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Sinhalese Nationalism and its interrelation with Identity, Peace and Conflict

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I Introduction

1 Epistemic Interest

The topic of national identity is highly complex and very difficult to grasp, yet every one is affected by it in some way. The reason why I chose to work on nationalism in Sri Lanka in general and Sinhalese nationalism in particular lies without a doubt in my own Sinhalese origin. During my studies of International Development in Vienna I started to realise that the country from which I came is a country haunted by violence and conflict, where minorities claim to be oppressed and extremely violated by the majority. I come from the Sinhalese majority. Western media and Western literature enhanced this view, sometimes calling the Sri Lankan government Sinhala chauvinist or supremacist. On the other side, I was confronted in my every day life with Sinhalese people, none of who seemed to me to be chauvinistic or racist. To the contrary, I actually found that they were the most friendly and hospitable people I had ever met. Thus, I was confused and deeply irritated by the huge gap in my knowledge and understanding. How was it that I had no idea about the conflict or how somebody could call Sinhalese people 'racist', 'chauvinist' or 'oppressors'?

In fact, I started my quest by asking my family questions about Sri Lankan history and about the reason why my father decided to leave the country. As many children of South Asian expatriates know, topics like this are not frequently discussed; it took me a lot of time and patience to reach the core of the matter, but understanding Sri Lankan history and culture became a matter of my own pending identity.

At first my view and perception was blurred by the violent attacks of the *Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam* (LTTE), all the more so as there where only Sinhalese people there to explain the conflict to me; the only thing they could offer was their one-sided perception, mainly enriched by descriptions of LTTE atrocities. To my naive question as to why they were fighting a guerrilla war against the state, their only response was, "Because they want a separate state." If I

asked further questions I would only be met by a yawning void. It was obvious that there was something missing in their explanations. Thus, I started reading; and the first thing one encounters while focusing on the Sinhala-Tamil divide is the year 1983: the year I was born and the year that marked the outbreak of the Sri Lankan conflict that caused extreme human suffering.

The anti-Tamil pogrom of 1983 was the extreme violent and perverted manifestation of feelings and actions canalized and instrumentalized by Sinhalese nationalist agitators. During this 'Black July' I was an unborn child in my mother's womb, who was at that time in Colombo visiting my grandparents. My mother described this event to me, and told me how Colombo was suddenly filled with gangs of rural Sinhalese that even came to my grandparent's house and asked if they would hide any Tamil and told them that if they did, they would burn us all alive. Luckily they did not come in, and even luckier for the Tamil family my grandfather was hiding in his old unused wedding hall. Nevertheless, this year marks the rise of a tragic play whose main actors are the people guided by false nationalism, whether it be the Sinhalese version or the Tamil one.

Thus I finally was given insight into my first question of why some people call Sinhalese oppressors, chauvinists or racist. At the same time it appeared to me that this issue was far too precarious and complex to simply brand it as Sinhalese chauvinism. It needed to be approached with care and sensitivity, most of all with understanding, but at the same time without trying to legitimise the violence connected to it.

The next task for me was to understand how it had reached this point. This part was not as easy to ascertain and I am still not sure if it is possible for anyone to determine how events can go so astray that humans become capable of killing each other. But I could walk a different path and look for different answers. I therefore decided to make the focus of my research Sinhalese nationalism.

It was a topic to which I could gain access on many levels: through literature, interviews, or simple conversations with people from different ethnic communities – both rural and urban – as well as with NGO workers and the average individual.

I am aware of the fact that I cannot present a balanced view of the conflict, and that I likewise cannot comprehend the situation as person living in Sri Lanka does, especially a person from the Tamil community. At the same time, one can also infer that it is the distance that provides me with certain objectivity. Either way my aim of inquiry is not to put the blame on the one or the other side. It is not to legitimize any atrocity committed by the conflicting parties or the current war of the Rajapaksa administration. My aim of research is purely personal: I want to understand the Sinhalese and their perception of their national identity in the context of the conflict and determine how exclusive nationalism is nurtured by the conflict and how the conflict provides the justification for a radical outlook of Sinhalese nationalism.

After these first initial steps I started devoting myself completely to the subject of identity and conflict in Sri Lanka. I discovered that discussing these topics in Sri Lanka was far more difficult than I expected. Opinions about the Sri Lanka conflict are extremely polarised, leaving no space for moderate opinions or approaches. Any person who commented on the Sri Lankan conflict who was not part of a certain section of the indigenous Sinhalese intelligentsia was branded as elitist, foreign-funded and therefore harmful to the country's (and Sinhalese) cultural welfare.[1] This emotionally charged reaction made it difficult for me to conduct my research, but it also guided me in the right direction.

2 Methodology

I chose a historical framework for this study on Sinhalese nationalism. Looking in the depths of history and taking into account the changes connected to colonialism and the process of becoming a nation-state appeared as crucial factors in my inquiry. Therefore, the main chapters of research are based on extensive literary research. Even though the main source of the thesis is scientific literature, there were various other sources that are worth mention.

As previously discussed in the chapter on epistemological interest, the treatise was partly influenced by my own family history and discussions about Sri

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[1] See Matthews 1988−1989: 620.

Lanka. To make the process of research as transparent as possible it is relevant to mention that to a certain degree the work was influenced by ideas gained through talks and discussions with relatives living in and outside of Sri Lanka. Additionally, it was possible to access expert information on the Sri Lankan conflict and peace initiatives through members of the *Institute of Integrative Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding* in Vienna.

I gained my main insights into the Sri Lankan experience realm – in particular Sinhalese perception – through a three-month trip to the south western province of Sri Lanka. I visited local NGOs and made use of their research facilities, which meant a lot of reading, copying and excerpting. I discussed relevant points of the conflict with NGO workers, in particular of the NGO *Sarvodaya*. I had talks with *Sarvodaya* members ranging from temporary interns to project coordinators, or external advisors. At the same time I was attentively following Sri Lankan media to find out in what way the conflict and ongoing war was reproduced through media.

I conducted additional interviews with rural Sinhalese youth, and asked them questions about their perceptions of different communities in Sri Lanka and of history, identity, conflict and peace. Despite my limited use of the material offered by the qualitative research, the information I gained provided me with the needed guiding line during my discursive literature research, and illustrated important points. In an extra chapter I further discuss the impressions I had. During my trip and in an effort to pinpoint their differences in knowledge, perception and understanding, I used every opportunity to talk about the conflict with Sri Lankans from every community, from the Muslim tri wheel taxi driver to the Sinhalese or Tamil guesthouse owner to the university student.

II   Introduction into a Theoretical Framework

In the last century, the Sri Lankan conflict developed an outstanding character with regards to its intensity, duration, interaction of inside and outside communities and most of all bloodshed. This chapter aims at finding a theoretical framework to analyse and explain certain aspects of the Sri Lankan conflict through a historical lens. The conflict in Sri Lanka is deeply connected to the question of identity, whether it be the Sinhalese identity[2], the Tamil identity[3], the Muslim identity[4] or even the Burgher identity[5]. The separate subject of identity formation is such a complex and multi-dimensional process that it was narrowed down to the question of national identity in Sri Lanka, more precisely to the development of a distinct Sinhalese identity, which is mutually exclusive from any other ethnic community in Sri Lanka. I chose a historical dimension to point out how the specific ideology of distinct '*Sinhaleseness*' arrived on the Island, changed throughout the centuries and finally became the mainstream ideology, particu-

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[2] The Sinhalese are the principal ethnic group on Sri Lanka; they make up more than 74% of the Islands' population. Their main language is Sinhala, which is categorized as an Indo-Aryan language, in contrast to Tamil, which is a Dravidian language. The Sinhalese are overwhelmingly Buddhist. There is also a minor proportion of Sinhalese Christians, they make up about 6, 5 % of the Sinhalese community in Sri Lanka. (See Gunawardena 2005: 72, 334-335).

[3] The Sri Lankan Tamils form next to the Sinhalese the second largest ethnic group with about 12%. They trace back their history in Sri Lanka back to ancient times. In Sri Lankan Tamil community Christian proselytization was more successful than in the Sinhalese community. Apart from them, there are also Indian Tamils (also called Plantation Tamils or Up-country Tamils) who make up for another 6% of the Tamil speaking population. They were purposely brought to Sri Lanka during the 19th and 20th century to work on the tea, rubber or coffee plantation. (See Amirthalingam 2003:31).

[4] The Sri Lankan Moor community forms about 7,6 % of the population and claim to be of Arab or Indo-Arab origin. Their language is mainly Tamil, but their principal source of identity is rather religion than language. The Sri Lankan Muslim community also includes a small community of Malays. (See Gunawardena 2005: 250).

[5] The Burgher community of Sri Lanka are the descendants of a polyglot European community of whose member were married to local Sri Lankans. The generic term Burghers means citizens. The Burghers developed as a distinct community, with English as their first language and Christianity as their religion. They occupied senior positions as administrators and in the professions. After independence when Sri Lankan politicians favoured the use of local languages, many Burghers migrated, mainly to Australia. (See: Amirthalingam 2003: 45-47, Gunawardena 2005: 59-60).

larly within Sinhalese Buddhists in Sri Lanka. To demonstrate that process, I initially turned to a set of literature about nationalism in general. Regarding these theories, all of them put emphasis on different patterns. Yet in order to describe Sinhalese nationalism as an entity it appeared to me that connecting various theoretical frameworks was a better way to understand the process than focusing on one single theoretical scheme. My conjecture is that a nationalist ideology requires very specific circumstances to become a popular mainstream ideology.

With regards to Galtung's peace and conflict theories, three different dimensions need to be taken into consideration: the culture, the structure and the agent/agency.[6] Culture is regarded as a social construction, the structure as a pattern of interaction and the agent/agency functions as a political-psychological dimension able to influence, manipulate and penetrate into the culture and structure. All of these dimensions are directly correlated. Collective actions of groups, in our case based on the ideology of nationalism, are evenly interconnected to these spheres.[7] Detailed explanations on the three dimensions will be given later.

In relation to this three-fold framework one should not forget that the core piece of analysis centres on the basic human need for identity, in this case Sinhalese national identity. Like any other nationalism, Sinhalese nationalism places the need of national identity, as well as the survival of the state in the center.[8] With regards to a more general definition of identity, I refer to Johan Galtung's concept of individual basic human needs, in which identity is regarded as a fundamental basic need.[9] Galtung states that

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[6] See Graf 2008a: 11.

[7] Ibidem, p. 21.

[8] Ibidem, p. 19.

[9] Galtung assumes that there are four basic human needs, two material and two non-material (Survival, Wellbeing, Identity, and Freedom). All needs are interdependent and not hierarchically fixed. (See Graf,/Kramer,/Nicolescou 2008: 15) Any of these basic needs can be threatened or violated through direct, structural or cultural violence. Direct violence is defined as an event, structural violence is a constant, and cultural violence is permanence. (See Graf 2005: 4).

"[i]dentity in the sense of a basic human need, is the form not the content, and in that understanding neither a concept for any pre-modern cultural essentialism nor any post-modern cultural relativism."[10]

A short summary of the discourse on the identity will be provided later, including a post-Orientalist view that has proven to be of particular interest in deconstructing nationalist ideologies in Sri Lanka. Regarding Sinhalese nationalism, it is important to mention that nationalism brought about a change of meaning in the South Asian context. I acknowledge this alteration in a short subchapter. Likewise, it is not my purpose to provide a detailed survey on nationalism and identity; therefore only selective sources were incorporated. The study is divided into three main parts, starting with the British colonial experience, the post-colonial period and the present situation. The third part on the present situation includes an analysis on the failures of the peace process initiated in 2001 and a personal introspection on the conducted qualitative research. The peace initiative will be examined according to Lederach's 'Three Gaps in Peacebuilding' while placing special attention on Sinhalese nationalist tendencies. As concluding remarks, emphasis lies on the value of conflict analysis in developmental work and aspects of peaceful national identities.

The theoretical framework is based on - but not limited to - the ideas of Benedict Anderson, Johan Galtung, Ernest Gellner, Antonio Gramsci and Anthony D. Smith. Evenly included are various other scholars, who were not explicitly mentioned within this chapter, such as Michael Roberts, John. D. Rogers, Hardt & Negri, Eric Hobsbawm, Ernest Renan, John Paul Lederach et al. The treatise will be based on a transdisciplinary approach, connecting various disciplines.

1 Nationalism: Approaching a Holistic Framework of Understanding

"The growth of nationalism and nation-building is an important, spectacular and highly consequential dimension of the worldwide processes of change connected with colonialism and de-colonisation. Nationalism is a kind of

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[10]   See Graf/Kramer/Nicolescou 2008: 16.

ideology which exists almost everywhere in the world, although it assumes very different forms."[11]

Most theoretical examinations on nations and nationalism come to the conclusion that these ideas are products of the modern world and arose out of Europe at the time of the French revolution.[12] Just after the process of colonisation and de-colonisation, this Europe-rooted system was to be the result of that process and was virtually forced upon developing countries in Africa and Asia. Both terms, although constantly reproduced in popular and scientific discourses, are very difficult to define. Within this chapter I have arranged the ideas of various authors into three dimensions of culture, structure and agent/agency and applied them to the Sinhalese case.

2 The Cultural Dimension of Nationalism

According to Galtung's definition, culture is the mental 'significances' that convey meaning to our actions.[13] In the case of nationalism, national identity includes cultural meanings and symbols and is manifested in myths and national anthems, monuments, literature etc. The cultural dimension can be seen as a social construct that defines the inner world, manifested in our thoughts and actions, but not critically reflected upon. As Amartya Sen states, many contemporary political and social issues centre on conflicting claims of disparate identities because the conception of identity in various ways influences our thoughts and actions.[14]

Benedict Andersons, one of the most cited theoretician on nationalism, integrates the whole concept of a nation into the socio-cultural constructed field by defining 'nation' as following:

> "It is an imagined political community- and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them,

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[11] See. Hylland Eriksen 2001: 274–275.
[12] Ibidem, p. 275.
[13] See Graf 2008: 12.
[14] See Sen 2006: xii.

or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. […] [And] regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship […]."[15]

We can presume that an actively supported 'imagined construction' (the nation) promoted by an 'agent' (the empire, state, elite) and an adequate 'structure' (socio-economic framework) created an imagined feeling of inclusion and communion (collective identity). It manipulated the previous culture and fabricated a feeling of union between actual strangers, while at the same time promoting exclusion of people considered not part of the nation.

In this sphere of culturally constructed assumptions, groups develop goals and claims, whereas behind those assumptions rests mostly the conflation of their human basic needs.[16] For instance after Ceylon became independent, there was a very positive response to Sinhalese nationalist ideals, glorifying past achievements of ancient Sinhalese culture and trying to project them onto the future of the nation. Claims connected to this ideological movement, developed a rather marginalising character, creating a sense of discrimination within minorities and gradually depriving them of their basic need of identity.

Stigmatising the Sinhalese agitators as racist would be an unfair oversimplification. To sufficiently understand the processes connected to this way of thought, one has to take a deeper look at the hidden forces that are linked to it.

In a similar manner Anderson avoids describing nationalism as an ideology and connects it closer to concepts such as kinship or religion because it is perceived as destiny rather than choice. He stresses that the nation became important as some older identities began to lose their credibility.[17] Anderson points out three central elements of the pre-nationalist *ancien regime*:

"sacred languages and scripts (Latin, Arabic, Pali, Chinese), held to be the sole key to truth; divine monarchs; and a cosmological or equidistant sense of past time. […] the new factors which helped to erode these ele-

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[15] Anderson 2006: 5–7.
[16] See Graf 2008a: 21.
[17] See Reid 1985: 497.

ments and laid the path for new imagined communities were the invention of print capitalism."[18]

2.1 Print Capitalism and Promoting Nationalism: Spreading a 'Social Construction'

Thus the core of Anderson's argument is that the invention and rise of print language is directly related to an increase in nationalism per se.[19] With regards to Anderson placing emphasis on print capitalism as an instigator of nationalism, one has to question if there was a mass readership in every European nation before the late 19th century.[20] The existence and importance of a mass readership in Asian nations is even more doubtful, if one takes into consideration that there have been highly developed oral traditions which have enjoyed a unique popularity throughout South Asia, for instance the Hindu sage *Ramayana*[21] of the *Mahabharata*; the epic has been translated into various languages and modified according to regional traditions or their own insights and interpretations. The *Ramayana* did not only function solely as an entertainment story, it encodes many of the cultural values of Hindu civilization.

> "[…] In this way, it has functioned less as a fixed message than as a kind of language within which South Asian culture thinks about itself, and project (and argues about) its ideals of the good life and just society."[22]

One can conclude that these myths, songs and folklore fulfil a certain function of coping with and understanding reality. One finds comparable, but not similar developments with the *Sinhabahu*, a part of the historical chronic of Sri Lanka, the *Mahavamsa*. The Great Chronicle is constantly reproduced and provides the audience with questions and ideas, and its longstanding political value certainly stands out.. The *Mahavamsa* plays a very special role in creating a com-

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[18] Ibidem, p.497–498.

[19] See Anderson 1983: 117.

[20] See Obeyesekere 2004: 6–7.

[21] In this delineation I am not referring to recent populist politicisation of the Ramayana through the Hindu-nationalistic *Bharatiya Janata* Party (BJP). This is a different case of political mobilisation and creation of community. For further studies I recommend reading Six/ Riesebrodt/ Haas (2004) on religious fundamentalism.

[22] Lutgendorf Online in:
http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/moynihan/programs/sac/Outreach/ramayana/oral.asp.

mon sense of nationhood in Sri Lanka, but this subject will be discussed in a later chapter. In the case of Sri Lanka it seems adequate to assume that the spread of oral traditions on the Island had a certain value in the stimulation of nationalist sentiment, but it was only after the spread of printing facilities in Sri Lanka that it became possible for a mass readership to access this so-called ethno-historical heritage and a nationalist vision, which allows one to stress that oral tradition and the invention of print capitalism had their part to play in promoting the cultural foundation of Sinhalese nationalism.

3 Structural Dimension of Nationalism

The structural dimension serves as the underlying condition for nationalism. According to Galtung it is a pattern of interaction that defines who is related to whom, how, when and where? Hence it is a constant process.[23]

Ernest Gellner places his emphasis on the structural aspects as the genesis of emergence of nations and nationalism. In his influential book "Nations and Nationalism", Gellner points out that certain structural formations need to be fulfilled so that nationalism as an ideology can appear. He narrows down nationalism primarily as "a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent."[24] Gellner's main argument is that nationalism grew out of a reaction towards industrialisation and the decoupling of people from their primordial ties to kin, religion and local communities. People had to adjust themselves to different patterns of social interaction. In ancient times Sinhalese society had a feudal structure. Caste determined a person's obligation and position within the hierarchy. After more than four hundred years of Western domination this system was severely weakened.[25] The dissolution of traditional caste hierarchies and sudden economic mobility, no longer limited to caste, created severe disorder within society.

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[23] See Galtung quoted after Graf 2008: 11.
[24] Gellner 1983:1.
[25] See Amithalingam 2003: 22.

Furthermore, industrialisation caused greater geographic mobility, so that people could participate in much larger societal systems. There was a need for a connecting ideology in these evolving societies - which nationalism could meet. A fundamental difference between former primordial ties and the concept of nationalism is that the latter implies the existence of an abstract community.[26] Gellner observes, therefore, that nations are not natural entities, but social constructions.[27]

By stressing the interrelation of primordial ties and the rise of nationalism, Gellner's view is mainly influenced by a functionalist standpoint. After the decrease of the former bonds, another substituting ideology was needed to create a sense of unity. "His argument is that at a certain point in industrialized life, a shared culture- meaning particularly a shared language and shared education- becomes a state wide necessity."

In Sri Lanka one finds that less than ten years after independence the demand for one common language was expressed through the 1956 'Sinhala only' demand. 'Unfortunately' Sri Lanka was multi-lingual, thus after the introduction of the 'Sinhala only Act' conflict about the right of language was almost a natural conclusion. Again the working forces behind this exaggerated demand have to be looked upon with care; otherwise we again fall into the trap of painting a black and white picture of subjects that are too complex to press into these limited dichotomous categories of good against bad, right against wrong.

Coming back to Gellner's standpoint, nationalism appears to be the product of industrialisation and the route to a universal culture in which only the nation can serve as a unit.[28] His thesis that nationalism is a result of an industrialisation process seems quite suitable even though contemporary Sri Lanka is still largely dominated by agrarian structures. Through the past process of foreign colonisation and the current trend towards globalisation, a system of greater mobility was introduced in Sri Lanka, which has replaced a village-centred identity construction model that had dominated Sri Lankan society. It should be

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[26] See Hylland Eriksen 2001: 278.
[27] See Tilly 1985: 528.
[28] See Menes 1985: 721.

pointed out that the structure describes the outer world. It is in this dimension that contradictions become visible, for example when incompatible goals and claims (Unitarianism vs. federalism, Sinhala only vs. protection of minority rights, etc.) based on different groups' culturally bound assumptions encounter each other. Consequently, conflict and/or violence will emerge between these fractions.[29]

4 The Agent/Agency – Dimension of Nationalism

Thirdly, we have to consider the political-psychological dimension of the agent/agency. The agency/agent controls, influences and manipulates the cultural and structural sphere, while being evenly bound and connected to these spheres. It is mostly a political agent or agency that penetrates into the perception and thinking of the masses. In the process of nation building the agent becomes the most vital leading force. In this section on nationalism the focus on the ideas of Antonio Gramsci and Anthony D. Smith.

Anthony Smith's theories are not clearly defined as one of the three delineated categories; in fact, they relate to all three dimensions. In the case of Sinhala nationalism they provide us with a very interesting framework for analysis.

4.1 Defining National Identity

Smith distinguishes nationalism as an ideological movement from the broader phenomenon of national identity. He states that one cannot

> "understand the power and appeal of nationalism as a political force without grounding our analysis in a wider perspective whose focus is national identity treated as a collective cultural phenomenon".[30]

The self of every individual is a composition of multiple identities and roles, depending of familiar, territorial, ethnic, religious, gender related aspects. National identity is just one facet of identity and Smith defines it as follows: "[…]'national' identity involves some sense of political community, however tenuous. A politi-

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[29] See Graf 2008: 26.

[30] Smith 1991: vii.

cal community in turn implies at least some common institutions and a single code of rights and duties for the members of the community. It also suggests a definite social space, a fairly well demarcated and bounded territory, with which the members identify and to which they feel they belong."[31]

4.2 Ethnic Heritage and Nationalism

One of Smith's main assertions is that every nation has a dominant ethnic core. His concept on national identity is definitely a synthetic work that has its roots in modernist and traditional scholastic disciplines. He argues that:

> "nationalism derives its force from its historical embeddedness. As an ideology, nationalism can take root only if it strikes a popular chord, and is taken up by, and inspires, particular social groups and strata. […] Unlike other modern belief systems, it depends for its power not just on the general idea of the nation, but on the presence and character of this or that specific nation which it turns into an absolute." [32]

The utterance of nation it creates is derived from pre-existing and highly particularized cultural heritages and ethnic formations.[33] Until the rise of nationalism ethnic and religious forms of collective identification were predominate. Even nowadays many ethnic minorities retain strong religious bonds and emblems, for instance the Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, the Serbs and Croats, as well as the Sinhalese are among the many ethnic communities whose identity is based on religious criteria of differentiation.[34]

The fundamental features of his conception of identity are therefore:

> "[…] an historic territory, or homeland; common myths and historical memories; a common, mass public culture; common legal rights and duties for all members; a common economy with territorial mobility for members."[35]

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[31] Ibidem, p. 9.

[32] Ibidem, p. vii.

[33] Ibidem, p. viii.

[34] Ibidem, p. 7.

[35] Ibidem, p. 14.

4.3 Educating Consensus

With the experience of colonialism and the creation of new nation-states the principles of political legitimacy changed "[…] from sacred, inclusive hierarchies legitimising the rule of kings […] to the egalitarian ideal of a state governed in the name of 'the people' in its threefold meaning citizenry, nation and sovereign."[36]

One has to examine the process of how people came to accept the new form of rule and the way it was introduced to the people. I refer to Antonio Gramsci's writings on hegemony; we have to take a deeper look into the process of creating consensus between ruler of the state and subject of the state. Gramsci explains that modes of rule strive for a specific balance between elements of force and consensus, but always let consensus prevail.[37]

A hegemonic group can only exercise consensus when they are able to get their ideas, values and norms accepted as the leading ones; leading is hereby understood as political, moral and cultural charisma, which should likewise function as an orientation device for the thoughts and cultural lifestyle of the majority of society.[38] The relationship between ruler and subject is considered similar to the pedagogical relation between teacher and student, but extends to society as a whole and is not a unilateral, but a dialectical process.[39] The state possesses various hegemony-creating gadgets, through which consensus is not only demanded but also taught. Hence the state fulfils the function of an educator, creating a new form of civilization.[40] The agent/agency is therefore able to actively influence, manipulate or even penetrate into the society, in constructive and

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[36] Wimmer 2002: 87.

[37] „Die ‚normale' Ausübung der Hegemonie auf dem klassisch gewordenen Feld des parlamentarischen Regimes zeichnet sich durch eine Kombination von Zwang und Konsensus aus, die sich die Waage halten, ohne das der Zwang den Konsens zu sehr überwiegt, sondern im Gegenteil vom Konsens der Mehrheit, wie er in den sogenannten Organen der öffentlichen Meinung zum Ausdruck kommt, getragen wird (See Gramsci qoted after Merkens 2006: 6.

[38] See Merkens 2006: 7.

[39] Ibidem, p. 8,12.

[40] „In Wirklichkeit muss der Staat >als Erzieher< aufgefasst werden, insofern er gerade nach strebt, einen neuen Typus oder ein neues Niveau der Zivilisation zu erschaffen." (See Gramsci quoted after Merkens 2006:10).

deconstructive ways. It is able to imperiously propagate its ideology. Consequently, one of the main goals of state politics is creating a nationalist society, which places the interest of the state and its apparatus in front of the individual interest, and prioritizes the national facet of identity.

In this context education becomes a central field of politics, because education can never be considered neutral. To overcome existing modes of political and cultural orders one must question content and forms of education and pedagogy.[41] In post colonial Sri Lanka one finds that within the educational system the fault lines for conflict between ethnic communities were already drawn, making the only unknown variable the length of time that would pass before the actual occurrence of conflict. Additionally, Andreas Wimmer explains that in post-colonial states

> […] in many cases the new elites are not capable of marshalling enough support for their project of nation-building – which in most cases implicitly or explicitly consists in generalising their particular *ethnos* to the whole population and thus transforming it into the nation."[42]

One recognizes the fact that Sri Lanka was neither mono-lingual nor mono-ethnical and again conflicting lines are easy to foresee. Wimmer's statement gives us one explanation as to why conflict over identity occurred on the multi-cultural heterogeneous Island, but just as well it shows us the embeddedness of the agent/agency in the actual process of creating and maintaining consensus.

4.4   The Functions and Meanings of National Identity

Returning to Smith, we can divide the function of national identity in external and internal aspects. The external functions are territorial, economic and political. A nation will first define a definite social space and provide its individuals with 'sacred centres', which mirror the uniqueness of their nation; economically it means the quest for control over resources and politically its legitimization of common legal rights and duties of legal institutions.

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[41]   See Merkens 2006: 14.
[42]   Wimmer 2002: 91.

The internal functions of national identity are mostly the socialisation of the members as 'nationals' and 'citizens'.

> "Today, this is achieved through compulsory, standardized, public mass education systems, through which state authorities hope to inculcate national devotion and a distinctive, homogenous culture, an activity that most regimes pursue with considerable energy under the influence of nationalist ideals of cultural authenticity and unity."[43]

This social bond is created by the use of symbols like: flags, coinage, anthems, uniforms, monuments and ceremonies. Through such practices people are reminded of their common heritage and cultural kinship.[44] Smith concludes, similar to Wimmer, that the new political elites coming from a dominant ethnos "[…] fashioned a new political mythology and symbolism to legitimate their rule."[45] In the fresh born nation state of Ceylon the ruling stratum emphasized culturally narrow defined forms of nationalism based on ethnic lines, for instance between 1930 to 1980 large-scale sponsored agricultural development was showcased as the restoration of the glories of a pre-colonial Buddhist Sinhalese order. [46]

And as mentioned before, nationalism can only take root if it strikes a popular chord in the minds of the people. And what could be more popular within the majority Sinhalese than propagating the glories of ancient Buddhist kingdoms and cultural heritage in Sri Lanka?

5 The Non-Western Conception of the Nation

The concept of nationalism has no absolute and universal meaning to it. Just as every person has a different interpretation of nationalism, states and their citizens also differ in their basic perception. As an Austrian citizen and who grew up in a country with a history so deeply connected to the horrors of *National Socialism,* I find it important to acknowledge the difference in perception. While conducting research in Sri Lanka it was extremely surprising that almost every

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[43] Smith 1991: 16.

[44] Ibidem, p. 17–18.

[45] Ibidem, p. 41.

[46] See Spencer 2008: 612.

person I talked to proudly claimed to be nationalist, some of them were even willing to sacrifice their lives and belongings for the country they loved. On the other side I hardly found any young person in Austria who would openly claim to be nationalist. This opinion might vary substantially based on the social background of the person, but there is a definite disparity between what people think of nationalism in general.

In theory Hardt & Negri state that the term 'nation' developed a significant change of meaning outside Europe, especially in the colonised regions of the world. Whereas the term 'nation' remained in the hands of the ruling powers as a symbol for cessation and restoration, in the hands of the oppressed it transformed into a meaningful symbol in the struggle for change and revolution. It is also argued that the so called 'subaltern nationalism' had two main functions. The first one was the creation of a defence line against the dominance of alien nations, against external economic, political and ideological powers. The term 'nation' was used as an ideological weapon against the hegemonic discourse of the foreign ruling nations. It worked against the belief of the colonising nation that the people and the culture of the ruled region were inferior to their own. This quest for independence and self-governance should reconstitute the dignity and pride of the people. The obverse of this philosophy is, according to Hardt & Negri that the same power that tries to fight alien oppression oppresses within its boundaries in the name of the nation and its unity. This form of new nationalism appears to be progressive and reactive, providing an opportunity for change while at the same time being a hindrance for plurality.[47]

Smith equally differs between the concept of a Western and non-Western model of the nation; he divides them into two categories, a civic and an ethnic model of the 'nation'. He considers the Western nation as a predominately territorial conception, in which the main components of it are: "historic territory, legal-political community, legal-political equality of members, and common civic culture and ideology."[48]

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[47] See Hardt/ Negri 2000: 119–122.
[48] Smith 1991:11.

In Asia a new form of nation emerged, which added significant new elements to it. Smith terms it an 'ethnic' conception of the nation. The nation was primarily a community of common descent and:

> "[…] the place of law in the Western civic model is taken by vernacular culture, usually languages and customs in the ethnic model. […] by creating a widespread awareness of the myths, history and linguistic traditions of the community, they succeeded in substantiating and crystallizing the idea of an ethnic nation in the minds of most members […]"[49]

In this Asian model the emphasis lies more on the ethnic conception of the nation, but in every nation you will find civic, as well as ethnic conceptions.[50] Hence, one can conclude that in Asia the concept of the nation and nationalism enjoys a much more positive connotation within the people than in some countries in Europe, especially the ones who already experienced the dangers connected to radical nationalist ideologies.

6 Discourses on Nationalism and Identity

Debates about nationalism in South Asia are normally categorized into different approaches. Wimmer defines four ways of approaching nationalism:

> "The first approach [is based on] rational choice theory […]. Its exponents regard the politicisation of ethnicity as an option that promises maximum return for individuals under certain 'incentive structures' unrelated to the mega-trends of modernisation. Secondly, from a neo-romantic perspective ethnicity is portrayed as a constant of social life, making nationalism and the nation-state appear as late manifestation of the eternal quest for cultural autonomy. Thirdly, ethnicity and nationalist politics may be regarded as birth pains of modern society as a transitional phenomenon in the evolutionary process. Lastly one may argue that the rise of nationalism and the nation-state constitutes a genuine component of, if not the functional prerequisite for, modern society."[51]

Nowadays Wimmer's last referred to; the modernist approach succeeded the scientific discourse and has proven to be very influential. One can connect

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[49] Ibidem, p. 12.

[50] Ibidem, p. 13.

[51] Wimmer 2002: 44–45.

Anderson's and Gellner's views to this position. Modernists also trace the roots of cultural nationalism back to the impact of the colonial experience. Social or religious movements that occurred in the nineteenth century, such as the Buddhist Temperance Movement in Sri Lanka, are thereby interpreted as an indigenous response to the hardships of colonialism. Movements of cultural nationalism vary on the emphasis they lay on aspects but it includes;

> "[…] cultural influences, such as Western education, economic factors, including changes in class structure; and political changes, such as the extension of representative government."[52]

Furthermore, the neo-romantic perspective of Smith is evenly relevant. He claims that:

> "Ethnic communities have preserved their identity and asserted their political autonomy for centuries on the strength of myths of predestination and the idea of a historic mission."[53]

Within the Sinhalese one finds that legends based on the '*Mahavamsa',* which serves as the principal source of information on Sri Lanka's early history, are used to consolidate Sinhalese Buddhist over lordship of the nation. In Sri Lanka's popular science and political culture one often encounters primordialist stances that centre more on the direct linkage between ethnic nationalism and pre-colonial identities. This approach becomes easy prey to misleading ideas of essentialism.

Recently a new interpretation of identity began to take shape. John D. Rogers labels it the 'Post-Orientalist' approach. It carries the clear influence of Edward Said and Michael Foucault and is a variant of modernist interpretation on ethnic and cultural nationalism. It directs its attention to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when the British arrived. According to Rogers:

> "Post-Orientalists place great importance on the role of the British in the construction of new identities through the power of colonial discourse on India. This discourse, which was based on the scientific documentation of

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52 See Roger 1994: 10.

53 Wimmer 2002: 46.

Indian society, was designed to bolster colonial power by subordinating Indian to Europeans in general and the British in particular."[54]

In Sri Lanka one finds a similar colonial discourse, for instance through the works of the *Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch* (RASCB). The works of this academic circle introduced racial categories into the island that shaped the Sri Lankan identities in fundamental ways. The 'scientific documentation' was based on the idea of essentialism, which Inden defines as:

> "[...] the idea that humans and human institutions … are governed by determinate natures that inhere in them in the same way that they are supposed to inhere in the entities of the natural world"[55]

Furthermore the colonial census in Ceylon and in British India led to the construction of mutually exclusive communities and promoted communal consciousness that previously had not existed.[56] British scientism and the colonial administration implemented a process of documentation and classification which was similar in manner. Even though there are some divergences, it served to crystallize social categories in the two South Asian nations.

As far as this academic approach is concerned, it is likewise important to illustrate the creation of fixed social categories by examining the role of census of Ceylon and the work of the *Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch* in promoting the racial discourse out of which Gunarwardena alleges the modern Sinhalese nationalism arose.[57]

7 Conclusion

As I already mentioned the theories were arranged into one theoretical framework and applied onto the Sinhalese case through a historical examination. It is my belief that we need to connect at least all three of these dimensions in order to cover the subject of Sinhalese nationalism in Sri Lanka. Aside from that, all three approaches are dialectically connected to each other, therefore the divid-

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[54] Rogers 1994: 10–11.
[55] Inden quoted after Rogers 1994: 11.
[56] See Bhagat 2001.
[57] See Gunarwardana quoted after Rogers 1994: 11.

ing lines become indistinct in the process of analysing. As my work is focusing on a historical perspective it is not possible to go into detail about processes connected to the individual identity on a micro-level. By also offering a Post-Orientalist view misleading ideas of essentialism will be deconstructed, which can be used for the justification of discriminate ideologies. By merging different approaches into one framework I aim to provide a more balanced analysis on how the situation progressed to the present moment in the Islands history.

III   Laying the Foundations for Modern Sinhalese Nationalism in Ceylon

The starting point of this historical examination on Ceylon is the arrival of the British in 1802, even though Ceylon was already partially colonized by the Portuguese and the Dutch.[58] The British were the ones who left the deepest imprint on the Island and eventually on its nationalisms especially in terms of culture, structure and agency. They managed to capture the whole Island by penetrating into the heartland of the Sinhalese, the kingdom of Kandy. The last bastion of the Sinhalese kingdoms was annexed by the British in 1815, whereas its coastal lines have already been long controlled by the Portuguese, Dutch and British.[59]

After more than four hundred years of Ceylon's subordination to colonial power, far reaching changes in structural and cultural terms had place, which resulted in the need to construct a new sense of collective group identity. As the historian K. M. de Silva points out "[…] the colonial experience has had a profound impact on its culture, its traditions and its development, and indeed on its nationals identity."[60]

The focus of this chapter lies on the context and circumstances that made it possible for Sinhalese nationalism to appear and finally become a driving force in the postcolonial Sinhalese-Tamil identity conflict. This will be discussed according to the three different dimensions of nationalism in Sri Lanka, which in most cases correlate to each other.

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[58]   In 1796 the British realised the strategic importance and took over the Island of Ceylon from the Dutch for protection during the wars hat followed the French revolution. In 1802 the takeover was regularized and Ceylon was made a crown colony. (See Yunnus/Parmar 2003: 226).

[59]   See Berchert 1992: 51–52.

[60]   De Silva 2006: 1.

1 Sinhalese Societal Structure in the Eighteenth Century

In the eighteenth century there were two distinct zones with predominately Sinhalese populations, the interior mainly referred to as the Kandyan Kingdom and its surrounding areas and the maritime region at the coast. Subsistence agriculture was the main economic activity in the interior of the island and most needs of the people where met locally, whereas the coastal regions were dependent on international trade through export of agricultural goods and import of rice and cloth.

As there were differences in the economic structure, slight modifications were also to be found in the social structure. Sinhalese culture was not egalitarian; hierarchical structures were omnipresent in all social relations. In the interior almost all Sinhalese were Buddhist and the *Goyigama* caste (cultivator) was at the top of the hierarchy, control over land and political power was bound to them. In the maritime regions the long dominant position of market economy brought about a distinct social feature. Economic mobility was not limited to persons with specific social backgrounds; castes, like the *Karawa* (fisherman) and the *Salagama* (cinnamon peeler) challenged the traditional dominance of the *Goyigama*. Ritual ties and services between the *Goyigama. Karawas, Salagamas, Vahumpuras* were no longer evident. There was no clear link between caste and class anymore. Another attribute of the coastal regions was that many villages were predominantly Roman Catholic due to conversions during the Portuguese rule and many Moors - Sri Lankan Muslims - also lived along the coast.[61]

The caste structure in Sinhalese society is different from the Hindu caste system of India. The most diverging characteristic is that the cast pyramid is reversed. The majority in the traditional hierarchy are the high-caste *Goyigamas*, even though there is an aristocracy in Sinhalese society, namely the *Bandaras* and *Radalas*. They are considered as a sub-caste of the *Goyigamas. Goyigamas* occupy an active role in public affairs and in the protection of Buddhism.[62]

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[61] See Rogers 1987: 587, 591.
[62] See Farmer 1965: 437.

The confusion about social positioning created much disorder and resulted in a continuous strive of various groups for status and power in independent Ceylon.

2 Structural Changes through British Colonialism

The British colonial administration undertook significant structural changes in the local administration and law. Additionally, by imposing their religion, language, customs, dress, and culture, the British challenged the traditional life of ordinary Ceylonese in manifold ways.[63]

These changes interfered with the usual modes of interactions, hierarchies and lifestyle. It forced Ceylon's inhabitants to adjust to a different environment. In Kandy these changes resulted in a rebellion (1817-1819) led by the former elite, aimed at the restoration of the Sinhalese Monarchy.[64] After the British crushed the rebellion it was obvious to the majority of the Sinhalese that they could not dispel them and:

> "[…] from this point on most protests against the government were aimed at obtaining specific changes in policy, not bringing colonial rule to an end. It was clear to the more dynamic elements in Sinhalese society that the Kandyan Kingdom would never be restored and most Sinhalese came to accept the colonial state as legitimate."[65]

One crucial consequence of this incident was the unification of the former kingdom of Kandy and the maritime districts to a single social and political unit. The colonial administration began opening up the interior of Ceylon for economic utilisation. Sir Edward Barnes, the colonial governor of Ceylon, focused on building and expanding streets. He relied on the former traditional obligation of the Sri Lankan inhabitants to do unpaid work for the ruler (*Rajakaariya*).[66] One can assume that by capturing the kingdom of Kandy the British managed to embody the symbol of lordship[67] and then restructured the entire Island. By so

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[63] See Wimalaratne.

[64] See Berchert 1992:51−52.

[65] Rogers 1987: 587.

[66] See Berchert 1992:51−52.

[67] This is only referring to the Sinhalese Buddhists, not to the other communities in Ceylon.

doing, the British not only effectuated economic changes, they also utilized traditional patterns of interaction and loyalties, while at the same time modifying them.

The Colebrook-Cameron Commission also formulated a program through which Sri Lanka should be shaped according to the doctrines of liberalism. The purpose of the commission was to modernize Ceylon's traditional economic system and to impose a uniform system of justice, education, and civil administration.[68] Different autonomous units of Ceylon were brought by force under one single unit.

Coming back to the economic changes, the foundations for plantation economy in the maritime regions were already laid due to the early colonisation of these regions. However, the uncultivated land of the central highlands that was available to Kandyan highland farmers became property of the state and was then sold to speculators or planters. This led to the pauperisation of the highland farmers, which, in combination with the colonial administration's negligence of the important irrigation system for rice farmers, turned into a triggering point of social conflicts.[69] Furthermore, the systematic influx of South Indian labourers started in 1840.[70] In the relatively homogeneous and separated Kandyan region the changes were felt the most, and led to a disruption of the traditional social relations between the Kandyan elite and the peasants. As already mentioned, the land cultivator is on the top of the Sinhalese hierarchy. One observes that through economic changes traditional modes of social interaction were equally challenged.

Another vital component of the Ceylon becoming a plantation economy is that its infrastructure changed completely. A transport system was built linking the interior of the island with the coastal regions, marking the beginning of a modern transport system and moreover the development of a modern economy.[71] A growing proportion of Sri Lankan inhabitants travelled more frequently from one

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[68] See Encyclopaedia Britannica: The Colebrook-Cameron Commission, Online in: http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/125187/Colebrook-Cameron-Commission.

[69] See Berchert 1992: 51–52.

[70] Ibidem.

[71] See De Silva 2006: 4.

place to another; they were subjected to change and interaction, and were thus no longer bound solely to their traditional village structures. As Ernest Gellner describes, in these 'evolving societies' a connecting ideology was needed and as one later finds in history, nationalism would become this connecting ideology, unifying people from different Sinhala-speaking communities with different loyalties, different histories and lifestyles, with no knowledge of each other, Through the power of ideology, these distinct peoples were merged into a whole nation of Sinhalese people.

What should not be forgotten while explaining the changes connected to British colonialism and the beginning of nationalism is that although much of the plantation export industry was mostly in the hands of Europeans, some sections of the Ceylonese also participated in the export industry.[72] It offered new economic opportunities to the peasants in the Kandyan villages as well as to a significant amount of the low-country Sinhalese. The restructuring process that was supposed to benefit the British also benefited some local inhabitants. Out of these emerging indigenous capitalists the leading forces in the reform and nationalist movement descended.[73] Although here it is postulated that the radical changes of the structure serve as the underlying condition for nationalism to appear, the nationalist position of these indigenous capitalists is more connected to processes of the agency-level, which will be explained separately. Nevertheless, it illustrates the dialectical connection between the three dimensions of structure, culture and agency.

The following decades of British rule in Ceylon were surprisingly calm, with the exception of the Matale rebellion in 1848, which "[…] were essentially protests against the sudden imposition of unreasonable taxation, not a serious rebellion"[74] and the anti-Moor riot of 1915, which will be discussed in a later chapter.

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[72] See Berchert 1992: 51–52.
[73] See De Silva 2006: 6–7.
[74] Rogers 1987: 587.

2.1 State and Religion in Ceylon

One important feature of the experience with colonialism was the conflict it created between intrusive Western culture and religion and Buddhism in Sri Lanka. It drastically changed the traditional link between state and religion, especially after the capture of the Kandyan kingdom in 1815. The traditional, more than 2,000 year old bond lost its foundation and practically meant the de-establishment of the Buddhist heritage.[75] The Sinhalese refused to accept the disestablishment between the state and the religion. The relationship between the king and Theravada Buddhism, in particularly the monkshood, was an important strain of the royal ideology dating back to the first century A.D.[76] This led to regular protests on this subject by Buddhist activists.[77] The Matale rebellion of 1848, although not in the fore of the protests, had religious overtones. Some of the rebel leaders articulated their resentment against effort of the British to terminate the traditional link between religion and state. More important rebellions against foreign influences took place in the southwest of Sri Lanka and were largely organized by Buddhist *Bhikkus*.[78] The revision of the Constitution in independent Sri Lanka in 1972 and 1978 to make Buddhism the national religion can be interpreted as a way of compensation for not restoring the link between Buddhism and the state.[79]

By now one can see that the changes affiliated with the colonial penetration of Ceylon led to changes of a structural dimension. It changed the way people interacted with each other, traditional hierarchies were severely challenged or replaced. The traditional economic, religious and cultural systems were drastically modified. In the Sinhalese social structure where hierarchical relations were omnipresent, people suddenly had to adjust themselves to a completely new pattern of interaction and new surroundings, and had to learn new definitions of who is related to whom and in what way. The huge influx of foreign workers contributed to this confusion, not only by changing the demographic

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[75] See De Silva 2006: 9–12.
[76] See Rogers 1994: 15.
[77] See De Silva 2006: 12.
[78] Ibidem 2005: 428.
[79] See De Silva 2006: 12.

balance; additionally, the reorganization of the islands infrastructure led to greater geographical flexibility, resolving the foundation of rural Sinhalese identity and creating the need for another connecting ideology, which nationalism was be able meet.

3 Cultural Changes: Religious Revival as Precursor for Nationalism

During the rule of the British Empire and the spread of Christian missionaries throughout the nineteenth century, a massive transformation of the public sphere in Sri Lanka took place that manifested itself in the introduction and rapid development of means of communication.[80] This transformation marked the arrival of print capitalism in Sri Lanka, which following Benedict Anderson's work on 'imagined communities' can be directly linked to the beginning of nationalism. The rise of indigenous publicists and independent editors was fundamental to the conduction of the nationalist movement in South Asia.[81] This sub-chapter illustrates how the mechanisms introduced by a foreign power triggered a new movement that aimed to uplift the collective identity and national conscience, most of all through the work of Anagarika Dharmapala.

3.1 Arrival of Print Capitalism and the Formation of 'Protestant Buddhism'

Even though Christian proselytization in Ceylon was meager compared to other colonised nations, it left remarkable imprints on the island, albeit in diffusive ways. Christian missionaries unleashed unprecedented amounts of tracts and pamphlets on the island to win the minds of the people. This triggered a counter offensive movement in the major ethnic communities and led to a new, constructive approach in the discursive activity of the indigenous elite, which "[…] 'revitalised and restructured' existing methods of debate and of social and political critique."[82] In the case of the Sinhalese, the process resulted in the forma-

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[80] See Frost 2002: 942.
[81] Ibidem.
[82] Ibidem, p. 943.

tion of 'Protestant Buddhism' or 'Buddhist Modernism'. The Western methods of spreading the British doctrine and ideas of Christianity reinforced a similar indigenous process that gave rise to the Buddhist religious and cultural movement. It started with the purchase of a disused mission press overlooked by Mohittivatte Gunananda, who was a prominent monk and founding father of the Buddhist revivalism movement. In 1862 he created the 'Society for the Propagation of Buddhism' and "[…] led the Buddhist clergy in a series of public debates with leading Christian proselytizers such as Wesleyan David de Silva. Mohittivatte went so far as to adopt a style more like evangelical Christian preaching."[83] Traditionally the pose of Buddhist monks in Ceylon is very impersonal. The monk sits in a chair next to a fan while offering a prayer in an 'unemotional' manner, yet Mohittivate quite distinctly stood upright, employed gestures and made use of other rhetoric tools.[84] His greatest and most far-reaching success was the Panadura-debate with Christian missionaries. It was a two-day open-air debate that reached a crowd of approximately 15,000. Its success was published in Sinhalese and English newspapers that even reached the United States; first and foremost it greatly influenced and thus gained momentum through Colonel Henry Steel Olcott, President of the Theosophical Society. Shortly thereafter, Colonel H.S. Olcott and Madame Blavatsky visited Ceylon in 1880. This marked the beginning of the involvement of the Theosophical Society in Ceylon's Buddhist revivalism movement and the creation of the Buddhist Theosophical Society in Colombo.[85] In cooperation with Theosophists and the 'rejuvenated channels of indigenous social communication'[86], Buddhist propagandists were able to counter the Christian propaganda offensive. They printed and distributed anti-Christian tracts, as well as indigenous manuscripts and major classical Sinhala works. As Rogers describes, the "[…] first viable Buddhist newspapers, published in the 1860s, served as vehicles to promote education, doctrinal debate, the construction of temples, and other religious activities."[87]

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[83] Ibidem, p. 944.

[84] Ibidem.

[85] Ibidem.

[86] Ibidem.

[87] Rogers 1987: 588.

British scholars encouraged projects like T.W. Rhys David's, the founder of the Pali Text Society (1881) and author of the RASCB. He made the classic texts of the Pali canon available to a wider audience in both English and Sinhala, the most notable being the *Mahavamsa*, the Great Chronicle of Ceylon. It presents a distinct perspective of the island's history, especially the flourishing of Buddhism and the wars against Tamil invaders.

> "Some of the chronicle's famous passages referred to King Dutthugamani who encouraged monks to leave the Sangha and fight in his army and who placed a Buddhist relic in his spear to serve as his standard in battle."[88]

The *Mahavamsa* then started to serve as a basis for the newly constructed Sinhala Buddhist conscience and identity. Since 1870 the Buddhist revivalism movement continuously gained influence and its protagonists "[…] were among the earliest exponents of economic nationalism"[89], arguing about the need to become self-sufficient and pursue rhetoric against the European capitalist, who exploited the island's resources.[90] In 1898, C.S. Dissanayake, a convert from Roman Catholicism founded the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) in Colombo. It was modelled after the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). In the following years about 900 branches of YMBA were established in other cities on the island. Besides providing spiritual guidance the YMBA also held weekly debates which examined Western culture.[91] At the beginning of the twentieth century the Buddhist Theosophical Society began promoting the celebration of *Vesak*. They disbursed *Vesak* cards and sung *Vesak* carols: the celebration of *Vesak* was to function as an alternative to the Christian Christmas celebrations.[92]

It should be noted that although they oppose Westernization and Christianity, all initiatives reflect a substantial degree of modernisation and adoption of Western cultural practices coupled with the aim of restoring ancient Buddhist values and

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[88] Frost 2002: 945.

[89] Roberts 1978: 364.

[90] Ibidem, p. 364-5.

[91] See Frost 2002: 953.

[92] Ibidem, p. 955.

cultures. The need to fabricate a collective conscience was acknowledged the first time in an overarching manner by trying to uplift Buddhism and thereby laying the foundations for a nationalist conscience.

4 Anagarika Dharmapala as an Agent of Early Sinhalese Nationalism

One of the most endeavours figures of the Buddhist nationalist movement, as well as the Buddhist revivalism movement, was Anagarika Dharmapala. Nowadays he is still celebrated as the leading figure in the Sinhala nationalist movement, as a reformer and preacher. He founded the *Maha Bodi Society* which "[…] set out to give Buddhist missionaries, both priests and laymen, a scientific western education, to teach them English and the Indian vernaculars and then to send them off to convert the world, beginning with India."[93] It originally was designed to raise funds to purchase the religious site of Bodhgaya - where Buddha found enlightenment - and to restore it as a holy place for pilgrims. It should "[…] become to the Buddhist what the Holy Sepulchre is to the Christians, Zion to the Jews and Mecca to the Mohammedans"[94]. Anagarika Dharmapala was likewise able to mix traditional Buddhist ideas with Christian concepts.[95]

By being subject to all sorts of influences and knowledge combined with the revolution in communication and the broadening of social networks, Dharmapala embodies all that exemplifies the past Zeitgeist. His father was a furniture dealer. He attended a Roman Catholic primary school, then an Anglican secondary school, all the while remaining a practising Buddhist at home. He then worked as a clerk in the Education Department and after Colonel Olcott's arrival to Ceylon he became actively involved in the Theosophical Society.[96] He accompanied Olcott during his visit to the island and worked as his guide and interpreter. Dharmapala and his mentor were trying to create and promote a

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[93]   Ibidem, p. 960.

[94]   Ibidem, p. 961–962.

[95]   See Berchert 1992: 51-52.

[96]   See Frost 2002: 956.

transnational Buddhist identity; thus, they were spent more and more time travelling outside of Ceylon. Olcott dreamt of creating a 'United Buddhist World'. He came up with two very successful initiatives: the Buddhist catechism and the creation of the Buddhist flag.[97] During his work with Colonel Olcott, Anagarika Dharmapala became a consistent critic of Christianity and a leading demagogue of Buddhist revivalism.

Through the Sinhalese Newspaper, *Sinhala Bauddhaya,* run by Dharmapala, he could attract wide ranges of the Sri Lankan vernacular audience; still, much of his work was targeted at the bilingual Elite in Colombo, whose readership impacted how Theravada Buddhism is interpreted today. Dharmapala also conceptualised a new Buddhist order, which strikes a balance between the layman and the monk. It allows for devotion to the Buddhist way of life without requiring renouncement of worldly life, for example a worldly political life, as was Dharmapala's case.[98]

Even though he was a fierce opponent of British rule, at the same time he admired Western scientific discipline and rationality. Once he was quoted:

> "Europe is progressive. Her religion is kept in the background… [used] for one day in the week, and for six days her people are following the dictates of modern science. Sanitation, aesthetic arts, electricity, etc., are what made the Europeans and American people great. Asia is full of opium eaters, ganja smokers, degenerating sensualists, superstitious and religious fanatics- Gods and priests keep the people in ignorance."[99]

Over the years Dharmapalas outlook changed and he moved in a different direction, taking on a more traditional attitude that emphasized pilgrimages and sacred places. Probably because of his focus shift, he was able to attract a broader section of society that included more than just Western-educated Buddhists.[100] Dharmapala can be considered the first Sinhalese propagandist who realised the need to construct a collective identity and national conscience and:

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[97]   Ibidem, p. 960–961.
[98]   Ibidem, p. 957.
[99]   Dharmapala quoted after Frost 2002: 957.
[100]   See Frost 2002: 962.

"[b]ecause of his strident and sometimes militant pronouncements on be-half of Sinhalese Buddhism and against the British colonial presence, Dharmapala has often been depicted as an early father of Sri Lankan na-tional awakening."[101]

5 The Temperance Movement and the Anti-Moors Riots of 1915: Two Examples of Arousing Nationalist Sentiments

In Ceylon it was religion that provided the framework to challenge the ideologi-cal dominance of colonialism. Kumari Jayawardena argues that the Buddhist revival of the 1880 can be seen as a forerunner to nationalism in Ceylon be-cause:

"[i]n colonial societies where the connection between politics and religion is very close, movements of religious revival have frequently had a distinct political content and religious activities have served as a convenient fa-cade for political agitation."[102]

Therefore the movement first directed its concerns against Christianity and mis-sionary education. At the end of the century it was linked to an interest in an-cient history and texts. Spurred on by the discovery of impressive ruins that gave credit to past Sinhalese greatness, it led to a process of self-assertion within the Sinhalese Buddhist stratum and then the agitation was further chan-nelled against foreign invaders, so to speak against all non-Sinhalese groups in Ceylon.[103] That process became clearly visible at the outbreak of the anti-Moors riots in 1915. This reaction was apparently a reaction to British domination, but directed against the economic powers of minority groups in Ceylon.[104]

The Temperance Movement of 1904 and 1912-14 was led and dominated by Sinhalese Buddhists who pointed out that the consumption of alcohol was pro-hibited by their religion. It was later taken over and modified by Sinhalese Bud-dhist leaders of Colombo and became an "[…] outright rejection of what was

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[101]   Ibidem.
[102]   Jayawardena 1970: 223.
[103]   Ibidem, Rogers 1987: 589.
[104]   See Jayawardena 1970: 223.

seen as an imported, western vice, inconsistent with Buddhist dictates."[105] In 1912 a government reform that increased the availability of liquor by legalizing *toddy* shops resulted in the establishment of the Colombo Total Abstinence Central Union that coordinated an island-wide agitation. In 1915 the membership of the Temperance societies had reached about 50,000 people and the Chairman of the Central Union Colombo stated:" It is becoming evident that our Temperance Convention will in the near future become our National Convention and we should all work with that end in view."[106]

This movement encountered a hearty, responsive audience among the growing populations to whom 'village Buddhism'[107] no longer seemed as relevant as before. In particular the inhabitants that became affluent through entrepreneurial opportunities in the South Western coastal regions, as well as the growing English-educated Buddhist elite actively participated in the movement.[108]

In May 1915 riots broke out, mainly directed against Moors. Years before these riots "[…] the growth of nationalism among the Sinhalese [had] led to an increase of communal tensions. The Sinhalese newspapers and Buddhist journals led the campaign against minority groups."[109] Papers run by Anagarika Dharmapala like Sinhala Bauddhaya (Sinhala) or Mahabodi Journal (English) were most blatant in their attacks:

> "From the day the foreign white man stepped in this country, the industries, habits and customs of the Sinhalese began to disappear and now the Sinhalese are obliged to fall at the feet of the Coast Moors and Tamil."[110]

And when the anti-Moor riots quickly spread to Colombo the British government officers shared the clear opinion that this riot was not actually a reflection of a Sinhalese-Moor dispute, but preliminary to a resurrection against the British Crown. In 1915 the inspector of the general police observed that "[…] national-

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[105] Frost 2002: 964.
[106] Ibidem.
[107] Rogers defines 'Village Buddhism' as conglomeration, which consisted of beliefs and habits that assumed a reasonably stable agricultural order. (Rogers 1987: 591).
[108] Rogers 1987: 588-589.
[109] Jayawardena 1970: 224.
[110] *Sinhala Bauddhaya*, 1912 quoted after Jayawardena 1970: 225.

ism and politics figured largely in these temperance meetings [which where]
political meetings held under the cloak of temperance."[111]

Most of the rioting was carried out by the Sinhalese against Moors. Thousands
of shops were looted, mosques were destroyed, and about forty Moors died.
According to Rogers:

> "[…] rioters acted on the basis of Buddhist revivalist ideas propagated by
> wealthy Colombo Buddhists, especially on the view of history that pictured
> Sri Lanka as a Buddhist land where non-Buddhist were foreigners."[112]

Additional economic pressure brought by inflation and changing patterns of land
use generated frustration that was responsible for the outbreak of violence. Af-
ter the communal riots broke out the government quickly suppressed the riots
and the leading members of the Young Men's Buddhists Association, the Bud-
dhist Theosophical Society and the Maha Bodhi Society were detained without
trial. These arrests contributed to the island-wide sympathy for the detainees,
but as soon as they were released they had to "[…] make immediate expres-
sions of loyalty to the colonial government."[113]

After the realization that the Temperance Movement could evocate a Sinhalese
nationalist sentiment and awakening efforts were made to de-communalize the
movement and committed themselves to a more cosmopolitan outlook of multi-
ethnic harmony.[114] With reference to Mark Frost, the Temperance Movement's
failure to transform itself into a national political movement was largely a conse-
quence of the Colombo leadership's actions.

John D. Rogers connects outbursts of collective violence in Ceylon to an ancil-
lary effect of the interaction between social change and popular ideology. He
defines social change as:

> "[…] the structural development of the Sri Lankan economy and the con-
> sequent changes in the distribution of political, economic, and social

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[111] I.G.P. Report, 1915 quoted after Jayawardena 1970: 225.
[112] Rogers 1987: 592.
[113] Frost 2002: 965.
[114] Ibidem.

power [and by] popular ideology […] the ideas and assumptions that define the ways the Sinhalese create social identities and view politics."[115]

The unrest was channelled away from economic conflict into religious passion in a visible and scattered minority. According to Rogers the Buddhist revivalism movement had some secular aspects to it:

"It was an indirect way to challenge British economic, political, and cultural authority; it provided the new middle and working classes with a social and cultural identity lacking in traditional village-based Buddhism; and it enables upwardly mobile Sinhalese to challenge the more traditional elite families, many of whom were Christians."[116]

Furthermore, the importance of this movement was that the religious agitators were able to garner support for their causes across geographical lines; people from urban as well as rural areas participated. The Buddhist revivalism created a sense of solidarity that had been lacking since the demise of the Kandyan Kingdom and this ideology had the power to provoke riots in places that were not directly affected by the matter in question.[117]

The movement of cultural, as well as religious revivalism can be interpreted in large part as a reaction against Westernization that was foremost directed against Christian fanatics agitating against Buddhism. New means of communication and public debate led to the transformation of the public sphere that aimed for the restoration and recovery of a perceived authentic cultural and religious past.[118] Anagarika Dharmapala gave this process a greater effect within the Sri Lankan population, which therefore led to the substantiation of the Sinhala Buddhist identity and a means of uplifting Sinhalese self-respect.[119] Religious revivalism had acted as a device for local grievances and by striking a popular chord recreated the Sinhalese Buddhist ethnic identity.[120]

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[115] Rogers 1987: 584.
[116] Ibidem, p. 589.
[117] Ibidem, p. 589- 590, Jayawardena 1970: 225.
[118] See Frost 2002: 945–946.
[119] See Roberts 178: 364.
[120] See De Silva 2006: 17.

6 Agents of Change: National Identity and the Role of the Ceylonese Elites

Ceylon's inhabitants that converted to Christianity, especially during the presence of the Dutch and the Portuguese, were treated as a privileged group; in contrast, penalties and severe restrictions were imposed on people practising primarily Buddhism, but also Hinduism and Islam. Nevertheless, during and after the colonial period the number of Christians (Protestants and Roman Catholics) never rose above ten percent. However, they still managed to play a significant role in Sri Lankan history as the island's elite. They were and were perceived to be the country's wealthy and socially prominent group, which inherited most of the political supremacy. Their influential status became one of the dissensions creating problems the country had to face during the transition from colonialism to independence and even decades after.[121] At some moments in history it actually seemed that this chasm rather than the Sinhalese-Tamil gap would remain the most divisive factor in Sri Lanka's political life.[122] Understanding the role of Sri Lanka's elite in formulating a nationalist vision for the island and how it is linkable to the current conflict situation gives us informative insights.

6.1 English and Vernacular Education

The introduction and spread of Christianity in Ceylon wasn't a very successful objective but it led to the construction of some of the most influential missionary schools.[123] Even though missionary schools dominated the scene they didn't have a monopoly on providing Western education. The Madras-based Theosophical Society promoted the establishment of several Buddhist English and Anglo-vernacular schools in Colombo, as well as *Shivite* English schools and *Mohammedan's* schools. These institutions, like '*Ananda College*' or '*Dharmaraja College*' were designed to challenge the threat of Christian missionary schools

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[121] See De Silva 2006: 13.
[122] Ibidem, p. 16.
[123] See Berchert 1992: 51–52.

that were supposed to proselytize through education.[124] Furthermore, providing Western education to individuals out of each community was necessary for creating the next generation of Ceylonese political leaders and thus to "[…]break the hold that a native Christian elite had managed to secure for itself in appointments to municipal and legislative council seats."[125]

The opposite side of the newly introduced Anglo-vernacular education was that it simultaneously strengthened the notion of communal identity. Nonetheless, the use of English as *lingua franca* in the public sphere was a connecting medium between communities of different ethnic or religious backgrounds. Robert Kearney points out that:

> "[…] the 'middle- class' world of English language schools, public service, law courts and British-owned commercial and financial establishments, together with the residential intermingling created by urbanization, fostered a 'bond' between Sinhalese, Tamil and other elites, in which it was a sign of modernity to reject communal sentiments as barbarous."[126]

6.2   The Elite in Colombo and its Notions of Nationalism

When the access to government service and profession was opened up in 1870, Western-educated Sinhalese and Tamils challenged the dominant position of the formerly privileged Christian Burgher community. As Mark Frost argues "[t]he creation of this multi-ethnic, western-educated elite was equally the consequence of varied intake of the capital's educational institutions."[127] Too, imperial cities in the Indian Ocean, such as Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Colombo and Singapore became thriving centres of cultural and intellectual intellectual exchange between 1870 and 1920. Journalism and associational life flourished in the centres of intensified imperial networks and communication. These crossing points "[…] functioned as entrepôts for the reception and transmission of knowledge and information as well as of goods, labour and capi-

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[124]   See Frost 2002: 947.

[125]   Ibidem, p. 948.

[126]   Kearney quoted after Frost 2002: 948.

[127]   Frost 2002: 947.

tal."[128] The enhancement of imperial communication networks led to greater interconnectedness and the growing communities of western-educated literary intelligentsia found themselves with increasing contact with each other and the outside world. Ideologies, news and views from different parts of the world travelled the 'imperial highway' with a much greater speed and concentration.[129] This interconnectedness can be directly linked to the communication revolution in the British Empire, which caused:

> "[…] a massive diffusion of newspapers, pamphlets, books and letters, all of which circulated with a relative degrees of freedom."[130] The new emerging elites "[…]drawn from the ranks of civil servants, company clerks, doctors, teachers, public inspectors, communication workers, merchants, bankers and (above all) from the legal profession began to form themselves into intelligentsias by immersing themselves in discursive activity, and quickly developed habits of intellectual sociability that became organized and systematic."[131]

This bilingual intelligentsia had enjoyed the fruits of western education and were highly anglicized in habits and manner. In that particular social stratum it became increasingly acceptable for people of different religious and ethnic backgrounds to frequent public gatherings and join forces in the same political or social reform initiatives. It was acceptable, even fashionable to nourish an integrated and multi-ethnic sense of national unity. Some even pledged to eliminate distinctive labels like Sinhalese, Tamil or Burgher and to adopt the name 'Ceylonese' for all inhabitants. Throughout this period, initiatives were launched that promoted an inclusive form of nationalism and created sympathy between all communities.[132] [133]

The so-called 'brown Englishmen' in the capitals of British India or its Crown Colonies were often an integral part of the early nationalist movements.

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[128] Ibidem, p. 939.

[129] Ibidem, p. 940.

[130] Ibidem.

[131] Frost 2002: 937.

[132] Ibidem, p. 948-950.

[133] For instance the *Ceylon Examiner*, a Colombo daily pledged fort he dropping of the distinct labels, '*Sinhalese*', '*Burgher*' and '*Tamil*'and to adopt the name ,*Ceylonese*'; or plans were laid to establish a joint Hindu-Buddhist college (See Frost 2002: 949–950).

Through Western education they came in contact with Euro-American ideas of the nation-state and nationalism and re-modelled it to make them suitable for a wider Sri Lankan audience.[134] Through their education they absorbed the concept of a nation-state, which had remarkably influenced their views on the Sri Lankan state.[135] The English-educated leaders were attracted by its secular emphasis.[136]

6.2.1 Communal versus Universal

At the end of century the newly created local elite and intelligentsia articulated goals that aimed for participation in governing the island.[137] According to their political education, terms like 'communalism' or 'tribalism' became enemies to the West European single nationality concept and they began to downgrade ethnic loyalties and viewed them as parochial and divisive.[138] During the beginning of the twentieth century, sectionalist claims from various ethnic or religious groups in Sri Lanka were stigmatized as 'communalist' and through a relative dogmatic interpretation of the borrowed Gandhian 'One Nation Concept' denied legitimacy: as inspiring as the universal inclusive approaches of early 'Ceylonese Nationalism' may have been, they were only bound to individuals of the English educated elite.

> "Attempts to fashion a national identity that took account of the global dimension and aspired to be multi-ethnic may look like wishful thinking on the part of a westernized cadre that was [completely] out of touch with the strength of communal feeling in the hinterland."[139]

Michael Roberts point out the ideological persistence of the West European single nationality concept, which manifested itself in the minds of the educated class in Sri Lanka and "[…] hindered fruitful inter-ethnic accommodation within the island and has contributed to the process by which Sri Lanka's political inte-

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[134]   See Frost 2002: 937–938.
[135]   See Roberts 1978: 354.
[136]   Ibidem, p. 365.
[137]   See Berchert 1992: 51–52.
[138]   See Roberts 1978: 354.
[139]   Frost 2002: 950.

gration and survival as a state are seriously threatened."[140] During the beginning of the twentieth century the Sinhalese leaders feared that if they started making serious concessions to so called 'communal demands' it would weaken their movement and compromise their objectives.[141]

For instance in 1917, Ponnambalam Arunachalam, a Tamil politician, became the leader of the Ceylon Reform League, from which the Ceylon National Congress emerged in 1919, with Arunachalam as president.[142] The National congress was founded to demonstrate Ceylon's readiness for long- postponed constitutional reform.[143] In its first years it repeatedly expressed its commitment to a multi-ethnic nationality.[144] These integrative aspirations were blocked through the attitude of the former Governor William Manning, what according to K. M. de Silva was "[…] an illuminating text-book case study in the application of a policy of *divide et impera.*"[145] Manning tried to strengthen communal feelings among the high-caste Kandyan elite and to set them in opposition to the Ceylon National Congress by subsequently attempting to foment a divide between the Tamil and Sinhalese elites. A few years later it broke apart due to the disagreement between Ceylon Tamil political leaders and the Kandyan Sinhalese leadership. and both sections built up their own units of representation. The Congress developed a rigid attitude towards communal representation and "[…] alienated regional and ethnic factors, except the politically dominant "low-country" Sinhalese of southwest Ceylon."[146] Congress members were mostly Anglicized lawyers and large landowners, who wanted to maintain constitutional unity.[147] Around 1920 the British were ready to devolve political power to the Ceylonese and established the Donoughmore Commission, which then introduced the Donoughmore Constitution. Thus Ceylon was the first British dominion where universal suffrage was adopted. As Rogers points out, the "[…] nine-

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[140]   Robert 1978: 355.

[141]   Ibidem, p. 375.

[142]   Berchert 1992: 53.

[143]   See Peebles 1980: 858.

[144]   See Frost 2002: 951.

[145]   K.M. de Silva quoted after Frost 2002: 951.

[146]   Peebles 1980: 858.

[147]   Ibidem, p. 858–859.

teenth-century colonial consensus that there were two equal majority communi-ties, the Sinhalese and the Ceylon Tamils, broke down in the face of the clear numerical superiority of the Sinhalese."[148] The sudden introduction of universal suffrage dramatically changed the balance of power and resulted in the quest of the party leaders to retain their position, gradually giving up their notion of a Ceylonese nationality in order to catch the votes of the hinterland, which was highly disconnected from the universalistic ideas of the Colombo elitist subcul-ture.

One aspect in this process of political divergence becomes noticeable. It ap-pears that the deep influence of the West European model originally hindered suitable concessions to ethnic claims.[149] This leads one to the assumption that the apprehension of communal demands and its integration into a universalistic vision in Ceylon during the period of becoming an independent nation would have possibly absorbed the risk of the outbreak of communal violence and eventually the violent conflict in Sri Lanka.

7 Post-Orientalist Identity Discourses in Ceylon

Through British scientists and the colonial administration, a system of classifica-tion was introduced in Sri Lanka that still functions on the Island, albeit in differ-ent ways than during the colonial period. It shaped Sinhalese and Tamil identity and it created boundaries that haven't been there before, but more importantly it laid one of the many foundations of the postcolonial conflict, which has haunted the Island for more than 25 years. There may be various reasons for why the British intervened in this ideological dimension; one of them was obviously the need to bring order to a seemly incomprehensible complexity concerning the cultural diverse island's population. Perhaps, too, it was the extension of the 'Divide et Impera policy' that the British colonial administration implemented in order to exercise their power over the Islands inhabitants. However, it most

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[148]   See Rogers 987: 593.
[149]   See Roberts 1978: 357.

definitely functioned as a legitimization of the structural violence that colonialism engendered.

One result of this ideology was that mutually contrasting groups were created that based their national identity on a narrow and biased construction; supported by a majority-based electoral system, it offers the foundation of supremacist ideologies in contemporary Sri Lanka. It should also be mentioned that just a small proportion of the present-day Sinhalese nationalists adhere to such racist ideologies.

7.1   The Invention of Modern Ethnic Identities

When the British arrived in Ceylon the Island was exceptional in terms of its enormous heterogeneity and cultural diversity. The main inhabitants of the Island of Ceylon were believed to have arrived from the Indian subcontinent, centuries ago; at the same time, it was also naturally absorbing people coming from different parts of the world into its society. In contrast, present day Sri Lankan inhabitants have divided into three major distinct categories: Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim.[150] This section will focus on the emergence of distinct ethnical groups in Sri Lanka. How can one trace the distinct identity category Sinhala back to its roots in Sri Lanka and what significance can we attribute to it?

Various scholarly investigations make it possible to suggest that prior to the nineteenth century the identity of the people tended to be variable and contextual. The term 'Sinhalese' for instance seems to have functioned as both a cultural and political label without implying any belief in shared ancestry. Rajasingham-Senanayake points out that records of ethno-linguistic mixes are evident in the *Pali-Vamsas*, the Buddhist mytho-historical chronicles "[…] where royal and aristocratic marriages between Dravidian and Aryan linguistic groups […] were contracted."[151] Those marriages were contracted across ethno-linguistic lines, but within the warrior or kingly caste. One can assume therefore that the priority of identity shaping categories must have changed later in history of the Island. The main point is that the construction of ethnically pure and dis-

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[150]   See Guneratne 2002: 21–22.

[151]   Rajasingham- Senanayake 2002: 27.

tinct communities, such as the Sinhalese or Tamils, were constructed through a process of documentation and categorisation, which took place recently in history, namely through the colonial Census of Ceylon.

7.2 Colonial Census in Ceylon

The British colonial officers classified and constructed identities of natives with the aim of reifying an administrative penetration of the whole society as soon as possible. The function of the Census in Ceylon has to be understood within this context . One of its underlying assumptions it that every individual fits in a definite category and it constructs the false image of including everyone.[152]

In 1871, the first Census Report in Ceylon listed 78 different nationalities and 24 races on the Island of Ceylon. Forty years later, a process of rationalization had taken place and the Census counted only eleven races: Low Country and Kandyan Sinhalese, Indian Tamils, Ceylon Tamils, Indian Moors, Ceylon Moors, Malays, Burghers, Vedas, Europeans and Others.[153] In 1922, a court ruled that the Low Country Sinhalese and the Kandyan Sinhalese did not belong to different races. This became the trend and major dividing lines emerged between the majority Aryan Sinhalese and the minority Dravidian.[154] These race-based labels, which were externally imposed, became indigenised and vital to those to whom they were applied.[155] The Census of 1901 additionally included a chapter on the history of Ceylon, which was a record of conflict between the two communities; as Bhasin- Malik points out, instances of coexistence and interaction were not given much importance in British administrative traditions of writing history.

Furthermore, the Ceylon Census must be explained as the British colonial government's attempt to collect systematic information about the society and economy of the countries they ruled.[156] By trying to capture the reality of the Island the colonial officials played around with identity categories in the Census. They

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[152] See Anderson 2005: 166.
[153] See Rajasingham- Senanayake 2004: 55–56.
[154] See Bhasin- Malik 2007: 82.
[155] See Peter Rob quoted after Bhasin- Malik 2007: 84.
[156] See Bhasin- Malik 2007: 76.

continuously combined, separated, intermixed and restructured them. They assumed that the natives were members of a definite group and their behaviour, physical features and needs were pre-assigned based on the particular group to which they belonged. [157]

When the colonial census inquired about mother tongues, people were forced to make a choice and label it, and their answer had political impact.[158] During this process of documentation one must bear in mind that like many South Asian languages, pre-modern Sinhala had no words that expressed the distinctions used by the British. Identity based categories like 'race',' religion', 'caste' had no equivalent expression in Sinhala. Most commonly people used the term '*jatiya'*, which is very contextually used and "[…] refers to what is now labelled family, caste, religion, ethnicity, or even gender".[159] [160]

Identity-shaping aspects like religion and race were used as fundamental categories. Through the use of these classification system they created a particular image of reality and the shifts and changes in the categories used to describe the population of the Island reflected firstly the changes in colonial perceptions of their subject and secondly the changes in the self-perceptions of these subjects.[161] What kind of effects can we discern from this process of categorization and description of social reality?

Firstly, this modern 'scientific' racial coding of cultural and linguistic differences among 'native' populations transformed local identities and continues to configure identity conflict in Sri Lanka, in the form of an Aryan and Dravidian dichotomy, where Sinhalese and Tamils consider themselves two different and mutually exclusive 'races'.[162]

When the Legislative Council was established in 1833, the Governor nominated one Low Country Sinhalese, one Burgher and one Tamil to be the Ceylonese

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[157]   Ibidem, p. 78.

[158]   See Guneratne 2002: 35.

[159]   Rogers 1994: 13.

[160]   A different word used to designate people is the term '*minissu'* (people), which is a very universal label.

[161]   Bhasin- Malik 2007: 75.

[162]   See Rajasingham-Senanayake 2002: 26.

representatives. In turn, the native population, through the introduction of representative government, emphasized these group identities. [163] Thus secondly, the colonial discourse had enormous influence because the Census became the basis for the distribution of political power, government patronage and access to education and employment. [164]

And thirdly the:

> "[…] assumption about the nature of the colonial society […] created problems for the postcolonial states because it made it extremely difficult to conceptualise the nation in relation to any sort of civil society on the western model, since all social groups, all habits of thought, and all tradition of politics were seen as emanations of group identity and essential bodily differences." [165]

The British substantialized heterogeneity and laid the basis for political representation according to ethnic lines. [166] It deepened the perception of differences between seemingly racially different communities in Sri Lanka and especially gave those categories a totalising character, which it did not possess before. The need and practice of categorization and homogenization of the population was then:

> "[…] inherited by anti-colonial nationalisms and was fundamental to the nationalist imagination. […] Nationalism reinforced the clear definition of people and communities as being Sinhala Buddhist or Tamil, Hindu or Muslim, majority or minority, and this tendency has only intensified with the growth of ethnic and communal conflict in the South Asian region." [167]

Colonial and modern construction of the Island's people and past converged with the *Pali- Vamsas*, ancient Buddhist mytho-historical chronicles. [168] The selective reading of ancient texts like the *Mahavamsa* combined with the colonial discourse on racial differences resulted in the mutually exclusive and bi-polar construction of modern Sinhalese and Tamil ethnic identity categories. This

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[163] See Nira Wickremasinghe quoted after Bhasin-Malik 2007: 82.

[164] See Bhasin- Malik 2007: 79.

[165] Breckenridge / Van der Veer quoted after Bhasin-Malik 2007: 78–79.

[166] See Bhasin-Mailk 2007: 83.

[167] Ibidem, p. 94.

[168] Rajasingham-Senanayake 2004.

tendency plays a substantial role in Sinhala nationalist discourse and conflict perceptions in present day Sri Lanka's Sinhalese community and should not be underestimated.

> **Ethnicity Rather than Caste: Differences in Categorising South Asia**
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> The main difference in the categorising process in Sri Lanka and India is the different emphasis on the terms ethnicity and caste. In Sri Lanka, ethnicity rivalled caste as an administrative social category. Reasons for why the British preferred ethnicity to caste can be explained by the fact that it was more attractive to the British to divide along racial lines rather than caste or religion. By so doing they could treat Sinhalese Christians, who gained importance as collaborators with the colonial administration, as representative of all Sinhalese. Another reason was that when the British discovered that not Hinduism but Buddhism was the main religion in Sri Lanka they realized that caste was an inappropriate tool; they wanted to bring progress to the island by ignoring caste as much as possible.[169]

7.3 The Introduction of the Aryan Theory

The introduction of Aryan theory of languages and in a more subtle form its convergence with the Aryan theory of race through British scientism in the nineteenth century plays a considerable role in the contemporary self-conception of the Sinhalese population in Sri Lanka. It also shaped the idea that Sinhalese and Tamils were essentially different.[170], Most of the scholarly research about Asia was conducted by the Royal Asiatic Society, which was considered a 'club of the intelligentsia'; the work of the society, therefore, offers interesting insight into how the British related to Ceylon. Theories published through the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch (RASCB) developed a life of their own and still

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[169] Rogers 1994: 13,17.
[170] Guneratne 2002: 20.

function in manifold ways in present-day Sri Lanka. Nira Wikramasinghe has acknowledged the role of the nascent academic discipline anthropology in creating and aiding racial thinking:

> "Developments in physical anthropology and linguistics at the turn of the twentieth century were responsible for the definition of essentially linguistic groups such as Tamil and Sinhalese in Ceylon in terms of physical characteristics which were supposed to be specific to those groups."[171]

First, one has to separate the two theories of language and race from each other. The first theory argues that Indo-European and Aryan languages share a common origin. Scholars from the Royal Asiatic Society Ceylon Branch classified Sinhala, the language of the Sinhalese, as an Aryan language. The most notable of these scholars was the German philologist and orientalist Max Müller, who proved the accuracy of the Aryan theory in 1861. It was argued that Sinhala was a direct derivative of the Aryan language family, whereas Tamil was Dravidian in origin. After this discovery, the cleavage between the Sinhalese and the Tamils became greater, but it was only after it was equipped with the Aryan theory of race, which assumes that there is one common distinct (superior) race from which speakers of the Aryan or Indo-European language descend, that Sinhalese and Tamil adopted a definitely divergent character.[172] Although Friedrich Schlegel, a German Romantic philosopher, already connected linguistic aspects to cultural and racial theories at the beginning of the 19th century, it was only with Max Müller's efforts that it was introduced into mainstream scholarship in Ceylon.[173] The RASCB then took a stance that argued that "[…] the Sinhalese are both linguistic and racially Aryan; that Tamils are Dravidian; and that the Sinhalese Aryan race is superior both racially and (therefore) culturally."[174] To consolidate their theory, 'scientific' procedures appropriate to the times were used to prove, amongst other things, that in physical anthropology "[…] Sinhalese were the more pleasing (?) race […].[175] Many arti-

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[171]   Nira Wikramasinghe quoted after Angell 1978: 49.
[172]   See Angell 1998: 42–46.
[173]   Ibidem, p. 47.
[174]   Ibidem, p. 49.
[175]   Ibidem, p. 50.

cles published by the Royal Asiatic Society were in favour of the Sinhalese people and their culture; voices that argued against this position were not published. Marissa Angell alleges that the reason behind this attitude was presumably that by valorising the Sinhalese culture, they actually worshiped their own Aryan ancestry. Thus, the British racially identified themselves with the Sinhalese and therefore promoted the 'glories' of the Sinhalese culture.[176]

In summation, the Aryan theory of language was 'racialized', integrated into Sri Lankan mainstream discourse and created irreconcilable gaps between communities that had up to that point been socially porous and interactive. This leads one to the question: where else does one find imprints of the linguistic-racial 'scientific' discourse on aspects of Sinhalese national identity?

7.4   The Pali-Chronicles: The Role of Religious Mythology

Without arguing about the content and validity of the Pali chronicles, especially the *Mahavamsa*, their relevance in shaping Sinhalese nationalism will be discussed here. The Pali chronicles, *Dipavamsa* and the *Mahavamsa,* were first composed around the sixth century and updated in the thirteenth, fourteenth and eighteenth century. In 1837, it was first published by the colonial government and then widely interpreted as a history of the Sinhalese nation.[177] Scholars like Kemper argue that "[…] the content of the chronicle influenced the shape of modern Sinhalese nationalism."[178] Referring to Michael Roberts's analysis about the Asokan Persona and Sinhala kingship, he poses that the chronicles are inscribing that:

> "[…] the Sinhalese were (are) a chosen people destined to maintain the Buddhist doctrine in its pristine purity. […] In shorthand, these are what can be referred to as the interrelated and overlapping concepts of *Dhammadīppa and Sīhadīpa* (island of the *Dhamma* and island of the Sinhala people.) […] They are didactic by nature and written as a sacred history,

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[176]   Ibidem, p. 53.

[177]   See Rogers 1994: 12.

[178]   Ibidem, p. 12.

as a political charter with a 'midrashic' tendency to actualise the past events in the present."[179]

This history imposes a single and continuous view on the past that is purely Sinhala and Theravada Buddhist and its polemical value is certainly due to the fact that it is like a court chronicle, expressing a state ideology and written as a *kāvya,* a work of praise*.*[180] The *Mahavamsa* developed a myth about the Buddha's visit to the island of Lanka. He foresaw that Lanka would be the place where the glory of his doctrine would shine, created a cosmic order to tame the demonic, represented by the island mythical aborigines (the *Yakhas* and *Nagas*), and declared that the island belonged to the Buddha. On his death bed, the Buddha decreed that prince Vijaya should protect Buddhism and its followers on Lanka and thereby raised the Sinhalese kings to a similar position, charging them with the duty of protecting and upholding the religion.[181] This left the Sinhalese kings with immense authority, which manifested itself through patronal and symbolic acts.[182]

The RASCB published a report on the translation of the *Mahavamsa*, invoking an image of a Ceylon ransacked and plundered by Tamil invaders throughout ancient history.[183] Tamils were deemed aliens and categorized as invaders of the Sinhalese culture, clearly contrasting with the Sinhalese culture. At that time, historical images were fundamental to the crystallization and consolidation of colonial perceptions. By then the *Mahavamsa* was generally accepted as the history of the Sinhalese nation.[184]

Furthermore, Guneratne states that the "[…] Aryan myth helped to reinforce a particular view of the island's history that had begun to take shape during the latter half of the nineteenth century."[185] This view, which was actually bound to the academic circle, trickled down to the local population. Anagarika Dharma-

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[179] Roberts 1994: 65.

[180] Ibidem.

[181] Ibidem, p. 66.

[182] Ibidem, p. 68–69.

[183] See Angell 1998: 58.

[184] See Rogers 2004: 16.

[185] Guneratne 2002: 24–25.

pala, the founder of the Buddhist revivalism movement, was one of the popular advocates of the Aryan theory. Once he was quoted: "The bright, beautiful island was made into a Paradise by the Aryan Sinhalese before its destruction was brought about by the barbaric vandals."[186] The perception of Sinhala or Tamil culture as two pure entireties was (is) consequentially misleading because they are randomly imposed and stimulate a very narrow definition of national identity.[187]

In 1882, Ernest Renan gave his famous speech 'What is a Nation?' and warned of the dangers connected with the confusion of race with nation,[188] be it the case of Sinhalese nationalism or Tamil nationalism or any nationalism worldwide. It is important to deconstruct seemingly fixed concepts of identity or race to point out the highly dynamic structure of identity formation in colonial as well as post colonial Sri Lanka.

8 Conclusion

In my attempt to explain the emergence of Sinhalese nationalism in colonial Ceylon I referred mainly to three different perspectives of structure, culture and agency/agent, but also included a Post-Orientalist view to deconstruct assumed fixed identity categories.

Gellner describes the rise of nationalism as often connected to changes in structure, for example the process of industrialisation. In colonial Ceylon it is connected to the changes owing to the impact of colonialism. The Portuguese, the Dutch and the British who penetrated into the indigenous system of political, economic and social organisation changed the landscape of Ceylon completely.

> "The rapid expansion of plantation agriculture in the mid-nineteenth century was the major catalyst of social change in Sri Lanka as it formed the basins upon which the economic development that arose in the period of

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[186] Dharmapala quoted after Guneratne 2002: 25.
[187] See Guneratne 2002: 20–21.
[188] See Renan 1882.

British rule in the county came to have such a powerful influence in independent Sri Lanka."[189]

Through the introduction of plantation economy a better transport system and infrastructural measures were implemented in Ceylon. This led to greater mobilisation and interconnectedness of the Island inhabitants. Local boundaries were upstaged and primordial loyalties were neglected. This development erased the much-needed sense of community and group affiliation. The main source of political legitimacy and loyalty expired with the capture of the Kandyan Kingdom in the nineteenth century. The forceful introduction and spread of Christianity led to suppression of local traditions and religion, coupled with the aura of superiority of the 'white men's' colonial administration led to the curtailment of self-perception within the inhabitants. Religious revivalism during the end of the nineteenth century was able to revive the former primordial sentiments and uplift the Sinhalese self-respect when it laid the foundation of the Sinhala Buddhist identity on the reconstruction of the past glories of the Sinhala Buddhist kingdoms. The movement's wide appeal and success was due to the revolution in communication technology. New forms of print media made it able to draw on the attention of various sections of the society. Methods of Christian proselytising were also adopted to counter foreign influences. All these innovations made it possible for the Sinhalese to gradually grow into one significant, island-wide community.

Developments made in South Asian studies and the translation of the *Mahavamsa* into English and Sinhala provided the basis for the glory of Sinhala history and its people. Like K M de Silva concludes, "[o]ld societies struggling to establish a new nationhood […] have seldom been able to put their long and complex history behind them." In Sri Lanka the new nationhood was consolidated when Sinhalese nationalist activist sought to restore the link between Buddhism and the state and trying to reduce the privileges enjoyed by the Christian minority.

The concept of being Sinhalese or Tamil is a modern phenomenon that arose out of a specific situation connected to the process of colonialism and the social

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[189] De Silva 2006: 5.

and economic transformation process that took place afterwards. Assuming that there was a meaningful contradiction between those two folks in pre-modern times is very doubtful, even though selective reading and interpretation of the *Mahavamsa* tends to reinforce this 'ancient antagonism'. Sri Lanka's or any other country's history is definitely far too complex and diverse to be reduced to a simple "[…] binary opposition favoured by nationalists and some scholar."[190]

Furthermore, when analysing aspects of national identity one cannot just conclude that after the cessation of people's loyalties, be it religious or secular-ideological to a king, the state just stepped in and propagated the ideology of nationalism.[191] But it is very likely that the construction of nationalism was more successful when, as Eric Hobsbawm says, the new-born states 'borrowed and fostered' sentiments that already existed.[192] Leaders may place emphasis on the constructive or destructive aspects. What is certain is that the structure of colonialism challenged Ceylon in many diffusive ways, thus placing it in a very vulnerable position. When the colonial state began to lose its ideological sanction around the turn of the twentieth century, more broadly based ideologies, including cultural nationalism, secular nationalism, and socialism, competed for the political loyalties of the Sinhalese.[193] During these times of upheaval agents of nationalism started educating consensus towards its people, meaning lobbying to have their norms, values and ideas accepted as the leading ones. This turned the new-born nation into a battlefield for the individual power struggles of its political elite, which had a tremendous impact on the country and its people.

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[190] Guneratne 2002: 27.
[191] See Angell 1998: 60–61.
[192] Hobsbwam 1990: 80.
[193] Rogers 1978: 584.

IV History of Identities in Post-colonial Sri Lanka

As I have already discussed in chapter two, nationalist ideas and rhetoric occurred in Ceylon during the 19th and 20th century, first in a religious culturalist and second in a universalistic secular form, overlapping in time and societies (rural and urban). Both of them fulfilled needed functions concerning various dimensions of the societal system, be it the need for self-assertion, freedom, solidarity etc.

To start, I want to mention that when Ceylon gained independence, ethnic polarization between the majority Sinhalese and the Ceylon Tamils was not a 'historically' inescapable path. There had been some minor incidents and riots before but they mainly triggered by economic grievances rather than ethnical prejudices in the form of Sinhalese cultural nationalism.[194] Furthermore, we must take into account that after support of the urban Colombo elite diminished, organisations and advocates of Sinhalese cultural nationalism in Ceylon did not disappear and for the most part the social basis in the rural areas in favour of the movement was still completely in tact. Therefore, what dynamics of postcolonial Ceylon led to the massive diffusion of narrowly defined Sinhalese cultural nationalism rather than the universalistic Ceylonese nationalism that wasn't bound to a distinct ethnic community in Ceylon? What aspects led to an unprecedented disintegration of ethnic minorities in Sri Lanka, hence the violent Sinhala-Tamil divide? Can one call it the curse of Sinhalese nationalism, or of the nation-state in general?

1 Majority Politics: Consolidating Nationalist Values

The gateway to the rise of exclusive nationalist attitudes lies within Ceylon's political framework at the time of independence. Ceylon's constitutional affairs in the 20th century entailed various features that can be seen as a stimulus for

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[194]   Ibidem, p. 595.

the solidification of Sinhalese nationalism and thereby the Sinhalese-Tamil di-
chotomy. Jonathan Spencer assumes that the main preconditions for the out-
break of violent conflict were the illiberal consequences of liberal institutions in
Sri Lanka:

> "The conflict, it is argued, had to be understood first of all in political terms,
> as the outcome of a specific history of electoral politics, which from the
> 1930s on, was structured along 'ethnic' lines."[195]

The British felt a natural obligation towards those who had been loyal to them
and served them in the public service, foremost the Burghers and Tamils. Be-
fore the introduction of universal suffrage in 1931, the Burghers, Moors, Indian
and Ceylon Tamils were able to ensure their constitutional protection. This left
the Sinhalese Buddhists overly underrepresented until 1923. Combined with the
Christian domination in providing high status education, the British gave the im-
pression that they were actively supporting the minorities against the Sinhalese
Buddhist majority. And when communal representation was abolished and re-
placed with adult universal suffrage in 1931, it was of course heavily opposed
by the minorities based on the fear that it would not sufficiently safeguard their
position.[196] Indeed, it led to a break down in the pre-independent consensuses
between Tamil and Sinhalese politicians when faced with the clear numerical
superiority of the Sinhalese electorates, consequently the possibility of conflict
increased.[197] Ceylon's cosmopolitan politicians hurried to adjust themselves to
this new form of mass politics.[198] Their rhetoric turned into a language to which
they assumed the masses would respond 'positively'. Spencer says that it "[…]
was a language of linguistic and religious identity, laced with experiments in
xenophobia directed at different minorities: Indian Tamil labourers on the tea
estates and Malayali immigrants in Colombo, in particular."[199] Thus, one ob-
serves that the main focus of Ceylon's politics in 1931 drifted towards "[…] how
to take advantage of the political situation to preserve their interest, once for-

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[195] See Spencer 2008: 611.
[196] See Jupp 1968: 171, Bailey 1948: 253.
[197] See Rogers 1987: 593.
[198] See Spencer 2008: 614.
[199] Ibidem.

mally guaranteed positions were no longer available in the legislature."[200] The late representative structure of the British colonial administration distorted state-level politics and led them towards the use of ethnic symbols and allegiances from the very start.[201] The introduction of the national flag in 1951 supports this point because it actually is a modified version of the lion flag of the last king of Kandy, a cultural symbol popular with the Sinhalese Buddhist majority population.[202]

Furthermore, English, the language associated with status and the *lingua franca* in politics, courts and administration was by common consent perceived as a linguistic entrance card to the upper levels of society.[203] After 1948 it was clear to the ruling stratum that they gradually had to replace English with Sinhalese and Tamil. In 1955-56 this pressure resulted in the 'Sinhala Only Act'. Needless to say, the Ceylon Tamils opposed it. Until then, they had been the favoured beneficiaries of English language schools, which American missionaries had established.[204] The constitution did not define the official language. This would have at least been deterrence against imposing the 'Sinhala Only Act' in 1956. However, it only required a simple majority.[205] The 'Sinhala Only Act' is one of the crucial points in the Island's history and must be interpreted as a combination of forces. By demanding that Sinhala become the only national language, the majority population expressed their desire to improve their living conditions. They did so by uttering a radical and exclusionary demand, which should be understood out of the colonial experience of the Sinhalese. In the 'Sinhala Only Act' clearly lies the collective perception that the Sinhalese are the legitimate, albeit historically marginalised people of Sri Lanka and therefore they should be promoted. Political agents after independence put extra burdens on the cultural and structural dimension by maintaining the economic and social patterns of the colonial system and by further penetrating into the cultural dimension in order to

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[200] Jupp 1968: 171.
[201] See Spencer 2008: 612.
[202] See Gunawardena 2005: 253.
[203] See Rogers 1987: 595.
[204] Ibidem.
[205] See Jupp 1968: 175.

maintain their power. Myopic campaigns of this manner were the beginning of cultural violence that gradually took shape after Ceylon's independence.

Another visible example of encouraging ethnic allegiance was changing Ceylon's official name to Sri Lanka in the 1972 constitution. 'Lanka' had long been the name in Sinhalese.[206] The adaptation of the 'sri' had already been an issue in 1956 when Ponnambalam condemned the government's decision to use the Sinhala 'sri' letters on all vehicle license plates and called on all Tamils to use the Tamil equivalent 'shri' while simultaneously instigating a peaceful protest.[207]

From the very start the Sinhala and Tamil politicians only acted on behalf of their own community.[208] The incautious constitutional drafting encouraged a self-sustaining circle of fears generated within minorities and their demand for more rights, while a spin-off effect, created a growing resentment within the Sinhalese Buddhist majority. Spencer explains that:

> "[…] the new constitution already set in place the patterns of a vertical political mobilisation within ethnic communities and obviated the need for any broad horizontal mobilisation base on common opposition to the colonial presence."[209]

In reference to Gramsci theories, a hegemonic ruling group needs to have their ideas and values accepted as leading ones. This happens through a pedagogic relationship between subject and agent. One must not forget that this relationship dialectically connects the two. Furthermore, we find that from the very start the new elite generalized their own particular ethnos onto the whole population to marshal support for their nation-building process. As the voting power laid predominately with the Sinhalese, it was Sinhalese politicians who could get their ideas and values accepted and therefore Sinhalese nationalist discourse dominated the scene. Thus, an unstable political framework led to the gradual alienation of ethnic minorities whilst consolidating Sinhalese nationalism.

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[206]   See Gunawarden 2005: 342.
[207]   See DeVotta 109.
[208]   See Spencer 2008: 613.
[209]   Ibidem.

2 Constitutional Developments: Framing Identity and Discrimination

Three Constitutions followed each other in Ceylon, slowly defining a majority community from within its citizens. Similar to Spencer, Wikramasinghe points out:

> "Paradoxically the rights mechanism used by liberal states to engineer equality of opportunity for minorities were systematically utilised by successive Sri Lankan government to shore up the dominance of a Sinhala Buddhist majority. [210]

The Donoughmore Constitution, which enabled general elections and adult universal suffrage, was valid until 1947. One year later, Ceylon was declared independent and the Soulbury Constitution, which was modelled after the Westminster Parliament, was legally recognized.[211] The constitutional draft was established with the Ceylon Citizenship Act of 1948. It had more stringent definitions of citizenship and thereby deprived more than one hundred thousand Indian Tamil estate workers of their voting rights.[212] Prior to that, "Sinhalese politicians pictured Indian Tamils, whose ancestors mostly migrated to Sri Lanka in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as a foreign, privileged group that had arrived at the expense of the Sinhalese peasantry."[213]

The next constitutional revision occurred in 1972 when the Republican Constitution was ratified. The official name of the country changed from Ceylon to Sri Lanka and Buddhism was lifted to the status of a state religion. Tamil parties in parliament refused to participate in the framing of the Constitution, claiming that it did not contain the minority rights protection clause that the earlier Soulbury Constitution included in section 29.[214] Its representatives officially boycotted the

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[210] Wickramasinghe 2006: 182.

[211] See Bailey 1948: 251.

[212] Ceylon's problem with the immigration of Indian Tamils is a highly controversial subject. A 1946 census showed that over 283.000 immigrants arrived on the island, more than 95 percent of them Indian Tamils. Ceylonese politicians feared that Indian workers could be deliberately imported to influence elections. This fear led to a restricted immigration policy and citizenship issues. (See Bailey 1948: 254).

[213] Rogers 1987: 594.

[214] See: http://pact.lk/2008/03/24/may-1972/.

Republican Day ceremonies and organized protests against what they called the 'Sinhala constitution', which denied them fundamental rights of language and religion.[215] Sirimavo Bandaranaike, S.W.R.D Bandaranaiks's political successor, had 'institutionalized' the Sinhalese nationalist ideological movement of 1956 in the Constitution. From then on every Constitution stressed the special place of Buddhism. The constitution was further altered in 1978, turning it into a Gaullist-presidential system with a Bill of Rights that guaranteed individual–based fundamental rights but no community rights.[216]

It becomes clear that the newborn nation of Ceylon strived to construct an indigenous political framework. Ethnic nationalism thereby functioned as the theoretical framework of the new nation state. This theoretical framework became more and more mono-ethnical in its outlook and left the different socio-economic realities of Ceylon's multi-ethnic population unseen and unheard. The political remnant of colonialism, as well as the colonial experience itself supplied the socio-culturally constructed material needed to legitimize the exclusivist political practices, while obfuscating the fact that the formerly oppressed were well on their way to having the same hegemonic attitude as their predecessors.

3 Influencing the Socio-Cultural Perception: Obstacles to Inter-Ethnic Accommodations

From the very conception of an independent Ceylon the main threat to political stability was on the need to accommodate minorities, in particular Ceylon and Indian Tamils.[217] Yet development in Sri Lanka until 1956 can be described as moderate, especially in comparison with the following years. It was just after 1956 when the fusion between politics, Sinhalese identity, Buddhism and social frustration merged into a mass movement and set an irrevocable ball of ethnic unrest rolling. In this process the cultural dimension of nationalism unfolded it-

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[215] See Phadnis 1972: 1139.

[216] See Wickramasinghe 2006:183–185.

[217] The particularness with Indian Tamils is different, complex issue that needs special attention and is one of the many serious social problems that were neglected due to the urgency of the Sinhala-Tamil divide. (See Jupp 1968: 170).

self. Individuals with no real relation to one another other than ethnicity found themselves bound together by nothing more than the idea of a common history and ancestry to express claims and fears. Culturally bound assumptions materialized based on common awareness of the socio-cultural reality. This puts in motion a self-sustaining circle of fears and claims and legitimizes discriminatory political actions, not to mention that it is often a political agent who infiltrates this sphere whilst deriving power and legitimation out of it.

The United National Party was the party that first formed a government in Ceylon and until 1956 no other political party was able to challenge its dominant position.[218] The UNP's ideological stance was (is) centre-right with a *laissez-faire* economic policy. Some critics argued that the UNP appeared to be little different than the colonial regime.[219] It was a party led by elite politicians devoted to a universal and pluralistic outlook of nationalism, such as 'Ceylonese nationalism'. Its politicians were from the professional classes and landed aristocracy, who were educated in Britain and highly obliged to parliamentary methods. All the prominent family clans, such as the Senanayakes, Goonetillekes or Bandaranaikes, were well represented in the dominant political positions when they formed the UNP. The party cautiously led Ceylon to independence without using violent methods or creating a mass movement like the Indian example.[220] Rogers states that even though the politicians who took power at independence

> "[…] were members of a highly anglicized elite subculture, […] they were not entirely divorced from the more popular religious and social movements that attracted their fellow Sinhalese. In the 1930s and 1940s they had attempted to fulfil some of the goals of cultural nationalism, finding it a useful way of maintaining their own support."[221]

A language assembled with tones of linguistic and religious identity was purposefully used from independence onwards. Politicians attempted to arouse an ethnic sentiment within the Sinhalese to maintain their power. At the same time

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[218]   See Farmer 1965: 432.
[219]   See Abeyratne 2004: 13.
[220]   See Jupp 1968: 169–170.
[221]   Rogers 1987: 594.

they created a social force that no one was able to control. They also failed to distinguish between the ideology of Sinhalese Buddhist cultural nationalism and secular nationalism. Thus, while promoting a nationalist cause they used symbols that were only relevant to the Sinhalese majority. [222]

In the 1950s a revival of Sinhalese Buddhist cultural nationalism started to blaze and gradually took the form of a mass political movement.[223] In 1956 it found one of its zeniths with *Buddha Jayanthi*[224] and Sinhala Only. In response to the fear of becoming undermined by the majority, the Tamil Federal Party tried to secure autonomy for the Northern and Eastern provinces. It would have tipped the balance of the system in favour of the Ceylon Tamils, but unfortunately it seemed to the Sinhalese "[…] as though it [the Tamil Federal Party] is trying to restore the independent Tamil kingdom which existed at Jaffna before the British came, or, worse still, that it is simply a branch of Madras Tamil imperialism trying to attach Northeast Ceylon to India."[225] According to Jupp, stumbling blocks in the young nation's political development are firstly that "[…] communal policies favoured by Sinhalese nationalist have forced Tamil counter-action, while attempts to ameliorate the positions of Tamils have brought resistance from the Sinhalese, cutting across party lines." Secondly, the Sinhalese intensively oppose any change in the unitary system, which makes the process of a peaceful devolution very unlikely.[226]

Tamils and Sinhalese have driven themselves into a cycle of historically perceived inequalities. First Tamils were perceived to hold an unfair share in education, jobs and business in relation to their population percentage, leading to affirmative action regarding the Sinhalese and periodic anti-Tamil violence. This, in turn, led to the Tamils' feelings like second-class citizens.[227] B.H. Farmer notes some social facets that make the Ceylon case unique. Even

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[222] Ibidem, p. 593.

[223] Ibidem, p. 595.

[224] *Buddha Jayanthi* is the 2500th anniversary of Buddha's death, which was marked by extensive ceremonies. (See Gunawardena 2005:56).

[225] See Jupp 1968: 176.

[226] Ibidem, p. 177.

[227] See Somasundaram 1998: 108.

though the Sinhalese in Ceylon hold a numerically dominant position, they have a fear of being overrun by their Tamil neighbours in India. Although they have a clear majority on the island, they are a minority compared to the prevalence of Indians and in particular the Tamils of Tamil Nadu. Farmers and many contemporary social scientists frequently conclude that "[...] the Sinhalese are a majority with a minority complex."[228] This fear was enhanced by Sri Lankan politics and media. Phadnis sets forth:

> "Continued intellectualisation of old memories of Tamil intrusion on the territorial integrity as well as the Sinhala-Buddhist cultural identity of the Sinhalese, enshrined in the Sinhalese chronicle which form part of their literary tradition, provide the historical base for such feelings."[229]

Furthermore, the Sinhalese consider themselves the sole preservers of the ancient Sinhala language and culture, as well as the guardian of Theravada Buddhism on the Indian subcontinent, which is another contributing factor to the feelings of uneasiness within the Sinhalese society towards Dravidian regionalism.[230]

When I first started taking up the issue of the 'Tamil issue' and asked my relatives about the beginning of this problem they explained that after independence thousands of Indian Tamils came to Sri Lanka, drifting toward the island in search of opportunities and better prospects. They explained that every day hundreds would arrive in boats or even swim to Sri Lanka. Everybody could observe this happening in the media. According to my relatives, the government had to protect the country from an unending stream of Indian Tamil immigrants, because where else should they (probably only the Sinhalese) go? Jump into the ocean? Indian Tamils have been considered a social, economic and political threat to the wellbeing of Ceylon. [231]

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[228]   See Farmer 1965: 433
[229]   Phadnis 1972:1493
[230]   See Farmer 1965: 433- 434
[231]   Wriggins quoted after Phadnis 1972: 1493.

It becomes obvious that the Sinhalese constantly perceived themselves to be threatened by Tamils. The demographic reality of Tamil Nadu being in such a close proximity combined with the writings of the *Mahavamsa* makes generous concession concerning the Tamil population almost impossible. Believing that Ceylon is the Island destined to guard Buddha's doctrine additionally substantiates this stance with a spiritual aura.

4 The Rise and Success of Sinhala Nationalism

1956 marked a sudden change in Sri Lanka's political culture; it was the year when ethnic unrest accumulated and imagined fears took the shape of real political decision-making. It was the time when former UNP member Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike formed the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and took over the ruling power with the '*Mahajana Eksath Peramuna*' (People's United Front) coalition. Even though Bandaranaike was one of the first to propagate ideas of federalism in independent Ceylon, he became the leading mouthpiece for Sinhala nationalism.

4.1 Creating Unity and Empowering the Sinhalese Masses

Some years before Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike formed the SLFP, he founded the *Sinhala Maha Sabha* (Sinhalese Great Assembly), an organization devoted to promoting Sinhalese culture and communal interests. Its significance can be seen as a prelude to the creation of a real majority community. In one particular speech, Bandaranaike, in his capacity as *Sinhala Maha Sabha* spokesman, elaborated:

> "We [i.e. the Sinhala Maha Sabha] saw differences amongst our own people- caste distinctions, up-country and low-country distinctions, religious distinctions, and various other distinctions- and we therefore felt that we should achieve unity, which is the goal of us all. Surely the best method was to start from the lower rung; firstly, unity among the Sinhalese; and secondly, whilst uniting the Sinhalese, to work for the higher unity, the unity of all communities."[232]

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[232] Bandaranaike quoted after Roberts 1978: 360.

It is possible that Bandaranaike encountered so many obstacles while trying to unite only the Sinhalese that he did not have the opportunity to unite all communities. And indeed he was able to ally the Kandyan and the Low Country Sinhalese.[233] By aiming to create unity among the Sinhalese, Bandaranaike brought forward some structural conditions for nationalism, meaning a shared culture, education and language. Furthermore, Bandaranaike, a critic of the elitist political structures, claimed that Ceylonese politicians would continue with colonial politics without considering the conditions of the country. He probably was the first politician who was willing to understand the indigenous social realities.[234] This attitude was a contributing factor to his popularity among the rural Sinhalese masses.[235] He designed his party as a reformative alternative to the elitist UNP; nevertheless, both parties adopted the slogan of 'Sinhala Only' during their elections campaign.[236] However, it was the SLFP that assumed power in 1956 in a wave of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism. The determining factor was the support of a new group: the new village leadership (NVL). This group was able to unleash social forces that previously had not existed.[237] Its members were Sinhalese rather than English-educated and consisted of Buddhist priests, '*Vedaralas*' (practitioners of traditional Ayurvedic medicine), '*Mudalalis*' (village money-lender-shopkeepers) and teachers. The NVL was increasingly aware of their influence on the voting habits at a rural level, and - by uniting with the SLFP - also at a national level.[238] The village leadership considered itself deprived of upward mobility because of to their lack of English education. Hence they tended to foster feelings of:

> "[…] envy, jealousy, and righteous indignation against the English-educated, especially the Ceylon civil service; against the village headman, who though not all English-educated were derived for the most part from the traditional rural aristocracy; and against the Ceylon Tamils, and Chris-

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[233] See Roberts 1978: 361.
[234] Ibidem.
[235] See Fernando 1973: 380–381.
[236] See Rogers 1987: 595.
[237] See Farmer 1965: 435, Jupp 1968: 170.
[238] See Farmer 1965: 435.

tians of whatever community, who were both said to hold more posts in Government Service than their number alone would warrant."[239]

Sentiments against Ceylon Tamils were later further reinforced with concepts like communalism, religion and backward-looking nationalism.[240] Bandaranaike was able to gain control of this group by arousing sentiments for Sinhala language, religion and cultural nationalism. Another factor that contributed to the Sinhalese nationalist wave was religion. Once before, religion had functioned as a uniting force, but the British colonial administration hindered it from growing beyond pure religious content. In 1956, Buddhism in Ceylon reached its peak in popularity. It was the year of *Buddha Jayanti*, the 2500th anniversary of Buddha's entry into Nirvana. Wriggins writes:

> "Buddha Jayanti year had a peculiarly Sinhalese significance. The coincidence of the landing of Vijaya [the legendary founder of the Sinhalese nation] and the death of the Buddha made it possible to see the year 1956 as a unique, three-fold event- the completion of 2500 years of Buddhism, of the life of the Sinhalese race [sic], and of Ceylon's recorded history"[241]

At least since *Buddha Jayanthi,* the message of a shared culture has trickled down to all layers of Sinhalese Buddhist society. Buddhist monks and their traditional place in politics made an additional contribution: many of them were leading agitators in the second wave of nationalism.[242] Buddhist monks displayed the link between primordial ties and nationalism. Farmer points out various reasons for this role:

> "[T]he great and so far almost unchallenged influence of the priests in the villages, their identification with the linguistic and cultural aspects of Sinhalese nationalism, their membership in the same vernacular-educated group as other members of the new village leadership, their numbers and their power to add their numbers (for it is relatively easy for a layman to take to the robe), and the limelight that was theirs in Buddha Jayanti year."[243]

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[239] Ibidem.
[240] Ibidem.
[241] Wriggens quoted after Farmer 1965:436.
[242] See Farmer 1965: 436.
[243] Ibidem.

Bandaranaike was able cumulate these various factors into a single social movement. He united the Sinhalese, in particular the rural masses from throughout the Island, not only in contrast to non-Sinhalese, but also in contrast to the Westernized elite. By merging their manifold socio-cultural realities into one and emphasizing Sinhalese Buddhist cultural glories, he empowered them ideologically and politically. The crucial point is that enjoining the Sinhalese masses suddenly became a determining factor in the island's politics.

4.2   Sinhala Nationalising the State

In this section it is important to clarify that the active propagators of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism are members of a militant form of Buddhism, which exists next to the three orders of the Buddhist Sangha. Sinhala Buddhist nationalism troubles the collective conscience of monks loyal to the message of non-violence and also contributes to the paralysis of the peace process between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil separatists. Behind their activism lies the assumption that Buddhism in Sri Lanka is endangered by the Tamils separatists and therefore needs to be protected, by violent means if necessary. Their doctrine has lost all its universal intent and marks a crisis in the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.[244] This chapter provides examples of how the Sinhala Buddhist nationalist agenda gradually took root and infiltrated the political constitution of the state.

After becoming independent "Sinhalese nationalists strove to adopt the principles of democracy for themselves and erase their European origins."[245] Buddhist monks, who had a vision of society based on the *Mahavamsa*, organized themselves into pressure groups.[246] Their main assertion was that the *Sangha* was actually the prototype of democracy, but superior to the West European System. It led to the demand that the state recognise the moral authority of the *Sangha* and that Buddhism be elevated to a privileged position in society.[247]

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[244]   See Meyer 2003: 49–50.
[245]   Ibidem, p. 121.
[246]   See Wickremasinghe 2006: 182.
[247]   See Meyer 2003: 121.

The same pressure groups protested against the Indo-Lanka Accord in 1987,[248] "[…] claiming the agreement betrayed the Sinhala people by conceding too much to the Tamils and allowing Indians to enter the Island as a peacemaker force."[249] The Sinhalese nationalists' demands were met when the following amendment was introduced into the Constitution in 1972:

> "The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give to Buddhism the fore most place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the State to protect and foster the Buddha Sasana, while assuring to all religions the rights granted by Articles 10 and 14."[250]

The introduction of the clause implies on the one hand an elevated status of Sinhalese Buddhists in the eyes of the state, and on the other and leaves individuals from other communities with an adverse impression. Enforcing Sinhalese Buddhist values had a symbolic, as well as a real impact on Sri Lanka's multiple ethnic communities[251], foremost because the Sinhala language also became fully enshrined as the official language at a constitutional level. From then on, every constitution granted a special place to Buddhism. Even though it was obvious that Buddhism enjoyed affirmative action from the state, many of its proponents still portrayed it as a religion under threat. Nira Wickramasinghe aptly asserts that all measures taken to elevate Buddhism in Sri Lanka must be understood as "[...] a process of rectifying perceived colonial favouritism towards Catholics."[252]

Political parties began reinforcing Buddhism as the state religion by performing Buddhist ceremonies at almost every state function.[253] The Sangha gradually adopted its role of ancient Sinhala Buddhist times by providing legitimacy of political procedures. A few years later the Sinhala Buddhist nationalization continued when nationalist pressure resulted in the abandonment of the parliamentary democracy and the introduction of a presidential regime from 1977-78. The

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[248] The Indo-Lanka Accord is an agreement signed between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Eelam in 1987. (See Gunawardena 2005: 190).

[249] Wikramasinghe 2006: 183.

[250] Meyer 2003: 121.

[251] See Wickramasinghe 2006: 183.

[252] Ibidem, p. 184.

[253] Ibidem.

parliamentary democracy was abandoned in the name of the Buddha's doctrine. In contrast to a non-absolutist and peaceful Buddhist doctrine, Meyer states that "[t]he model of enlightened despotism, already present in the Buddhist tradition, is embodied in the Indian emperor Asoka: Asoka denounced unjust violence but not fair, universal, absolute power."[254] The Sri Lankan upper class had a keen interest in the new role the system of revived ancient monarchy would offer them:" […] protector of the Buddhist community, and provider of wealth and prosperity to the people by way of irrigation projects, construction of hospitals, and land distribution."[255] President Premadasa launched the Ministry of *Buddha Sasana* (Message of the Buddha) during his term in the 1980s. During his reign facets of the Western democratic model were successively abandoned for the adoption of a model based on the *Jathika Chintanaya* (National Ideology).[256] Manifestations of Sinhalese nationalism became apparent on different levels, for example the large-scale state-sponsored agricultural development from 1930 to 1980. They were designed as a restoration of the glory of pre-colonial Buddhist kingdoms.[257] These well-intended projects had multiple effects and causes:

> "[…] Accelerated Mahaweli Development Scheme, as massive hydroelectric and peasant- resettlement project, launched in 1977, […] invoked nationalist visions of the ancient Sinhala Buddhist hydraulic civilization, [and] further exacerbated Tamil anxieties on a national scale."[258]

This trend was perceived by the Tamil population as Sinhala Buddhist colonization of Tamil areas. One again recognizes that it was one particular ethnos that was imposed on all inhabitants. The push forward of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism as a political force exemplifies many obstacles to a peaceful cohabitation of the Island different communities. These obstacles are, firstly, cultural nationalism based on one perspective of the Island's many histories, which consequentially hindered the formulation of a common national identity (particularly since it

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[254] Meyer 2003: 122.

[255] Ibidem, p. 123.

[256] Ibidem.

[257] See Spencer 2008: 612.

[258] Somasundaram 1998: 5.

displayed an ethnic concept of national identity) and, secondly, the steady politicization of the *Buddhist Sangha* as a result of the reformative movement led by Anagarika Dharmapala. His efforts to promote Sinhalese Buddhists as legitimate rulers and inhabitants of the Island was the impetus for the rise of Sinhala Buddhist pressure groups, which, thirdly, led to the alteration of the Constitution in favour of Sinhala Buddhist whilst marginalising other communities in front of the state.

One dubious result in contemporary Sri Lanka is that it faces a situation in which Buddhist monk are Members of Parliament, most notably the Jathika Hela Urumaya (National Heritage Party) which seeks to protect Sri Lanka's integrity, or more subtly the integrity of their Sinhala Buddhist state.[259]

5 The Janatha Vikmuthi Peramuna: Insurrection in the Name of a Sinhalese Nation

In the last third of the 20th century Sri Lanka's inhabitants enjoyed improved living conditions due to the state's social policy and greater access to education; at the same time, they faced slow economic growth. In Ruhuna, which became the centre of the *Janatha Vikmuthi Peramuna* (JVP), the People's Liberation Front uprising, unemployment ran and still runs high. Even though the government tried to empower the region, the results were not prosperous when one takes into account the exceptional human potential found in area.[260] This generation of young, educated Sinhalese adults grew into an idealistic rebellious movement that sought a Marxist-Leninist revolution coupled with the ideas of Sinhalese nationalism.[261] The JVP launched two abortive insurrections - the first in 1971 and the second in 1987 - in the name of the Sinhala Buddhist nation. The latter gravely exceeded the first in terms of human cost and societal conse-

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[259] See Wickramasinghe 2006: 183, my accentuation.

[260] The only place where one could an equal human potential was the Jaffna area, the bastion of the LTTE insurgency (See Meyer 2003: 109-110).

[261] See Meyer 2003: 161–162.

quences.[262] The movement aimed to occupy territory, then to assume power over the media and police stations, and finally to take control of the government by encircling cities from the countryside. Their strategy was to paralyse and dominate all areas of government control.[263]

There are varying reasons for why revolutions and uprisings take place in third world democracies. They can be interpreted as mass socio-psychological disturbances, poverty or in structural terms such as 'weakness of elites', 'armed forces' and 'the influence of international economic or political pressures'. Certainly, it was interplay of forces. Moore redresses the JVP uprising as an:

> "[…] intelligent, creative and highly ambitious political leadership, dedicated to the achievement of state power, but blocked from achieving it by electoral means [which] exploited […] the reservoirs of political alienation found within Sri Lankan society […]."[264]

The charismatic leader of the JVP, Rohan Wijeweera, who had studied at the University of Moscow, enjoyed absolute authority within the JVP.[265] The movement's doctrine was mainly socialist or Marxist, but these aspects were increasingly neglected and replaced by Sinhalese chauvinist and indigenist elements targeting the Sri Lankan and Indian Tamil ethnic groups, as well as the Indian armed forces during the ongoing civil war in 1987.[266] In the same tenor, the rival left parties were branded as traitors because of their support of the negotiated solution to the Sinhalese-Tamil conflict.[267]

Nationalism played a key role in mobilizing the masses in both insurrections. Consequently, nationalism became increasingly interpreted in terms of local differences.[268] The dominant moral basis was 'Patriotism', of course again in-

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[262] During the repression of the 1971 insurrection 'only' about three thousand suspects were killed, or rather slaughtered in the process, whereas the second insurrection cost about forty thousand Sri Lankan lives. (See Moore 2003: 593, 605).

[263] See Meyer 2003:166–167.

[264] See Moore 1993: 596.

[265] See Meyer 2003: 163, 166.

[266] Even though the JVP went gradually over to foster sentiments against the Tamil minority, they expressed limited support for the Tamils to national self-determination in the early 1980s. (See Moore 1993: 619).

[267] See Moore 1993: 599.

[268] See Moore 1993: 599.

terpreted in Sinhalese Buddhist terms.[269] Sinhalese students, mainly of *Karava* origin, an enterprising caste, established the JVP. Its ranks were filled with mostly non-*Goyigama*, quasi people with non-elite status.[270] According to Meyer:

> "[t]hese young students were educated in rural, exclusively Sinhalese schools and harboured a deep resentment toward the English-speaking bourgeoisie of Colombo, as did their parents who voted for Bandaranaike or Marxist candidates."[271]

As in most revolutionary movements their programme was increasingly directed against the indigenous elite because they were (are) closely associated with neo-colonial foreign powers.[272] Because of their inability to speak (and ignorance of) English their chances of finding a job and their access to university were reduced. Hence "[…] they established a political counterculture founded on a combination of Marist-Leninist theories and nationalist Sinhalese ideals."[273] One factor behind the eager support of the JVP lay mostly in the fact that unemployment was constantly high and the output of the educational system was far too large to be absorbed into the labour market.[274] The JVP was against parliamentary democracy, the Marxist left and the so-called Sinhalese nationalists whom the SLFP had accepted. They wanted to redevelop the welfare state that was threatened by the intervention of foreign powers.

The first insurrection was put down within a few weeks; many members were hunted down and executed until the government changed their stance and placed them in re-education camps. According to Meyer the government did not want to attack the descendants of those who had elected them in the first place. When the UNP came into power in 1977, the remaining prisoners were rehabili-

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[269] Ibidem, p. 629.
[270] This process is quite similar to the Tamil *Karaiyar*, who founded the LTTE (See Meyer 2003:163).
[271] Meyer 2003: 163.
[272] See Moore 1993: 598.
[273] Meyer 2003: 164.
[274] See Moore 1993: 616.

tated and the JVP transformed itself into a political party, procuring about four percent of the votes in the 1982 presidential elections.[275]

One year later the anti-Tamil pogrom in Colombo took place, for which the government held the JVP responsible and consequentially banned the party. The prohibition urged the movement to go underground and reaffirm itself with nationalist and anti-Indian propaganda. Their moment to resurrect arrived in 1987, when Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi imposed the Indo-Lanka agreement on Sri Lanka.[276] It needs to be clarified that during this turbulent period the ruling stratum felt more threatened by the leftist revolutionist than by the emerging Tamil separatist conflict.[277] The Indian intervention in Sri Lanka was a perfect situation for the JVP to gather ideological support by exposing Indian expansionism.

Meyer describes the JVP the sudden appearance to be "[…] the only authentic incarnation of Sinhalese nationalism […]"[278] in contrast to all the other parties. Even the police and the armed forces shared the aversion to Indian intervention and as Moore elaborates

> "[…] [It] appeared to represent the realization of an old, deeply rooted, and carefully nurtured collective Sinhalese paranoia about Indian expansionism and the vulnerability of Sri Lanka to betrayal by leaders who where not genuine Sinhalese Buddhists."[279]

The second rise of the JVP occurred almost simultaneously "[…] with the emergence of a indigenist middle class Sinhalese intellectual movement, known as Jathika Chantanaya (The National Ideology), which constituted an attempt to reestablish and reaffirm the Sinhala culture and language in the face of foreign influence and the re-popularization of the English language."[280]

Unplanned riots broke out shortly after the agreement was signed, forcing the government to unleash special police force units while the support for the

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[275]   See Meyer 2003: 168.
[276]   See Meyer 2003: 168.
[277]   Ibidem, p. 169.
[278]   Ibidem.
[279]   See Moore 1993: 613.
[280]   Ibidem, p. 627.

movement increased. During the 1987 insurrection the JVP launched a campaign of terror to eliminate corrupt politicians and the local mafia. Their actions aimed to destabilize the Colombo elite. Suddenly the whole nation turned into a security-conscious militarised state with a perplexing array of arms, uniformed men, barriers, check points, searches and ID cards, creating an atmosphere of tension and insecurity.[281] Due to their intimidating methods the JVP quickly lost their popularity.[282] Between mid 1987 and mid 1989 a situation of anarchy emerged in the southern and central areas. Sri Lankans no longer knew who was responsible for all the mass killings that occurred.[283] The fatal mistake that the leftist movement committed was to threaten to harm the families of policemen and soldiers who refused to desert the government and join the movement. This tactical move resulted in a brutal campaign of counter-terrorism meant to eradicate all traces of JVP support. The government made use of death squadrons, kidnapping and executing JVP members without trial and then burying them in mass graves along highways, near villages or even in the middle of university campuses.[284] The pervasive difference between the handling of the first and the second insurrection was that during the first the convicts were handed over to a court system, whilst during the second rebels were simply executed.[285] This period marks the successive breakdown of political affairs in Sri Lanka.

Interestingly, after the insurrection the JVP was once again able to convert itself to a political party; it still enjoys solid support in the South. According to Meyer's analysis:

> "[…] they have regained control of several student unions, benefiting from the support of advocates of a 'national ideology' (Jathika Chintanaya) and adversaries of globalization, who exhort purging all foreign influences from the intellectual life of the country."[286]

A combination of factors created an environment supportive of the uprising:

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[281]   See Somasundaram 1998: 75.

[282]   See Meyer 2003: 168.

[283]   Ibidem, p. 169.

[284]   Ibidem, p. 170.

[285]   Ibidem.

[286]   Ibidem, p. 173.

"[…] increasing poverty, frustrating unemployment and diminishing natural resources (particularly land), compounded by a mismanaged economy, exposure to unattainable luxury goods and unrealistic expectations of prosperity, […] [were] the economic determinants of the continuing youth unrest and violence, especially the JVP phenomenon in the south."[287]

The increasing economical gap between the English-educated and Sinhalese-educated can be connected to the re-emergence of Sinhalese cultural indigenism, which has been used as a weapon by the middle and professional classes against the 'westernized' elite, whom they felt excluded them. As Eric Meyer states:

"Their ideological discourse systematically denounced the hegemony of the English-speaking middle class- whom they considered as foreign and out of touch with national reality- and the power of high-ranking families such as the Bandaranaikes, whom they considered feudalists."

The masses behind the JVP can be seen as one outcome of a societal transition process. During the transformation the Sinhalese rural youth were not willing to accept the dominance of the Sri Lankan political elite. Sinhala nationalist values provided them with the ideological impetus for challenging that dominance. Furthermore, it seems likely that one of "[…] the main reason for the emergence of the JVP after 1987 was the perceived threat to the Sinhalese identity, particularly its territorial integrity from the intervention of India (from whom there is supposed to be a 'racial' memory of repeated invasions in history)." Again the content of the *Mahavamsa* is brought to life and used to agitate nationalist sentiment.

5.1   Socioeconomic Stimulation for Sinhalese Nationalism

My argument here is that the postcolonial economic policies and circumstances proved to be a stimulus for the outbreak of conflicts on the island, for example by providing the basis for the Sinhalese to readdress their socioeconomic grievances through a perceived threat to their identity. This perception was enhanced by a certain section within the Sinhalese Buddhist stratum of society that called for Sinhalese Buddhist super ordination, which consequently meant

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[287]   Ibidem, p. 170.

the subjugating of minorities. Thus, the massive endorsement of this idea could not have come about if there had not been general consent within the Sinhalese Buddhist majority community that they needed to restore their neglected collective identity.

Nevertheless it is important to mention that the causes for violent conflicts in Sri Lanka or any other conflict are multidimensional and go beyond a pure identity conflict. One dimension in the Sri Lankan example is the contradictions created by the national development policy in independent Ceylon/Sri Lanka. At this point 'ethnicity' was used as a mobilization device rather than a root cause.[288]

At the time the country declared independence, the Sri Lankan economy had for centuries already been dependent on the global market through the export of tropical goods and the import of rice.[289] Besides economic structures the colonial heir "[...] included a high human development standard, well-developed infrastructure, a well functioned judiciary and a democratic political system [...]."[290] Thus contrary to other newly independent Asian states Sri Lanka's main issue was not to raise the living standard of the people, but to maintain it amidst the tremendously fast growing population.[291] Thanks to the welfare system the population grew rapidly and almost doubled between 1950 and 1980.[292] Abeyratne argues that one of the main reasons for the almost simultaneous outbreak of the two violent insurgencies, and therefore the intensification of exclusive nationalisms,[293] was the social demand gap created by the extension of the welfare system and economic reality. The Sri Lankan economy was able to satisfy neither the number of people nor the high expectations stimulated by the welfare state and access to free education. He concludes therefore that:

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[288]   See Abeyratne 2004: 2–3.
[289]   See Meyer 2003: 91.
[290]   Abeyratne 2004: 4.
[291]   Ibidem.
[292]   Ibidem, p. 10.
[293]   My conclusion.

"The gradual exclusion of individuals, social groups as well as regions from the mainstream development process was an inevitable outcome of these contradictions in development."[294]

The post-independent government launched two radically different economic policies to overcome these urgent issues. Thus, first self-sufficiency and bureaucratic control was first explored in 1960s and then exploited from 1970 to 1977. [295] In the years after 1950 the Sri Lankan economy was confronted with a steady decline in market prices, in particular its three main exports: tea, rubber, and coconut.[296] By the mid 1950's, with no corresponding economic development, there was strong competition for limited government jobs, as the government was the country's main provider of employment. And just like the ideological thrust of Sinhalese radicals had first turned against Muslims in the 1920s and against Indian workers occupying the labourer positions in government departments in the 1930s followed by a reaction against Christian influence, it now increasingly turned against educated Ceylon Tamils with white collar aspirations.[297]

The next economic shift took place in the early 1970s when the state nationalised the plantations. The result of this shift was a major decline in the private sector and the increasing importance of the state's role in being the main 'entrepreneur' as well as the main 'supplier' to the economy. During that time of actual economic stagnation the public sector expanded and became the main source of employment opportunities.[298] Coupled with the gradual ethnic nationalization of the state it contained a great deal of conflict potential.

Twenty years later, profitability had dropped so far behind because of bureaucratic management and lavish salary practices that the state had to step back and hand over management to private local or foreign companies.[299] Since then (1980s), the agricultural sector in Sri Lanka has experienced a major slowdown

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[294] Abeyratne 2004: 8.
[295] See Meyer 2003: 91.
[296] Ibidem, p. 92.
[297] Somasundaram 1998: 39.
[298] See Abeyratne 2004: 14–15.
[299] See Meyer 2003: 92.

caused by the nationalisation of the economy and the start of separatist conflict.[300] Thus in 1977 the Sri Lankan state had to abandon its restrictive import substitution policy in favour of economic liberalisation.[301]

When the conservative United National Party took over, their *laissez-faire* economic programme was based on globalizing the economy by emphasizing the textile industry, tourism and export of its labour force. Deregulation and privatisation started with foreign aid to finance the development of the country's infrastructure.[302] During these years of actual economic growth the country was haunted by the outbreak of two violent conflicts, one of which turned into a massive civil war.

6 The Role of Elites and the Masses

"If one surveys the political scene of Ceylon since Independence one cannot help noticing that the island has been governed throughout by a numerically small elite the composition of which has cut across political, religious, ethnic and caste divisions. Those who wield political power and those who have in the past, whether they claim to be of the Left of Right ideologically, are a part of the same social elite and therefore there has been no significant broadening of the base of power despite four decades of electoral politics with universal adult franchise."[303]

Many of today's former colonies are governed by the elite, who are clearly distinguishable from the masses. Through Western education they inherited a different worldview, which disconnected them from the traditional society and most of all from the peasant worldview in Sri Lanka.[304]

"Westernization, which involves radical changes in life style and the adoption of universalistic world view, invariably results in the loss of identity with the masses, stepped in tradition, poverty and parochialism."[305]

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[300] Ibidem, p. 99.

[301] Ibidem, p. 91.

[302] Ibidem, p. 100.

[303] Fernando 1973: 370.

[304] Ibidem, p. 363.

[305] Ibidem, p. 366.

One can therefore see that the new governing elite in Sri Lanka had almost as little to do with the masses as their colonial predecessors. Hence there was just as little empathy for their concerns.[306] Even though the elite were fairly decoupled from the rural masses they still were dependent on their voting power. The new national leader had to be positively identified with the masses. As previously mentioned nationalism can only take root if it strikes a popular chord and derives its force from its historical embeddedness. This means that the masses must recognize the politician as their national leader and spokesman and "[…] in Ceylon this involves populist rhetoric, compromising a subtle mixture of Theravada Buddhism and socialism […]"[307] The elitist agent therefore not only makes use of existing socio-cultural patterns, he also manipulates them for his own purpose. Thus, invoking populism became the central dogma in Sri Lankan politics.[308] But staying in power by only keeping an image alive has its limitations and the JVP uprising occurred when the elitist system started to crack during a period of economic deterioration and mass unemployment. Social exclusion and the young generation's frustrations in Sri Lanka created a fertile ground for the emergence of conflict in Sri Lanka; the socio-cultural sphere contributed to the trend that these conflicts were staged on the basis of ethnic dividing lines.

Another interesting perspective is that neither the Sinhalese nor the Tamils were homogenous communities; within each community was a constant conflict of interest and competition for power. Based on Abeyratne's analysis "[...] the political conflict developed in Sri Lanka is not only between the communities, but also within the communities."[309] It was the youth who instigated uproar against the traditional political elite and they presented themselves in a far more nationalist manner than their majorities.[310] While their human capabilities gradually increased after independence, the space for social, political and economic participation stagnated and generated masses of frustrated youth in the

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[306] Ibidem, p. 367.
[307] Ibidem, p. 380.
[308] Ibidem, p. 381.
[309] Abeyratne 2004: 8.
[310] See Kloss 1993: 13 quoted after Abeyratne 2004: 8.

Sinhalese community and in the other communities as well. This concentrated passion suddenly turned against the state authorities and against every factor which they thought prevented them from fulfilling their expectations.

7 Cultural Production through the State: Education and Media

In most cases education has the potential to reduce conflicts and create awareness of 'the other', but in Sri Lanka neither its current institutional structure, nor its content is designed to create peace and mutual understanding.

Rather, its content inflames ethnic differences and its outdated institutional structures promote a sense of perceived inequalities within the Sri Lankan youth, the latter refers to the Tamil youth, especially when the language of instruction in most secondary schools was changed in 1959 from English to Sinhala and Tamils. Suddenly large groups of educated Sinhalese and Tamils with little knowledge of each other emerged, recognizing the other mainly as a competitor. These divisions were amplified during the university admission crisis of the 1970s.[311] With the diminishing role of English, linguistic polarization has contributed to the increasing support of movements that affirmed group identities, which are the Tamil separatists and the Sinhalese nationalists.[312]

Another implication of institutional deficits can be connected to the causalities of the JVP uprising. Chandra de Silva states that JVP supporters

> "[…] regarded the education system as one which guaranteed special advantages to the elite, who either had knowledge of the English language or the financial resources to acquire it. This was, in their view reinforced by the state's provision of a much better education to students from rich and middle-class urban families than those from poorer rural families."[313]

Furthermore, the educational system is based on linguistic lines and its content leaves enough space for cultural misunderstanding and discrimination between

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[311]   See de Silva 1999: 109–110.

[312]   Meyer 2003: 58-59.

[313]   de Silva 199: 117–118.

communities.[314] The language of education is either Sinhala, Tamil or English. School textbooks published by the state teach school children myths of divergent racial origins, which help to divide the Sinhalese and Tamils for generations to come. After a study of school text books in Sri Lanka, Reggie Siriwardena stated that history is exploited as an instrument of divisive ethnic ideologies. They project an image of Sinhala Buddhist identity, which is defined fundamentally through opposition to and struggle against Tamils in past history. And Tamil textbooks are likely to strengthen a communal feeling and foster a patriotic feeling towards Tamil Nadu, not Sri Lanka.[315] K. M. de Silva further highlights a study that observes the connection between school textbooks, communal relations and what outlook and attitudes regarding communal relations are likely to be fostered by its content:

> "[…] The study demonstrates in particular, that while the Tamil readers 'do seek to create an understanding of and respect for the way of life and cultures of non-Tamil and non-Hindu linguistic and religious groups, and do attempt to project a sense of a common national identity', the Sinhala books are exclusively mono-cultural in their content- that is, the way of life they present is not only solely Sinhala, but also solely Sinhala Buddhist. […] The Tamils are identified throughout the books as the traditional adversary. On the present occasion of the celebration of national independence, particular attention must be drawn here to the fact that in one of these readers, which still continues to be used in schools and copies of which may have been handed out by the President on January 31st (1983), the independence won in 1948 is describes as having been gained and to be enjoyed only by the Sinhalese."[316]

Sri Lanka's education system is probably as outdated as its constitutional structures and drastically needs to be revised. It is a relic of former times that segregates society rather than uniting it. Reggie Siriwardene goes so far as to conclude that this two-faced educational policy promotes continued discord, conflict and bitterness and fosters divisiveness and separation. It creates the polarised perceptions that caused the conflict.[317] The impression I gained whilst carrying

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[314] See Meyer 2003: 58.

[315] See Somasundaram 1998: 104–105.

[316] K.M. De Silva quoted after Wilson 1988: 44.

[317] See Somasundaram 1998: 104.

out my qualitative research aligns with Siriwardene's points. There seems to be a huge knowledge gap in Sri Lankan Tamil history within the Sinhalese educated stratum. A gap so wide that even assuming that there was a Tamil kingdom in Sri Lanka before the British arrived appears ridiculous. Another contributing factor, or simply an extension of the segregated education system, is the Sri Lankan media. As Daya Somasundaram points out:

> "The presence of mass media that constantly feed misinformation accentuates and aggravates these different views and the resulting absence of meaningful contact, communication and information about how the other is thinking and feeling, in short the ability to understand the other's point of view or *empathy* becomes the root cause of this polarisation."[318]

Therefore if one wants ethnic polarisation, mistrust and conflict to be defused, Sri Lanka needs to improve its education system and the public information flow. Sri Lanka needs to build a system in which trust, co-operation and common goals are fostered- in educational institutions as well as in the media. [319]

8 The Rise of the Tamil Tigers

In this part of my historical examination I will focus on the emergence of radical Tamil movements only in relation to the aggravation of Sinhalese nationalism. Several well-reputed scholars have already explicitly elaborated on the movement of the LTTE, for further studies I recommend reading the works of Hellmann-Rajanayagam, Gunaratna or Rösel. As my work is concerned with tracing the Sinhalese perspective, the version of events concerning the Sinhalese-Tamil conflict is far from balanced. One of the underlying assumptions is that Sinhalese nationalism provided one precondition for militant Tamil nationalism to rise. During the past thirty years violence has always forced counter actions, be it on behalf of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam or the Sri Lankan government. In contrast to the perpetrators, the victims were mostly the same: Sri Lankan citizens all over the Island. The long years of ethnic warfare have left immense imprints on Sri Lanka, so a short overview on the most important

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[318] Ibidem, p. 109.
[319] Ibidem, p. 314.

events concerning the ongoing agitation is included below. The current situation - meaning the peace process of 2002 and the reasons for its failure - will be discussed separately.

The movement of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam started in the mid 1970s when moderate Tamil politicians like Samuel James Veluppillai Chelvanayakam began a political quest for Tamil rights by making use of non-violent political activism, like 'Satyagraha'. According to Peebles, the agreements negotiated with the Sinhalese governments (SLFP as well as UNP) were repeatedly nullified or not implemented, like the Bandaranaike- Chelvanayakam Pact or the Senanayake- Chelvanayakam Pact.

In 1974 the Sri Lankan state abused its office when the police attacked the International Tamil Conference in Jaffna and caused nine deaths. Even though the attack was condemned, no one took actions against the perpetrators. It is important to mention that a change in the composition of the security forces took place in the late 1960s. The police and army underwent a transformation that consolidated the Sinhalese- Buddhist identity. This resulted in the perception that the North and the East was being occupied by hostile forces.[320]

Obviously unsatisfied, Chelvanayakam's successors turned to more radical forms of political activism. Militant Tamil activism started to flourish in 1975 when henchmen of the LTTE assassinated Alfred Durayappah, the mayor of Jaffna. One year later in 1976, the Vaddukoddai Resolution was adopted under the direction of Chelvanayakam. Wickramasinghe states: "The resolution was in many ways a 'manifestation' of the ascendancy for radical Tamil secessionism within mainstream Tamil politics."[321] During his political lifetime "Chelvanayakam sought recognition of Tamil minority rights in a modified institutional system, inspired by the Indian Federation […]"[322], not categorically separatism, but by 1976 he had abandoned his federalist ideas and was arguing for an independent Tamil Eelam.[323]

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[320]   See Wickramasinghe 2006: 280.
[321]   Ibidem, p. 280.
[322]   See Meyer 2003: 175.
[323]   See Wickramasinghe 2006: 282.

While his efforts were constantly parried, Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism rose to the heights of constitutional recognition when Buddhism received a superior status in Sri Lanka. More precisely, anti-Tamil violence broke out after the elections of 1977 and when President Jayewardene approved a constitution that maintained most of the Sinhalese Buddhist features, while offering no more minority protection than the previous constitution, Tamil militancy intensified.[324] The revised constitution practically meant the institutionalization of discriminatory practices, naturally opposed by the Tamil minority. As Michael Roberts points out:

> "At the political level they [Tamils] can look back on a history of broken promises and agreements on the part of several Sinhalese political associations. Their sense of relative deprivation is now acute."[325]

In the following years and with the support of UNP sections, criminals carried out a series of atrocities against Tamil civilians.[326] The worst, next to the human tragedies that occurred, was the burning of the Jaffna library.[327] This cultural offense left a huge scar on the collective conscience of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka. Consequently, various state-backed discriminatory events combined with the following anti-Tami pogrom of 1983 persuaded any undecided Tamil to support the militant cause.

Some scholars stress the importance of economic rivalry between the Sinhalese and Tamil business community in causing the outbreak ethnic violence. During that time the UNP advocated an open market economy, which made it possible for a […] large number of Tamils to utilize their ethnic and business connections with Indians and become upwardly mobile."[328] Sections of the Sinhalese business community fell behind because of this strategic

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[324] See Wickramasinghe 2006: 284.

[325] Roberts 1978: 369.

[326] Cyril Mathew a UNP minister was one of the leading agitators of anti-Tamil rioting. He was the publisher of the pamphlet *'Kauda Kotiya?'* (Who is the tiger?) and held a hard-line stance against Tamil political aspirations. According to the University Teachers for Human Rights, Jaffna (UTHR, J) he was one of the main perpetrators of the 1983 anti-Tamil pogrom. (See Wickramasinghe 2006: 285, http://www.uthr.org/BP/volume1/Chapter4.htm).

[327] See Meyer 2003:177.

[328] Ibidem, p. 285.

advantage. During that time several incidents 'occurred' that stirred up the communities against each other. The killing of thirteen soldiers provided a perfect legitimation for a large scale counter attack. Thus, the 'Black July' ethnic violence was staged as a defensive reaction towards the threats of Tamil insurgency and a just punishment.[329]

Black July: the Anti-Tamil Pogrom of 1983

In 1983, the LTTE killed thirteen Sinhalese soldiers in the northern Sri Lanka. This event resulted in an immediate retaliation by the Sinhalese majority against the Tamil minority. According to Nira Wickramasinghe: "During ten days of widespread violence, the lives and property of innocent Tamil civilians were systematically destroyed. The late intervention of President J.R. Jayawardene to appeal for cessation of the violence and other telling evidence suggests pre-planning and organization in the July events."[330] For further examination of the amount and extent of violence that took place before and during the pogrom, I recommend reports and publications by the University Teachers for Human Rights, Jaffna (UTHR (J)).[331]

While government sources estimated that only 300 to 400 people died, unofficial sources estimate the number of deaths as high as 3,000, creating about 200,000 refugees.[332] The refugees of 1983 represent the Tamil Diaspora of today. The tragic event of July left another lasting imprint on the collective conscience of the Tamils in Sri Lanka and "[m]any Tamils clung on to the illusion of a single collective agent- the Sinhala people-as being responsible for what had happened."[333]

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[329] Ibidem, p. 286.
[330] Wickramasinghe 2006: 287.
[331] http://www.uthr.org/index.html.
[332] See Wickramasinghe 2006: 286.
[333] Ibidem, p. 287.

Black July of 1983 was an incident of devastating human error, unforgettable for the so-called Sinhalese Buddhist society of Sri Lanka. After the pogrom open violence between the state and non-state actors reached a new intensity, since then any peace agreement or negotiated settlement has failed.

The LTTE emerged as the strongest group by forcefully monopolizing militant Tamil activism.[334] In 1987, the Indians intervened and introduced the Indo-Lanka Agreement, resulting in the 13th Amendment to the constitution. The Intervention of the Indians provided dynamite for another resurrection, the JVP uprising, subsequently forcing the Sri Lankan government to change their political course regarding the Indian intervention.

On this basis and other compulsive circumstances the Indians finally had to pull out in 1990. Fighting between the government and the LTTE resumed. The LTTE steadily gained more territory and in the areas of their control ethnic cleansing started. They were accused of orchestrating massacres of Sinhalese villages and settlements. Tamil militancy in Sri Lanka was not only directed against Sinhalese; there were also severe assaults against the Muslim popula-tion in the North, resulting in the expulsion of the entire Muslim community from Jaffna within 48 hours in 1990.[335]

In 1994, when the People's Alliance (PA) government of Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga came into power, the LTTE agreed to resume peace talks. The ambience of peace did not continue long and in 1995 hostilities recommenced. During these times of mutual hostilities the govern-ment gradually succeeded in branding the LTTE as a terrorist organization, which so far was only outlawed in India after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi by an LTTE female suicide cadre. In addition to dealing with the LTTE militarily, the government of Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga also promoted a 'peace package':

> "[…] [T]he 'peace package' which promised to institute a highly decentral-ised system of government that would create seven regions endowed with

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[334]   Ibidem, p. 290-291
[335]   See Reddy, Muralidhar: Sri Lanka's Muslims out in the cold,
         http://www.hindu.com/2007/07/31/stories/2007073154771000.html.

more autonomy than in the provincial council system. Avoiding the negative image that the term 'federalism' had acquired in the Sri Lankan political debate, the government's proposals called for Sri Lanka to become a 'union of regions'. The presidential-parliamentary structure of the government was to be replaced by a parliamentary one. The Northern and Eastern Provinces were to be merged into one region […] [and] the popularly elected regional government […] would be granted clear powers over wide range of policies including taxation, law and order, police, land, agriculture, industry, development and planning, education, culture and communication. Both Sinhala and Tamil would be official languages."[336]

Even though this package was more decentralised than the Indian solution of 1987, the peace process came to a standstill. The reason was that the major opposition party was against the abolition of a unitary system.[337] Sinhala Nationalist sections evenly regarded the proposal with suspicion.[338] In January of 2001 the LTTE attacked the most sacred place for Sinhalese Buddhist, the *Sri Dalada Maligawa*. The *Sri Dalada Maligawa*, the 'Tooth Temple' in Kandy, is considered the heart of Sinhalese Buddhists; it holds the tooth relic of the Lord Buddha. Besides the enormous religious significance, the temple is also very closely associated with the sovereignty of Sri Lanka. In response to the LTTE-bombed *Dalada Maligawa* the official website of the Government of Sri Lanka showed the following statement:

> "For the Sri Lankans, it is more than a place to worship. It is the jewel in the national crown and a symbol of sovereignty.[339]

One night after the bombing the Sri Lankan government outlawed the LTTE with immediate effect.[340] After the bombing even the most moderate Sinhalese was confronted by the feeling that his or her faith was under threat and that it was

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[336] Wickramasinghe 2006: 295–296.

[337] Ibidem, p. 296.

[338] Ibidem.

[339] www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/CA200101/ 20010118LTTE_Bomb_Dalada_Maligawa.htm.

[340] The Sri Lankan government had until then resisted the temptation to ban the LTTE because of the need of negotiations with the LTTE to finally settle the conflict.
(See SAPRA Research Bureau: Kandy blast forces Sri Lanka to outlaw LTTE, http://www.subcontinent.com/research/sapra_documents/tr_1998_01_001_s.html.)

not just the state, but the Sinhalese people as a whole that was under threat.[341] In the same year, a political shift took place, meaning the election defeat of Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga. UNP politician Ranil Wickramasinghe assumed the premiership and a peace initiative was reinitiated, this time facilitated by the Norwegians.[342]

9 Conclusion

Searching for causalities and explaining the forces that shaped Sinhalese national identity in postcolonial Sri Lanka is certainly a very complex and controversial quest. What can be assumed is that colonialism placed many obstacles of interethnic accommodation on the south Asian island. One of the nation's main buttresses certainly was the sudden introduction of universal suffrage that accompanies political mass participation. The British colonialists had introduced political reforms in former Ceylon more quickly than in India, where a large-scale nationalist movement sought independence. Hence, a united anti-colonial movement was not created on the island, nor did the spirit associated with a common opposition to colonial rule lead to an overarching establishment of a national identity. From the beginning of independence politicians made use of limited sectional identities for their own purpose, which resulted in the current situation in which Sri Lanka finds itself, namely that "[…] Sinhala and Tamil identities have hardened and polarized in the context of specific political actions and counter-actions."[343] Spencer acknowledges three forces that shaped Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism:

> "One is the long history of Buddhism as a source of political legitimation on the Island. Another is the long colonial presence and its cultural and socio-economic effects; […] the third force, and the reason for the sudden move to mass politics, is the shadow cast by Sri Lanka's giant neighbour, India."[344]

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[341] See Liyanage 1998.

[342] See Wickremasinghe 2006: 296.

[343] Spencer 1990: 288.

[344] Ibidem.

Politicians imagined themselves to be indigenous rightful leaders in order to achieve popularity with the masses, even though they were more connected to the preceding foreign powers according to their lifestyle and mindset. In order to present themselves as 'natives' the elite politicians drew upon the historical and cultural contents of the Sinhalese Buddhist ethnic community.

These contents are nowadays deconstructed through post-Orientalist discourse, but when discovered were interpreted through Western lenses and then, unquestioned, were used for political propaganda, penetrating the socio-cultural spheres of perception. The selective interpretation has now trickled down to the masses and become the mainstream discourse of how to perceive Sinhalese Buddhist history on the island. Two major results are that Sinhalese medium education also reflects this perception of history and; the formation of the JHU, a political party that aims to protect the Sinhalese Buddhist national heritage.

The impact of colonialism manifested itself more than just in the Sinhalese belief that they were socially, culturally and politically marginalised. The impact of the 'divide and rule' policy in Ceylon had not only left the impression of victimization, it also provided the fuel for upcoming conflicts. The seeds planted during Colonial attempts to homogenize and divide certain sections of society bloomed after independence. The unification of the Low Country Sinhalese with the Kandyans, as well as the increasing schism between Sinhalese and Tamils are constrained results of this trend. These tendencies completely contrast with newer research about pre-colonial Sinhalese society, stating that the particularness of Sinhalese communities actually was their potential of incorporation. The *Karava*, *Salagama* and *Durava* were mostly the product of south Asian emigration to Ceylon during the twelfth and seventeenth century.

Rogers writes that before British colonialism non-Sinhalese were either incorporated into a caste while maintaining non-Sinhalese status, or incorporated into an existing Sinhalese caste, or they were incorporated as Sinhalese caste. [345] Dividing lines and the fear of south Asian emigration such as we now find in Sri Lanka were in pre-colonial times clearly not existent to such a degree, but colo-

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[345] See Rogers 1994: 14.

nial rule was too intense and endured too long to return to practices of ancient times. Ultimately, colonial ideology prevailed in one way or another. The gradual change of the constitution in favour of Sinhalese Buddhism is one of the resulting interethnic stumbling blocks.

By looking at the socio-economic processes one understands the rise of Sinhalese nationalism from a different angle. Processes like these can be connected to the structural sphere of nationalism, for example, shifts in social positioning. The traditional societal systems and the economy were severely altered through colonial practices, an insufficient structure that was retained in the postcolonial nation. According to Spencer one has to observe:

> "[…] the forces of the market, which send men and women hundreds- and now thousands- of miles in search of work but which also have local effects in breaking down older ideas of identity and difference embodied in the rhythms of everyday life and everyday work; [and] the forces of the state, which all over the world takes ever greater responsibility for the reproduction and control of culture through the provision of formal education."[346]

A rebellious generation of Sinhalese youth in the south of the island were the outcome of these transitional processes. They no longer wanted to be the passive spectators of elitist politics and of mechanisms that were simply too similar to previous British domination. A different socio-economic surrounding had fuelled different expectations. When the youth actively sought change, their movement, the Janatha Vikmuthi Peramuna, adopted a language of Sinhalese nationalism, striving on issues of caste and class, or remains of past identities.

Social exclusion and economic frustration created a fertile ground for the rise of Sinhalese nationalism and its ethnic diving lines. A similar process occurred during the rise of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. Both movements share similar sociological roots:

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[346]   Spencer 1990: 287.

> "[…] a superficially similar blend of social justice and ultra-nationalism in its appeal to its supporters, and a shared vocabulary of 'traitors' and 'treachery' to describe more conventional politicians."[347]

Sadly, both movements "[…] failed to transcend the divisions of language and community. In each case the shared language of distributive justice they invoked was yoked to a vision of ethnic division and cultural exclusion."[348]

When India reacted and intervened in Sri Lanka during theses times of unrest and protest, the JVP made use of the long nourished cultural complex of Indian hegemony over Sri Lanka. Increasing fears of Indian hegemony is another facet that can be attributed to a single-sided interpretation of Sri Lankan history, emphasizing threatening aspects instead of the religious, cultural and social commonalities. The Indian intervention of 1987 triggered the culmination of Sinhala nationalism at its worst sending to their deathbeds thousands Sri Lankans who were either followers of or traitors to the Sinhalese nationalism cause.

As Hard & Negri explain this new form of nationalism appears to be progressive and reactive at the same time, providing an opportunity for change whilst simultaneously being a hindrance to plurality.

What cannot be forgotten is the year 1983, when mobs of Sinhalese, nurtured by hate and a false sense of nationhood attacked and killed thousands of Tamil civilians in the country's capital. It was a human tragedy that clearly goes beyond my means of explanation. Radical Sinhalese Nationalism was probably an abetting ideology.

The media and educational system enhanced the social construction of exclusive Sinhala and Tamil identity, providing grave spaces for misunderstandings and competition of limited perspectives and opportunities. Culture, now spread through media and education, travels along new communication routes, and is no longer limited to the privileged circles of the urban educated.

With increasing literacy and a free educational system in which access to historical information is available in the vernacular language, a sense of unity has

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[347] Ibidem, p. 619.
[348] Ibidem, p. 612.

been created within each community; the history of a common past and present that also affects the borders of a common future. The two competing national identities of the Sinhalese and the Tamils are a result of these manifold processes. The only space left for hopes and aspirations in a country that was once well versed in multicultural pluralism are the moderate voices that seem so quiet and suppressed in these years of ethnic warfare.

V   Sinhala Nationalism – Identity, Conflict and Peace in Present-day Sri Lanka

Since the mid seventies violence has dominated the relationship between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. As previously mentioned, one of the underlying assumptions is that Sinhalese nationalism provided a precondition for militant Tamil nationalism to manifest itself. In return, militant Tamil nationalism nurtured Sinhalese nationalists; in particular the rigorous demands and brutalities of the LTTE insurgency keep strong currents of Sinhala nationalism in Sri Lanka's political culture alive.[349] Until 2001 one observes that every peace accord failed to take root and ultimately resulted in repeated outbreaks of violence. The reasons for the failure of past peace efforts are manifold: first, the two main parties, the UNP and SLFP could not fulfil the interests of Sri lanka's minority communities due to the countries economic decline; Second, when in opposition the main parties always agitated against the peace process, mostly with support of the Buddhist clergy who perceive themselves as safeguards of the nation and therefore reject any change in the unitary system or concession to the Tamil minority, and third; the constitution of 1972 made it clear to every Tamil that, on a political dimension, they are powerless.[350]

When Chandrika Kumaratunga came into power in 1994, her peace proposal was the most far-reaching devolution plan in Sri Lanka's history, but it was defeated because of UNP opposition joined with the *Buddhist Sangha* and the nationalistic JVP, who organized hunger strikes, protests and roadblocks against the proposal.[351] Sinhala nationalism, therefore, must not only be seen as a stimulus for Tamil nationalism, but also as one obstacle to the resolution of the Sri Lankan conflict. Ethnically defined nationalisms of Sinhalese and Tamils

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[349] See International Crisis Group 2007: i.
[350] See Wagner 2004: 10.
[351] See International Crisis Group 2007: 9.

have catapulted themselves in a self-sustaining cycle of fear and violence. Hence, in order to create peace in Sri Lanka, any peace facilitator not only has to take into account the grievances of Tamil nationalists and the Sri Lankan government, but also the concerns of Sinhalese nationalists and probably also various other parties who are affected by the conflict. In the following chapter the failures of the peace process initiated in 2001 under Prime Minister Wickremasinghe will be analysed according to Lederach's 'Three Gaps in Peacebuilding'. It was the longest period of peace on the island and since the 1980s; even though it appeared so promising in the beginning, its setup was destined to fail.

1 Three Gaps in Peacebuilding

John Paul Lederach, a respected theoretician and practitioner of conflict resolution, has identified several key gaps that arise from peace-building activities in his experience. Gaps, according to Lederach, refer to "[…] inabilities or insufficiencies in our conceptual and practice frameworks that weaken our capacity to sustain a desired process."[352] The three gaps are interdependence, justice and process-structure gaps. He highlights an additional fourth gap, the authenticity gap. The Norwegian facilitated peace process in Sri Lanka became easy prey of all four gaps. In the following sections, Lederach's three gaps will be explained and then applied to the Sri Lankan case, placing special attention to the Sinhalese nationalist fraction that emerged as a powerful stumbling block due to the insufficient conceptual framework of the process.

1.1 The Interdependence Gap

By Interdependence Lederach refers to relationships, as they are the most fundamental aspects of peace building. During a conflict relationships are broken and need to be rebuilt across the lines of division. Usually peace-building efforts try to rebuild confidence along horizontal lines, neglecting the vertical capacities, which means that people with a similar status meet each other. High-level political leaders meet high-level leaders, community organizers meet commu-

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[352]   Lederach 1999.

nity organizers, mid-range leaders encounter mid-range leaders and so on. In order to sustain the peace process vertical relationships need to be fostered, high-level politicians, community and grass-root levels of leadership on every side need to respect and understand each other. By emphasising the vertical capacity people are encouraged to recognize "[…] that peace building involves multiple activities at different levels of leadership, taking place simultaneously, each level distinct in its need and interdependent in effects."[353] Sustainable peace building, therefore, requires horizontal as well as vertical relationship building and coordination.[354]

1.2 The Justice Gap

A peace process mostly succeeds in stopping direct violence, whereas the deeper roots of the conflict remain. The structural dimension of violence gave rise to the conflict in the first place. According to Galtung people who engage in direct violence are actually trying to address the perceived injustice, respectively 'structural violence'. If the situation of direct violence leads to an environment in which one or all conflicting parties perceives themselves worse off than before, people begin to re-evaluate their goals and methods. Hence they start redefining their relationship and start negotiating. Negotiation mostly ends with the signing of tremendous peace accords, yet does not comply with the people's desires that the structural dimensions of violence vanish simultaneously with the direct violence. This gap is what Lederach describes as the justice gap. Peace negotiations result mostly in more political participation of the conflicting parties, but "[…] the expectations for social, economic, religious, and cultural change are rarely achieved, creating a gap between the expectations for peace and what is delivered."[355] Sustainable peace building should therefore focus evenly on transforming structural violence.[356]

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[353] Lederach 1999.

[354] Ibidem.

[355] Lederach 1999.

[356] Ibidem.

1.3   The Process-Structure Gap

According to Lederach there is a misconception about the nature of a peace accord. It is often seen as an endpoint of the peace process; in reality a peace accord is "[...] nothing more than opening a door into a whole new labyrinth of rooms that invite us to continue the process of redefining our relationships."[357] Lederach prefers the term conflict transformation over conflict resolution, because a resolution creates the impression that conflicts have an enclosed endpoint. By contrast, conflict transformation implies that something unwanted is changed into something wanted. It makes one reconsider the idea of a process that is dynamic in nature. People who are engaged in peace building have to commit themselves towards "[…] embracing the permanency of relationship building."[358] It requires one to work at building an infrastructure, which is able "[…] to support a peace process of desired change, and change is permanent."[359]

1.4   The Authenticity Gap

People who live in conflict settings often express feelings of suspicion, indifference and distance after a peace accords is signed. These feelings can be connected to what Lederach refers to as the authenticity gap. People have the feeling that they aren't part of the process. The structure of the peace process lacks authentic engagement of the public sphere. "In other words, our least developed capacities are the practical mechanism for how people, whole communities, are provided access and engaged in the change process and how that engagement creates a sense of ownership, participation and genuine commitment."[360] Peace should develop from within, instead of being imposed from outside. Therefore, individual as well as communal ownership of peace should be promoted.[361]

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[357]   Ibidem.
[358]   Ibidem.
[359]   Ibidem.
[360]   Lederach 2005: 59–60.
[361]   See IICP 2006: 18.

2 The Sri Lankan Peace Process in Brief

After the 2001 elections the UNP took over rule in Sri Lanka: Ranil Wickremasinghe became the Prime Minister, while Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga retained presidency. The new premier minister had been secretly talking to the LTTE and once he was in power things moved quickly.[362] The UNP didn't maintain C.B.K's strategy of 'War for Peace'; instead, they almost instantly agreed on a ceasefire with the LTTE in December 2001, facilitated by Norwegian mediation. In February 2002 the conflicting parties signed a *Memorandum of Understanding* (MoU), which should have provided the foundations for further negotiations. The signing of the MoU depicts the first shortcoming of the peace process, because Prime Minister Wickremasinghe only presented the paper to the president after it was already signed.[363] The president's displeasure about his exclusion revealed itself in his criticism of major contentual points. According to the report of the International Crisis Group the president was not the only party to disagree with the peace approach:

> "Another source of opposition to the CFA was a more politically powerful group- the Sinhalese nationalists, who viewed the agreement as tantamount to diplomatic recognition of the Tigers and feared it would eventually lead to a separate LTTE state."[364]

Still, the SLFP and the UNP proceeded with the peace-oriented collaboration until they encountered more obstacles.[365] The first peace talks were launched in Thailand in September 2002 Even though nothing substantial was achieved the communication appeared cordial.[366] In December of the same year both parties finally agreed on some political issues. The statement of the Oslo talks said that they wanted to:

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[362] International Crisis Group 2006: 10.
[363] See Wagner 2004: 19.
[364] International Crisis Group 2006: 6.
[365] See Wagner 2004: 20.
[366] See International Crisis Group 2006: 6.

"explore a solution founded on the principle of internal self-determination in areas of historical habitation of the Tamil speaking peoples, based on a federal structure within a united Sri Lanka."[367]

Despite hopes generated through the Oslo talks the negotiation atmosphere deteriorated due to repeated ceasefire violations, mostly by the LTTE.[368] Thereupon the LTTE rather unexpectedly announced that it was pulling out of talks in April 2003. The explanation given for this move was that they were excluded from a Washington donor's conference.[369]

After negotiations broke down the LTTE and the government put out separate proposals for interim administrations, but the government was not willing to come up with far reaching proposals and the LTTE did not want to compromise on its goals. In October the LTTE came up with a detailed proposal for an Interim Self-Governing Administration (ISGA). The ISGA was highly problematic in its content and it was clear it would not receive any support from the regional Indian hegemony or the Sinhalese nationalists in the south. The ISGA proposal also stirred up much of the Sinhalese media. Its introduction into the peace process actually ended the hopes that a serious negotiated settlement could be achieved.

"There was no consensus among Sinhalese politicians around even limited autonomy for the Tamils, and the maximalist ISGA idea tended to fuel those Sinhalese political forces that argued devolution would inevitably lead to secession."[370]

Thus, President Kumaratunga took over three ministries, claimed that the government was jeopardizing national security and then finally called for elections in 2004, which the SLFP won.

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[367] International Crisis Group 2006: 7.
[368] Ibidem.
[369] Ibidem, p. 8.
[370] Ibidem.

Excursion: Tsunami, Peace and Sinhala Nationalism

The Island of Sri Lanka was one of the most severely affected regions hit by the tsunami in 2004. The tsunami destroyed the basis of existence of thousands Sri Lankans around the coastal regions, killing at least 35,000.[371] In the aftermath of the tsunami there was sudden hope that the catastrophe could bring about a positive dialogue between the two conflicting parties in the form of cooperation on reconstruction. Those hopes and aspiration were short-lived and the conflict soon escalated again on the grounds of unfair aid distribution. The government and the LTTE attempted to create a joint management structure for aid deliveries to the north and east of the island, the Post Tsunami Operational Management Structure (P-TOMS). The proposal was strongly opposed by Sinhalese nationalist factions and consequently President Kumaratunga was unable to bring the process forward, mainly because of the JVP's threat to quit the government.[372] The JVP criticized any deal put forth by the government and the LTTE because they as the deals recognized the LTTE as the sole representatives of the Tamils, which would be the first step in giving in to the LTTEs demand of a separate state.[373] The JVP and JHU organized protests against the agreement and monks of the *National Bhikku Front* even organized a 'fast to death'. President Kumaratunga in a way was abetting the resistance movement by not adequately informing to the public what the P-TOMS agreement was about. The media was suddenly full of rumours of hidden agendas and conspiracy theories.[374] Another opposition came from Muslim politicians from the east of the island. They were demanding direct participation in the peace negotiations and also for equal representation of Muslims in the P-TOMS, as their community was one of the most affected by the tsunami. All these events culminated in the public rejection of the peace process and in 2005 the Supreme Court decided the proposal was unconstitutional. Thus, it was never implemented.[375]

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[371] Ibidem, p. 9.

[372] See Rajakulendran 2005.

[373] Ibidem.

[374] See Bruch 2005.

[375] See International Crisis Group 2006: 9.

3 Gaps in the Sri Lankan Peace Initiatives

Transforming conflicts is a highly complex task. One of the basic conditions is an understanding of the myriad dimensions of the conflict; without addressing the deeper roots of a conflict most peace related programmes are destined to fail and violence will re-emerge. What happened in Sri Lanka was that the Norwegian-facilitated ceasefire led to a stop of direct violence between the state and the LTTE, at least until 2005, and it certainly brought some normalisation to the lives of many people in the north and south of the island. Nevertheless, stayed more or less the same on a structural level, meaning the conflict could not transcend into peaceful structures.

The interdependence gap outlines insufficient vertical relations within one conflict party. The peace process was held only by the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE. It sought only to enhance communication between these two fractions. The problem, however, is that there is no common position within the conflict parties. First of all, there is a major power struggle between the two main political parties of the south, the SLFP and the UNP. [376] One main reason for failure was certainly the unsupportive dynamics between the UNP and SLFP. The SLFP President was not informed and excluded from the talks; she therefore impeded the process that finally led to general elections in 2004. Secondly, the Muslims were also not part of the official negotiations. They have been directly affected since the outbreak of the conflict because their homes lie within the proclaimed LTTE territory, thus any political decision would have a direct impact on the Muslim communities of the east. They therefore demand to be represented as an independent third party. Furthermore, Muslims were also not included in the P-TOMS agreement.[377] This gives the impression that the powerful only listen to voices equipped with guns. Currently there are rumours that Muslim groups are arming themselves. Having another armed party in the conflict would further escalate the problem.[378]

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[376] IICP 2006: 17.
[377] Ibidem, p. 12.
[378] Ibidem.

The third insufficiency within the vertical linkages refers to the Sinhalese nationalist voices of the south, especially the left-wing JVP and right-wing JHU. Their concerns and fears are often dismissed as irrational or racist.[379] Their complete exclusion led to polarisation and "[…] both parties have flourished in opposition to the 2002 ceasefire and oppose any political settlement involving devolution to the predominantly Tamil regions."[380] Both parties are extremely critical of the West and their involvement; any well-intended effort will be looked upon with suspicion and regarded as a revival of imperialist agendas. In a constructive peace initiative the government would have to consider the voices and concerns of the nationalist JVP and JHU to guarantee that nationalist parties do not hamper the process.

Within the Tamil party one finds interdependency gaps. In addition to the factions within the Tamil community that either support or vehemently oppose the LTTE, there are now further divisions among those who support Karuna and those who do not.[381] The issue of 'Colonel' Karuna is a delicate one. Karuna, special commander of the eastern districts, was one of the close associates of the LTTE leader Prabhakaran and part of the LTTE negotiation team. In 2004 he broke away from the LTTE "[…] claiming that the Eastern Tamils were being discriminated against by the leaders from the North."[382] He demanded a separate cease-fire for the eastern district.[383] The government then rejected his demand, but later Karuna became a government ally. A further negotiation process would have to include a faction representing eastern Tamils concerns.[384]

The vertical linkages between the top and the grass-root levels within each party were also lacking. The government could not garner the support of the people for the peace initiative; cooperation efforts with the civil society had limited impacts. Neither the political leaders nor civil society leaders were able to

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[379] See International Crisis Group 2007: i.

[380] Ibidem.

[381] See IICP 2006: 17.

[382] IICP 2006: 12.

[383] See Gopalakrishnan, Ramesh: "Profile: Colonel Karuna", BBS South Asia, 5.3.2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3537025.stm.

[384] See Burk, Roland: "A date with a renegade rebel Tiger". BBC South Asia, 4.4.2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6524869.stm.

influence the other.[385] Civil society has been largely marginalized in the peace process.[386] Religion in Sri Lankan politics also plays an important role. In particular, Buddhist *Bikkhus* could have a positive influence among large sections of the Sinhalese population for a peaceful solution. Their relevance needs to be positively explored in order to enhance vertical communication linkages.[387]

The second gap Lederach discusses is the justice gap. It indicates gaps between the expectation of peace and what is actually delivered.[388] When the ceasefire agreement was signed in 2001 it was accompanied by much optimism among the Sri Lankan society. People throughout the country were tired of conflict and had great expectations. Regrettably, these expectations could not be met. Neither the ceasefire nor talks between the government and the LTTE addressed the structural causes of the conflict. Furthermore, there was no evidence that the LTTE would change its tactics on the ground and there was little progress in the way of political solutions either.[389]

During the peace process practically nothing changed for the better on the island, especially in the war-torn regions of the north. Instead of being the open door towards peace the signing of the ceasefire agreement was the first and last step taken until a fresh round of violence broke out.[390] Thus, sustainable peace building has to focus on positively transforming the social, economic, religious and cultural dimension. [391]

Thirdly, the process-structure gap points out the misconceptions of a peace accord. As mentioned above, signing an agreement is nothing more than 'opening a door'. The structural dimensions of conflicts also need to change and with them attitudinal changes need to be encouraged, meaning that a culture of peace needs to be fostered. It is not about signing the agreement, rather adhering to it and trying to expand peace onto all levels of societal interactions. This

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[385]   See IICP 2006: 13.

[386]   Ibidem, p. 14.

[387]   Ibidem, p. 15.

[388]   Lederach 1999.

[389]   International Crisis Group 2006: 6.

[390]   See IICP 2006: 18.

[391]   See Lederach 1999.

includes the participation of all layers of societies, from elite to grass-root communities.[392] Media and education systems also have to reflect this attitudinal change. It needs to be an inclusive process with popular participation. This aspect leads us to the additional fourth gap of peace building, the authenticity gap. Peace must come from within the society. The elite levels of society cannot impose it on civil society. People who are affected by conflict should be part of the process of peace. The Sri Lankan peace process lacked authentic engagement of the public sphere. Only when part of peace will people genuinely commit themselves to a culture of peace. According to authenticity, Norwegian foreign involvement became one stumbling block of the peace initiative. When the Norwegians entered the stage of the Sri Lankan conflict in 2000, they first took on the role of facilitator to reinitiate the broken relationship and communication between the government and the rebels. For about two years they organized secret meetings between the government and the LTTE, which culminated in the signing of the MoU. After the MoU the role of the Norwegians changed and they went from facilitator to mediator; should the governments and the LTTE's interests' conflict, the Norwegians were the ones to decide. This was perceived as a cutback in Sri Lanka's national sovereignty. Sinhalese nationalist parties, including the JVP, claimed that Sri Lanka had become Norway's colony.[393] The nationalist factions encouraged xenophobic elements in the Sinhalese community. Local ownership and not international involvement needs to be emphasized to achieve a sustainable conflict transformation.[394]

4 Exploring Perceptions of Rural Sinhalese Youth: Introspective Thoughts

At this point of my thesis I want to look at the qualitative material that I collected in addition to studying literature. Twenty qualitative interviews were conducted two months before I finalized my decision to research explicitly Sinhalese nationalism. Though the material was not used as an official source for the thesis,

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[392] See IICP 2006: 18
[393] See Wagner 2004: 21
[394] See IICP 2006: 18

the views and opinions expressed by the participants provided me with the needed stimuli and guiding lines to carry out my research. In addition to inspiring me to work on Sinhalese nationalism, it also helped me to understand the dynamics of the manifold Sri Lankan realities, an experience I could not have gained by relying only on literature. Nevertheless, these experiences were systemized through theories of nationalism, conflict, peace and identity. The goal of this chapter is to reflect critically on my process of research, meaning where and how I got my information and the impressions it left on my thesis. Going beyond introspection, I am trying to arrange my research procedure as transparently as possible. With reference to Mayring, introspective data is recognized as a source of information, but only if it is declared as such.[395] Therefore I want to state that the qualitative material collected during a three-month field study in Sri Lanka was crucial in the decision of how to conceptualize my work. The answers I received from the participants provided me with the necessary incentives to discern the peculiarities of the rural Sinhalese realities and helped me realize how wide the gaps in perception were between me as a foreign-based researcher and a rural Sri Lankan. Observing differences in socialisation and trying to comprehend them has proven to be the most difficult task of my research. The general endorsement of Sinhalese nationalist values made me ask questions like: *"Through what kind of a socialisation process must a person go to adhere to the rightfulness of Sinhalese nationalism? What kind of information do they base their opinions and decisions on?"* In turn these questions shed light on my own social and cultural background: an urban, European born, ethnical Sinhalese female researcher.

So far one notes that emphasis is placed on my personal comprehension of the individuals in this context. Selective quotations that surprised me, or influenced my work in one way or another will be presented here. I did not gain all of my insight from interviews. After my query I had the opportunity to spend time with the village youth. As my questions seemed to arouse specific thoughts, they mostly discussed aspects of the interview with friends and family. During that

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[395] See Mayring 2002: 31.

time I listened to their conversations about Sri Lanka and gained further impressions on history, identities, peace and conflict.

4.1 Methodological Choice

Fieldwork is a classic area of qualitative research. The basis principle is about understanding a subject in its natural context, without distorting it through an unrealistic perspective from afar.[396] According to Mayring the main object of qualitative methods are human subjects. They have to be a starting and an endpoint of the research.[397] I chose a qualitative approach because this methodology appears to be more suitable to gathering an in-depth understanding of the mindset of Sinhalese youth. Sinhalese youth are of particular interest when analyzing the dynamics of nationalism. They can be seen as the latest recipients of hegemonic nation building discourse, while at the same time unveiling the open spaces left for constructive changes in defining national identity.

The research was conducted with semi-structured, problem-centred interviews in Kalutara. This interview method is particularly suitable to gathering personal opinions and meanings given to specific events. The questions dealt with the issues of Sri Lankan history, identity and communal relationships, and focused on the individual perception and interpretation of the interviewees. Historical facts were less important than feelings, beliefs and attitudes expressed by the participant. Even though semi-structured interviews lead towards a certain problem, they provide the interviewee with the needed space to answer the question according to his own view.[398] This methodological tool had a standard list of open-ended questions, but made it possible to expand any theme if it appeared to be important.

4.2 Participants

The participants of the study were twenty Sinhalese youth (eleven males and nine females) from Kalutara, about 40 km south of Sri Lanka's capital. All of

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[396] Ibidem, p. 55.
[397] Ibidem, p. 20.
[398] See Mayring 2002: 69.

them were Sinhalese Buddhists from a predominantly rural area. Out of the twenty interviews, all participants were 18 to 28 years old and from low to middle income families. Every interviewee had attended Ordinary Level Education, and four of them were currently enrolled in Advanced Level Education. I conducted my interviews in the context of an ongoing warfare between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Sri Lankan Army. Each of the participants was in some way directly affected by the conflict because their friends or family members were army recruits and/or indirectly affected through the rise of the cost of living. During the intensifying hostilities between both factions an episode of bombings in and around the country's capital Colombo took place, killing and wounding hundreds of civilians, including people from my area of research.[399] The sampling method for the study was a snowball convenience sampling. As such, the participants were recruited through a circle of friends and acquaintances.

4.3 Procedure

The interviews were conducted between February and April 2008 in Kalutara, Sri Lanka. Each interview lasted from 30 to 60 minutes. Most of the interviewees understood English, but choose to respond in their mother tongue Sinhala. As my knowledge of Sinhala is limited, I was assisted by a female Sinhala-English translator. If the participant agreed to the interview, the date and time was set. Most of the interviews were held in the participant's or the translator's house. The interviewee was informed about the research and guaranteed confidentiality. One difficult aspect was that friends and families of the interviewee were eager to attend the happening. In some cases it seemed that their attendance was disturbing or seemed to hamper the process, therefore they were asked to leave. The interviews were recorded when permission was given to do so.

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[399] During the bombing of Colombo's main railway station on 2 February one 16-year-old boy from the village died, three weeks later two girls were injured by another bus blast on the 23rd. (See AFP: Seven dead, nearly 100 hurt in Sri Lanka suicide blast: police, hospital, 2.2.2008, http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5hZftUZJ4fLGo72X5W-cuq2mSP2WQ. See AFP: Bomb blast outside Sri Lanka capital injures 18, 23.2.2008, http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5g5If2vL4FES5OeXbAlOjniPMOstQ).

4.4 Picturing My Own Experiences and Thoughts on Interviewing Rural Sinhalese Young Adults

As a researcher it is important to reflect on one's own position. It is relevant because it explains the decisions taken and the perspective on the research subject. Experiences gained during the three months I stayed in Sri Lanka definitely influenced my work. The following lines will point out how these impressions and thoughts flowed into my work.

First of all it is important to clarify that I am an ethnically Sinhalese female researcher who was raised in Austria. As previously mentioned, feeling nationalistic about something was not an experience with which I was very familiar; it more or less appeared obscure to me. Before beginning my fieldwork, most of the information available to me about Sri Lanka was, more or less, a Eurocentric view on the south Asian island and its problems. From this perspective it becomes difficult to comprehend why Sri Lankans pursue nationalist ideals, but after carrying out fieldwork in Sri Lanka, the strong devotion felt for their mother country was a lot easier to comprehend and I would even go so far as to say that I suddenly discovered something similar to a devotion for the small island nation, but certainly my personal affection was different in its outlook. Another important aspect that deserves mention is that as a researcher one cannot isolate oneself from the process of research, meaning disregarding my inner socialisation, my outer appearance will undoubtedly influence my research. Most people perceived me as an upper class Sinhalese, severely westernized and out of touch with Sinhalese tradition and culture. This attitude revealed itself in thankful remarks about my enthusiasm about and interest in Sinhalese heritage. Or, while having dinner at a participant's house, people gathered around me, positively surprised that I ate dinner with my fingers in the same way they did. Naturally, people interacted with me according to what they believed was appropriate to my 'status' and therefore presented a specific version of what they believed. Whereas it is impossible to eliminate this inter-relation between researcher and subject, it is possible to be conscience of it and identify it for what it is. The following statements made about rural Sinhalese are my own assump-

tions based on my own socialisation and are not intended to be of general validity.

4.4.1 Sinhalese are Very Hospitable People, Smiling and Friendly

One of the first things I encountered during my interviews was that most participants had severe difficulties describing Sinhalese society and culture. While promoting the friendliness and hospitality of Sinhalese people came almost naturally, grasping a more refined description of 'Sinhalesness' proved to be a stumbling block. My explanation for this discomfort was that most of my interviewees lived in a remote rural area; during their youth they seldom left village structures, when they did then mostly it was to go on a Buddhist pilgrimage or school trip. Hence interaction between rural Sinhalese youth with people from other communities, even urban societies, does not happen all too frequently.

Another abetting factor is that they only speak, read and write in Sinhala. Their knowledge of any other language is limited. Sinhala is therefore the only language in which they can access information. Furthermore, they all are educated in Sinhalese medium education system, only one of the participants parents could afford to send their daughter to an international school, where she learnt English language and about other cultures.

When it came to the question of describing Sri Lankan history and the origin of the Sinhalese, all participants explained in detail the myth about prince Vijaya, which is based on the *Mahavamsa*, the oldest chronicle of the Sinhalese Buddhist kingdoms. Interestingly, the history of Sinhalese genealogy is unquestioningly combined with mythical components of the Pali chronicles. And if not, then it was implied that a distinct '*Sinhalese evolution*' took place in Sri Lanka. This stance, combined with the repeated depiction of Tamils as invaders to Sri lankan soil, demonstrated that the impression that the Sinhalese were the legitimate inhabitants of Sri Lanka was profoundly etched into their collective memory.

> *"Sinhalese race started with the migration of the great king Vijaya. After king Vijaya came to Sri Lanka, Indian cultures came to Sri Lanka. Before Lord Buddha visited Sri Lanka and from that time the Sri Lankan popula-*

tion started, then Vijaya came. Buddhism started with Lord Buddha's arrival and Sinhalese race came with arrival of Prince Vijaya."

<div align="right">(Participant 15, male, 18 years)</div>

"Before the arrival of Prince Vijaya, Sri Lanka was ruled by various inhumane inhabitants. After Prince Vijaya arrival those people have vastly spread over Sri Lanka and after that only the civilisation has begun. Most of the great kings have ruled Sri Lanka, Duttugemunu, Parakramabahu"

<div align="right">(Participant 4, male, 23 years)</div>

Sri Lankan history was presented as the history of Sinhala Buddhist kingdoms and the *Mahavamsa* had an important role to play in consolidating this perspective. An important section of the *Mahavamsa* is the battle between King *Duttugemunu* and *Elara*. This event is a major focal point in Sinhalese Sri Lankan history and was introduced several times by the interviewees at various times during the inquiry. King *Duttugemunu* is described as the first Sinhalese Buddhist king who fought for the unity of the country, while *Elara* appears to be the prototype of an aggressive Tamil invader. The fact that *Elara* is portrayed in the *Mahavamsa* as a good and tolerant ruler of the Sinhalese Buddhist and Tamils was not mentioned.[400] Equally interesting is the strong belief that the Buddha had visited Sri Lanka: except for the *Mahavamsa,* there are no scripts that would prove this assertion. Furthermore, there is an underlying belief that the contemporary Sinhalese-Tamil conflict arises from those past times.

"It is coming from the ancient times. In the ancient times the kings have already protected our country. Many great heroes have sacrificed their lives and it is coming up to now, because of that the state can't give in to their all demand, as there are so many dedications and sacrifices made for the country."

<div align="right">(Participant 20, male, 18 years)</div>

It occurred to me that historical education in Sinhalese medium is predominately concerned with the Sinhalese perspective, instead of a combined Sri Lankan perspective. This worldview distorts interethnic understanding and harmony on an island that was and is home to so many communities. Furthermore, it explains the knowledge gaps about Tamil history and culture in Sri Lanka within

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[400]   See Mahingoda 2006: 37.

the rural Sinhalese areas. None of them knew that there is profound history of Tamil kingdoms in Sri Lanka. When I questioned them about when and how Tamils arrived in Sri Lanka, none out of the twenty participants was sure about the answer. Their guesses were a mixture of the idea that Tamils were 'imported' by Sinhalese kings, the Dutch or the British as workers. Sri Lanka was not considered their native country.

> *"These (Tamils) are the people who are brought from India as workers for the kings. Under the kings they came to do their work, before the British."*
>
> (Participant 18, male, 23 years)

> *"In case of Tamils they were in India, some of them are very low, low caste and so. Those people have come from India and reached to Sri Lanka and been in coastal areas, by Trincomalee, Vavuniya and those areas. They have done fishing and so. After some time they expanded to other parts of Sri Lanka. They are the people who escaped to Sri Lanka because of their low caste and the increasing of the population and they have settled here at the coastal areas. They came before Christ."*
>
> (Participant 1, male, 18 years)

> *"Tamils were coming to help us. Tamils were coming to our tea estates, rubber, tea and other things, during the Dutch period. I think they have first come with Dutch. These Sri Lankan Tamils, there are two different Tamils, Indian Tamil and Sri Lankan Tamils. I think Sri Lankan Tamils started also with Indian Tamils and from that on they started their own population in Sri Lanka."*
>
> (Participant 16, female, 20 years)

> *"First of all they came as tea estate workers from Tamil Nadu, after invading of the British 1852. They imported some workers and those are the Tamils. I mean there are two kinds of Tamils, the estate Tamils and the Tigers, means Prabhakarans party. After that only Prabhakarans party came and they ask for separate state, equal rights".*
>
> (Participant 6, female, 18 years)

> *"I have no idea when and how the Tamils came to Sri Lanka, but I heard there was a king called Elara. So some people say with Elara Tamils came to Sri Lanka. So I don't know actually how they came to Sri Lanka."*
>
> (Participant 12, male, 28 years)

I assume if Tamils are sublimely defined as an immigrant community, any demands for rights and autonomy on Sri Lankan soil will be considered less legitimate than the Sinhalese demands. These gaps of knowledge are exactly the spots were Sinhalese nationalist propaganda can exert itself and find fertile ground. One reason for the popularity of the JVP and JHU in rural areas must be because of a single-sided educational system and the resulting gaps of socio-cultural knowledge. Furthermore, the media landscape is extremely polarised and biased, reinforcing exclusive views and nationalist propaganda. Even for me as a foreigner it was difficult to inform myself properly and to maintain an unbiased view.

Another aspect that came to my attention was the frequent use of the term 'Aryan'. Because I was raised in Austria, the word 'Aryan' connotes one of the biggest crimes committed against humanity: the Holocaust. I was therefore deeply surprised that the Sinhalese would define themselves as 'Aryans'.

> *"Past day there were a group of Indians called Aryan or so, have come to our country and from them we have, I don't have a very profound idea of this, but anyway, I think from them we have originated as Sinhalese."*

<div align="right">(Participant 9, female, 19 years)</div>

While describing differences many participants were using the term 'Aryan' for the Sinhalese race and 'Dravidian' for the Tamils race. There was an implicit assumption that Sinhalese and Tamils were mutually different in race and language. Given that assumption I deem it important to deconstruct these rigid categories of ethnically pure communities. The concept of racial purity mixed with nationalism has proven to be far too dangerous to control. Furthermore, one participant mentioned that it was not important to know who first arrived in the country, but rather who built the country. By that he was implying that the country was built by Sinhalese kings and Sinhalese folks. All the glory belongs to the Sinhalese when combined with the misleading idea of two racially segregated societies.

Interestingly, when it came to the question of national heroes, many participants mentioned people from different ethnic origins who were associated with the independence movement. The effort of Anagarika Dharmapala for the 'sake of

the country' and Buddhism were frequently mentioned, thus I included a chapter focusing on his controversial achievements and the Buddhist Theosophical Society. With regards to heroes, emphasis was nevertheless given to ancient personas that bravely sacrificed their lives for the nation.

> *"The original heroes are in the past. There is one great in 1818 and one 1848. During that time we can see a lot of heroes. Senanayake and Ponnambalam are fighting for the political situation. They are fighting for the freedom of Sri lanka, but in the earlier period they are fighting for their motherland, without thinking about their lives. I have seen this in books and teledramas and so on. They are the most important national heroes in Sri Lanka. They are original national heroes, like Puran Appu."*

> (Participant 15, male, 18 years)

It becomes clear that in addition to education, media also functions as a major element of socialisation. Ancient heroes and mythical stories were reinvented through television, similar to in India where the television series *Ramayan* reached unknown heights of popularity throughout India and created awareness of a common heritage.[401] Talking about heroes and the glories of Sri Lanka was an easy task for all twenty interviewees.

The next question dealt with events that made the participant feel ashamed of their country. I always had two possible answers in mind before I asked this particular question: the first one was the burning of the Jaffna library and the second one the pogrom of 1983. No one mentioned either of the two events; even the killings connected to the JVP uprising were not mentioned. It simply did not occur to them. Instead, topics like alcoholism or betrayal were their answers to this question.

> *"An example when they are going to make a construction for a bridge or road, they are making a big budget and they are asking people to pay. From the people they are just taking the money and not performing the activity in perfect way and they are taking the money to contribute their own self. I am so ashamed of that."*

> (Participant 2, female, 27 years)

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[401] See http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Ramayan-(TV-series).

"From even in the ancient times it was like that. The people are betraying the kings. They are always telling for the sake of money or alcohol or those things they are betraying the country and become traitors to the country by providing the leaders to the British colonialist. Most of the people who are betraying the country are providing details for the LTTE."

(Participant 20, male, 18 years)

I had the impression that these young adults were kept insufficiently informed about tragic events. Talking about the past is not common in Sri Lanka although President Kumaratunga officially excused for the pogrom of 1983 and the burning of the Jaffna library in 2004.[402] When unaware of the scale of these traumatic events, it is almost impossible to comprehend the Tamil uprising. The Tamil rebellions will naturally appear as irrational and mischievous. Then again, it is possible that the interviewees, who were eager to present a 'positive' picture of the nation, did not want to give a negative account to a 'foreigner'.

"Sinhalese think they treated well Tamil people … Tamil people thought Sinhala people don't treat them well. This is the basic reason for the war. They thought Sinhala people always look down on them. There is no thing like that. Sinhala people always treated them well, it is only imaginary."

(Participant 17, female, 26 years)

A topic into which I did not delve, but which was nevertheless frequently talked about, was the question about who can be seen as the rightful ruler to Sri Lanka. Even though Sinhalese and Tamil are both originally from India, Sri Lanka is considered the country of the Sinhalese, while India is the native, home country of the Tamils.

"This is the only country for Sinhalese to live peacefully. So Sinhalese in my point of view, they can't survive in whole world because there are no any other countries to live Sinhalese on their own; because Sri Lanka is the only country that using their mother tongue Sinhala. So I think, that is why I am always looking for Sinhala community as the major community in Sri Lanka. So I think there should not be any other nationality to become majority. For instance if we think Tamil became major nationality, there may be a problem because Tamil can live anywhere, they have other

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[402] See Speech of President Kumaratunga on the 21st anniversary of the Black July Pogrom in 2004: www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/shrilanka/document/papers/BlackJuly2004.htm).

countries, but with Sinhalese that's not the situation. This is the only place where we can live peacefully and do what we want."

<div align="right">

(Participant 13, male, 18 years)

</div>

"We are the owners of Sri Lanka. If they want to live peacefully and freely in Sri Lanka, first they must give the ownership to the Sinhalese."

<div align="right">

(Participant, 13, male, 18 years)

</div>

"Or they have to go, instead of staying here to Tamil Nadu and live there, because they have a separate town. That is their native land."

<div align="right">

(Participant 6, female, 18 years)

</div>

"I think this country belongs to Sri Lankan people, so I give them chance to live in any part of the country, Tamil people also, as I think they don't belong to this country. They have another country, like India. It is their motherland."

<div align="right">

(Participant 17, female, 27 years)

</div>

Quotations of this manner speak for themselves. I consider them the rational conclusion of people provided with insufficient information and influenced by nationalist propaganda against foreign influences. In literature about Sri Lanka, one finds the common description of Sinhalese to be 'a majority with a minority complex'. To a certain extent one has to agree with the statement, but the current conflict has reinforced these fears within the Sinhalese. The demographic positioning of Tamil Nadu in such a close proximity to Sri Lanka has had an impact on domestic problems in Sri Lanka.

In turn a counter argument would be to ask the Sinhalese population to return to their land of origin- according to the Pali chronicles, this would be somewhere in Bengal. Of course, neither allegation is legitimate, fair or even necessary. Sri Lanka was and is an island of heterogeneous communities. What is nevertheless the most troubling factor regarding these statements is that the nation is defined in ethnic terms; ownership and entitlements in Sri Lanka are reserved for the one community that has no other place to go.

I hope to have revealed more or less how the qualitative research influenced my thought process and my work. The interviews were used in the context of illustrating my thoughts and impressions. Hence I will conclude the chapter on per-

sonal reflection with some positive examples brought in by the participants. Despite some irritating expressions made, which one can frown upon, there is a lot of hidden potential and unexpected openness within this section of society. Although as a researcher I disagree with many of the opinions and attitudes expressed regarding the history, conflict and communal relationships, I strongly believe that the opinions of the participants are highly adaptable. Their access to 'impartial' information and higher education is limited, and so are the possibilities of inter-ethnic comprehension. Self-reflection, criticism and creativity are not attributes that are encouraged by parents, education or society, and furthermore, the participants live in the south of the country, far away from the conflict and war zone, which are one cause of their positive stance towards war and the military defeat of the rebels.

Sri Lankan society needs to think outside the box and overcome the man-made boundaries of co-existence. Instead of focusing on exclusive or segregating aspects, one has to lay emphasis on inclusiveness, tolerance and openness. The following concluding statements are refreshing remarks made by Sinhalese youth that portray their openness and actual desire for change.

> "We have to chase away the politicians of this country because with them we will never achieve peace. We have to give their demand, but we should have to go to their place and they have the possibility to come to South also."
>
> (Participant 11, male, 23)

> "I would invite Prabhakaran to my home and give him a flower (laughs). I would ask him to be united. And what he is asking I will give him, but there should be the possibility to go to their place and come and to stop the war and every killing and bomb blast, everything."
>
> (Participant 11, male, 23)

> "They (the government) can give the LTTE the chance to come to parliament and they can democracy with the government."
>
> (Participant 15, male, 18 years)

> "If I have a magic pen or magic anything, I think if I can change the religion, if everybody could use the common language, if everybody could wor-

ship the common place. I think I would do this. I can't say all Tamils and Muslim, come and use Sinhala. That we can negotiate. (Laughs)"

<div align="right">(Participant 12, male, 28 years)</div>

"This is his country (Prabhakarans) and this is my country. We think about Sinhalese and he think about Tamils. This war is empty, come for the peace. I want him to realise that we can live together."

<div align="right">(Participant 15, male, 18 years)</div>

5 Conclusion: Peaceful National Identities

Currently one finds exclusive nationalisms opposing each other in a violent conflict in Sri Lanka. This study was concerned with Sinhalese nationalism. Throughout the historical study Sinhalese nationalism was never explicitly defined. There are different reasons for not doing so; first of all, during the colonial era nationalism was too embryonic to label it in ethnical terms, secondly, Sri Lanka had yet to become a nation and its first leaders were part of a multicultural intelligentsia. Still, the era of colonialism, especially British colonialism, was the initial time and space for that ideological stream to grow. At that point in history when Ceylon was completely integrated into the world economy, the structural foundations were laid. The annexation had multiple effects on the island and its inhabitants, for example changes to the social, economic and political sphere. The introduction of a modern transport system opened up possibilities of exchange and interaction. Local boundaries were upstaged and primordial loyalties neglected due to the dramatic changes of inner and outer spheres, which created an ideological deficit. Theorists like Gellner have pointed out the connection between nationalism and the needs of a modern, industrial society, meaning nationalism creates the common culture and social homogeneity needed for the complex and constantly changing division of labour in modern societies.

Only in the nineteenth century was the ideological vacuum filled with contents of religion and recently discovered artefacts of past glories. During that particular time Sri Lankan nationalism and also Sinhalese nationalism were born out of a reaction resulting from decades of foreign oppression. The societal conditions for nationalism were already laid, including modern communication facilities and mechanisms, which are prerequisites for nationalism to transform into a mainstream ideology. To reference Anderson, one can label it the start of 'Print capitalism' in Ceylon. Propagandists like Henry Steel Olcott of the Theosophical Society and his indigenous associate Anagarika Dharmapala were the leading forces in a cultural change fundamental to the rise of Sinhalese nationalism. Dharmapala promoted a purification of Sinhalese Buddhist culture through au-

thentication and engendered ethno-nationalist solidarity and self-assertion. Scientific findings of that time supplied the needed material to construct the context of meaning, in particular the *Mahavamsa* and the Aryan theories of language and race. Dharmapala often quoted from the *Mahavamsa* and was an advocate of the Aryan theory; his teachings had a profound impact on Sinhalese national identity in present-day Sri Lanka.[403] During the process of becoming a nation state it was not Dharmapala's ethnically defined nationalism that prevailed in politics, it was a more secular form of nationalism set up by a small cosmopolitan indigenous elite, which thwarted ethno-nationalist demands on the hinterland. It recruited members from various communities of different religious backgrounds. The international atmosphere and interconnectedness of Ceylon's capital Colombo had stimulated the formulisation of an integrative and multi-ethnic national identity; a vision of national identity that should have transcended communal barriers.[404] But the introduction of universal adult suffrage changed the 'universalistic' political setting; suddenly ethnically defined nationalism was used in the power struggles of leaders and parties. Hence the elite of Ceylon functioned as an agent of socio-political change, influencing and manipulating the masses by emphasizing ethno-political awareness. This coincides with Smiths position on pre-modern ethnic ties and the modern nations, as well as with the belief that nationalism can only take root if it strikes a popular chord.

The whole island had concomitantly suffered from the structurally violent system of colonialism. Moreover, the Sinhalese majority felt proportionally more oppressed and neglected based on the British 'divide et impera' policy. This combined with the ideological adoption of past Sinhalese ethno-cultural heritage in Ceylon's politics led to the gradual 'Sinhalization' of the state and its structures in order to maintain power and popularity with the masses. Therefore, Sinhalese nationalism in its current form took shape just around the mid 1950s, notably as a political force. According to Smith:

> "Certainly the states and political action play important roles on crystalliz-
> ing ethnic sentiments and national identities, notably through protracted

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[403] See Jayahanthan 2004.
[404] See Frost 2002: 951.

warfare and territorialization. But ethnic ties and national sentiments are created by a variety of factors- ecological, social, and especially cultural and symbolic, such as religion, language and the arts."[405]

Sinhalese ethnicity was used for political manoeuvring and hence became a way for Sinhalese groups to seek political goals. In reference to Gramsci's concept of political pedagogy, a hegemonic agent/agency is only able to exercise consensus when they are able to get their ideas, values and norms accepted as the leading ones. This is a dialectical process between ruler and subject. The Ceylonese politicians did so by referring mainly to ethno-historical aspects important to the Sinhalese majority. The agent/agency's multifunction of substantiating, teaching and demanding consensus is achieved through nationalistic socialisation. Education therefore plays a major role; through standardized, public mass education the state hopes to inculcate national devotion and a distinctive, homogenous culture, as well as to propagate nationalist ideals of cultural authenticity. In independent Sri Lanka one finds three different education systems, all three teaching a distinct version of Sri Lankan history and culture, and thereby placing major obstacles in front of multicultural understanding and the creation of a common national identity. Another gadget of nationalist socialisation on the island was institutionalized religion, particularly Sinhala Buddhism. The collaboration of the *Buddhist Sangha* with the Sri Lankan state offered the cultural and moral charisma that attracted the Sinhalese masses during the processes of nationalist socialisation. Regardless of these overlapping efforts in nation building, there were severe shortcomings regarding the socio-economic situation, which disembogued in two youth uprisings, one of them staged by the Sinhalese youth, the other by the Tamil youth. Both militant movements were filled with socio-economic frustration and ethno-nationalist rhetoric. Even though the two movements changed their original form and aims, they still haunt the country in manifold ways. Currently, one links the nationalistic politics of the JVP and its conservative radical Buddhist counterpart, the JHU, to contemporary Sinhalese nationalism in Sri Lanka; Furthermore, the Tamil youth rebellion monopolized by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam became the driving force

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[405] Smith 1996a: 448.

of equally exclusive Tamil nationalism. The long lasting violent conflict in Sri Lanka is constructed around notions of these two threatened identities, one within the Sinhalese majority, the other within the Tamil minority. Both of them struggle to protect their own identity against a perceived threat from the 'other'.[406]

Coming back to my introductory statement, Sinhalese nationalism and national identity is difficult to define, and simply stigmatizing it will not lead us to a sustainable solution to the Sri Lankan conflict. What is clear is that Sinhalese nationalism has long historical roots, albeit not in its present form. Nowadays, intellectuals and foreigners often dismiss this worldview as irrational or outdated without realising the dynamics behind it. It was born out of a need for empowerment, and has grown into an obstacle of inter-ethnic accommodation, apparent in the 2001/02 peace process and the Tsunami related cooperation programmes. Sinhalese nationalism and to a similar degree Tamil nationalism are the main ideologies that nurture the Sri Lankan conflict and its agitators have been able to undermine many of the peace related programmes and projects. Considering the historical interconnectedness of the Western world and Sri Lanka, Western influences - in addition to the LTTE demand for a separate state - are now also perceived as a real threat to the Sinhalese national identity and their sacred lands.

Having analysed these multi-dimensional processes regarding Sinhalese nationalism, identity and conflict, I want to conclude with ways to promote peaceful national identities; but beforehand it is important to explain the nexus between international development and conflicts, in particular why it is important to analyse conflicts precisely while trying to conduct development programmes.

Violent conflicts, such as the one in Sri Lanka, cause extreme human suffering and socio-economic deficits, which again create the foundations for upcoming conflicts. Furthermore, they annihilate any development progress made so far. Peace is a precondition for economic welfare and development. Reducing the risk of conflict escalation through conflict sensitive approaches in developmental work are noted in the preambles of most public development agencies. Any de-

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[406]   See Orjuella 2008: 243.

velopmental project or programme is an intervention that can have sudden consequences. Hence the basis for 'working in conflict' or 'working on conflict' is being aware of the conflict symptoms and a having complex conflict analysis.[407] Without addressing these deeper roots any peace related programme is destined to fail and violence will re-emerge, either in structural, cultural or direct forms. Mechanisms of this nature were analysed according to Lederach's 'Three Gaps in Peacebuilding', which have shown that it is important to create an inclusive, comprehensive and multi-dimensional peace process.

Although the past Sri Lankan peace initiatives failed, one should regard them as a pre-condition for creating a new approach to fostering sustainable peaceful dialogue. One important aspect is the promotion of alternative discourses that challenge existing notions of nationalist identities. Sri Lankan identity politics have strengthened one-dimensional and simplistic understandings of identity, but identities are never monolithic and one should not take those politicised national identities at face value. Orjuella states that in theory just as much as on a practical level it is widely acknowledged that "[…] enemy images and polarisation have to be replaced by shared identities between the parties in the conflict."[408] At the same time it is important to be aware that the promotion of all-inclusive identities, for example the 'human' or 'Sri Lankan' identity, hides hegemonic structures of dominance and subordination.[409] Still, encouraging inclusive identities is relevant to set a peaceful process in motion because:

> "Nationalist extremism and ethnic polarisation are outcomes of and entangled with power politics, state structures, competition over resources and experiences of violence. Opening up spaces for shared, inclusive identities across this polarisation can create opportunities for discussion about the underlying problems. It will however, in itself not solve those problems."[410]

Recognising hard line positions instead of further marginalising them is important when working in or on conflict; engaging them in constructive dialogues should be one lesson learnt from former peace initiatives. In Sri Lanka it is im-

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[407] See Austrian Development Cooperation 2006: 6-7; 11.
[408] See Orjuella 2008: 244.
[409] Ibidem, p. 246.
[410] Orjuella 2008: 246.

portant to deconstruct politicised identities and challenge hard line stances in the public sphere, be it the Sinhalese version or the Tamil version. All of them are constructed and instrumentalized. A reformed education system would support this process by on the one hand valuing and stressing the achievements of all major communities in Sri Lanka and on the other hand by actively facilitating intercultural understanding between the Sri Lankan communities through compulsory language and cultural classes. This might sound like a utopian approach, but understanding the language of the other can possibly lead to comprehension and empathy, which can further concretize the sentiment that the grievances felt by Tamils towards the Sri Lankan state are not very different from the feeling of marginalisation that the rural Sinhalese masses feel. Creating a common opposition towards the Sri Lankan state would certainly yield more results by forcing it to reform its outdated structures and provide opportunities and perspectives to its multicultural communities.

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VII   Appendix

Questions for the Interview:

Introduction

Introduction of myself and my work

Information for the Interviewee:

All the information given will be handled anonymously. If you for any reason feel uncomfortable with a question you may skip it and proceed to the next one. You can also quit the interview any time. I am interested in your assumptions, not your factual knowledge. If there is a question for which you cannot think of an answer, try to take your time and tell me what comes to mind.

Personal Information of the Interviewee:

a) Age:

b) Sex:

c) Study Program:

d) Study Year:

e) City of birth:

f) Marital Status: single engaged married divorced in a relation-ship

g) Profession of Parents: Mother:

Father:

Part one: Perceptions of the Sinhalese

1. Please introduce yourself.

2. Every one of us identifies himself with a certain group or community. Which community is important to you?

   • Can you think of any other community?

3. How would you describe the Sinhalese community?

- What is special about it?

- Are there behaviours or phrases that you would consider typically Sinhalese?

- Can you tell about some positive aspect of the Sinhalese?

- Can you tell me what is negative about them?

4. Are there differences within the Sinhalese community and how would you describe them?

   - Regional, cultural differences? Low country, up country? Caste? Colombo?

5. Do you see yourself as a Sri Lankan first or as a Sinhalese?

   - In which context, situation?

Part two: Community Perceptions

6. How do you think the Sinhalese people perceive the Tamil community?

   - Are there any statements about Tamil people you sometimes hear?

   - Stereotypes? Good or bad things?

   - Why do you think these assumptions exist? Is there something true about it?

7. How do you think the Sinhalese people perceive the Muslim Community?

   - What do the people say about Muslims?

   - Why do you think those assumptions exist? Is there any truth to it?

8. How do you think the Tamil Community perceives the Sinhalese Community?

   - Why do you think those assumptions exist? Is there any truth to it?

9. How do you think the Muslim Community perceives the Sinhalese?

   - Why do you think those assumptions exist? Is there any truth to it?

10. How do you think the Western Countries perceive the Sinhalese?

11. How would you describe the relationship between Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslims?

Part three: Retracing perceptions of history

12. Can you give me a brief history of Sri Lanka?

    - How did the Sri Lankan people come to the island?

    - Is there any legend connected to the recovering of Sri Lanka?

      Is there another mythical story that comes into your mind?

        Do you know the Indian epic Ramayana?

13. When and how the Tamil population entered the Island?

    - Did they invade the island or did the come in peace? Had they already been there?

    - What about the up country Tamils?

14. Do you think it is important to know who entered the island first?

    - What about the Vedas in this case?

15. How did Buddhism arrive in Sri Lanka?

16. Is there any famous song or poem that you have known since childhood that talks about Sri Lanka?

    - Can you tell me what this song/poem is talking about?

17. Looking back at Sri Lankan history are there any specific battles or national heroes you can remember? Recent or past?

18. As a Sri Lankan citizen are there any specific events that took place in Sri Lanka that you are proud of or/and ashamed of? If this is the case could you please narrate them?

Part four: Conflict and Identity Perceptions

19. Tell me something about the 'Tamil problem' in Sri Lanka.

    - When and how did it start? What are the reasons for it?

20. Do you think that the conflict influenced the way people identified themselves?

    - If yes please elaborate. What kind of influence has it had on people's life?

21. Do you think that the identification process influences the war?

- For example: Do you think that because people perceive themselves as totally different communities it has an influence on how the conflict is handled? If yes, please tell me your thoughts about it.

22. Do you feel sufficiently represented by the current political party?

23. Some political parties argue that Sri Lankan Buddhism is endangered and needs to be protected. Do you think there is any truth to that? If yes, please elaborate.

24. Are you a patriotic person? Would you place the country's interest before your own interest?

- If yes, how far would you go sacrificing your personal need for your country?

25. How would you feel if the government decided to give in to the LTTE demand for a separate state?

Part five: Hybridism

26. Thinking of the Sinhalese and the Tamil Community: What are the differences?

- Tell me anything that comes to mind.

27. Are there any similarities you can think of regarding for example the Tamil community?

28. Do you know any historical examples of mixed culture in Sri Lanka?

- If yes, are they good or bad examples?
- What about Kataragama, Lord Skanda/ Murga?

29. Imagine you are married: Would you welcome it if your daughter/ son marry someone from a different community, regardless which?

Part six: Peace

30. Imagine you were given magical powers and you could change one thing in every Sri Lankan community to achieve peace on the island.

- Which characteristic would you change concerning the Sinhalese people?

- Which would you change about the Tamil people?
- Which would you change about
- The Muslim people?

31. Which aspects of Sinhalese Identity can support peace in Sri Lanka, which should be more promoted in the public sphere?
    - What role should Buddhism play?
32. What would you personally do to achieve peace in Sri Lanka?
33. If you could talk personally to the LTTE chief as a representative of the Sinhalese what would you say to make him change his war strategy?

Zusammenfassung

Der srilankische Konflikt wird von zwei gegensätzlichen Nationalismen angetrieben, die jeweils ethnisch definiert werden, singhalesischer und tamilischer Nationalismus. Die koloniale Vergangenheit Sri Lankas legte die Wurzeln für den postkolonialen Konflikt zwischen der Singhalesischen Mehrheit und der Tamilischen Minderheit, sowie für die ideologische Basis der gegenläufigen Nationalismen.

In dieser Arbeit wurde die Entstehungsgeschichte und Rolle des singhalesischen Nationalismus in Hinblick auf die Konfliktdynamik analysiert. Dabei wurden Theorien aus verschiedenen Disziplinen in einem Triangel, bestehend aus einer Strukturebene, Kulturebene und Akteursebene arrangiert um die Bedeutungen und Funktionen des singhalesischen Nationalismus in Sri Lanka in seiner Gesamtheit nachzuvollziehen. Zusätzlich wurden post-orientalistische Ansätze miteinbezogen um irreführende Annahmen von „essentiellen" ethnischen Identitäten zu dekonstruieren. Weiters wurden Interviews mit singhalesischen Jugendlichen geführt um das Wirken von singhalesischem Nationalismus zu illustrieren.

Die ethnischen Identitäten „Singhalese" und „Tamile" sind moderne Konstrukte, die ausgehend von post-orientalistischen Studien früher in weitaus flexibleren Strukturen existierten, als heute im Mainstream -Diskurs verankert sind.

Zunächst bezeichnete ein universal definierter „Ceylonesischer Nationalismus" Selbstermächtigung nach knapp fünfhundert Jahren kolonialer Besetzung, und wurde dann mit der Einführung des allgemeinen Wahlrechtes in ethnisch definierte Bahnen gelenkt, dabei kämpfte man jeweils um die Gunst der eigenen Ethnien. Der srilankische Staat wurde dabei sukzessiv „singhalesiert".

Ab Mitte der 50er Jahre erfuhr der singhalesische Nationalismus einen vermehrten Zulauf und kulminierte in zwei Jugendaufständen. Ursachen dafür lagen neben der strukturellen kolonialen Last, in der stagnierenden Wirtschaft, dem veralteten politischen System, sowie in einem Bildungssystem dass die ethnisch definierte nationale Identität untermauerte. Das aktuelle Wirken von

singhalesisch nationalistischem Gedankengut wird bei den Friedensverhand-
lungen von 2001/02 sichtbar. Die Friedensverhandlungen scheiterten an der
Einflussnahme der singhalesischen Nationalisten, die vom Prozess ausge-
schlossen waren und im Volk gegen Verhandlungen mit den tamilischen Sepa-
ratisten wetterten. Jede zukünftige Verhandlung muss auch die Anliegen der
singhalesisch nationalistischen Fraktion mit einbeziehen. Die Befragung von
singhalesischen ländlichen Jugendlichen hat ebenfalls die weite Zustimmung
von nationalistischem Gedankengut widergespiegelt.

Summary

Currently one finds exclusive nationalisms opposing each other in Sri Lanka, Sinhalese and Tamil nationalism. Both nationalist ideologies provide fuel for the violent conflict.

During colonialism the foundations for the postcolonial Sri Lankan conflict between the Sinhalese majority and the Tamil minority were laid, as well as the ideological basis for the two ethnic nationalisms.

This study was concerned with Sinhalese nationalism. Therefore the origin and the function of Sinhalese nationalism and how it is related to the dynamics of the Sri Lankan conflict were analysed. I used theories from various disciplines and arranged them in a triangle to explain Sinhalese nationalism as an entity. The vertices of the triangle consisted of a structural level, cultural level and agency/agent level. Additionally a post-Orientalist view was included to deconstruct seemingly fixed categories of 'essential' ethnic identities. Furthermore for illustration Interviews with rural Sinhalese youth were conducted.

The ethnic identities of the Sinhalese and the Tamils are modern constructs; based on post-Orientalist studies, identity categories like Sinhalese and Tamil were far more porous and flexible in pre-colonial times.

After about five hundred years of colonial subordination universally defined Ceylonese nationalism functioned as a tool for empowerment, just after the introduction of universal suffrage ethnically defined nationalism was used for political manoeuvring. Thereby the Sri Lankan state was gradually 'Sinhalized'.

Around 1950 Sinhalese nationalism started to rise and culminated in two violent youth uprisings. Reasons for that were besides the structural colonial heir, the stagnating economy, an outdated political system and an education system that reinforced ethnically defined national identities. The influence and impact of nationalist values became apparent in the 2001/02 peace initiative. The peace talks between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil separatist failed because of the Sinhalese nationalist fractions, which agitated against the process.

Sinhalese nationalist parties were excluded from the talks; any future peace initiative would need to address their concerns to lead to a constructive process. The interviews with Sinhalese youth reflected their positive stance towards Sinhalese nationalist values.

Curriculum Vitae

Name: SIRIMALWATTA Nisansala

Date of birth: 27.10.1983

Place of birth: Vienna, Austria

Nationality: Austrian

Educational Background

Elementary school: 1990-1994

High school: 1994–2002, graduated in English, German, Mathematics, Geography and Psychology.

University of Vienna: International Development

Elective Subject: Religion, Peace and Conflict Studies, Spanish, Regional Specialization: South Asia

Language Skills

English: Fluent

German: Mother Tongue

Spanish: Ability

Hindi: Ability

Sinhala: Ability

Vocational Training

Computer Training

Experiences & Duties

2004:   Project-coordination during the Tsunami 2004 for the Organization United Help for Sri Lanka in Vienna.

2005:   University tutor for the subject of north-south relations in historical analysis at the University of Vienna

2005:   Organization of a socio-political Workshop in cooperation with the Institute of International Development in Vienna and the Organization Theatre of the Oppressed, Vienna

2007:   Research on sex selective abortion in India
Nishtha Rural Health, Education and Environment Centre, Himachal Pradesh, India

2008:   Three months research scholarship for brief scientific stays abroad in Sri Lanka

Internship at the Institute for Integrative Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding, Vienna