kapumahattaya*, drummers and scavengers, other temple staff members were appointed either during the period of former chief priest or the current chief priest. However, the new trustee monk appointed in 1998 made some changes in the lay temple staff by recruiting some people loyal to him.

⁶⁸ Evers, *Monks, Priests and Peasants*; Seneviratne, *Rituals of the Kandyan State*; A.J. Kendrick, ‘Caste and Temple Service in a Sinhalese Highland Village’, Unpublished PhD thesis (University of London, 1984).

⁶⁹ De Silva, *Globalization and Transformation*.

⁷⁰ Bruce Kapferer, *A Celebration of Demons: Exorcism and the Aesthetics of Healing in Sri Lanka* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983) and *The Feast of the Sorcerer: Practices of Consciousness and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

⁷¹ Interviews on 30 September and 20 October 2001 with the executive monk (*krutayadhikari*) who served at Sri Pāda under Dhammānanda from 1955 to 1970, and with Dhammānanda’s only pupil, Rev. Pinnagoda Sumanatissa, on 13 November 2001.

Sri Pāda, similar to those that he introduced at the Kelaniya temple. For instance, D.C. designed ‘official’ ritual practices (such as daily services to Buddha or *Buddha puja*) based on the practice at the Kelaniya temple. My point here is that the religiosity we find at the Sri Pāda is remarkably ‘modern’ compared or contrasted to the religiosity at other temples such as the Temple of the Tooth and Lankatilka temple. This does not mean that the Sri Pāda temple had or has no ‘traditional’ religiosity. Many versions of it can be found throughout its history. For example, under the Kandyan king, Kirti Sri Rajasinhe, something akin to an ‘official’ religiosity was instituted at the Sri Pāda.

Today, the elaborative ‘official’ or ‘public’ religious practices at Sri Pāda temple can be found in many forms. There are the daily or regular rituals which take place in the morning, midday and evening. Then, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, a special evening ritual known as ‘*kemmura pūjāva*’ is added to the daily ritual. In addition to the daily rituals, there are major ‘public ceremonies’, or annual ceremonies, that include the full moon day merit-making ceremonies (*pōya pinkama*). Among them there are three major public ceremonies. The ‘inaugural’ or ‘commencement’ ceremony, and the ‘closing’ or ‘concluding’ ceremony, respectively mark the beginning and the end of the Sri Pāda pilgrimage season. The main feature of these two ceremonies is the escort of two images of the guardian deity, Saman, in a motorcade procession from Ratnapura to Sri Pāda, and then back at the end of pilgrimage season.⁷² The third main ceremony is the full moon day merit-making ceremony in March, known as *mādin dina pinkama*. This ceremony is organised as a nationally important religious festival for the island. Interestingly, non-Buddhists hardly participate in these rituals and play no part in the temple proceedings. Hence, not surprisingly, ‘official’ religiosity at Sri Pāda temple is unmistakably Buddhist in orientation.

Conclusion

I have explained how Sri Pāda was constructed as a hegemonic Buddhist sacred site following Sri Lanka’s independence from the British Empire. This new ‘reordering’ project became more visible after the mid-1950s without much state intervention. During this period, the ‘official’ discursive practices of rituals, ceremonial and administrative affairs of the temple, as well as the physical appearance of the temple, were remade and transformed into something predominantly Buddhist. As I have demonstrated, the notion of fashioning of Sri Pāda as an exclusive ‘Buddhist site’ was first articulated in the mid-1950s, at a time when new forms of Sinhala Buddhist identity were developing in the country. Morontuduve Dhammānanda, the chief priest of Sri Pāda temple (1954–70), and

⁷² According to temple officials, the commencement ceremony began as a publicly visible event around the early 1990s, whereas the concluding ceremony began much more recently, precisely from 1998.

his ally, D.C. Wijewardene, became key non-state actors in formulating a new version of Sri Pāda. Dhammānanda's successors totally transformed Sri Pāda temple into a fully-fledged Buddhist site. The Sri Pāda temple that was (re)ordered in the decades after independence, as I have demonstrated, does not represent a return to any original forms that had existed before. Rather, it was a new creation that coincided with the emergence of a new post-colonial discourse about Sinhala Buddhist identity and nationalism in Sri Lanka. As mentioned at the beginning of the article, most studies on South and Southeast Asia have emphasised the role of the state (structure) in the formation of nationalism, but have failed to understand the contexts in which nationalist agenda can be played out without the involvement of the state apparatus. This work shows that it is only through detailed ethnographic analysis of everyday experiences and socio-political conjunctures that we can begin to obtain a glimpse of the complex link between the growth and (re)production of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism (and other 'nationalisms') at the non-state level and larger discourses on nationalism.

Acknowledgements

This article is based on research made possible by a grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation: Professional Development International Fellowship (PDIF); an Overseas Research Student Award (ORS); and Studentship of the Faculty of Social Sciences (University of Edinburgh) and a Radcliffe-Brown Award of Royal Anthropological Institute, The British Academy/Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). I am most grateful to all institutions. I am particularly grateful to Jonathan Spencer for his valuable guidance and continuing support. Earlier versions of this article were presented in Edinburgh, Colombo, Otago, Missouri State, Cornell and Harvard universities. I have also benefited from the insights and suggestions of Gananath Obeyesekere, Kumari Jayawardene, Tony Good, Charles Hallisey, Ananda Abeyasekara, Anne Blackburn and Rohan Bastin.