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The Development and Role of Kataragama as a Sacred Place in Post-War Sri Lanka

Through Comparison of a Syncretic Festival with Everyday Buddhist Hegemony

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ABSTRACT

The religious complex of Kataragama located in southeast Sri Lanka is explored as a place from a cultural-geography perspective in this thesis. It was chosen due to the multicultural attributes it has through the veneration of devotees with Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian and Vädda identities. By focusing on the intersection between place and religion through sacred geography and scales the various cultural traces that affect the place and its development are assessed and place is considered as a process. Qualitative methodology has been used in order to explore the private domain of religion; through observation and semi-structured interviews that allowed flexibility. The case study of the multicultural Kataragama festival in August is at the core of this analysis, yet it is compared to the off-season as well as the place is visited by more diverse groups during the festival than otherwise, and it is argued through the empirical and intersubjective data from religious representatives and secondary data, that this is important due to the various claims to the different sacred places. The Kataragama Maha Devale is the focus of the claims and it has also been affected by the Buddhicization processes that the entire country shows evidence of through the investments in Buddhist heritage over other minorities'. Yet this thesis also finds that while Kataragama has changed, and the Maha Devale especially as my Hindu informant felt out-of-place there, it is still an important and multicultural place namely due to the many devotees who celebrate religion together during the fifteen-day festival.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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MAP OF SRI LANKA

Credit: United Nations

RELIGIOUS TERMS

Aalatiyamma: Ancestors of Valli Amma

Basnayake Nilame: Chief custodian who administers devales of importance

Bhakti: Hindu devotion traditions

Bodhi tree: Or Bo, a type of fig tree that the Buddha gained enlightenment under

Bodhisattva: Future Buddha, someone who can attain Buddhahood

Buddhicization: Buddhist appropriation through a naturalization process

Brahmin: High-ranking Hindu caste associated with sacred teachings and priests

Deity: Supernatural and divine being

Devale: Sinhalese patronised Buddhist temples

Esala Perahera: Religious procession in the month of August

Hinduism: Religion that stems from South-Asia and is characterised by great diversity

Kapurala: Buddhist lay priest

Kataragama deity: God with connections to India and Sri Lanka and several religions

Kiri Vehera: Buddhist stupa; religious structure

Kiri Vihara: Buddha temple in Kataragama complex, next to Ganesh kovil and Maha Devale

Kovil: Tamil patronised Hindu temples

Pada Yatra: Foot pilgrimage

Pali: Indian language associated with the Buddha, and connected to Theravada Buddhism

Pooja: Prayer ritual to worship a deity

Sufism: Mystical Islamic belief that practices seeking truth through direct contact with God

Stupa: Also called Dagoba and Vehera, dome structure containing Buddhist relics

Teyvanai deity: Indian goddess, first wife of Kataragama deity

Theravada Buddhism: Branch of Buddhism practicing the Pali teachings of the Buddha

Valli Amma deity: Local goddess, second wife of Kataragama deity

1. INTRODUCTION

> "The sense of cleanliness in Kataragama deviates from the orthodox Hindu notion
> of pollution because the devotees mingle with all social groups, and the low caste
> groups cause social pollution. Traditional Hindu temples are socially exclusive.
> But Kataragama is socially inclusive" (Goonasekera, 2007, p. 499-500)

This quote above is based on the experience of a researcher who participated in the religious festivities at Kataragama, my research area. It sums up all the motivation for writing this thesis and explains why this specific place is important; its social inclusion that transcends borders. It is especially due to the post-war context Sri Lanka is in now that my interest in this specific topic of religion and place, with a focus on inclusion, was piqued.

In my youth we travelled to Sri Lanka many times - during the ceasefires – when my family lived in Pakistan, and after the end of the civil war of 2009 we all went back in 2014 along with many other tourists. The the first I can remember hearing about Kataragama it was from a guidebook that described it as a place of ritual union and tranquillity and I wished to visit it then but did not have the time. Over a year later when my thesis planning was under way and my supervisor suggested Kataragama as a multi-religious place (as my topic was focused on religion and development) where a very interesting study could be made due to the many cultures with a connection to the place, something clicked. The thesis planning up until that point had gone slowly, but with a place I had a previous connection to, a topic I found highly interesting and an opportunity to research cultures I was already fascinated by, the process picked up.

The interest in having religion as main topic comes from the depth and perspective that social anthropology offers about it, especially how it affects people, and how it is powerful. The connection to place came through my study program, where the geography department offer courses that discuss it in depth and thus made its relevance clear. While there were both personal and academic reasons for the interest in this project, the main drive was to explore how multiculturalism can work, and be a positive force. This happens during the festival at Kataragama where there is a syncretic nature and the interplay between religion, place and development is unique and symbolic for not only this specific place but also the whole island of Sri Lanka as it represents many personal realities.

1.1 Problem statement

This study will look into the development of Kataragama as a place in southeast Sri Lanka, with special attention to the changes due to the civil war of 2009. This is especially relevant as the war created national boundaries among the main ethnic groups, while Kataragama's reputation claims that societal borders are transcended. By utilising a cultural geographic perspective and theory on the concept of place, the different claims to the religious area and how it interacts with its heritage will be assessed. It is a complex task as Kataragama as a place is sacred or important to not only the majority religion Buddhism, but also to Christians, Muslims, Hindus and the indigenous Vädda. It will be explored by referring to the following objectives and research questions.

Objectives

The objective is two-fold in order to analyse the importance of Kataragama as a symbolic place that includes several religious groups:

1. Explain the relationship between place and religion over time in order to see whether it changes.
2. Assess the relation religious representatives have to the sacred area and the Kataragama deity

Research questions

The key question of this thesis is to understand what constitutes sacred place, and how people of diverse identities converge on the same religious place. With respect to Kataragama shrine and temple in Sri Lanka I ask:

1. How has the Kataragama sacred area changed over time?

    1.1 Have shifting political landscapes, especially including the recent war in the country, re-shaped the religious landscape and people's claims to this place?

2. Who has a claim to Kataragama temple?

    2.1 How and why does Kataragama temple represent a religious place for several religious groups?

1.2 Structure of the thesis

This first chapter shortly introduces the study area, the place Kataragama and why it was chosen. The aim of the study is presented as a wish to understand the multicultural aspects that are unique to Sri Lanka, and to specifically look at how this works at Kataragama by focusing on the topics of religion and place. The way in which this will be assessed is presented through the listed objectives and research questions, as well as the summary of the thesis' structure.

The second chapter on methodology introduces the practicalities around the six-week fieldwork held in 2016, where the Kataragama festival serves as a case study. My choice of qualitative methodology is explained, along with the research process and data construction. The choice of research participants is paid special attention to, as they form the core of the intersubjective data; this includes the gatekeepers, informants and religious representatives. The semi-structured interviews and varied methods of observation are also discussed in this chapter, and it ends with a look into the study's limitations and ethical considerations.

The third chapter explains the theoretical framework of the thesis that is focused on place and religion, and thus explores sacred place through sacred and cultural geography. The connection between geography and religion is explained by focusing on a spatial approach with attention to scale. Place is seen as a religious construct and the approach of more-than-representation and creation of place is focused on to explain this, along with the effect power has on both people and place.

The fourth chapter looks into Sri Lankan history to understand the context that has shaped not only the cultural or political change but also religious. It pays attention to how this has transpired at Kataragama as well, and covers aspects from the far past and up until the observations during my fieldwork.

The fifth chapter is concerned with analysing the role of place and sanctity and mostly utilises the micro scale. It uses the second research questions to look into who the informants believe has a claim to the place in general, and to the Kataragama temple specifically. The claims are done through both historical figures and physical manifestations. Analysing the annual festival and its pilgrimage raises the question of whether there is ritual union at Kataragama.

The sixth chapter analyses the changes and processes that have occurred at Kataragama over time with special focus on the post-war development, thus it pays attention to the first research question. The political aspects of this are looked into through the 'protection' of the place and what it is that is protected, as well as how hereditary positions hold a power over key temples. Demographical changes, such as the increase in tourism, is lastly looked into as this reflects who the place is important to.

In the seventh and final chapter I will make my conclusion about what kind of place Kataragama is, who it is sacred to and how its changes have affected the people venerating it, and vice versa. The research questions will be summed up with my findings from the analysis.

2. METHODOLOGY

The following chapter will discuss the choice of using qualitative methodology in my fieldwork. To do so I will reflect upon the methodology itself and discuss issues such as the considerations taken, the challenges confronted and the validity of the project. The choice of qualitative methodology was a decision made based on several reasons, with the foremost being that the in-depth and contextually adaptive approach allows the necessary sensitivity required when working with the topic of religion. However my own academic background also directly affected the choice of both religion as a research topic and qualitative approach to methodology as I have a bachelor degree in social anthropology. However the constraints to time and funds limited me from doing an ethnographic fieldwork, which, due to my background, was the initial and most intuitive plan. What I did take from the anthropological perspective was the attempt to use cultural relativism actively by trying to understand my research subjectives' beliefs and actions in terms of their *own* culture, and also my effort to participate as much as possible in order to understand their social world.

Qualitative methods in a fieldwork offer a more grounded and in-depth understanding, especially as the micro level can be explored with both observation and interviews (Crang & Cook, 2007). During my fieldwork at the Kataragama sacred area (hence shortened to KSA) in the South-East of Sri Lanka I utilized observation spanning over three different visits. At the first visit I observed as much of the festival as I could – due to my mishap with misunderstanding the dates of the Perahera as ending with the full moon, rather than starting with it as a result of little information about the event other than the core dates of the important rituals. This, along with other limitations, will be touched upon in more detail later in this chapter. On the second visit I travelled on my own with the intention to observe the daily use of the temple grounds and engaged in informal talks. The last visit was after I had arranged contact with my gatekeeper and my research assistant, and that was when we conducted the interviews and I used the expertise of my research assistant and gatekeeper to answer my questions based on previous observations. All of my observations happened during a national school holiday, which is a contributing factor to my observation of the temple use and pooja participation. It was pointed out by my Muslim informant that the numbers of devotees increase at the mosque during holidays; the same likely applies to the whole sacred area.

2.1 Case study

My fieldwork was focused on a qualitative case study at the KSA because it allowed me to study a number of phenomena such as the rituals at the sacred area and hence its context and in-depth nuances in the natural setting of the temples (Baxter in Hay, 2010). As I observed and partially partook in the two last days of festival and was able to gather empirical data for my thesis from the religious and cultural connotations. I also changed my focus to the daily use of the temple, so I observed the rituals performed in the sacred area and the worship performed by devotees. Yet it is important to keep in mind that there are limitations due to the many variables and aspects at a case study, and this can affect the quality of the data. My case study does still represent what happened in a set time at the very symbolic and unique pluralistic religious festival in Sri Lanka; in a country where the borders between ethnicity and religion separated people during the recent civil war. To avoid having a lack of credibility in my empirical data I had to uphold and process the case study sample through a focus on analytical generalisation by carefully selecting said sample and apply a relevant logic, which ascertained a higher transferability of the empirical data (Baxter in Hay, 2010). In order to do this it was important to considering my informants within their contexts and discourses.

The KSA and festival is a well-known place and event in Sri Lanka, with a great symbolic value as the local hotel Rivinka's website highlights[1]. This means that there have been many different studies at this place over the years, which allows for a comparison (as it is a revisit to the case) over an intervening time period (Ibid). It has been done with different approaches and different research methods, but the many previous studies are valuable as they allow for a careful comparison on the development of the physical place and the relations to it. This also influenced my approach to creating data, as the use of secondary data influenced the preparations.

2.2 Data construction

During my fieldwork in Sri Lanka I constructed[2] empirical data on the topic of religion with my key-informants. Both my own position and that of my informants heavily influenced the data collected through a qualitative method, which I'll discuss in more detail later in this chapter. I focused on construction of observational data and semi-structured interviews. This

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1 http://www.hotelrivinka.com/kataragama.php hotel's guide over "Places to visit at Kataragama".
2 Construction implies that the qualitative data is *created* because they are made out of social relations through the research process (Crang & Cook, 2007).

was due to my own academic background in social anthropology and geography, in combination with recommendations from my supervisor concerning the limitations of my fieldwork. It did influence the scope and scale of the data construction, however, I could still utilize the social anthropological point of view by focusing on people and their relations to each other, which has influenced both the results and the interpretations that I make (Hay, 2010). The short timeframe of maximum three months in the field influenced the decision to have few interviewees, resulting in strict sampling methods by primarily interviewing one key representative from each of the religious temples at the KSA.

Sampling methods

I utilised several approaches to my sampling methods as the circumstances in which I could get in contact with informants were quite varied, and because I often had to combine methods in order to gain satisfactory data. Therefore different methods were used pragmatically based on the situation that depended on both mine, my gatekeeper's and the participants time.

The main sampling method was criterion sampling, which simply implies that I selected my participants based on a set of criteria (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010). The criteria I focused on was the longevity of the participants' relation to the KSA, which I preferred to be started prior to 2009, which marked the end of the civil war in Sri Lanka. The second important criterion was that the representatives had to have an acknowledged position within the different temples, in order for them to act as representatives on behalf of the religion. This was possible to carry out do due to my gatekeeper's help with selecting participants based on my criteria, as he had extensive knowledge of the place and was a native to the town just outside the sacred area.

While I had certain criteria for my interviewees, the sampling method used to get in touch with them through my gatekeeper was snowball sampling as I used "cases of interest reported by people who know other people involved in similar cases" (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010, p. 75).
However, for this interview a combination of different sampling methods had to be used as I had specific criteria for the interviewees' position, as there were recommendations of who else to interview (which made the selection somewhat biased) and as they were based on access to interviewee due to time restrictions on both my own and their behalf.

The informal interviews that were of a conversational nature were access based as they depended on people coming to the sacred area with time to talk to me, and this makes them examples of convenience sampling (Ibid). This method was for instance used when I interviewed the women selling incense and flowers for the Buddha worship at the Kiri Vehera road, and when talking to the devotees in Kataragama about why they came to the sacred area.

Choice of research participants

As the previous section mentions there were both informal interviews that were sampled by convenience, as well as more carefully selected key-informant interviews with religious representatives. However, all were held at sacred areas in Sri Lanka, so the intention of the interviewees was predominantly worship. The informal interviews were made within the sacred area and for the most part during my independent observation - much due to the fact that I was noticed by the devotees at the sacred area who made initial contact. These conversations were not tape-recorded and often quite short, I recorded them only in my research diary. The core of the empirical construction that will be the focus of the analysis was done with the carefully selected key informants, however it is important to first address my main research participants namely the gatekeepers who both enabled my research project and who had a great effect on the empirical data.

Gatekeeper

A gatekeeper can be described as "someone who has the power and control over access to communities and key respondents in a particular location selected for research" (Lund, Panda, & Dhal, 2016, p. 2). I feel that this definition suits my relation to my gatekeepers very well as they did hold much power over my study. I was introduced to my primary gatekeeper due to his relation to the KSA and knowledge of the place.

My primary gatekeeper was from Kataragama new town and visited the sacred area every day because he claimed "I am used to this. When I don't come I feel so upset". He was a local businessman who owned one of the many little shops close to the entrance of the KSA where he sold items such as fruit baskets for pooja to devotees. The task for my gatekeeper was to set us in direct contact with key informants. He did this by taking my translator and me to the temples at the sacred area and introducing my study and us to the interview subjects who were chosen based on the criteria I had given.

One important note about the communication with my gatekeeper was that he did not speak English, so I was reliant on my translator to communicate with him. My translator did this very well and I benefited greatly from her knowledge of social norms, especially when it came to the compensation of the gatekeeper's time. By interviewing my gatekeeper I also gained some knowledge about his relation to the sacred area, as well as an explanation to his priorities. As he personally was of Buddhist faith it was not surprising that he prioritised the interview with a very high-ranking Buddhist representative. Overall it was quite clear that certain interviews were more carefully planned, and prioritised. It can also reflect that he had better contacts within his own religion, but his insistence of giving credit in the thesis to the representative of his own faith does reflect his priorities, as it did not occur with any other interviews. The interview guide used was the same, and my active part of the interview remained the same, but he did have a certain amount of power over the research process with the sampling and interviewee selection.

While my gatekeeper did have "an invisible hand in the production of whose knowledge we could access", I was also aware of this aspect and did retain a vital amount of control over the choice of research participants due to my sampling method (Lund et al., 2016, p. 10). My gatekeeper was very important to my study as he made the introductions and vouched for me; without his participation the interviewees would not necessarily have made time for me or answered quite so freely. However the gatekeeper's presence during the interviews may also have limited the level of confidentiality. Despite this I did gain access to the knowledge of people with very relevant experiences through my gatekeeper.

Translators

I used different translators because of practical reasons and opportunity, but as I am pressed for space only the interviews with my primary gatekeeper and translator were used in the thesis. My supervisor recommended my primary translator who was an English teacher; she was around my own age and of Muslim faith. She came with me to do the interviews in Kataragama and stood for the communication with the gatekeeper. She also came along with me to observe the daily use of the temple, and to make up an opinion of the Kataragama museum. During the interviews I encouraged her to take part as she found it easier to clarify questions when the language was restrictive or not operationalized enough. When we were pressed for time I allowed my translator to conduct the interviews while I kept track and made

notes of their behaviour and reactions. She was asked to keep to the interview guide, and especially my highlighted questions.

Prior to some of the interviews, especially with the Buddhist representative, my translator was worried about her own positionality. However, there was not an issue with this during the interviews, the only being with the Hindu representative refusing to speak Tamil and rather insisting on speaking English. The interviewees did not show much suspicion or negative attitudes, although a more serious reception in some cases could have improved the interview. It can be argued that the translators ought to be treated as key informants (Crang & Cook, 2007, p. 26), as they not only translated for me but also transcribed and were encouraged to explain my interview questions more explicitly or add their own follow-up questions when deemed necessary.

Informants

The five informants in my core interviews were representatives from the main religions with physical temples at the KSA; Islam, Buddhism, Ganesh (Hindu), Valli Amma and Kataragama. According to my sampling preferences they were to have a relation to the temple from during the time of the civil war, and most did. However especially the interview at the mosque suffered from lacking this criterion, as it was the first interview and not well prepared by my gatekeeper; the interviewee had only been employed there for about a year. It made the results rather different, yet it was an interesting point of view. Most of the interviewees had received the position from relatives, which is an interesting note that I'll reflect more upon in the analysis. I performed the interviews with my translator where they were based, so the comfort of the subjects was a priority. I also did not wish to take too much of their time so my interpreters performed some interviews on behalf of me with doing them wholly in Sinhala or Tamil and adding their own follow-up questions where it was necessary.

Key informants

Based on consultation with my supervisor we decided that with the restrictions placed on the time allocated to a fieldwork, a more focused target group would be the best. This resulted in a decision to focus on key informant interviews with five different religious representatives at the KSA. Due to the fact that the festival is high season at the temples, the interviews were scheduled for after the festival. However, this resulted in some limitations as for instance the indigenous Vädda are only at Kataragama during the festival; according to my informant from

the Valli Amma temple the Vädda only come to Kataragama for the celebration of Valli Amma's marriage to Lord Kataragama. This resulted in lacking an interview with the Vädda, as well as a formal interview with Christian devotees. However, the religious institutions with physical temples at the KSA were researched with interviews with five religious representatives from the Mosque, Ganesh temple, Kataragama temple, Valli Amma temple and Buddhist monastery. They had for the most part a long relation to the KSA and were chosen by my gatekeeper. His positionality and belief may have influenced these choices, as I will reflect upon.

Interviews

Due to the nature of my topic being as sensitive and personal as religion, I was very careful to introduce my research project and myself. During my total of nine interviews I made a clear point of how the interviewees were allowed as much time as they needed for thinking and that it was fully acceptable that they decline to answer questions that could be considered uncomfortable. Hay (2010) points out that it is important to discuss these matters in advance of the interview process in order to decrease the chances of embarrassment on either side, and to prepare the participants. The sensitivity over the research topic, and my assurance that it was anonymous, was necessary in order to conduct successful interviews. This was especially apparent during my very first interview that was held at the mosque in Kataragama. Upon my arrival I realised that my gatekeeper had not prioritised the interview as it had not been booked beforehand and he picked out an administrative worker to interview. Because of this, and my gatekeepers' vague relation to the mosque, I had to spend extra time assuring the interviewee of my position and reliability by using my informed consent form. Even after this the use of the tape recorder was still not permitted, and there were several topics that were discussed "off record".

While I focused my planning on semi-structured interviews I was also acutely aware of the fact that unstructured interviews also can grant valuable information. I used this knowledge to interview five devotees in a conversational manner at the sacred area, but also to interview my gatekeeper in an un- and semi-structured manner; especially due to the fact that he had shown interest during the interview held at the Valli Amma temple where it was held in Sinhala. The observation of and conversations with devotees at the sacred areas also added valuable insights, as well as how devotees responded differently to both my presence and to that of my translators.

The strengths of a qualitative approach to interviews is that it gives empathic access, is flexible (as my edited interview guide shows, in appendix 2), and it has many stages where it is reconsidered and reflected upon (Crang & Cook, 2007). However these stages and all the considerations that has to be made also makes it time-consuming and therefore challenging.

2.3 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were chosen due to the nature of qualitative methodology, and also due to the time restrictions. In order to gain good contact with and the trust of the participants to investigate the social aspects of the religion they represented, flexibility in the questioning was necessary. The sensitive kind of information that I was looking for is more likely to be divulged with semi-structured interviews where there is a greater focus on the interviewee (Hay, 2010).

I was also very conscious of where the interviews were held, as the comfort of the interviewee was my focus. The interviews with key informants were held inside the sacred area, at the different temples where the religious representatives were residing, with an option of moving them to a bakery in Kataragama new town if there was a need for it. An interview with my gatekeeper was also held at the KSA as we waited for another interview. The last interview I held was an informal talk with a sociology professor in Kandy, making it an expert interview to support the development of my analysis.

This structure of interviews allowed flexibility, but also allowed for preparation. Before departing for the field I prepared my preliminary interview-guide (see appendix 1) with the four sections "Significance of place", "Change over time", "For religious representatives" and "For Pilgrims". I covered my research objectives in the approximately four open questions within each section. In addition I had follow-up questions prepared, as well as what both my translators and I added during the interviews. However, this was edited upon during my fieldwork as I adapted it to the different interviewees and changing situations. My lack of pilgrim research subjects made me leave out the entire section on that, while my addition of a gatekeeper's perspective added a section. These changes can be seen if comparing the preliminary and revised interview guides in appendix 1 and 2 respectively.

Observation

Due to my academic background I consider observation vital, especially as it has the potential of validating my data. However it is also important to make a note of the fact that it isn't a pure form of objective data construction as my presence still has an effect on what I am observing due to inherent power dynamics (Hay, 2010). My position as an outsider is an active role in the phenomena no matter what, and I am bound to "unwittingly alter the research setting" (Kearns, 2010, p. 246) Upon retrospection I consider my methods as an alternation between Gold's (1958) four research roles as the degree of my participation varied. I went from being a "complete observer" with as pure observation as was possible when looking at who queued up to give religious offerings, to "observer-as-participant" by participating inside the temple during pooja, to "participant-as-observer" when I was taking part in the festival together with locals, and lastly with "complete participation" as I attempted this with attending the ceremonies and living at pilgrims' rest houses (Ibid). This gave me a more holistic point of view and also affected my understanding, and that of my research subjects. They had noticed me participate in rituals during the festival and the Brahmin, for instance, mentioned this in our interview. This was most likely a positive factor, and is an example of what Crang and Cook (2007) claims that participant observation is, namely a means of developing intersubjective understandings between researcher and the researched.

Already during my initial observation at Kataragama I varied the degree of participation with the Esala perahera temple visits and informal talks, as well as my purely observational view of the mystical water-cutting ceremony. My role and level of participation was shifting due to the invitations to take part in rituals, which I under normal circumstances most likely would have only observed without active participation from my side. When I was invited I partook in blessings and pooja, and gained a valuable first-hand account of these experiences.

As a contrast to this, and also in order to gain a more independent and neutral view of the place and the use of it, I returned to Kataragama the following week for my second observation of the Sacred Area's daily use from a standpoint without local guides. This experience was rather different and allowed for new insights and more contact with devotees who mostly inquired into why I was on my own. This was especially clear when I was there on my own before the mid-day pooja as several devotees of different religions approached me, including an elderly lady I met on the road to the Kiri Vehera who shared her lotus flowers which were intended for Buddha pooja. There were very few, if any, tourists there at

that time which explains the difference, as I felt less "out-of-place" during the evening pooja. These interactions during the mid-day, with varying levels of interaction during pooja offerings exemplify what Kearns (2010) claims is the goal of participant observation, namely to "develop understanding through being part of the spontaneity of everyday interactions" (p. 245).

2.4 Data analysis

After conducting the interviews I began the process of analysing the data immediately. The interviews held in Tamil or Sinhala were prioritized as I worked on them together with my primary translator while we were in the field. We also discussed the data and this was a great resource to my understanding. This increased the validity of the interviews as I was helped with a second opinion. After all the empirical data were transcribed I began the thematic coding process where I divided the data into sections based on conditions, interactions, strategies and consequences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In addition to the main categories I also had many sub-categories derived from the trends in the empirical data and my research questions as can be seen in Table 1 below.

CONDITIONS	INTERACTIONS	STRATEGIES	CONSEQUENCES
Circumstances	Relationships	Tactics	Results of change
Life situation	Conflict	Memory	Outcomes
Job/position	Encounters	Heritage, claims	
Caste	Worship	Development/change	
Sacred area	Cooperation	Future/past	
Perahera	Tourism	Identification	
Ethnicity	Generations		
Tamil	Coexistence		
Sinhalese	Respect		
Religion	Exclusion		
Hindu, Buddhist			
Muslim, Christian			
Social status			
Age group			
Pada yatra			

Table 1: Chart of thematic codes used in data analysis

2.5 Ethical considerations

There are many responsibilities to consider while having the role of a researcher, especially if taking the stance of Goffman (1969) with the stage analogy[3] that I kept in mind during the fieldwork due to my anthropology background. This is part of the "baggage" I have which affects the empirical data through direct interference in the analysis as well as indirectly through my presence in the community. My behaviour, biographical characteristics, background and all the other factors that affect my positionality do according to Hay (2010) influence the informants and the data. This made it important to be very aware of where I was positioned in the dynamic power structure. It is especially important to keep in mind that knowledge is embodied and always situated, not least when using a subjective methodology which according to Crang and Cook (2007) becomes intersubjective as the world the interactions are made in are influenced by it. My own presence had an effect on the research area and the relations there, and while ethical considerations were made beforehand and constantly during the fieldwork through reflexivity it was still not possible to be neutral. However, it did help that I was aware of it and attempted to not make a negative contribution. In order to ensure that my data construction was as ethical as possible I made several precautions, as the following sections will show some examples of.

Confidentiality

The anonymity of my research participants is highly important, much because of the topic they discussed due to the trust they put in my confidentiality and me. What was confided in the interview sessions is to be kept solely between my translators, my supervisor and myself in order to respect participants' privacy and safety. The recorded, transcribed and coded data is to a certain extent anonymous by not including any names. However the age, position and religious position of my informants can reveal their identity so it will not be included in the thesis, and the documents will be destroyed after completion of the thesis, in accordance with my agreement with the Norwegian centre for research data (hence NSD), see appendix 4 for the details on the agreement. A requirement for my study to be approved by the NSD was an informed consent form, which I will describe below.

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[3] Goffman's stage analoygy discusses the role of a person as being either front-stage with a specific role (i.e. researcher), or off-stage where one can be 'oneself' without the same expectations

Informed consent

The informed consent form (see appendix 3) was very important to legitimise my role as a researcher, as it increased the trust my interviewees put in me and therefore increased the confidentiality. This was very important to do as it described what being a source for my thesis implied, and that they knew what they were agreeing to.

It was carefully presented to the interviewees and they were encouraged to keep a copy. I gave them sufficient time to read through it in order to know what they were agreeing to, as well as making it explicitly clear that they could withdraw their information at any time by using the contact information in it. When they did not speak or read English I made sure my translators explained it to them. There were cases where the interviewees did not wish to sign the form, but they were still informed of what it implied and after that they gave explicit oral consent that my translator was witness to. In hindsight the introduction made by my gatekeeper may have influenced this denial, as it was at the minor temples where he seemed to have less of a personal relation to that there was a hesitancy to record the interview and sign the consent form. This is explained in more detail below.

Power relations

My positionality as a northern researcher creates an inherent asymmetrical power relation between the research subjects and myself, which in turn affects the data construction. This is mostly due to the north-south relations but also to my control over the interview guide, its presentation and the topics chosen (Dowling in Hay, 2010). In addition to this the role of being a Norwegian in Sri Lanka has specific associations there due to the Norwegian involvement in the peace initiative during the civil war. However, I was rarely questioned about this - although some of course did mention it - but it never became an apparent issue during my interviews.

What was an issue, in hindsight, is that I got an important and socially high-ranking contact through my family-friends to gain initial contact at Kataragama. It was not my own initiative, and I did not know the scope of it until after we had been introduced, and it was hard to turn down the offer of an introduction to the sacred area as well as a secure way to see the festival as it was done because of the worry my friends had regarding my security at the festival due to my age and gender. It turned out to be a very fruitful connection as this introduction allowed me to view the perahera and water-cutting ceremony from a vantage point, and most

importantly to introduce me to my gatekeeper. However, the contact was a high-ranking police officer that was in Kataragama in work related business. He had brought his family along to view the festival and it was them I stayed with. I was invited along with them to the elephant alms giving and to view the perahera (religious procession) from the most sacred area at the Maha Devalaya (Frydenlund, 2003). It was a unique opportunity to observe the festival and the rituals connected to it, and I was introduced to my gatekeeper this evening. The policeman was not involved in my fieldwork after the perahera, however my gatekeeper may have used the position he gains from knowing such powerful people to book interviews. I do believe that the introduction I made with the consent form and that I myself did not refer to the policeman did ease the participants, especially with the promise to retain their anonymity and confidentiality. Also my gatekeeper was a local businessman who went to the sacred area daily and had relations there due to his business and his own position in the community. This is reflected more upon in the following segment on limitations.

2.6 Limitations of the study

As this was my first experience with a fieldwork in a foreign country I planned as much as possible prior to the departure, such as the semi-structured interview guide. I was aware that it was likely going to be changed as the preparatory "Progress and fieldwork" course warned us of such a possibility prior to our departure. What the course had not prepared me for was how my gender could be a limiting factor during the interview, as it could have kept me from entering the temples. Prior to the visit to the Kataragama Maha Devale during the festival I received a discreet question from one of the females in my company about whether I was menstruating, as it is believed that it is a violation to the purity norm connected to religion in Sri Lanka (Obeyesekere 1978).

However, one important thing I had not foreseen were the varied dates for the festival. In my research prior to the fieldwork did I struggle to establish the exact dates, only the fact that it lasted for approximately two weeks and that the full moon pooja perahera on the 19th of July was the main attraction. This led me to assume that the festival started with the perahera, which I upon my arrival found out was not the case, it marked the end. This eventually led to an alteration of my research focus. The religious groups who do not have temples at the KSA are predominantly only there during the festival time, such as the Christian man I had an informal chat with who was there due to his friends religion, and the indigenous Vädda who I

did not obtain an interview because they lived far away and were only at the temple grounds during the festival[4].

This led me to change my research focus and leave out the planned section on interviews of pilgrims and the Vädda; I did not have time to arrange interviews and the pilgrims could not be kept back. However, I was prepared that the focus of my study was likely to change during the fieldwork as I had an inductive approach. As previously noted, my study design was influenced by my background and position, and alterations after the fieldwork reflects that my views have changed based on my interviews and observation. This can be seen with the changes made to my revised interview guide (appendix 1 and 2), as well as in the shift from my focus on pilgrimage trends to the daily use of and symbolism at the sacred area.

Considerations during data construction

The qualitative methodology is both in-depth and subjective, and my data construction was affected by not only my own positionality, as I'll reflect upon shortly, but also the position of my interviewees, my gatekeeper and my translators. The very nature of the methodology used is influenced by societal context, which is something Dowling (in Hay, 2010) points out as the empirical data is influenced by the power structures and norms both that have an effect on all the interactions made during a fieldwork. The unwritten rules, which I as an outsider did not understand were likely a limiting factor, especially with the treatment of religious representatives according to respect and caste. These are unfamiliar aspects to a northern researcher, even with prior theoretical knowledge of the caste system. The use of observation is made all the more relevant as it allows for a greater understanding of social structures and everyday life due to its close perspective on knowledge production in the field. However, I did not have much practice with it beforehand so my own observations were probably limited, which is why I discussed them with my translator and I will in the thesis compare them to previous studies made at Kataragama.

Among my own considerations it is important to point out my gender as a factor as the religious representatives at the KSA were all male, due to the caste perspectives and the priorities of my gatekeeper. It may have been a limitation in regards of how seriously they took me, but it may also have come at an advantage as they had less cause to feel threatened

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[4] Which is an interesting notion in itself that will be analysed in chapter five by the use of secondary sources.

by me. It was also easy to ask for clarification and explanations to aspects they themselves took for granted.

Informants

The informants in my core interviews were representatives from the main religions with physical temples at the KSA; Islam, Buddhism, Ganesh (Hindu), Valli Amma and Kataragama. According to my sampling preferences they were to have a relation to the temple from during the time of the civil war, and most did. However especially the interview at the mosque suffered from lacking this criterion, as it was the first interview and not well prepared by my gatekeeper; the interviewee had only been employed there for about a year. It made the results rather different, yet it was an interesting point of view. Most of the interviewees had received the position from relatives, which is an interesting note that I'll reflect more upon in the analysis. I performed the interviews with my translator where they were based, so the comfort of the subjects was a priority. I also did not want to take too much of their time so my interpreters performed some interviews on behalf of me with doing them wholly in Sinhala or Tamil and adding their own follow-up questions where it was necessary.

2.7 Validity and credibility

My empirical data construction was made with qualitative methods, where it was based on a small case with a financial and time limit. This led to a focus on few key interviews representing the religions with physical connections to the KSA, but with supporting observational methods to validate the information from these interviews by gaining further depth and potential confirmation. My credibility was important when introducing the study to the interviewees in order to ensure the validity of their answers. Both my own, the translators' and the gatekeepers' presence had an effect on the intersubjective data, both during interviews and observation as we all represented different cultures and norms based on our identities and positions - especially mine with my gender, young age and nationality connected to the debated peace mediation during the civil war. In addition to observation and making notes of what was seen and heard, I also kept a research diary to make note of the overall impressions and conversations that were informal yet part of the overall fieldwork experience (Crang & Cook, 2007).

Still, given the change of research plan and the observed limitations the fieldwork was followed through to the best of my capability, especially due to my awareness of these issues.

3. THEORETICAL APPROACH TO RELIGION AND PLACE

While there has been a multitude of qualitative studies of the KSA over the decades by especially social anthropologists (Obeyesekere, 1978, 1981, 1984; Pfaffenberger 1979; Wirz 1966; Goonasekera, 2007) and theologists (Kalyanasunderam 1980; Harrigan, 1998; Frydenlund, 2003), the geography field is not well represented. To combine my academic backgrounds I will utilise terminology and concepts from the anthropological realm and focus on theories from the field of cultural geography as they can serve as a bridge between both the micro and macro perspectives, and between more natural science- and social-science and human science research. This is largely due to the attention to scales and thus how human life is influenced by factors both from above and within (Anderson, 2015; Rigg, 2007). It is important to consider this when understanding the complex place that Kataragama is, as there are both political and cultural factors from above influencing the development of the sacred place as well as the influence by the varied devotees who both visit during the annual festival and who use it on a daily basis. Therefore the following theoretical perspectives will be used in order to analyse these aspects of the sacred place.

Place is chosen as the main concept and approach in this study because it can be seen as the "key term for interdisciplinary research in the arts, humanities and social science in the twenty-first century" (Malpas cited in Cresswell, 2015, p. 1). A straightforward definition of place is in Cresswell's (2015) view that it is a *meaningful location*. In this way place is seen as a way of understanding as it is "an aspect of the way we choose to think about it – what we decide to emphasize and what we decide to designate as unimportant" (Cresswell, 2015, p. 18). This is especially important when considering contested places, such as the many multi-religious sites in Sri Lanka. However, in order to fully understand the importance of place in Kataragama the concept of religion and its ties to geography needs to be unpacked as it is arguably a sacred place where the role of religion as a cultural component is central.

3.1 Geography and religion

Sopher is considered to be one of the forefathers in the field of geography and religions, and it is especially his publication *Geography of religions* (1967) which is acclaimed as it gives a "masterly overview of an emerging field" (Park, 1994, p. 19). Sopher saw the importance of a connection between cultural geography and the geography of religion already in 1967. As the relationships both between the earth environment and a culture, and different cultures' spatial

interaction is the foci of cultural geography, this is also utilised and narrowed down further as "the geography of religion investigates these relationships, concentrating its attention on the religious component in culture" (Sopher, 1967, p. 1). He takes an approach to religion as a cultural component, thus acknowledging the dynamic nature it has and this can be tied to affecting place as part of the traces that *create* places, in light of Cresswell and Anderson's arguments which will be further outlined in section 4.2.

Spatial approach

The beginning of a spatial turn in the study of religion originated with Lefebvre's *La production de l'espace* in 1974, where a new view of culture was presented. Rather than considering it as primordial and classifying, culture was understood as having an existence both in and through space and with cultural classifications and social divisions often being spatialised (Knott, 2010). This work has heavily influenced cultural geographers working with religion, and a recent development in the geography of religion that followed the spatial approach is Thomas Tweed's view on religion as he uses a spatial definition:

> Religions are confluences of organic-cultural flows that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and suprahuman forces to make homes and cross boundaries (Tweed, 2006, p. 54).

It is especially the aspect of crossing boundaries from this definition that will be highlighted in this thesis, since Kataragama is a place of many boundaries – both in abstract space and grounded place. Movement and religion is tied together on several scales and Tweed (2006) asserts; "religions, in other words, involve finding one's place and moving through space" (p. 74) as it positions men and women in the social space and grounded place. The practice of crossing is vital to religion as it enables crossing the limits of embodied life by not only earthbound but also cosmic and corporeal manners (ibid). Knott (2010) points out that this is a theory with the potential to be applied to other religious lives, and this is an encouragement that will be taken up in this thesis and thus applied to the multi-religious relations at Kataragama in order to understand the importance of the religious aspects of the place.

Knott (2010) also highlights that Tweed's examination of dwelling and crossing as concepts in religion give many possibilities to rethink religion through spatial metaphors. Especially crossing as it has the potential "to connect geographical, embodied and imagined movements

and transformations" (ibid). This is because religions facilitate crossing, this being movements from one position to another within either physical places or more fluid spaces. Religion is in Tweed's spatial perspective a category that is about both settling and moving across because they "designate where we are *from*, identify whom we are *with*, and prescribe how we move *across*" (Tweed, 2006, p. 79).

Sacred space and movement

The concept of sacred space is quite complex, and it is important in not only practice - such as rituals - but also in theory. This is according to Park because it "demarcates certain places and spaces as having some particular religious association, and by definition sets them apart from the rest of geographical space" (1994, p. 258). Yet space as a concept is often distinguished from place, due to its more abstract nature. Place and space are not necessarily dichotomies, as space arguably is also a socially produced human product. Religious space and the sacred are connected concepts that are difficult to pin down. This is much due to the varied scales which religion adheres to; it can be a physical place at a local level, such as the mosque in Kataragama where devotees come to worship Sufi-saints, or at a supra-local level with sacred sites where key events in the religions development took place, such as the Kataragama area in general due to the shared mythical story of God Kataragama's marriage to Valli Amma (Anderson, 2015). Within this one religious area there are thus different levels of sanctity, and what is considered religious space and place is fluid.

Rigg (2007) sees space as something abstract, while place is grounded, and this is a less discerning way to consider the different concepts. Space is in many ways the opposite of place, yet they are still connected concepts because gaining meaning through human effort also socially produces spaces. Panelli (2003) uses the same view when highlighting that identity construction can implicate space by either drawing boundaries and through that including or excluding each other; as will be discussed further with Andersons (b)ordering concept below.

In light of this discussion it is important to point out that space and place, as concepts, are not clearly distinguished by most of geographers on religion, as Jackson and Henrie show below in their definition of sacred space as:

That portion of the earth's surface which is recognised by individuals or groups as worthy of devotion, loyalty or esteem. Space is sharply discriminated from the non-sacred or profane world around it. Sacred space does not exist naturally, but is assigned sanctity as man denies, limits and characterises it through his culture, experience and goals (1983, p. 94)

Theologist Harrigan (1998) has a similar approach to sacred geography, as he argues it is the rare and divine spots where divinity is revealed on the physical earth, thus creating sacred places when considering the dichotomous definition of place as space with added meaning. What it is important to take from this discourse is what Park (1994) points out; most religions see sacred space as real places on the ground. Yet they do not necessarily have equal status amongst believers, as might prove especially apparent at Kataragama where the devotees have very different backgrounds and reasons for worship.

There are differences within both contexts and religions in how sacred sites are selected, and Park (1994) points out that there is also an important distinction to make between *religious* and *sacred* sites as "places can be of historical significance in a religion without being imbued with the quality of sanctity, and places used for worship can be sacred space but are not necessarily so" (1994, p. 252). When it comes to what distinguishes a sacred place and therefore its significance is also context dependent. Yet, Park (1994) claims that pilgrimage is a clear sign of the significance of sacred space, as a physical and visual manifestation of the sanctity as the locale is associated with a manifestation of the divine. The fact that Kataragama is a multi-religious place gives the Pada Yatra foot-pilgrimage a special nature as its participants belong to not only several communities from all over the island, but also a multitude of religions (Harrigan, 1998). Multi-religious pilgrimage is distinguished from other forms by Bhardwaj as the goal of it "specific and very much related to this existential reality [healing], not to an abstract or unknown here-after. In fact, the goal is to get well. But even if that is not possible, to at least feel better in the process" (Bhardwaj, 1987, p. 463). Yet the pilgrimage is also affecting others than the devotees as it can promote trade flows of a secondary nature, enable cultural exchange, political integration, or even spread disease as the British colonists worried about in regards to the Kataragama pilgrimage (Sopher, 1967; Nichols-Barrer, 2003). The pilgrimage's geographical importance is affected by all of these factors, but it is particularly the interrelation between not only the pilgrim as a person, but

their origin, motivations and social groupings, and the destination as a setting, its shrines and development – as they are changing each other (Park, 1994).

Scale

Scale is a concept which denotes where a process is taking place, and it is important to separate scale from both place and space and to consider their distinctions as separate concepts when using qualitative data construction, as Rigg (2007) shows when discussing how people are challenging existing power relations by creating abstract spaces and making them into grounded and secure places. In order to separate the various scales and actors social anthropologist Fredrik Barth's (1994) levels of micro-, medium-, macro-, and international-perspective analysis will be utilised. Here the micro-perspective looks into what is occurring at an individual level with a focus on personal experiences, while the medium-perspective studies processes in society, and macro-perspective looks at the national level where ideologies are articulated (ibid). This view can be connected to Anderson's (2015) use of scale as it has a similar structure, and he focuses on the fact that everyday practices and thus culture, are building a sense of local place and that it is direct interaction between individuals which makes the local, or micro, scale unique. To generate a sense of place at a larger scale is more difficult and must be done with different means, such as at the national level where Anderson points to belonging being established through the creation of flags, music and invented rituals – all of these aspects are occurring at Kataragama, by different actors from various cultures.

3.2 Place as a religious construct

Place is an important concept, in not only - but yet especially – geography studies, as it concerns the realm of experience and meaning; if contrasting the concepts, place is what space becomes when invested with meaning in the context of power (Cresswell 2015). Cresswell highlights that creating place is an ancient process that happens globally and at all scales; it is not limited to any decades or areas. However, this scope also makes it a disputed concept as it is up to interpretation and therefore often vague, especially when considering discourses. My choice of a place-based approach to understand the importance of Kataragama is because both the concept and theory reflect the importance it has within the geography discourse, especially as there is "no other discipline that [holds it as] a central defining concept" (Cresswell, 2015, p. 24).

More-than-representation approach

The chosen approach to analyse the importance of the KSA in my thesis is from within the cultural geography discourse, as it is relatable to a micro perspective and my focus on identity and belonging. Jon Anderson's (2015) "more-than-representation" theory defines place as the result of the intersection between context and culture. This is a complex definition, as it claims that places are *created* by culture, which in itself are the traces that are made by human life that can be both material and non-material. Anderson (2015) argues that places ought to be understood as "ongoing compositions of traces" (p. 5), and that it is cultural geographers' role to interrogate these traces. The traces are also constantly produced and they tie the meaning of places to the identity of the cultural groups that make them; connecting geography and identity (ibid).

Because place is not necessarily either representational or non-representational[5], with its emotional ties and material grounding Anderson argues that it can be both. This approach allows for a view of place as something that is changeable and can be fought over, as there in the case of Kataragama are claims by the religious institutions with ownership to the place (ibid). These different claims can lead to different outcomes, and the nuances between the result in production of either a hybrid place where the traces are combined or a 'battleground' where ownership decides residency and use, is one of the main points of investigating the different claims to the KSA. This aspect is especially interesting when contrasting the development of Kataragama to other religious places in Sri Lanka, such as Anuradhapura or Kandy as they today are associated with Buddhism.

Place is within this perspective dynamic, since culture is continually produced (ibid). People and places influence each other, therefore the production of place and its identity go both ways. While the aforementioned relationship is reciprocal, there are also important power structures at play that makes places political (ibid). Panelli (2003) builds on this by using the concept of identity, and how it is continually renegotiated as it is interpreted by both the individual and others. The crucial point that identity changes in implication, as well as in its value, in different places is highlighted by her. This was an aspect I was quite curious of prior to the fieldwork and that ended up not affecting myself as much as my research assistant, due

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[5] As the non-representational theory suggests (Anderson, 2015)

to the fact that my identity as a foreigner stood out at all the different sacred areas within Kataragama[6]. Meanwhile my research assistant is of Muslim faith and wears a hijab as an indicator of this; thus giving off a message that was interpreted very differently within the sacred area. While we were conducting interviews and observing the use of the various religious buildings I was unsurprisingly gaining some attention while in the area around the inner Maha Devale and the outer area around the mosque where there is a combination of shrines and temples by friendly queries on whether I was there alone, and generally what my purpose was as it was outside of the festival time. However this differed with my research assistant as she gained much attention as we were observing along the Kiri Vehera road and by the stupa, in the only part of Kataragama which is distinctly belonging to only one religion; Buddhism. Here her identity stood out more than mine and came in contrast with the majority, so devotees questioned her placement by not only looking at her but also questioning her identity in ways such as asking "Muslim girl?" These questions made her feel uncomfortable in this distinct area at Kataragama.

Creating place

People and places influence each other, as both Panelli and Anderson exemplify above. The process of creating a place is as mentioned a dynamic production where meaning is given to the human beings' surroundings. In light of this Cresswell's argument that places never are finished rings true, since they are "produced through the reiteration of practices – the repetition of seemingly mundane activities on a daily basis" (2015, p. 116). This production is heavily influenced by both power and memory, as *what* is remembered can be controlled through place. Cresswell (2015) sees the concepts of place and memory as being inevitably intertwined because "one of the primary ways in which memories are constituted is through the production of places. Monuments, museums, the preservation of particular buildings (and not others)…"(p. 119), these show *placing* of memory. A place's materiality makes the memory inscribed in the landscape thus creating a public memory. Cresswell refers to the work of historian Delores Hayden to explain that the nature of individual experience of place makes it a tool for the religious representatives with ownership that can be used in the '(re)production' of memory.

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[6] Goodhand, Klem & Korf's (2009) article on religious boundaries also describes this with detail on p. 681, especially in regards to religious markers having different meanings based on place within Sri Lanka during the civil war.

Within this perspective on place and memory Cresswell uses museums as particularly clear examples of active inscriptions of place in the memory of specific groups, and that it "for the most part places serve to commemorate the winners of history" (122). The Norwegian geographer Kvidal-Røvik makes a similar argument when exclaiming "*What* is remembered is directly tied to *where* it's remembered" (2015, p. 102, emphasis in original, translation by me). Kvidal-Røvik emphasises the fact that public memorials constitute cultural authority, and this is in line with the article by Hay et. al (2004) that criticizes the Adelaide gardens in Australia's colonial celebration. While the Kataragama museum also is an example of this (as I will discuss in more detail in chapter six), yet it is not celebrating the colonial powers but rather over-emphasising the Buddhist presence in southern Sri Lanka.

It is well known when it comes to criticism of historical sources that "history is written by the victors" and hence are representations of power, but when it comes to place and the role of memory it's highly important not to take it for granted. This is because it is always surrounding people and both consciously and subconsciously shaping the future memories, and this makes the question of *whose* values are being commemorated and promoted all the more important[7]. This happens with not only monuments or museums but also buildings; "Clearly places have many memories and the question of which memories are promoted and which cease to be memories at all is a political question" (Cresswell, 2015, p. 123).

3.3 (B)Ordering

Agnew and Duncan (1989, in Anderson, 2015) have an influential approach to place where they take the different dimensions of it into account as they separate locale, location and sense of attachment. Bordering can be understood in light of this definition as the power place has in affecting people's sense of belonging in a geographical site, due to the different dimensions of place working together. Anderson (2015) expands on this in his more-than-representation definition of place as he believes the sense of belonging is created by the traces that culturally order places, yet I will argue that this also works in accordance with physical geographical borders as there are sacred places in Kataragama that have physical borders limiting the movement of people – despite the claims of some interviewees.

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[7] See Hay, Hughes & Tutton (2004), Tolia-Kelly (2004) and Dwyer & Alderman (2008) for more on how memory in the landscape affects the future.

When talking about the cultural ordering of places Anderson uses the concept of *(b)ordering* processes in order to explain what happens when groups "attempts to define the organisation and limits of a place, as well as the cultural group who claims it" (2015, p. 64). The aim of this process is to establish power over what and who doesn't, or does, belong in a given place. A border can thus actively be created and it can be a physical representation in the landscape such as a fence, yet often it is a mental separation and therefore much more difficult to discern. If considering Newman and Paasi's definition of a border as *"the point of contact or separation that usually creates an 'us' and 'other' identity"* (1998, p. 191 in Anderson 2015) it becomes easier to see that it is apparent in both places and spaces, and this is something that will be touched upon in more detail later as I claim that the borders within the KSA are effectively creating differences among identities. In order to discern how these differences are created, and especially how place is affected, the concept of power demands attention.

Power and place

Michel Foucault is well known within the social sciences and his in-depth works on the power concept are widely accepted. He sees power as neither spatial nor as an object, but rather as something "which circulates, or rather something which only functions in the form of a chain" (Foucault, 1980, p. 98); this makes it relational as Foucault presents it as a net-like organization where people are the *vehicle* of power. Power is also placed within discourses by Foucault, due to the fact that it demands context and meaning to be influential. This aspect on power can be applied to the concept of place as the view used in my analytical approach uses context and culture as the driving forces of what creates places. Aure et al. (2015) also argues that the notion of power actually changes when considering a place as becoming - with the approach seeing place as being dynamic is just that – as it then is a productive force that creates both the place and the actors.

Anderson (2015) expands on this notion of power and its place in cultural geography as he sees it as the very root of it with the influence it has in the creation, maintenance and destruction of both borders and orders. Power is therefore continually shaping the composition of the traces that create places and it is these traces that are fought over through acts of resistance and domination. Anderson also utilises Foucault's notion of power as a transformative capacity as it's has the ability to transforms other's traces to reach one's own goals; and he ties it to the agency of all individuals as they have a degree of power which can transform how people not only think but also act. This means that all individuals who frequent

the KSA do have a power over the place, and that the festival may have its own transformative action due to the difference in values held by the participants during this fifteen day period.

It is important to study place with power in mind because it is seen in the landscape, and by doing so Anderson argues that one can read the power struggles and identify who has the power to transform the place, and are thus dominating. When power becomes dominating it means that it can successfully control the action of others, and this can be done through Andersons' ordering concept as traces are bordered. It is interesting that Anderson points to signs as clear signifiers of this form of dominating power; in Sri Lanka all religious places that have UNESCO protection have a multitude of signs urging certain behaviour. In Anuradhapura, which is considered among the holiest and most sacred place for Buddhists in Sri Lanka due to the Bo-tree there being the last remnant of the tree Buddha gained his enlightenment under, the signs stood out as more controlling than others as they suggested how to dress as well (see picture nr. 2 in appendix 1). Dark coloured clothing was discouraged, in addition to the rules normally written on such signs (see picture nr. 1 in appendix 1).

Caste

Caste is a system of division that has been heavily debated within anthropology and which is mainly associated with India and Hinduism. The most well-established definition is by Louis Dumont (1980), and he sees it as a division of the whole society into hereditary groups that are distinguished from, yet also connected to, each other by the three characteristics of *hierarchy, division* and *separation*. When considering this definition in relation to my analysis of Kataragama it is the characteristic of hierarchy that is the most prevalent. It is interesting to point out that caste as a concept of social differentiation turned out to be unavoidable during my fieldwork due to my focus on religion.

Caste was not included in my interview guide nor was it a concept I planned on focusing on, yet it appeared very obvious when coding the interviews as there was a clear trend. It was pointed out to me by a sociology professor during an expert interview as a most natural explanation to my question about the hereditary aspects of the official positions held at Kataragama, such as the Nilame and Kapurala. As a response to my question on the generational positions at the temples in Kataragama my informant answered:

It is a common tradition, taught by parents. They are from a particular caste system hierarchy. It is a secular position because of levels of purity. They have to be clean. (Interview with sociology professor, August 2016)

3.4 Analytical approach to religious place

I will focus on how Kataragama as a place both has developed and how it is continually created by different actors in order to analyse my key research question; *to understand what constitutes sacred place, and how people of diverse identities converge on the same religious place.* In order to do this I will focus on the fact that places cannot be neutral as the context and culture that make up places are always partial; their visibility, or effect, depends on power as they are representing cultural preferences in the place. It is my assumption that in Kataragama there are very different cultures that affect the creation of the place. The traces of the different cultures can be used to persuade; thus they are a force of power over somebody. The traces of cultural hegemony from the caste positions at Kataragama are certainly forces of power that affect the creation of place, and the fact that it is an on-going process is important to highlight. How both devotees and religious representatives experience the place is important to take into account as this says much about how the place is developing and which traces are dominant. The concepts of sacred space and place are diffuse when shifting between discourses as I do with my combination of cultural and religious geography and social anthropology. Therefore it is necessary to point out the fluid and abstract nature of Kataragama sacred space, as it is also arguably an embodied experience, as for instance the pilgrimage route from the northern tip of Sri Lanka to the deep South effectively is a shared experience of sacred space (Harrigan 1998).

In order to bridge the scales and different discourses used in this chapter on theoretical approaches to religion and place I will utilise Anderson's (2015) concept of places as ongoing processes that are created by human life and the context which they exist in to explain how Kataragama is a *sacred* place to several religions, and thus a place with both hybrid aspects and bordering processes happening *through* transgression. Because I argue that place is a construction, I will use this perspective to explain why Kataragama as a *symbol* of religious unity is important within the Sri Lankan context, and to analyse how it is considered to be sacred by so many different cultures; as its development parallels the changes in religious context nationally. Yet there is also a difference in how this religious place has developed

when comparing with other multi-religious places, and this is an aspect I will look more into using the aforementioned theories in relation to place and power.

There will always be a connection between assumptions about normative behaviour and geographical places, yet the level of the bordering process and sense of place varies based on context (Cresswell, 2015). This raises the question whether transgression exists in Kataragama, as it occurs when someone crosses either a socio-cultural or geographical line (ibid).

4. RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

This chapter will focus on the development of religion in Sri Lanka through the changes to its demography, much due to the colonial history and migration. The influences from foreign powers were quite varied as they had different goals and methods of colonisation, as will be explored in more detail below. However, this chapter will begin by placing Kataragama as it is the foci of this thesis, and then delve into how its development has been along with the religious and political change in the country, and lastly look in to how this affects the sacred status of Kataragama today.

Kataragama is well known within Sri Lanka as an important religious place and it is located in the deep south, at the very edge of the Yala jungle. It is an ancient place with many different names (such as Kathirgamam, Katirkamam, Kajaragama) and it has been mentioned in many different religious and historical texts such as the Mahavamsa and Skanda Upada. It is known for its distinctive Pada Yatra (foot) pilgrimage (see map in appendix 5) and the Esala Perahera (religious procession) festival in August of the Kataragama deity - whom the place is named after - where cultures and religions from the whole country gather in one place. The tie between the pilgrimage, the influences of different traditions along with a deity who several have a relation to – although in different manners and views – makes it a very important and interesting place. The sacred area as a physical place, or a location within Agnew's theory, is located as a complex that is clearly separated and apart from the town as one has to cross one of the bridges over the Menik Ganga river, or wade the river itself, to enter. In order to understand the importance of this shared sacred space the religious, cultural and political development of Sri Lanka, with a focus on Kataragama, will now be explored.

4.1 Far past; from the mythical ancient times and through colonialism

The Mahavamsa is one of the oldest Sri Lankan foundational stories and it is the main text of the Buddhist Vamsic chronicles, and it was because of this according to Michael Hertzberg (2016) rediscovered during the colonial time and used as a tool for religio-national revivalism so it is not a neutral source. As mentioned above Kataragama is included in this text, as one of the oldest sources to do so, with the recognisable name Kajaragama. It was through the mention of being the seat of a clan who paid homage to the Buddhist Sri Maha Bodhi tree in Anuradhapura, that is used to lay a Buddhist claim to the island and to Kataragama as a branch from the same tree is planted there and is a reinforce of the fact that the island is

"Dhamma Dipa"; the undivided homeland of Theravada Buddhism (Frydenlund, 2003; Stokke & Ryntveit, 2000). Yet Frydenlund points out that what religious activity was transpiring in the entire island and Kataragama specifically prior to the arrival of the Bodhi tree is not accounted for – and thus other forms of religious practice are likely to have occurred. The Sri Lankan Tamil perspective on ancient history in Sri Lanka is that Tamil Eelam was an independent Tamil kingdom in the Jaffna-area in the North, and that it was this way until the Colonialists forced the ethnically divided nations to unite into one state in opposition, thus making the Tamils a minority within the larger country with more Sinhalese (Stokke, 1999).

Colonial invasions and influences

With the Western Colonial invasions and their cultural influences new social formations appeared, such as the Catholic or Christian Tamils or Sinhalese and the mixed descendants like the Moors[8], and they can still be seen in the Sri Lankan society today. For instance the highland and lowland Sinhalese differences were increased during the Dutch colonisation, which led to distinctions in both politics and culture as the lowland area was more influenced by the Western customs and development (Wickramasinghe, 2014). The Tamil communities were rather affected by the import of labourers of South Indian origin, that created a distinction between Ceylon Tamils and Indian Tamils, as they were separated geographically with the imported Tamils working in the tea-plantation areas in the mountains and thus separating their cultures and history (Ibid). The effect on identity is according to the historian Wickramasinghe (2014) the most lasting result of the Portuguese occupation from 1505 to 1658, as it affected the religious faith; both the Sinhalese and Tamil communities were experiencing threats towards them as "the Portuguese discriminated against other religions with a vengeance, destroyed Buddhist and Hindu temples, and gave temple lands to Roman Catholic religious orders" (Wickramasinghe, 2014, p. 23).

This had ramifications for how religion was connected to power, and politics, as the Kandyan Kingdom used both Buddhism and Hindu gods to legitimise its power. This is especially important to keep in mind as the Portuguese colonialists did not occupy all of Sri Lanka, and especially the Kandyan kingdom in the middle of the country was considered a safe place for Buddhists as monks fled there (ibid). Kataragama was also directly connected to the political

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[8] Colonialists' term for Muslim community of mixed origin

legitimacy and security of the Kandyan kingdom for the three centuries prior to British rule as the Kataragama deity was recognised as a protector of the Kandyan kingdom, subjects attended the pilgrimage and temples were built there for the four guardian deities: Visnu, Pattini, Kataragama, and Natha (Frydenlund, 2003; Meegama, 2011). This led to a connection between Kataragama as a place and the power of the kingdom, which was still present during the British Colonial time and resulted in them sending a military detachment to Kataragma on the 18.03.1815 that robbed and terrorised the civilians in order to quell the religious mobilisation (Nichols-Barrer, 2003).

The British took over the Dutch controlled areas in 1796 and colonised the whole island - being the first European nation to do so - in 1815 when the British ousted the king of Kandy with "the Kandyan Convention" (Wickramasinghe, 2014). The loss of state patronage at the fall of the Kandyan kingdom affected the very vitality of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, especially because the colonial powers both withdrew support and actively opposed Buddhist tradition (ibid). As religion, and the Kataragama deity as well, was used to unite the locals against the Colonial powers a "divine mandate" was used during uprisings. The Hindu Dore Swami was for instance participating in this when he gathered a resistance force by *using* Kataragama's power (ibid).

The change in demography that was introduced by the Colonialists also affected Kataragama especially as the displaced "Indian Tamil" labourers found familiarity in the worship through pilgrimage, and they even represented the ethnic majority at the 1870 festival (ibid). This affected the place in many ways, as the next chapter will look more into. Nichols-Barrer claims that "rather than acting as a sign of political resistance against foreign invasions, the Kataragama festival was now operating predominantly as a cultural site of religious significance to the displaced workers of the colonial economic system" (2003, p. 50). This statement shows that the shared worship in the place, and especially in the way that various forms of worship and especially the pilgrimage, was important. In fact it was considered so important by the British Colonial force that they took over the administration of the festival and gave the responsibility to Steele, a British employee, in 1873 (ibid). The main reason, except from the symbolism of it, was that the festival was associated with spread of disease and thusly the plantations could possibly be financially affected. The perspective of Steele on the religious practice is summed up in his reports where he states that the devotees wanted "vested rights in spreading disease" (Steele, 1874, p. 107). Thusly it was attempted to

decrease the number of attendants and to limit the duration of the festival to only three days by introducing a ticket system that actually lasted until 1910. It was finally abolished because the colonialists realised that *"a limited number of police and administrators stood no chance of turning back a united and organised party of 1000 worshippers who served an established ritual function at the festival"* (Nichols-Barrer, 2003, p. 54).

The changing political situation in Sri Lanka with the colonial powers created a process of "Otherness" which was directed towards the Colonial powers. The opposing religions, both Hinduism and Buddhism, joined together against the cultural change that Christian colonists were introducing, as can be seen in the example above from resistance at Kataragama (interview with sociology professor, August 2016). Obeyesekere (2004) explains that the Buddhist reaction to this was mainly because the Christian faith and aggressive proselytization threatened the Buddhist identity, as the Sinhala part of the country no longer could be seen as a Buddhist "nation" when the dominant political power was Christian. In effect this served to reinforce Buddhist and Sinhala identity in the post 16th century, and lead to the process of general religious revivalism in Sri Lanka. The religious revivalist movements in Sri Lanka were according to Wickramasinghe (2014) not distinct social movements but rather more affected by the personalities connected to them and the various actions made. A collective consciousness of identity was created in different ways; especially through increased revival of religious space by pilgrimage - to both Anuradhapura and Kataragama[9].

4.2 Recent past; civil war and the post-colonial age

Sri Lanka gained its independency in 1948 after centuries of colonisation that had a great impact on not only the diversity of the people or their religious practice, but also in dividing manners that the political climate in the post-independence era still has remnants of. These issues of the post-independence era were according to anthropologist Jane Derges (2013) highly affected by a process that started as early as 1920; namely the pursuit of a national identity. It was at the same time that the British administration left Kataragama and Sinhalese pilgrims began to take control of the political vacuum, as Nichols-Barrer (2003) highlights the infrastructure-projects after the independence as a clear example of this, for instance by having extra busses for the southern population. This tightening of ethnic borders along with

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[9] Jeganathan (1995) & Nichols-Barrer (2003) respectively, have documented this.

the issues mentioned above eventually led to the creation of separate Tamil political parties to have a national unity that could protect Tamil rights, as the representation of the ethnic groups was a sore issue (Derges, 2013).

In the immediate aftermath of the independence the religious momentum that had been directed towards the colonial forces for so long was taken over by popular political groups, and eventually resulted in the landmark-election of the pro-Sinhalese Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike as Prime minister in 1956 on the premises that the opposition was pro-Christian and more Western (Wickramasinghe, 2014). He introduced the infamous "Sinhala Only Act" that changed the official language of Sri Lanka from English to Sinhala – and thus excluding the entire Tamil speaking population – which caused an outrage and was the start of a long period of disputes between the ethnicities (Hertzberg, 2016). It was also the beginning of the anti-Tamil riots that occurred sporadically over decades as a reaction to the Tamil's protest against the act (Stokke & Ryntveit, 2000).

This form of politics led to Tamil nationalists claiming they were being "internally colonised" by the Sinhalese in a similar manner to what the British had done (Stokke & Ryntveit, 2000). According to Spencer (2012) the most obvious factor for the many political crises following the independence was the government's failure to settle the Tamil's objections in a manner that could also be acceptable to the Sinhalese. The power of the Sinhalese, and especially the Buddhists monks, led to further alienation of the Tamils and Christians from the political centre from 1956, and while this was reacted to with non-violent campaigns up until the 1970s when isolationist policies were introduced, the grievances of minorities led to Tamil militant groups reacting and pushing back (Hertzberg, 2016).

Civil war

While there are many different factors as to why a civil war broke out in Sri Lanka in 1983, it was according to Spencer (2012) not because of the cultural differences or ancient history, but the result of the hegemonic depictions of primordial times combined with the political rhetoric. Derges (2013) argues that the Tamil's were seen as the 'others' in the post-colonial era's failure to construct an encompassing national identity under a cohesive state, and this led to reactions and confrontations that escalated. The beginning of the civil war that lasted until 2009 is considered to have started with the events of the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam), who fought for the claim of a historic Tamil Eelam country, killing 13

government soldiers and the anti-Tamil riots that followed during the month of 'Black July' where Tamil civilians were attacked across the country (Hertzberg, 2016).

The Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) had to intervene in 1987 because the hostilities increased, and it was only then the country was officially defined as a "multi-ethnic and multi-lingual plural society" (Wickramasinghe, 2014, p. 199). The intervention led to the Indo- Sri Lankan Peace Accord that gave relative self-governance to the Tamils in the east and north, but it was also met with massive reactions and even led to the Sinhalese Nationalist movement JVP (Janata Vimukthi Peramuna) to lead an armed conflict with the government in the southern areas (Hertzberg, 2016; Stokke & Ryntveit, 2000).

The Sri Lankan civil war was a drawn out conflict with many steps backwards, largely due to the power and opposition of political monks who were against increasing Tamil rights due to their belief in 'Dhamma Dipa'; the monkhood was therefore directly critical of all proposals of devolution (ibid). It was also an ethnically induced struggle for entitlements for both the Tamils and Sinhala Buddhists that was drawn out. In this description it is important to point out that those who were most affected by this were the people caught in the midst of the fighting; the largely Tamil northern population who "sometimes did not approve of the methods employed by the LTTE, they believed there was no other organization capable of protecting or representing their interests" (Kingsbury, 2012, p. 69).

The civil war changed after the Norwegian-led peace facilitation halted and Rajapaksa of the SLFP (Sri Lankan Freedom Party) won the 2004 election on the vow that he would end the war with military means; which he did by initiating active warfare in the northern areas from 2006 till 2009 (Hertzberg, 2016). The last stages of the war have been highly debated for not adhering to human rights, and it has yet to be accounted for – despite the United Nations' official inquiry and the current government's promises to make one.

Post-war state

Rajapaksa was re-elected after the end of the war with 58 per cent of the votes on the 27th January 2010, and he led such politics that convinced the citizens of the legitimacy in the patriotic post-war state (Wickramasinghe, 2014). Yet this patriotism and the measures to build it was entrenched in cultural politics; the spread of pride in the past and national heritage was at the focus of it, and again the Sinhalese past was put forward. Wickramasinghe asserts that this use of heritage "is as much about production of the present as reproduction of the past"

(2014, p. 393), and this led to a thriving patriotism that validated the state constructions of heritage that was focused on cultural symbols of the Sinhalese community. It eventually led to the Tamils especially feeling that the state was renovating traces of Buddhist heritage in the east and north, and that Hindu heritage was neglected (ibid). This is also reflected at Kataragama where the museum was built in 2008, under Rajapaksa's government and where it focused on Buddhist symbols.

In addition to this the post-war government allowed for the BBS (Bodu Bala Sena), a movement led by Buddhist monks that claim Buddhists are at a disadvantage and that resources are controlled by minorities, and who attacked revivalist Muslim movements especially (interview with sociology professor, August 2016). It was a powerful movement for three years, from 2012 until 2015 when a new president who focused on reconciliation with minorities was elected; Maithripala Sirisena's UNP-led opposition coalition surprisingly won the election on the 8th January with 51.3 per cent of the votes (Burke, 2015).

Despite the change in government to one that is more reactionary towards extremism such as BBS, there are examples of a nationalistic identification that is used as resistance in a more low-scale way as an underlying tension between the various religious and ethnic groups is still active, and it is even visible in the public through movements and even on public transportation; for instance the movements "SinhaLe" and its response "Different yet equal" were a discussion topic during my fieldwork[10]. The SinhaLe movement has also broadened into the public visibility as it its symbol of the Sinhalese lion on the Sri Lankan flag is used alone to signify their claim to a 'united' island with decoration and especially stickers denoting the ethnic identity of the driver on the three-wheelers used as taxis. This was a noticeable trend especially in Kandy during my fieldwork, but it was also observed in Kataragama which indicates it is spreading.

Today, all these processes and traces that have been outlined above are visible at within the kataragama complex in not only the physical structures, which will be further unpacked in the next chapter, but also in the devotional practices and cultures that have been coulored by the people who use the place. The politics and structural processes touched upon here, including the civil war as a culmination of all these, have also affected the place and the entire island in

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[10] SinhaLe movement currently has over 30,000 followers on their Facebook-group, and are actively pro-Sinhalese https://www.facebook.com/pg/SJBOFFICIALPAGE/about/?ref=page_internal

such ways that it should be obvious that tolerance and respect for each other - no matter which ancestral claim there might be.

4.3 Traces and physical manifestations in Kataragama today

Kataragama is a place where there are many different cultural traces, as has been outlined above, and this makes it a complex place to understand. One of the more interesting traces of a specific culture is that the Tamil community still has a very clear influence on both the physical place and the rituals performed there, unlike many other previously multi-religious places in Sri Lanka. It is especially the pilgrims coming from both the northern areas and the hill-country, thus representing both main Tamil communities, which have affected the place and the traces increasingly since the British colonialists immigrated Southern Indian labour forces (Obeyesekere, 1981). There are Bhakti (devotion) traditions from the Hindu religion used in the Kataragama temple in an integrated way within the Maha Devale complex, clearly visible during the festival with for instance the fire-walking ritual[11]. Some of these devotional practices are shared among the religions; others are separated within the worship to the same deity or clearly demarcated along ethnic lines. The same applies to the Buddhist traditions and festivals.

There is also a Muslim presence at Kataragama that creates its own unique traces in the place as there is a mosque and shrines placed on the edge of the complex in the direction of Mecca. The mosque in Kataragama is the largest in this area, and it is special due to the active Sufi worship. The Muslim representatives also take part in the Esala festival as the gates are held open and the shrines and Mosque are visited for blessings as usual, but they interestingly also participate actively with the flag-hoisting ceremony that opens the festival.

The indigenous people of Sri Lanka, the Vädda, also have a connection to Kataragama through the deity Kataragama who they worship in their own manner, and through the story of how goddess Valli Amma who was brought up by a Vädda chief. Their physical connection to the place is the tamarind tree (see picture nr. 5 in appendix 1) where she according to the myth met the Kataragama deity. The tree is located by the Valli Amma temple that is placed directly opposite of the Kataragama temple, at the edge of the complex and next to the mosque.

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[11] Obeyesekere discusses the development of the fire-walking ritual over several decades, and in great detail in his publication from 1981; Medusa's hair : an essay on personal symbols and religious experience

The most of the activity at the KSA occurs within the Maha Devale complex, where the Maha Devale temple is the main attraction with the devotion to the Kataragama deity. It is placed together with a Buddhist and Ganesh temple in the middle of the complex, and during the official pooja times it is these three temples that receive offerings from the officials in an organised manner.

There is a Bo tree behind the three temples in the middle of the Maha Devale complex and along with the Kiri Vehera Stupa - that is on the opposite side of the complex from the Mosque and Valli Amma temple - these are the physical places where the Buddhist devotees have their own worship.

There are many other different shrines and religious buildings within the sacred area but the focus in the following chapter will be on the ones mentioned above as they represent the main religions and are what the interviewees pointed out as the important and sacred in the place, as will become evident below.

5. PART I: INCLUSIVE PLACE?

This chapter will explore the KSA as a place by discerning how it is sacred to the different religious representatives and by relating it to theory on sacred and contested place. The concept of sacred space will also be applied, as there is a general sense of sanctity that transcends spatial borders. By focusing on placing Kataragama the main research question to be addressed in this section is *"Who has a claim to Kataragama temple"*. It will be unpacked by looking into what the different religious representatives consider sacred and important about the place, as well as how they interact through rituals; thus exploring different views on the place and answering the sub-research question *"How and why does Kataragama temple represent a religious place for several religious groups"*. The overarching theme of the chapter is whether Kataragama is a place of inclusion, and if it is only symbolic by considering the levels of respect and influences from outside processes such as governmental policies on sacred status and temple management as well as minorities as all of these affect the place. The method and implications of inclusion will also be looked into as there is variation between how it is interpreted and experienced by different religious representatives. The context which has shaped the development of the sacred place was touched upon in chapter three and will be further explored in Part II. Thus it is rather Anderson's theory of "more-than-representation" where place is continually constructed by culture that will be the focus in this chapter, and it is therefore the traces of cultural and religious life that will be investigated.

5.1 Sacred place

In order to unpack the concept of sanctity it is a good starting point to look into the famous quote by social anthropologist Mary Douglas about pollution, where she claims that dirt is simply a *matter out of place*. This implies that there is a structure of ideas concerning dirt due to the classifications made by humans that inherently use value systems, and this leads Douglas to the view on what is holy and thus the symbolic opposite of dirt, because "order is asserted in the ritualized avoidance of ambiguity and indiscretion; man creates the holy by putting it in its place" (Douglas, 1968, p. 196). This statement implies that dirt is relative, and also therefore that what is holy, or sacred in other terms, is also relative depending on the religious representative. It can now also be useful to revisit the aspects of Jackson and Henrie's definition of sacred space, where they focus on the fact that is assigned through culture by limitation and characterisation, and therefore something which will be quite varied

at Kataragama due to the different cultures. It is a characterisation that sets the truly sacred apart from what is not, thus it is a dichotomous concept. As mentioned above Kataragama is a place that is clearly demarcated from the town, and thus limited from ordinary life and non-sacred place, so it does fit into this rather open definition of sacred space. Yet it is also up to interpretation by the different cultures and religious representatives who have a claim to the sacred area, and it will be explored below how there are quite varying views on *why* it is sacred. Whether Kataragama is considered more sacred than other places will also vary; for instance the Kataragama deity ceremonial master who lives within the grounds at least a full month of the year will have a different view than the Christian devotee who visits only during the festival. What aspect of Kataragama that makes the place sacred varies as well, as can be exemplified by my gatekeeper who considered the sacred area in both spatial and embodied terms;

> Why most people come to Kataragama is due to Menik Ganga [river], Kataragama devale, Kirivehera, Ashtapalla Bodhi. People first bathe in the river, worship at kirivehera and come to the Ashtapalla Bodhi and finally we go to Kataragama temple to worship him. I 100% believe that there is so much power in this place (Field interview with Gatekeeper, August 2016).

This comes from a Buddhist point of view, as my gatekeeper's position was made note of in the methodology chapter, and that can be seen in the priority of where to go within the sacred area as he does not mention any of the Hindu temples nor the mosque, thus only those that are under Buddhist claim or are shared by all. Although his view is affected by his personal religion there is a general notion of sanctity at Kataragama that is definitely shared, which occurs at the medium scale, and the relation to the Menik Ganga is a clear example of this. The pilgrims bathe and cleanse themselves in the river when they arrive at Kataragama, the locals wash their clothes in the river, the ceremonial masters purify themselves in the river before poojas and the water-cutting ceremony takes place in the middle of the river (see picture nr. 3 in appendix 1).

Sanctity in Sri Lanka

Within the Sri Lankan context it is a very complex process to define even the concept of religion, due to the many different interpretations of it with cultural ties and the changing context (Herath & Rambukwella, 2015). In the recent post-war developments it's become an

increasingly contested term, and in many ways religion has taken over the role of being the defining force which ethnicity had during the conflict (ibid). What is considered sacred in Sri Lanka is also varied along these same lines, as Spencer et al. (2014) asserts that what is sacred is generally determined based on its division from what is non-sacred in spatial terms, however what is *actually* sacred is diffuse. Spencer et al. identify the sacred in Kataragama as far more open space than other places in Sri Lanka due to its multi-religious elements. They see the sacred as "identified with some sense of religion in general, and is opposed to all kinds of worldly activity" (Spencer et al., 2014, p. 84). Thus they focus on the fact that it is rather the division from the non-sacred that is important. Goodhand et al. (2009) has a contrasting view on this, as they argue that the entire religious field is a highly contested hybrid zone that is affected by politics and internal boundaries. They do not see it as having *any* 'pure' spaces, and even point to Abeyesekara's view on it as deriving meaning from the dynamics of contestation. These different views on sanctity and religion in Sri Lanka are affected by what Herath and Rambukwella point out above; there are many interpretations and it is a difficult concept to define and use because of this. The meaning of sanctity varies and it is this I will discuss by unpacking the different views on what makes the specific place of Kataragama sacred to different religious representatives from various religious and social standpoints.

Is Kataragama sacred to all?

What it is interesting to look into regarding sanctity at a specific place is the different perspectives by people with a personal relation to the KSA. The perspectives that will be discussed below are drawn from the semi-structured key informant interviews with religious representatives at the various physical shrines at Kataragama. Upon answering questions regarding what made Kataragama important to my interviewees, or what it is that makes the place sacred to them, the most commonly agreed upon view was the one held by my Hindu informant who saw it as the physical yet spatial "inner sanctum" of the temples, in this case within the Ganesh temple, where only certain people were allowed to enter:

> Brahmin in Hindus, there have some castes, we are Brahmin here so Brahmin only going inside the sacred area. Only Brahmin go to the sacred area. Because inside the temple there is some sacred area no? Devotees go only to temple. Sacred area means God is living there and that is only going Brahmin (Field interview with Hindu informant, August 2016).

Therefore what makes the place sacred within this view is also an aspect of purity, which distinguishes the devotees from the ceremonial masters who belong to a certain high social status, or caste as I argue more about later. What is sacred starts at the area of demarcation, the temple itself is merely a religious place at a local scale, not a sacred place in this view. It is also a both spatial and physical view on what is sacred; the religious entity is present at a location – since it needs to be demarcated – but the spatial aspect of it also extends far beyond the inner walls of the temple and thus reaches a higher scale. As my gatekeeper pointed out above people believe there is power in the *place*. But his view on place may rather be the space that Kataragama represents, where the mythology is connected in general and there are different rules than in the inner sanctums. This location-based aspect was also broadened upon in the same interview as he considered it important to add information on the practicalities of what level of purity is required to enter a physical sacred location:

> These devotees who come with fruit or something, they say they want to do some pooja or something. He is saying swami you go and do pooja. I will take his all, things, offerings, I will keep inside and I will do pooja inside. He is not allowed to go inside, I will help him and ask name and all those things and do pooja inside. He is not allowed to go inside, only inside Brahmin person can go inside. And before that we have to do some sacred sankalpam, we do a promise to god, "now I am going to enter your place, please keep me safely. And give me good mind, and give me some good ideas". All these things just promise to God. And then we enter inside the temple (Field interview with Hindu informant, August 2016).

What is considered sacred by this informant is where there is direct contact with the god, in this case the Hindu god Ganesh. People who have not performed the vow or is not of a high enough caste cannot give the offerings directly to the deities due to their social status and level of pollution if considering Douglas' view on the holy. The importance of purity and caste is not as distinct in Sri Lanka as in India, but there are still many examples of it within the religious sphere (Silva, 2009). Upon my questions of the devotees' relation to pooja, and with my focus being upon the varying social aspects I was actually interrupted by my Kataragama deity informant as he considered it important to point out that the people who perform pooja are *not* the devotees, because it is where one is in direct contact with the God:

> Actually, eh, our duty is to do the pooja. The offerings, like the milk-rice with
> honey, this we make here. We made it here and then we do the pooja. So the
> offerings people can bring fruit and various things. Even though the people don't
> come we do by ourselves. We make the preserve in here and then we do the pooja
> (Field interview with Kataragama deity informant, August 2016).

This informant shared the view on the inner sanctum and sacred part of the temple as a delimited physical place at a micro scale that has a spiritual connection. It is also an aspect that makes the temples at Kataragama considered to be very mystical, and it is repeated during the Esala festival with for instance the water-cutting ceremony where hidden rituals occur three times (see picture nr. 3 in appendix 1 for the second ritual), or even during the perahera procession as the deity is constantly covered with cloths and flowers while paraded outside the temple. The mysticism and exclusivity of the inner area of the temples was also highlighted as what was personally important to this informant:

> It is important to me because nobody can go inside the temple. Only one from the
> kapurala can go inside and do pooja, it is a secret we won't divulge to anybody
> (Field interview with Kataragama deity informant, August 2016).

Yet there were various interpretations to sanctity across the different religions. The previous two belonged to the temples within the walls of the Maha Devale complex, which is also the border in which many take of their shoes, as Frydenlund also made a note of this during her fieldwork by writing that it "illustrates that there are various degrees of sacredness in the temple area. The premises of the Maha Devale complex are undoubtedly the most holy, and the space where most respect and devotion are paid" (2003, p. 51). The whole area is already considered a sacred place on a macro scale as it is granted the status of a sacred place by the government, especially as it is past the Menik Ganga, but it is clearly different levels to this within the sacred area as shoes can be worn by the open park area between the Valli Amma temple and Mosque for instance, but not within the Maha Devale complex area which is walled of. The Buddhist monastery which is on the same side of the complex as the mosque and Valli Amma temple is interesting within this context because it is walled off with high fences and because shoes are left by the entrance to it; thus it is considered a religious place

and clearly demarcated in the same ways as the temples[12]. The holy Bo Tree, Ganesh temple, Kataragama temple and Buddha temple are all within this walled area so the major Sri Lankan religions are physically represented here.

The Buddhist informant considered the Bo tree as the most sacred aspect of Kataragama because:

> A branch from the original Bo tree where the Lord Buddha was enlightened was planted here. From the Sri Maha Bodi of Anuradhapura (Field interview with Buddhist informant, August 2016).

The fact that he believed that the original Bo tree no longer exists also increases the importance of the living Bo tree at Kataragama, and the Buddhist claims to religion in Sri Lanka in general are connected to the fact that a branch of the Bo tree was brought to the island by the Buddha. Although the Bo tree is significant to the Buddhist worshipers it is not the only plant that adds to Kataragama's status as a sacred place. The Tamarind tree is important because of its connection to Valli Amma and the Kataragama deity, and it is like the Bo tree taken care of by being propped up with physical support and protected by a fence; thus invested into and made as a physical memorial (Frydenlund, 2003). The Mosque also has sanctifying plants; three palms which sprung from the same nut (see picture nr. 7 in appendix 1) (Goonasekera, 2007). These palms are also protected and demarcated, but to a lesser extent than the Bo or Tamarind tree as there's no fence. This might be a reflection of the age of the plants and the investments in it and thus its level of sanctity; no other informants than the Muslim mentioned it in the interviews.

What the Buddhist informant also highlighted in regards to sanctity was purity, yet with a different approach than the more physical focus that the Hindu and Kataragama deity had, due to his religious context:

> It [is] unique of this place that not a single animal is tortured. Not even people consume meat when they visit this place. They maintain the purity of this place.

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[12] It is also covered with Buddhist flags, which is an aspect I will reflect more upon later as it requires a discussion due to its nationalistic connection

What is interesting here is that he puts a focus on the fact that a lack of animal slaughter makes the whole sacred area pure in a general sense in the same train of thought as independence to practice religion, when it does not apply to all the religions at Kataragama. The Vädda have a tradition of offering meat to the deities, and venison used to be sold on the grounds of the sacred area for such rituals but it is no longer so, which reflects a change in the place that affects the minorities (Obeyesekere, 1981). During my fieldwork I also spent time in Kandy during the Esala Perahera festival where the Tooth-relic is celebrated. For the whole duration of the festival it was not possible to buy neither meat nor alcohol at any of the local supermarkets or liquor shops. It was not a choice to be vegetarian due to your religion at the time, but rather forced, and it is thus similar at Kataragama that is known for its multi-religious aspects. Yet it was fully possible to eat meat outside of the religious complex if staying at a regular hotel in Kataragama so the level of imposition wasn't as high as in Kandy where the festival has a more Buddhist atmosphere - at the same time the pilgrims' rest house was always only offering vegetarian food but within that context it is rather implied as visits to the shrines are the purpose for the stay.

What was agreed upon by all of my informants was the importance of how Kataragama is an inclusive place for people of different backgrounds. Although there are aspects of claims and power relations - as the meat-consumption example above shows - there is also religious independence and free worship that stand out as the important features of Kataragama. My Muslim informant specifically declared that anyone could worship within the green walls of the Muslim area:

People of all kinds, not only Muslims, get blessings and visit the tomb. Anyone can go inside the mosque and get blessings from Quran (Field interview with Muslim informant, August 2016).

The mosque also had interesting features in regards to blessings as there were visible signs of its adjustment from mainstream Islamic practices (see picture nr. 6 in appendix 1); for instance my Muslim research assistant considered the bonds tied to a rail inside the Mosque to

be very curious as it was not common for her own type of worship, and rather similar to the Hindu practice done within the Maha Devale complex where they represent wishes to the god.

The shared sense of Kataragama being a sacred place where religion enables crossing of both social and physical borders is an encouraging thought to hold on to (Tweed, 2006). It is this sense of purity that extends to all who visit, and it is because of this the Buddhist informant could point out that:

> There is no conflict. In this sacred place there is not any single conflict among the ethnicities. This is a holy land where day and night worshipping is carried out. It is a pure and peaceful land (Field interview with Buddhist informant, August 2016).

It is also a shared story that connects and brings all these different people together, and this along with the shared veneration was the most important factor about Kataragama as a place for my informant from the Valli Amma temple;

> Murugan [Kataragama deity] met Valli at Kataragama, and the festival is celebrated at the time it happened. People come here every year to celebrate that. The Kiri Vehera and Hindu kovil is sacred. People come to make vows to Murugan and Valli. The Buddhist go to kovil (Field interview with Valli Amma informant, August 2016).

While the boundary of the sacred space, and place, varies among and within the religions there is a shared sense of how Kataragama is a religious place on all both the micro end medium scale due to the story told above. It is a tradition and thus a trace that is kept alive both with the temples that have micro-scaled sacred sanctums and this goes up to the national level with the religious experience of the pilgrimage and the festival that is connecting devotees from the whole island together. The view on sanctity that was presented by Spencer et al. (2014) and Douglas (1968) where a shared sense of religion in general is considered to be the definition of sanctity at Kataragama. This view does fit on the national level and when considering the location and locale and the more physical aspects of the place, as what is opposed to worldly activity and thus makes it an open religious space has become clearly demarcated. Yet when it comes to the sense of place and how the various traces affect the place and the people who are representatives within the various religions, the focus is far

more narrow and micro-scaled with the sacred being seen as what belongs to the various positions and religions. Still there is a common ground that is considered sacred and that is the very sense of the place and its atmosphere which is created by both the place and the people. These aspects of how the place is experienced differently and a sacred place to some will now have to be kept in mind when delving in to how this affects the physical place through claims.

Claims to Kataragama

A claim is typically a straightforward concept to relate to when considering it as something one feels ownership of, yet when it comes to claiming or merely feeling an ownership of a religious place the use of the word itself is highly sensitive. What is implied in the claim to a religious place is the management and use of it, and it is therefore important to refer to scales when analysing this as it varies very much from the specific shrines to the entire complex, and the more spatial aspects as well. Claims are often connected to different sources, and when considering the fact that religious sources are more assertive when predating other sources this complicates matters, as they also can be *less* reliable due to the old age. One must remember the general reliance on oral traditions in storytelling up to the time of the printing press; when an event happened and when it was written can have a large discrepancy, and in addition to this one must remember that "history is written by the victors" as the scriptures are within a narrative and representative of power.

When it comes to religion in Sri Lanka and its connection to claims the most debated issue is the wish for the island to be a Sinhala Buddhist space that is connected to ethnic nationalism, and it is pointed out by Spencer et al. that "such claims are not mere abstractions; they have material force in the demarcation of sacred Buddhist spaces, and the movement of populations in conscious emulation of Buddhist kingdoms of the pre-colonial past." (2014). This is a very important aspect of the contested claims to religious places in Sri Lanka, and it affects the claim in Kataragama too in a similar manner, yet the multicultural nature of the place is still intact unlike many other places[13]. What makes Kataragama different is that there are various, but connected, claims and they are quite varied in age, source, reliability and renown. The similarity between the claims is the reference to a person/figure having a relation to the place, with variety between who it was and when they were at Kataragama. These cultural traces are

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[13] Spencer et al. (2014) have a detailed discussion and comparison of the Buddhicization processes in Anuradhapura, Dighavapi and Kataragama in Chapter 4 *Making Sacred Space.*

still visible at Kataragama as there are physical places representing the different claims, and a theoretical approach focusing on traces and scales will be used in order to understand how they affect the place and the people.

To begin unpacking the complex claims to Kataragama the different connections to the place have to be explored. This will be done by looking into what the informants considered important about the place such as which scripture mentions the physical place, who worships at their temple thus connecting it to power, and which memorials are manifesting their stories. Even though these are all important claims the clearest connection is through *individuals* who have been important to the place, thus those who affect or even began the traces, and as the different statements below will show this is applicable to all the religions with physical connections to the place[14]. There are many historical figures connected to Kataragama, and while some may arguably be fictional this aspect will not be debated here, as it is very complicated, situated and requires far more research.

Historical figures

The most significant historical claim to the KSA is through the Kataragama deity who is generally acknowledged to have visited the place and to still have a connection to it as it is believed he resides there and thus the deity is worshipped every day. The Kataragama deity has many different names due to the ties to different religions and ethnicities, such as Kanda Swamy, Skanda, Murugan, Kartikaya, Kanda Kumara, and so on. Despite this he is a very recognisable deity due to his appearance and the symbols connected to him; he has six heads and twelve arms, carries a trident and he rides a peacock. The Kataragama deity is also associated with the colour red, as is used by both devotees and religious representatives, and can be seen during the water-cutting ceremony (Picture nr. 3 in appendix 1). He is also often depicted together with his two wives the Indian goddess Thevani Amma and the Sri Lankan goddess Valli Amma. The Kataragama deity is a clear symbol of multi-faith as he is venerated by many different religions and incorporated into the Buddhist pantheon as one of Sri Lanka's four guardian deities. This becomes apparent in the following perspective of the story where my Kataragama deity informant, who is personally Buddhist, explains the origins of the place and why the deity is connected to this specific place:

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[14] Therefore Christianity is not represented although they also worship at certain temples. For more detail on a Christian view on religion in Sri Lanka see Pinto, L. (2015) *Being a Christian in Sri Lanka: Historical, Political, Social, and Religious Considerations*: Balboa Press AU.

At first there was a priest, meaning he was not a monk actually but he is meditating. His name is Aruna Girinada. He was based in Kataragama and he was meditating here. So at that time there was a beautiful garden over here [gestures] and it was from this river. There were people like tributes and these ancient groups we call Vädda. So they were based around this Kataragama area. They were cultivating these seeds, millet, around this area. So one day he heard a very beautiful voice and flute sound. There was a girl who was talking, singing and guarding this vegetable farm. He went to see who this human being was. When he saw this lady he recognized that she is not a human, she is a Goddess. So she is Valli Amma. Then he thought that she is perfect for God Murugan, this means God Kataragama, and then he went to see him and said "there is a lady in this area and she matches you so why don't you come and marry her?" When he invited God Murugan he has decided to come to Sri Lanka and see this Goddess. And then he came with two people. One was a Muslim person and another was a Tamil person. So he came with both and you can see the Muslim Mosque over there, just next to the Valli kovil. He came to Sri Lanka and saw this Goddess Valli and then he planned how to win her heart. Then he took his brother's head, like God Ganesh and then only the story begins actually. After that they got married. So that's why they have Perahera for fifteen days. When they married they have a parade to go and invite her. So when he go in the parade to see the Goddess so she was guarded with these Vädda people. So they said "No no you can't come everyday like this. You have to show the wealth. We will not give our girl to someone who doesn't have wealth". So then he offered gold, silver, gems, jewels and then only they said "ok you can see our girl". So that is how the story begins. So then only he was here (Field interview with Kataragama deity informant, August 2016).

This account of the Kataragama story has many different aspects, and it is quite unique in the way that it is distinctively inclusive of the Vädda, Hindus, Muslims and even Tamils. My informant also pointed out that while there are various stories about Kataragama they all come together to form a truth:

There are so many other stories as well. Different people have different stories. There are so many stories which you can combine together and see how this [works] scientifically, if you can prove it or not. But certain things that I have seen,

there are matching things (Field interview with Kataragama deity informant, August 2016).

This is an interesting feature in his account and it highlights the view of Kataragama as an inclusive multi-religious place. The inclusion of the non-indigenous religions and ethnicities in the story, and by introducing them at the same time and therefore deem them equal status and claim to the place is a very interesting example of inclusion. Yet, the Kataragama deity is put above them and clearly the most important as the festival is celebrating the union of him and Valli Amma. This celebration is important to the reputation of Kataragama outwards, and the annual continuation of it emphasises this claim and the power it holds at the place. This makes the management of the Kataragama deity's main temple; Maha Devale, an especially contested issue and it will be considered with more detail later.

The part that is lacking in this account, and therefore makes it even more interesting when considering the informants perspective, is the Buddhist participation and thus claim to Kataragama. The 'Buddhicization' of religious places in Sri Lanka is often a topic of discussion that emerges when researching place and religion (Spencer et al., 2014). Within this context the open interpretations of Kataragama's origins and heritage actually allows for both positive and negative outcomes. It adds to the low levels of public disputes at Kataragama as it invites all religions to the festival, but at the same time this opens up for claiming rights to control the worship. As the Kataragama temple is under Sinhalese control – and has not always been so, as will be discussed in the next chapter – the view on the Kataragama deity by the Hindu interviewee makes the situation more complex;

Kataragama is a God no? He is son of God Shiva so he have power. He have power to bless anybody (Field interview with Hindu informant, August 2016).

The deity is the son of Shiva who is also the father of Ganesh, so this view is justified by the Kataragama interviewee as well, and thus it makes even less sense that the claims to the physical temple is not with the Hindus. Although the ownership has made the place change, as will be discussed more later, the most important claim to the place is with the Kataragama God and he can be worshipped by anyone according to the Kataragama interviewee;

> For God Kataragama everybody come and worship. Even Christians and Muslims and Hindus. Anybody can come and worship. It is a Buddhist and Hindu combination, that's how we do the pooja an all (Field interview with Kataragama deity informant, August 2016).

My informant from the Valli Amma temple had a very specific timeline of when events happened at Kataragama, and he clearly puts Valli Amma at the forefront of this and thus justifies her position at the place through her claim and veneration;

> Murugan [Kataragama deity] met Valli Amma 4000 years ago at Kataragama. He came to Sri Lanka from India and met his second wife here. Buddha came to Sri Lanka in the 6th century BC. Both came from India (Field interview with Valli Amma informant, August 2016).

Both Kataragama and Buddha are highlighted as figures that came to the island, while Valli Amma was born there and has ties to the indigenous people. Thus he places the female deity first, and then in contrast Kataragama and Buddha after. She is also actively incorporated into the festival through the rituals at her temple and by the participation of her female descendants Aalatiyamma who all walk before the Kataragama deity on the elephant in the procession. This is a clear trace of a culture tied to a historical figure because my gatekeeper explained that:

> They are the lineage of Valli Amma. Valli Amma was also dressed like them. They are her family line (Field interview with gatekeeper, August 2016).

Thus Valli Amma is justified as a claim to Kataragama through the belief and existence of her descendants, who are participating in rituals together with the Kapurala at the Kataragama temple and the Perahera. It is a cultural tradition that has affect both of the shaping of the place with the physical Valli Amma temple and protection of the tamarind tree, and in the continuation of this as people visit the festival and worship at her temple. This is in line with Cresswell's (2015) view on places as being in never-ending production through the repetition of practices. The annual festival and the rituals at the Maha Devale are clear examples of this; the place is affected by the practice that is grounded physically in several ways. The fact that

Valli Amma is reiterated and has a physical place in Kataragama is important to its multicultural profile, as it is inclusive. The Sri Lankan sociologist Goonasekera highlights her multifaceted role by saying that "Valliamma has a special identity that unites Tamil, Sinhala, and Vadda communities" (2007, p. 135). However he also points out the fact that she is not included in the written sources about the Kataragama deity until the eighteenth century, and that the oldest literary sources that indirectly confirm that the Tamils believed that the Kataragama deity married Valli, the daughter of a hunter actually stemmed from Tamil Nadu (Ibid). What must be taken into account here is the tradition of oral storytelling and the cultural exchange between Sri Lanka and India through migration, and its increase with the colonialists. Although these various claims in reference to dates and sources may be valid, it is not possible to discern them without much more detail, and the important factor in this is what the people venerating the KSA believe; which affects the place and vice versa.

A different historical figure that has as a claim to the place through a physical manifestation to the Kataragama deity is King Dutugemunu. The various interpretations of this kings actions depicts how complex the interpretations are in Sri Lanka, and why religions that are accommodating can be more liberal. King Dutugemunu is actually the common claim of both main ethnic groups of Sri Lanka, the Sinhalas and Tamils that were polarized during the civil war (Goonasekera, 2007). The claim of Dutugemunu at Kataragama is that he, as a local king, built the original temple at Kataragama because of his appreciation of the deity's help in defeating the Tamil king Elara – which allowed him to retake the strategically and symbolically important Anuradhapura (Ibid). Both my Kataragama deity and Buddhist informant referred to King Dutugemunu when talking about the importance of the place as he anchored the God to it in their view. In the chronology of events depicted by the Kataragama interviewee Dutugemunu came there after the events with Valli Amma:

> And then after that there was a king in Sri Lanka he was King Dutugemunu. He
> built this temple [Maha Devale], or I can't say temple, in those days they call it
> like a palace (Field interview with Kataragama deity informant, August 2016).

In this view there are several claims to the place that also confirm the Kataragama deity, but the connotations and associations of King Dutugemunu are not solely positive despite the

similar claims from both sides of the conflict[15]. For instance when discussing what makes Kataragama a sacred place my Buddhist informant focused solely on Buddhist aspects, and then reinforced this by placing Dutugemunu as one of several Buddhist kings who ruled over the place and had a direct effect on the physical place thus reinforcing this trace:

> A branch from the original Bo tree where the Lord Buddha was enlightened was planted here. From the Sri Maha Bodi of Anuradhapura. Since then this place was ruled by Buddhist kings. Their names are Sathya and Dasavaru. Later King Dutugemuni built Maha Ruhuna Devalaya (Field interview with Buddhist informant, August 2016).

However, this claim does according to Goonasekera not have any archaeological support or evidence from written sources up until the eighteenth century, yet he points out that "it is likely that a story connecting Dutugamunu with Kanda Kumara [Kataragama deity] existed in the Sinhala oral tradition and that this was attached to the Skanda lore during the medieval period" (2007, p. 418). He also notes of the lack of reference to a source during his own interviews, so there is not a formal way to authenticate the story of Dutugemunu. The theory proposed by Goonasekera is the same as was mentioned above, namely that it is an oral tradition kept alive, and in this case by the Maha Devale ceremonial masters (Kapuralas) who established their descent from the time of King Dutugemunu. The Kapuralas have an interesting caste-based place in Kataragama, and my own interviews also confirmed this claim that they stem from the warrior of King Dutugemunu and have a physical link much like the shrines at the Mosque and Hindu monastery;

> One child is appointed from the family. It comes from the family [of Dutugemunu's warrior]. He was King Dutugemunu's best warrior and after the war he appointed him here to do pooja for the God. We come from his generation. We have land nearby Yale so we have his grave there (Field interview with Kataragama deity informant, August 2016).

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[15] A quick look at the comment section of the trailer to a recent film about King Dutugemunu's fight against King Elara also establishes this current view, with quotes such as; "I feel this is very good historical movie. This should pass to the world with correct subtitle so people will feel the truth of the Buddhism. Thanks Mr. Jayantha Chandrasiri you have touch our feelings with the Great our king Dutugamunu." (IL Rukshan Perera, 2015, retrieved 09.10.2017 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTNaA-c4KiU)

However as mentioned before this representative is also personally of Buddhist faith, and the Kapuralas at Kataragama are Sinhalese. Therefore this claim is far from neutral, and social anthropologist Obeyesekere merely dismisses these claims and sees them as an example of Buddhicization as "this myth has no historicity whatever. It is an attempt to make Kataragama not just a Sinhala Buddhist god but an anti-Tamil god to boot." (Obeyesekere, 1981, pp. 170-171). Yet there are still Tamils who consider this a legitimate story and thus confirm this view without necessarily confirming the Sinhalese claims, as Goonasekera (2007) and Kalyanasunderam (1980) both talk about their belief in his affect on the physical place and connection to the deity.

Another claim to the place Kataragama through a historical figure's relation is from the Mosque representative who clearly and frankly placed his claim before the Buddhist one in terms of longevity;

> Prophet Hidhr lays claim to grounds, came before Buddha time wise (Field interview with Muslim informant, August 2016).

Despite his unwillingness to discuss whether some had more claims than other to the place, and the fact that he did not add much more on this topic than the line above, it was clearly important to point out that Hidhr, a prophet of Allah and a representative of Islam, arrived before the Buddha at Kataragama and therefore has a stronger claim to it as they have been there longer. This also correlates with the Kataragama deity informant's story where a Muslim arrived together with a Tamil and the Kataragama deity himself before the Buddha. The longevity of the claim is clearly important to the Muslim representative and can be seen as a way of placing the mosque before the Bo-tree for instance, and the Muslim connection before the Buddhist. Still it is special that this claim also acknowledges that Buddha did come to Kataragama and does have a claim there – yet a lesser claim. What was intriguing about the claim by the Muslim informant was that he also added that other religious figures had been at Kataragama, thus legitimising their claims to the place but not placing it before the Muslim claim;

> Kataragama represents many things. When Lord Krishna came here. Lord Buddha and his disciples came here. Prophet Haydhr came here. They have come to this

place at different times. All of these are related to each other, and in time we divided ourselves (Field interview with Muslim informant, August 2016).

He found it important to talk about how the place and religions there should not be divided as people are not really different, and he used the Pangaea continent as an example of how all come from the same place originally and have interpreted things differently thus creating changes over time. Therefore he makes a point out of how the claims should not be an important matter. This was a very diplomatic and scientific description that also matches what many said about Kataragama; that issues are not created there but from forces on the outside.

An important, relatively recent and acknowledged historical figure with ties to more than one religion is Palkudibaava, who was a pious man that only sustained himself on milk (name literally translates to milk-drinking recluse in Tamil) and has his tomb at Kataragama. The view on Palkudibaava as a figure venerated by several religions is reinforced by the interviews scholar Patrick Harrigan held for the local newspaper "The Sunday Observer" in 2003, where he also spoke to key informants from the different religions and discussed the topic of worship at several temples with a representative from the Mosque:

> At Kataragama, Muslims pray to Allah and show their respects to Hayat Nabi and *awliya* like Palkudi Bawa, the 'milk-drinking recluse'. Palkudi Bawa, who lived a century ago, enjoys the love and respect of people of all faiths to this day (Interview with Gaffar by Harrigan, August 2003).

Palkudibaava was a pious man who attained samadhi (yogi concentration of pure consciousness) and had a connection to the Kataragama deity, and through his shrine he still has a connection to the place Kataragama and the claim of the deity as a multi-religious figure (Jacobsen, 2010). When exactly he was at Katargama varies in the different accounts, but there is an agreement that it was relatively recent and that his tomb is at the compound. Despite this he is an important figure to the symbolism of Kataragama as a syncretic and multi-religoius place; it is especially the notion of him as an awliya, which can be interpreted as a friend of Allah, and the following ways that the different faiths at Kataragama show respect to his shrine and keep this trace active. The claim to the place is at a more personal level and at a micro scale, but it is also very important to the devotees and the continual

creation of the place as it increases the number of both Muslim and Hindu pilgrims and thus their impact on the place through their cultural imprint and effect on the physical place. His venerated shrine and the contiuation of this for over a century is important to the development of the place.

How these historical figures have ties to Kataragama as a location with physical placement, or claims through references in text varies, and is therefore highly debatable and difficult to discern through other ways than the veneration by devotees. What does simplify this process for not only a researcher, but also for the actual devotees is that there are physical manifestations of the history at Kataragama such as; temples, graves, shrines, stupa, trees, the museum and so on.

Physical manifestations of claims

The structures at Kataragama that are connecting the history and the past with the present also represent the claims to the sacred area. The dating of these structures is varied and disputed, much like the different stories above also have shown. These memorials are what physically places Kataragama on the map as a location, and also that grounds it and makes it a sacred place rather than a mythical space; therefore they are very important to how the place is perceived and produced by the people venerating it (Rigg, 2007). This was also touched upon in chapter four, and a marked focus on Cresswell's (2015) theory on the continual production of place and the role memory and place has on this will also be applied below.

The various temples are the most straightforward and clear examples of physical claims, as they are tied to the deities and historical figures that according to the interviewees have been at the place, and in some cases like King Dutugemunu also initiated the building. My Kataragama deity informant was clear on the fact that Kataragama was very important as not only a place but also for its functions, as the quote below shows. He predated the festival to be prior to the festival in Kandy that was a celebration of the both the kingship, gods and Buddha (Duncan, 1990):

> We were the first to have perahera in Sri Lanka, so it is very old. Older than the Kandy perahera. More than 2500 years. When the British were here, in 1812, that picture was taken (Field interview with Kataragama deity informant, August 2016).

The photograph my informant was gesturing at during this quote was of the Kataragama Maha Devale temple during the time of the British colonialism, thus placing it as prior to that and as important enough to be documented by the foreign powers. This informant also makes the comparison to the mainly Buddhist festival in Kandy which today is considered the grandest Perahera in the country with the largest tourist attraction, as my expert interviewee pointed out that:

> Asian Buddhists come to Kandy for the Perahera and the sacred tooth. They have vows (Interview with sociology professor, August 2016).

While the Buddha's tooth attracts a larger crowd in Kandy and is an important festival for the Buddhists in particular, the Kataragama temple has a similar physical claim to the Buddha as my interviewee below considers the following to represent the Buddhist claim to the place;

> Especially it has become an important place for Buddhist. Because some 2500 years ago the Lord Buddha has sent his disciples and kirivera [Bo tree branch] was planted. The stupa was built. That's how the Buddhist identity is incorporated into the Kataragama sacred place (Field interview with Buddhist informant, August 2016).

Thus both the Bo tree and the stupa are physical manifestations of the Buddhist claim to Kataragama, and it is quite clear that they are considered important as they are invested into and well-kept, and even considered as aspects of the Buddhist identity. The Bo tree is for instance protected by a wall and propped up much in the same manner as the Bo tree in Anuradhapura, where the sapling came from. Both these physical structures as well as the Buddhist monastery are heavily decorated with the Buddhist flag (see picture nr. 8 in appendix 1) which gives the claim more of a nationalistic - thus Sinhalese - tone due to the symbolism behind a flag (Anderson, 2015). This is quite problematic when considering the increasing ties between religion and nationalism which has resulted in extreme organisations such as the political Buddhists in Bodu Bala Sena (Hertzberg, 2016). Even though it is clearest at the Buddhist sites the other religions also use symbols as physical manifestations to reinforce their place, such as the Islamic coloured white and green Mosque that opens the festival with its similarly coloured flag.

What the Buddhist informant does not bring up is the claim that Buddha himself came to Kataragama; which both Goonasekera (2007) and Pinto (2015) argue are the core claim to a Buddhist Kataragama. However he does mention the scriptures where the visit is described, so it is still implied in his account;

> It has a history, this place has a special place. In Choola wamsa, Dhcati wamsa, Maha wamsa this place is mentioned. They are truth. This place is also mentioned in sculptures. So it is not stories made up but truth. These books are written over thousands of years before. We have no right to make up stories like these (Field interview with Buddhist informant, August 2016).

He interestingly refers to not only scriptures, as Goonasekera (2007) also brings up when discussing the claims, but also sculptures which is exactly what was pointed out as problematic about the new Kataragama museum in the theory chapter. The message implied in the imported sculptures from all across the region, and which the Buddhist informant refers to above, is that there is physical evidence which can be dated to show the claim to not only the place but the whole region. Even though it is a claim to an existence of Buddhists in the region is does not mean that it was only inhabited by them and does not really lay specific archaeological claims to the KSA prior to other religions; the reference to the Mahavamsa also includes a view of Sri Lanka as originally being inhabited by the Vädda – not Sinhalese or Tamil.

Yet there is actually a debate whether the Vädda has any ties to Kataragama, as they do not actively venerate the deity in the same manner as the other religions due to their more spiritual nature. While Frydenlund (2003) agrees that they may have less importance due to their numbers (as she observed only a few), she also argues that their do have a connection to the place through the origin myth and the physical manifestation of the tamarind tree where they have a traditional right to stay, Goonasekera implies that they have no physical attachment to the place and therefore don't really claim the place. While they do not venerate the KSA at other times than during the festival their presence during the festival is an important factor to the development of the place, as my informant notes below:

> They [Vädda] only come during the festival, and they stay the whole 15 days. In Hinduism there are three worshipping methods [flowers, food, spiritually], the

Vädda only do the spiritual (Field interview with Valli Amma informant, August 2016).

Due to the spiritual nature of the Vädda worship they are not visible in the place in the same manner as the other religions, and do therefore leave less visible traces of their culture. Despite this they are connected to the place through the story of Valli Amma and their spiritual worship, and they do affect the physical place as they participate during each festival and stay for the whole duration. The Vädda have their own rituals but even these are adapting to the changes to the place and the shifting power relations, as will be discussed more later.

The physical manifestations discussed above are merely some of the traces at the KSA, but they all have a function in the placing of memory as they are connected either to the religion in general or to a historical figure. As the claims above show a clear connection to the physically placed memories it therefore makes them a *public memory* through its inscription in the very landscape (Cresswell, 2015). These public memories are powerful as they affect the memory of the many different people visiting the place due to its important status for them; especially for the pilgrims walking from the northern tip of the island.

The manner of worship, and who is allowed to do so, is an interesting aspect at Kataragama due to the power the place holds, and its important symbolic role. While this will be discussed in far more detail later it is timely to point out that the claim to the physical place is varied; but the claim to the temple of the actual god who the myths are connected to create issues and contestation. While all interviewees point out that anyone can worship at their respective temples - and they do during the festival – the manner in which the worship is performed and who actually determines the order of events during the pooja (both standing in line [in general] and coming in front or side door) and the financial side of things all affect the power of the place and the experience of the place which the devotees have. The place can control their behaviour, and the use of culture to either control or assimilate behaviour within a religious context is very sensitive. This will be further unpacked in the next section where the inclusive or exclusive aspects of both the Perahera, the devotional practice during pooja and the Pada Yatra will be discerned by use of the interviews with key informants, my own observation as well as by comparison with other authors' works on the specific aspects.

5.2 Ritual union?

Rituals are in their most basic form "a prescribed order of performing religious or other devotional service" and because they are included in all religions there are many interpretations which leads to it being an important aspect for not only religion but arguably also culture (Tweed, 2006, p. 39). A ritual can therefore be seen as an embodiment of culture due to its close tie to people, and is thus changing and adapting while also representing heritage. This makes rituals complex concepts to relate to, and can according to anthropologist Verkaaik (2004) fuse nonlinear and linear modes of time and are defined as "culturally designed forms that interrelate themes of existence that are more diffused and obscure in the everyday" (p. 119).

It can be interpreted in many ways, and is so within the KSA where the devotional services vary greatly as will be delved into below. Rituals can be performed and have effect on all imaginable scales; from the most personal and up to the national and beyond, thus making it a powerful tool within the religious discourse. The following section will look into how these rituals affect Kataragama as a place, and especially if it increases or decreases the religious inclusion and sense of place. In order to do so the concept of a ritual will be considered from many different perspectives and stances, and the most important rituals at Kataragama will be analysed in regards to how they affect the place; the Pada Yatra pilgrimage, the Esala Perahera festival and the worship at the various temples and at the place in general.

Pada Yatra

First the most defining aspect of Kataragama will be unpacked, namely the Pada Yatra pilgrimage. It is a phenomenon that is quite unique in its multicultural aspects, the pilgrimage to Kataragama connects people of different backgrounds from all over the island, thus it is a ritual that has affected the place over centuries. To attend the pilgrimage can be an arduous task, and it was considered as a perilous affair as it earlier was believed that the pilgrims had to prepare their last will before leaving for Kataragama, and up until very recently the route was not safe due to the civil war (Goonasekera, 2007). The route goes from the north and along the eastern side of the island, and lastly through the Yala jungle – thus making it a tough form of Bhakti devotion as my expert interview confirmed:

> Worship is done in different ways. In Hinduism there are two types, the Brahmin offerings and the Bhakti devotion, which the Pada Yatra is an example of (Interview with sociology professor, August 2016).

It is therefore through Bhakti devotion that the people who do not belong to high castes can show their devotion personally; outside of the pooja that has to go through a high caste Brahmin due to pollution. Bhakti is according to Jacobsen (2010) definitive in most Hindus' personal relationships with gods and deities, and therefore very important in the performance of the religion. The pilgrimage is a very personal form of devotion to the Kataragama deity, as it requires much sacrifice. It is also the chance to have wishes fulfilled that draws people out on this long journey, as it represents a high level of devotion:

> They get benefits from coming here. Wishes are granted. People continue performing the Pada Yatra [pilgrimage] for the same reason (Field interview with Valli Amma informant, August 2016).

Symbolism

The pilgrimage is of a high symbolic value to not only the Kataragama deity devotees, whose religious views are certainly reinforced in this public display, but also to the place itself as it verifies the sacred status when considering Park's (1994) theory which connects it as a sign of the significance of the divine manifestation.

Historically the pilgrimage has been very important in terms of how the place is perceived, especially as the colonialists attempted to restrict the actual pilgrimage because of health issues with their labour force (Goonasekera 2007; Nichols-Barrer, 2003). This is reflected in the pull that Kataragama has as a multicultural place; it included the migrants and gave them a sense of belonging due to the open worship performed at the place and the personal devotion of partaking in the pilgrimage. The pilgrimage is part of the identity of the place, and it reinforces the view on it as a sacred place as it is adding to several scales of religious experience as Tweed (2006) pointed out that religion is tied to movement because it involves both moving through space and finding one's own place. It is what religion does to the personal level with experiences with both sacred place in a physical sense, and sacred space in a more mythical and emotional sense – but that is just as important to the devotee. Religion facilitates this crossing between the place and space, and thus the pilgrimage is part of what

bridges the gap that can overcome differences and create an inclusive place (ibid). Yet religion can also do the opposite, as will be discussed shortly below and in more detail later.

The participation has varied along the centuries due to governing influences and contextual reasons, but there has clearly been an increase in the numbers of devotees at Kataragama after the civil war as my interviewees all reflected over this; yet who these devotees are and whether they have participated in the Bhakti devotion of *walking* to Kataragama is arguable.

Transcending or creating borders?

When it comes to the inclusive aspects of Kataragama the pilgrimage is the clearest example, as all can partake in the same activity and route. It has participants from any groups that wish to join, and it thus a multi-religious pilgrimage that according to Bhardwaj (1987) distinguishes itself with the shared purpose of wellness. The expert interviewee mentioned some of today's varied participants to highlight its diversity:

> Sinhalese join it. Also coastal Vädda from fishing communities who are Tamil speaking join from Batticaloa. Different ethnic groups join (Interview with sociology professor, August 2016).

A far older source also reflected upon the diversity and atmosphere of the pilgrimage, as Harrigan cites Nallur Yogaswami's account of the pilgrimage from the early twentieth century:

> "subsequently by about the middle of 1910, Swami left on a solitary sojourn by foot along the Island's coastal belt eastward, and met many ascetics on the way. He moved freely with certain Muslim Sufi saints, Buddhist monks and Vädda chiefs. He communed with Murugan in Kathirkamam [Kataragama], the Holy of Holies skirted by the Manica Ganga" (1998, p. 34).

What draws these various groups to this specific place is the general aspect of wellness which Bhardwaj highlighted, as well as the far more personal reasons such as wishes they seek fulfilled through the close connection to the deity at the place.

The historical figure Palkudibaava was mentioned before as part of the claim to the place through his connection to it, and it is also something that affects the pilgrimage. My Hindu informant mentioned him as an especially important figure to the place of Kataragama as his veneration of it attracted more pilgrims and thus added to the sacred status when considering Park's (1994) theory. This historical figure still has an effect on the place through the veneration and pilgrimage as his existence adds to the power of the place. What my Hindu informant considered important about him was the following:

> Palkudibaava, a swami that was here about 3-400 years ago. He was here doing pooja, meaning meditation and all these things, and then he found God Murugan, Lord Kataragama. He has lot of devotees, Muslim devotees and Christians as well (Field interview with Hindu informant, August 2016).

This addresses the importance of the place namely that one can actually *find* the deity by being in the specific physical place, and attain enlightenment. The mention of Palkudibaava was brought up as a response to a question on claims, and what is also an interesting notion of his reaction to this question is that he added to it by mentioning the syncretic aspect of worship at Kataragama, and also the international pilgrimage:

> So all are coming here, all are worshipping and then going back to their country. So there is no problem, if any Hindu, Muslim anybody come it is no problem. That is good for us I think (Field interview with Hindu informant, August 2016).

Despite the diverse participation in the pilgrimage it also has negative aspects, as religion can not only transcend borders but also be used to build them as a tool of categorisation and (b)ordering (Anderson, 2015). The pilgrimage remained important during the civil war as it was still performed despite the ethnic and religious borders created in the country, yet there was however an incident that targeted the pilgrims due to their beliefs, as my Kataragama deity interviewee recounted:

> We had no issue with the Hindus at the time, with the people who came, but the last year before the war finished they attacked the bus, which carries people

[pilgrims] to the festival. Some people got killed. After a few months the war was finished (Field interview with Kataragama deity informant, August 2016)[16].

However, the pilgrimage continued despite the tension among ethnicities and this reflects the importance of the place and how the devotees value it. Still there may have been created divisions among the participants that are not reflected in the interviews with ceremonial masters – especially as there were tendencies to this early in the civil war. Despite this it was observed and commented on that there were more pilgrims after the end of the civil war, and this is something that increases the importance and sanctity of Kataragama as a sacred place and mythical space.

Esala Perahera festival

The festival held in August to commemorate the union of the Kataragama deity and Valli Amma is an old tradition that connects the mythical space of the religious story with the physical temples as a place. As described above and in the context chapter it is the reason why the devotees come at the specific time of the year for fifteen days, and there is a multitude of important rituals performed by the different ceremonial masters and by the devotees themselves through various worship methods – such as Bhakti devotion channelled through pilgrimage, fire-walking, body-piercing, Kavadi-dancing and more (Goonasekera, 2007). It is a unique time and it represents a truly multi-cultural celebration as participants from the islands different ethnicities partake. The festival is a clear representation of Tweed's (2006) view on religions as something where crossing is vital, as it is not only physical movement which occurs at a grand scale but it also affects the social aspects by crossing the borders of embodied life and in universal and spatial manners.

The festival was a busy time for the interviewees, and especially the representative for the Kataragama deity noted on the special circumstances as far more events occur during the festival days than normally:

During the festival all twelve Kapurala has to be attending, all twelve has to be here because during festival time for twenty-four hours we have operations. So

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[16] See newspaper article on this for more detail; Bus carrying pilgrims attacked by LTTE: 4 civilians killed and 25 others injured. Colombo: Asian tribune, 12.07.2008. Retrieved 01.11.17 from *http://www.asiantribune.com/node/12173*

many rituals to do, not like a normal day. So for ten days all twelve has to be here.

The temple is open from four o'clock in the morning till twelve pm sometimes it

never closed (Field interview with Kataragama deity informant, August 2016).

Thus the festival is a special occurrence where it is easier to worship the Kataragama deity than normally, and it requires far more work for the ceremonial masters than normally when they manage with one representative for the three pooja ceremonies scheduled for the day.

Symbolism

Thus the festival is an important representation of how Sri Lanka is a multi-cultural country, and the celebration of religion in general which occurs here is special - as is evident in the diverse pilgrims and the religious interaction among the temples. The place is in theory spatially open to the devotees within the Kataragama complex, yet they are demarcated on the outside of the sacred place with separate rest houses according to one's religion (or bank, interestingly enough).

The procession is an important event that truly connects people, as anyone who wants can gather to see the Kataragama deity paraded on top of an elephant and worship him then, in the same manner as the Buddha's tooth in Kandy. It is an old tradition as my context chapter mentions and Kataragama deity informant pointed out before; the Buddhist informant also confirmed this view:

Time has not changed the practice of the temple. The Perahera is similar to how it

was carried out like the old times. Even the Buddha Pooja. The Tradition is similar

to the old times (Field interview with Buddhist informant, August 2016).

The deity is still shrouded in mystery as he is constantly covered by cloth and flowers during the procession and what occurs during the visit to the Valli Amma temple is for instance not visible to the devotees as ceremonial masters enter the sacred inner sanctum. This aspect of a hiding the deity and thus its mysticism adds to the power of the place, as my expert interviewee pointed out that:

> God is not accessible at all, and this adds to the sanctity. Restrictions increase the faith. It gives supernatural power to performances of pooja. Penance proves the mystic experience as survival is a confirmation (Interview with sociology professor, August 2016).

The procession also includes the people of power and genealogical connections such as the Basnayake Nilame, the Aalatiyamma, the Kapuralas but also dancers from all over the country representing different dance styles, both high- and low-country dances in addition to the devil-masked dancers associated with exorcisms. The procession represents participants of both genders, including female artists and dances where both men and women dance together – interestingly my Buddhist gatekeeper considered the Kandyan Perahera as more important partly due to the *lack* of female dancers for other deities than the goddess Pattini. However this might be explained by the status of the high-country Kandyan dance, which traditionally are all male.

Transcending or creating borders?

As the look into symbolism shows there are many positive sides to the festival such as the diversity in the processions, the types of worship that occurs, the interaction among the temples and the rituals performed. Yet all these positives which sound good in theory have drawbacks in practice, which mainly come from (b)ordering practices which are not necessarily overt or visible but rather inherent in the power of the places due to the traces affecting and continually creating them (Anderson, 2015; Cresswell, 2015).

The inclusive and transcending religious practices at Kataragama during the Esala Perahera are connected to the pilgrims, who show evidence of having a multi-faith religious experience at the place as Obeyesekere describes his observation of how "the pilgrim pays the conventional homage to the deity, an offering of fruit, and then he goes to the Kiri Vehera" (1981, p. 4). This is an example of religious interaction and respect for each other as the pilgrims in general attend to both the deity Kataragama at his temple and Buddha by visiting the Kiri Vehera Stupa. My Buddhist informant also spoke of this same connection as he considered the place to be important and venerated because:

> This place is very sacred. They revisit because their wishes are granted. With the power of Lord Buddha and Deviyos [deities], the wishes are granted thus people

believe that this place has power and they also want to improve their minds spiritually (Field interview with Buddhist informant, August 2016).

While the importance and sanctity of the place does draw increasing numbers, it is even more important specifically because of what this symbolises for religion in Sri Lanka; that they can worship side by side and together if they wish to despite caste and creed. Both my Valli Amma and Muslim informant considered the devotion practiced during the festival to be what was important about the place:

Nobody is excluded from anywhere, all types of people to the festival, and it is increasing every year. All people are human (Field interview with Valli Amma informant, August 2016).

All religions visit the mosque during the festivals, also tourists. There is a great number of foreigners (Field interview with Muslim informant, August 2016).

Despite these encouraging quotes the reality is that the identity of the devotees does matter, and it does determine where they worship in some cases because of the power of the different temples and spatial aspects of the various religions as there are norms connected to them.

The most surprising aspect of my interviews was that despite the many assurances of Kataragama being an open place where anyone can worship however they want, my Hindu informant only felt that he could worship the Kataragama deity during the procession at the festival as the deity was *outside* of the physical temple that is administered by the Nilame and Kapuralas through secular hierarchy positions (Goonasekera, 2007). This is reflected in the following conversation about worship of the Kataragama deity:

I: Do you worship or give pooja to lord Kataragama?
A: Myself? No. Only that festival time I was doing pooja for fifteen days. At the time when you were coming here. That time only I am doing pooja. Not inside the temple. Outside when the god was on the elephant. Then only we do pooja.
I: For a specific reason, or?

A: Because we cant, because Kataragama now under the Sinhala people. We can't go inside and can't do pooja. So when god is coming outside then we are doing pooja. For fifteen days we are doing pooja.

I: For the whole festival?

A: Yeah, for the whole festival.

(Field interview with Hindu informant, August 2016).

This feeling of being out-of-place is most likely due to his position at the Hindu Ganesh temple, and thus connection to the Hindu monastery that is not under the administration of the Sinhalese administration. Still my informant experienced that the temple right next to the one where he works - and is one of three who can enter the inner sanctum - as a place that he could not physically enter because of his identity. The non-Sinhalese ethnicity of the individual certainly comes into play, and arguably his position as well, in this experience of (b)ordering. The place is delimited to the Sinhalese through cultural practices that establish power over it, and through my informants reaction above it is precisely at this point of separation that an 'us' and 'other' identity is created between the Sinhalese majority towards the minorities of the island (Anderson, 2015). This is again tied to Buddhism as there are nationalistic tendencies within people of the Sinhala population that utilise the religion to create a Sinhalese space, and often connect it to the claims at religious places as was mentioned earlier in reference to the research by Spencer et al.

During my observation this was not something that affected my personal sense of place, as I was welcomed into the temple in the same manner as other tourists - but I did observe tendencies that could make a non-Buddhist devotee feel out of place[17]. The clearest was during my time of interviewing and observing at the Kataragama complex after the festival when I attended several pooja ceremonies and was very surprised observe a Buddhist monk stand in front of the inner sanctum together with the Kapurala. The monk had his own section in the ritual before the devotees could give their offerings to the Kapurala, as he chanted a pali-verse and stood in the front the whole time. The monk was passive except from the chant, yet it is a powerful example of how Buddhism has become connected to the Kataragama deity by encompassing him as a guardian of Sri Lanka, and through this inclusion in the Sinhalese pantheon he's considered a guardian of Buddhism in Sri Lanka – or a Bodhisattva (a future

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[17] Another observation regarding this was the special treatment some people received during the pooja ceremonies, and which I was included in when my gatekeeper assisted my observation at the Kataragama temple. People with connections at the temple did not have to stand in line along the left side of the temple but were rather brought in the exit-door on the right.

Buddha) and within a Buddhist discourse therefore justifies the claims. This also connects with the view presented above with the claim to the place through King Dutugemunu. This connection to power makes the place political due to the various traces of not only Sinhalese ethnic but also Buddhist religious and thus political aspects, and this may in turn affect the identity of the place (Rigg, 2007; Anderson, 2015). These relations are according to Panelli (2003) reciprocal, but it *is* constantly enforced and justified through the power-relation which pulls more Sinhalese devotees to the place and affects the devotional practices; thus excluding others of a different identity and devalues their characterisations in this important and symbolic place as my Hindu informant showed a clear example of.

Despite these examples of (b)ordering practices - which are not physical borders but a mental separation that certainly represent a trace which over time affects the place in such a way that it might create physical borders in time - there is a shared sense of religion and worship. These shared emotions and experiences of religious worship come together during the festival with the procession when the Kataragama deity is taken out of his temple, and crosses the physical borders. The deity is celebrated by all who wish to during this time, and the other temples – also those under Sinhalese control - do not practice (b)ordering practices in the same manner, as both my Muslim and Valli Amma informant explained above in regards to their respective temples. There is likely not the same power-struggle due to the variety in importance of the deity, as Goonasekera (2007) suggests was the reason why some temples never came under the Nilame's administration in the first place. The Valli Amma temple is especially interesting in regards to shared worship because while it is under the same administration as the Kataragama temple, yet all can come and they can also perform their own rituals there:

> In terms of Valli pooja there is a difference, Tamils bring different food offerings. They mix rice, honey and gee. This is special to Valli. They also light lamps (Field interview with Valli Amma informant, August 2016).

Again the indigenous female goddess is uniting people, while allowing differences. She has a connection to the Kataragama deity and through that the Hindu devotees, as well as the Buddhist through her position as his wife. The Muslims, Vädda and Christians can see her as a mythical - or historical - figure who is commemorated by being celebrated during the festival.

When it comes to the Pooja ceremonies there are still restrictions in other places than just the Kataragama Maha devale. There are some actual physical borders that are delimited for people based purely on caste, or other ethnic and social distinctions. The physical border is at the inner sanctums of the Kataragama, Ganesh, Valli Amma temple, and so on where there are sacred areas that are delimited due to its status; where the God is physically represented. Interestingly my Hindu interviewee does not consider this to be unfair, as it is an old cultural norm that is usual both in religious places in Sri Lanka and in his native India. He considers his own Ganesh temple to be a place anyone can visit, and makes a clear point out of it as the many quotes in this chapter shows. Yet the Buddhist - or Sinhalese as he argues – trace which is so powerful in the Kataragama temple that he is feeling out-of-place there and is kept from physically entering the place due to a border, reflects how there are (b)ordering processes at this multi-religious site, and thus it can be implied in other places at the complex too.

Still the sacred space, the feeling of how one can experience miracles, have wishes granted and find the deity at this specific place is open to all despite the various power struggles – so the atmosphere and objective of visiting the place is open to all. This was also the claim of my Kataragama deity informant regarding the Kataragama temple, and while he highlights that is spatially open to all it does not mean that they feel welcome, despite the cultural trace from the Hindu tradition:

> Actually when it comes to God Kataragama it's not for one religion. I am Buddhist but the kovils belong to Hinduism. For God Kataragama everybody come and worship. Even Christians and Muslims and Hindus. Anybody can come and worship. It is a Buddhist and Hindu combination, that's how we do the pooja an all (Field interview with Kataragama deity informant, August 2016).

The fact that he claims the kovils belong to Hinduism does make sense if excluding the Maha Devale where the Kataragama deity is, but then the fact that he is Buddhist does not affect the argument as he is not connected to the *kovils*[18] (Goonasekera, 2007). This same (b)ordering is reflected at the Kataragama deity's wife Teyvanai temple that is also located at the close to the centre of the sacred area, but it is within the area of the Hindu monastery that is walled

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[18] A short explanation on this is that devales are Sinhalese patronised Buddhist temples, while kovils are Tamil patronised Hindu temples. For more detail on the debate around these differences and its development in Sri Lanka see Meegama (2011)

off. What is interesting here is also that it is spatially open to all, but there are Tamil cultural practices that keep others from physically entering the buildings (ibid). I visited the Teyvanai temple during the festival and was at first unsure if I could enter it as there was an attendant monitoring the entrance and stopping my company from entering before he had given my male companions instruction. It turned out that the men were required to undress patronise their upper bodies when entering the temple - this did not apply to women. This is a cultural trace that affects the place and the sense of place by regulating who are willing to follow the norms. Again an individual's identity can keep one from wishing to enter and pay respect to the deity due to the regulating norms, much in the same manner as at the Kataragama temple yet it is performed in a different manner and has a different impact at the Teyvanai temple as she is not considered a syncretic goddess despite her marriage to Kataragama.

Interestingly the other wife's temple, Valli Amma's, can again be contrasted to both Kataragama's and Teyvanai's. As it is open to both Tamil and Sinhalese worship without any enforcing cultural traces that exclude others, and it is part of the various inclusive rituals held during the festival due to the mythical story where the relationship between the Kataragama God and Valli Amma Goddess are the focus.

5.3 Summary

What the analysis in the chapter above has shown is how Kataragama is considered to be sacred by the religious representatives at the main temples, due to the connection it has to the various deities or religious people – thus the physical attachment that can be seen in the landscape and that continues to shape the place through the power of both devotees and religious representatives, especially ceremonial masters. What is important to the devotees is nicely summed up by Goonasekera: "Kataragama is sacred because the god of Kataragama lives here, because of its location and because the waters of Menik Ganga that sparkle like jewels" (2007, p. 496). This view resonates with what the respondents said, and it implicates the claim to the place of belonging to the deity. If considering Agnew and Anderson's theory it is a sacred place because of not only what it represents to different people at various scales which affects their sense of place, but also because of its location connected to the myth of the Kataragama deity and the locale itself with the physical manifestations.

The discussion on the ritual union suggests that Kataragama is different during the festival and in normal days, due to the movement of the sacred place by physically moving the deity from within the socially exclusive and caste-based bordered temple, and out to all the devotees in a celebration of religion during the procession where the whole Kataragama complex becomes a sacred space with the presence of the deity and the devotees sense of place. The most important aspect of Kataragama to many of the interviewees is also through their sense of place: the collective genealogical link to the land that the Kapurala and Aalatiyamma have due to their ancestral ties is a clear example of this. The pilgrimage also exemplifies this but in a different manner; they have a larger scale to the religious aspect as they not only have a religious experience along the actual pilgrimage as Harrigan and Goonasekera describes, but also venerate the KSA in a different and more open way than the temple representatives who are bound by their roles.

Theory and practice can be difficult to discern in the religious sphere as each individuals' interpretation varies and their realities differ. There are also many variables with their identities that can affect how the place is experienced, as for instance the Kataragama deity representative's Sinhala Buddhist background connected to the ancient king - who uses Hindu traditions in his pooja offerings where a Buddhist monk is present. The next chapter will look more into the processes that has allowed for this development, which is largely affected by more structural processes at the macro and medium scale (Barth 1994).

6. PART II: CHANGE OVER TIME

In order to assess the development at Kataragama the processes that influence the changes of the place in a more practical manner and in regards to its landscape will need to be assessed, thus at a larger scale than in Part I where the focus was on the micro scale and personal experiences. In the following sections focus is on power-relations and investments that occur on a macro and medium scale where national and societal influences come into play. It will be done in order to answer the following research questions; *"How has the Kataragama sacred area changed over time"* and its sub-question *"Have shifting political landscapes, especially including the recent war in the country, re-shaped the religious landscape and people's claims to this place?"* by focusing on the political influence on the place and looking into why it is important for the government.

6.1 Processes and where they lead

The major physical changes to Kataragama as a locale/location occurred *before* the civil war, as the place was declared a sacred area in 1961 and the 'worldly activity' such as shops and restaurants along the procession route were removed due to the government's endorsement of the place's sanctity (Spencer et al., 2014; Wirz, 1972). Spencer et al. also emphasises that the landscape of Kataragama has changed much from the time of Obeyesekere's renowned research in the 1970s, due to replacements and recent constructions – and improvements as my informants will explain below. Yet the sacred place with the many temples still has a similar layout as it did during both Goonasekeras and Frydenlunds fieldworks in the early 2000's, as I was able to use Frydenlunds map to navigate at the KSA and recognise the detailed descriptions of the place in "Walking to Kataragama".

Another visible change is that the festival procession is growing; the people I spoke to at the festival highlighted especially the tangible amount of elephants that was increased from the previous year as important. They also acknowledged that the Kandyan perahera has more elephants, thus comparing the festivals whilst admitting that the Kandyan was grander. This might be a result of the increase in devotees, or vice versa as both affect each other. This increase is probably what has led the Maha Devale to start offering food during the whole festival:

> […] for twenty-four hours, all fifteen days we offer food. That has started very recently actually, since last year. We have a large kitchen, and the army helps to make the food (Field interview with Kataragama deity informant, August 2016).

However this is not change that is visible in the landscape, and in that regard the place itself is very similar to how both Frydenlund and Goonasekera described it during the civil war, and this reflect what my Buddhist informant says about how the developments at the place were halted during the war – and picked up after with the investments that will be discussed later.

'Protected' place

First and foremost the most critical political act to have an effect on Kataragama as a place was the decision to declare is a sacred area, as it affected all the non-sacred and "polluting", creating a distinction based on power and values that excluded the Vädda, as the venison used in rituals was not allowed on the grounds. This sanctifying act did by definition exclude the political from the KSA, but Spencer et al. argues that it is ironical because it "at the same time is a space which depends entirely on the political for the ratification of its claims to sacredness" (2014, p. 70). Thus the political landscape affects the physical landscape, and the religious space due to the power it has. Spencer et al. also highlights how this declaration can be used to shift boundaries in the social world, as it did do at Kataragama with the exclusion of all "worldly goods" and thus implied a level of pollution to anything that was removed – including the meat for Vädda rituals. These moves to separate protected places for religion are done through the political sphere (ibid). The place is also tightly connected with political power as it is popular for politicians to visit the place to make vows and donations:

> Even when Mahinda Rajapaksa was the president here he was monthly coming. One month one time he was coming. And now president Maithripala he also coming but three months, four months, like that. Prime minister also coming (Field interview with Hindu informant, August 2016).

By doing so they both benefit, as the place is invested into and the politicians are seen as pious. These visits are also well documented in the media and this also increases the power of the place, yet there is variation to how often it is visited as the quote above shows[19]. What is

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[19] http://dailynews.lk/2017/07/10/local/121443/president-kataragama

interesting is that the visits have decreased from the more pro-Buddhist to the pro-minority president. Still the fact that Kataragama is considered important by the government and that it has an effect on the place is clear:

> Every government has helped this place to grow. The current government too helps us to develop this place (Field interview with Buddhist informant, August 2016).

Caste

The concept of caste emerged as a clear answer to my questions regarding the many heredityary ceremonial roles at temples at Kataragama, and they are only caste based in the Hindu case while even stricter in the Valli Amma and Kataragama temple where the lineage is also traced. These positions are reproductions of power, and strictly hereditary[20]. Caste as a tool for social differentiation in Sri Lanka has according to Silva (1999) primarily the role of separating who is superior to whom within a sub regional and community level. This perspective can be applied to Kataragama, as the caste aspect is most prevalent in the hierarchy within the religious institutions where purity is the main foci, as my Hindu informant stressed the purity of caste in terms of sanctity at Kataragama:

> He is not allowed to go inside, only inside Brahmin person can go inside. And before that we have to do some sacred sankalpam, we do a promise to god, "now I am going to enter your place, please keep me safely. And give me good mind, and give me some good ideas". All these things just promise to God. And then we enter inside the temple (Field interview with Hindu informant, August 2016).

Yet it is interesting to make a note of the fact that very few of my informants actually referred to it as caste, and this may reflect the development in Sri Lanka which Silva (2009) claims "has made caste very much a hidden entity not openly addressed by society, policy and social analysis" (p. xiv). This is also further strengthened by the fact that discrimination based on caste was outlawed by the Sri Lankan constitution with the Prevention of Social Disabilities Act in 1957 (ibid). While Silva does highlight the fact that not only caste but also discrimination based on caste still clearly exists in Sri Lanka, it is not this aspect of it I will

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[20] Article on lawsuit regarding hereditary claims to Kapurala appointment at Kataragama shows the measures taken when this was disputed http://dailynews.lk/2016/06/06/local/83785

focus on in my analysis. It is rather how religion is tied to power through the caste system and the way in which this reinforces and justifies the positions of religious representatives.

Thus the social status or even generations have claims to the temples and influence the place, and it is a form of accepted social discrimination. Yet it occurs as less extreme than other places with Hindu traces due to the fact that the pollution aspect isn't as strong and because they accept all;

> […] here we don't believe in social society categories. If one of them comes we treat them as one (Field interview with Kataragama deity informant, August 2016).

The hierarchy affects in different ways, usually it stays within the religious sphere and only adheres to the official representatives. Still I did experience special treatment along the lines of others with contacts and the social categories of the "mundane" world do have an effect on the worship, despite the claims of interviewees. This is not something that has changed or developed lately, but is maintained through the claims to the temples and the hereditary aspects of this.

New forms of communication

A process that has had a distinct effect on Kataragama as a place is the rapid modernization that follows the update in for instance technology. In addition to the end of the civil war this has led to several results such as an increase in tourism, as will be reflected upon below. These overall global changes come in contrast with the place as it is considered sacred and thus not changing, as my Muslim informant saw it:

> It won't change as it is a sacred place. People come with faith and for religious purpose. We come to worship and to be closer to god and to attain inner peace (Field interview with Muslim informant, August 2016).

Yet its increase in devotees as a result of development does change the place and space as the people affect it in different ways, and it also allows for more investments to happen and thus the physical place will develop:

> This place where we are sitting will be changed, that I know. Because they are
> going to repair. Our area will change. Something will change, no? In five years
> you come and then we will tell you (Field interview with Hindu informant, August
> 2016)

The up keeping of the temples results in constant change as there is a great influx of funds with the increase of devotees who give offerings of not only fruits but also money. The place is developing along the same lines as the rest of the country, and the increasing use of vehicles is one example of this that my Valli Amma informant disliked:

> It is wrong that people come in here to the sacred area by vehicles. Politicians and
> rich people (with high status) do so. It is a lack of respect (Field interview with
> Valli Amma informant, August 2016).

The quote above is referring to the use of vehicles inside the actual KSA, which is controlled to delimit only people with clearance – as I experienced first-hand as my companions to the festival drove there by car and were allowed in after identification.

Another interesting effect of the modernization is that the place is accessible online, one can read about people's experience of the place and festival on TripAdvisor and see clips from the festival on YouTube. The Kandy Perahera procession in its entirety was interestingly enough live-streamed on Facebook so one could experience it from all across the world. Online resources were also used my Hindu informant in order to determine whether or not to move to Kataragama as he relied on this aspect of the modernization to make his decision:

> After swami told me I had to come to Kataragama, then first I looked it up on
> YouTube. To see how Kataragama is (Field interview with Hindu informant,
> August 2016).

6.2 Results of change

As a reflection of the processes above - as well as the various claims and relations to the place reflected in the previous chapter - Kataragama as a place has changed over time; as is expected when taking Cresswell's view on a place into account and considering just how many different people have a connection to the place, and how it is important at every scale.

By taking the processes above, along with the views on the place and its sanctity into account the development of Kataragama will now be looked into by focusing on the specific aspects of investments, demography and tourism.

The funds used by different religious representatives to either create or develop physical manifestations of power in the place are important to look into. This also includes the investments of infrastructure that change how people can come to the place. It must be pointed out that these investments are largely legitimised through the government and thus connected to politics, as was discussed above. The place is created by these investments that have occurred over time, and the placement and control over them is also important to consider as a place is created (Cresswell, 2015). What stands out regarding investments at religious places in Sri Lanka is that they are in many cases funded by UNESCO or foreign governments, as the Kataragama is by the involvement of the Dutch government (see appendix 7). Yet when these outside forces legitimise the powerful buildings such as the museum, it is even more important that it is representational and reflects upon more than political views.

The Kataragama Museum is a clear example of an investment at Kataragama and as the ticket shows (appendix 7) it is intended to represent the place as multi-religious, yet as the unpublished document in appendix 8 also shows the suggestions to make it representational of the many faiths at Kataragama was not followed, with the Archaeology Professors' comment in our e-mail correspondence "I have attached here with my suggestion for Kataragama museum prepared in 2008. But it's not worked" (H. G. Dayasisira, Personal communication, 04.03.2017).

An example of how the museum is not representational, and why it is thusly more problematic as it claims to be so, it how the Muslim proportion at the museum is limited to approximately four posters of pictures with captions and a flag, and the Tamil representation was shown with less than a quarter of the museum with posters, trinkets of Ganesh and ceremonial tools along the wall at the far end. When my research assistant was asked to observe the museum on her own and report her findings, she had not even noticed the Muslim component. This is in stark contrast to the numerous imported statues and replicas of the Buddha that take up more than half of the space in the museum. This becomes a political question as the place is representing

memories that can arguably be seen as promotional, and maybe even cease to be memories at all if following Cresswell's (2015) theory.

There are other investments that are not within the KSA, which affect the place through their side effects. This was mentioned by my Buddhist informant in particular as he focused on how the infrastructure had improved, and the effect this had on the place as it increased the number of devotees:

> The crowd has increased rapidly. Early there were little facilities for the devotees. Now infrastructure has improved. Room facilities are easy to find. Security is good (Field interview with Buddhist informant, August 2016).

The infrastructure was mentioned earlier, and its focus-areas are also a critical point as which devotees are increasing due to investments may pose a political question based on its focus in Sinhalese populated areas (see map of religious dispersion in appendix 8). Nevertheless the Valli Amma informant saw the governments' improvements as a reaction to the popularity of the place, which also makes sense:

> The government contributes financially for the Perahera. They have also constructed roads in the Kataragama area since so many come here (Field interview with Valli Amma informant, August 2016).

An interesting example of how development projects by the government affects the place was raised by my Buddhist informant, as he considered the highly debated and criticized investments made by the previous President in his home district as improvements that would raise the importance of Kataragama:

> This sacred place is improved every day. With the Mathala airport and Hambantota harbour, this place would be highly famous. This would be an economic and holy city in the future. There will be a rapid development in this area. This place would be an important centre of our country (Field interview with Buddhist informant, August 2016).

He sees the investments as increasing the number of devotees more, and thus making the place more important due to its higher economic status and increase to become a "holy city" – something it currently was not based on this statement. This informant had seen the development of the place over a long period as he had an extensive relation to the place; he had seen the economy of the town's increase accordingly to the number of devotees and thusly had good reason to make the assumptions above. He also reflected on the effect the civil war had on the KSA:

> Before the end of the war, people were scared when they came to this place. The crowd really reduced during the war period, there were many bombs all over the country. Thus it became very difficult for people to live. Their economy dropped down. They could not afford to come to this place. The development of the place was distraught. After the end of the war again, there was a rapid development. People started to come here. And this village gets economic benefit through their visit (Field interview with Buddhist informant, August 2016).

Demography

Along the increase in investments in the place the clearest change in the post-war period was a general increase of devotees that may be a reflection of the infrastructure development as mentioned above as well as the obvious fact that the conflict officially ended in 2009. The reason why devotees come to Kataragama was an aspect I wished to look into, but it was difficult to discern as there are a multitude of reasons and they are often personal; many wish to have children and bring their babies after they are born, there's a trend of having car keys blessed for safety, students seek help with exams and so on (Spencer et al., 2014). Spencer et al. asserts that "the religiosity celebrated at Kataragama is intensely engaged with worldly concerns" (2014, p. 88) and it can be argued that it attracts more people, as it is open to all. There was a noticeable increase in a specific part of the demography, and that was among the youth (and tourists, as I will look into below). The Valli Amma informant attributed this to the fact that:

> Young people show more faith. They come, all age groups are coming here (Field interview with Valli Amma informant, August 2016).

While my Hindu informant had observed a general increase in devotees the post-war period, he attributed it to devotees' wishes being fulfilled:

> So earlier not too much crowd coming. But now big crowd coming. So now it means that God gives too much things and then devotees are coming here (Field interview with Hindu informant, August 2016).

He had noticed a distinct increase in the general crowd, and from the perspective of the Ganesh temple this includes Tamil devotees as it is among the most open temples without clear (b)ordering tactics. The Kataragama deity informant pointed out the same increase:

> I have noticed that the tourism has increased after the war. There has been an increase of local pilgrims as well. It is first now that I see people from the down south. They have not been to the north much for the last thirty-five years, and now they go to the northern side. But we see a lot of pilgrims come from the northern side. Even for the last festival we had big numbers of pilgrims from the north (Field interview with Kataragama deity informant, August 2016).

However, the pilgrims from the north come mostly during the festival, which is when the place is far more open and when the Hindu devotee felt that he could worship the Kataragama deity. With the (b)ordering and Buddhicization processes occurring at the Maha Devale it may arguably affect less during the festival when the entire demography is different – interestingly one of my informal interviews were with a Tamil Hindu from Jaffna who did not enter the temple but rather sat outside the Maha Devale during the pooja a few weeks after the festival. When questioned why, he seemed to find it uncomfortable to answer. The Buddhist presence, especially with a monk but also the Sinhalese Kapurala, might be the answer to this as the Hindu temple informant sees the temple as "belonging" to the Sinhalese.

Tourism

When it comes to change that will likely have an unforeseen effect on the place, the rapid increase in tourism is likely to do so. It has, as the statements above touched upon, already started and it will also affect the place over time due to their presence and the expectations that follow with their power to affect place. The festival especially draws tourists who visit all the various temples, including the mosque:

> All religions visit the mosque during the festivals, also tourists. There is a great number of foreigners (Field interview with Muslim informant, August 2016).

Therefore, this adds to the place's multicultural aspects as their mere presence can affect the place and how others experience it, especially when they come in great numbers. There were also many tourists during the holidays and especially at the scheduled pooja at the complex, and with the general increase of tourism to the island after the end of the civil war this may affect the place more in the future[21]. There are already tendencies for the tourists to overtake the place at certain times, as was experienced by the Hindu informant:

> Many tourists are coming! This time also, I can't count but about one day 50, 60, 70. Sometime big crowd coming. Yesterday I saw during pooja time inside all tourists. Inside Ganesh temple. I know because people have only phone or camera phone and take photo, photo photo. So yesterday big crowd, only tourist crowd inside our Ganesh temple. When I did pooja I was looking and all I think is that now I am in Europe, not in Sri Lanka. Because all are white persons there (Field interview with Hindu informant, August 2016).

While this was not considered negative by my informant, it could be negative for the local devotees actually wishing to worship the deity; this form of behaviour at sacred places requires a high level of respect which is not especially regulated at Kataragama when comparing it to other sacred tourist destinations (there are for instance not signs regulating behaviour, as picture nr. 1 in appendix 1 shows from Polonnaruwa). Despite my own observations of tourists at the KSA dressed in a manner that was not especially respectful with shorts and bare shoulders, the Buddhist informant only considered them to be a positive influence:

> The tourists who come here adjust to our culture. They show respect to our culture here. Their dressing patterns suits our culture. The food behaviour, they way they interact everything suits our custom and traditions. We have no conflict. They feel

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[21] Comparatively my home country, Norway, has an ongoing debate as the tourism is considered to take over many places and meets resistance in the local population. This has raised debates on how tourism should be managed; https://www.aftenposten.no/meninger/kommentar/i/XGz5E/A-reise-er-blitt-banalt-og-slitsomt-Masseturismens-suksess-odelegger-til-og-med-reisemalene-selv--Knut-Olav-Amas

so free to move here. The villagers respect them. They also take part in our religious activities (Field interview with Buddhist informant, August 2016).

What does benefit from the increase in tourism is the towns and temples economy, as it is a more stable income than the pilgrims who are mostly there for the fifteen days in August. The hotel business had a steady foot in the town with new luxury-hotels, and it stands out a bit in such a small town with otherwise few facilities and small buildings.

6.3 Summary

Processes from the outside which have a dominant Sinhalese trace, and that favours the Buddhists who already represent the majority of the population have largely influenced the changes to Kataragama as a sacred place, and to the town where worldly demands are met. Sinhalese-Buddhists have thus largely influenced the changes to Kataragama as a sacred place, and to the town where worldly demands are met. However, the people who frequent the place also have a power over it, as a place is an on-going process of creation. The KSA is still a multicultural place despite the various heritage claims and (b)ordering processes occurring at all the temples at various degrees – all show which religion they belong to and which deity is worshipped there, but some go to further lengths to do this and that is when the mental borders appear as norms are introduced or behaviour is controlled.

It is clear that politics are affecting the place, especially since the country's leaders regularly visit it, and because state policies have been proven to have direct consequences on the place. Where the administrative control is placed has caused debate, yet the combination of caste and genealogy adds to the claim for the most important temples and has thus reaffirmed the claims for the Kapuralas, Aalatiyamma and Basnayake Nilame. The end of the civil war has had a positive effect on the place when looking at the view from my informants, as they see increase in pilgrims as overall positive since it increases the importance of the place. And in order to understand the context of this, and thus its importance, this section will end with a quote by Nichols-Barrer who researched the governmental influence at Kataragama over centuries: *"The history of political interventions at Kataragama is a chronicle of the final powerlessness of government, over the long term, to ever fully dictate the manner and character of a society's religious beliefs"* (Nichols-Barrer, 2003, p. 56).

7. CONCLUSION

This thesis has analysed the importance of Kataragama as a symbolic place that includes several religious groups by considering the objectives of explaining the relationship between place and religion over time in order to see whether it changes, and to assess the relation religious representatives have to the sacred area and the Kataragama deity. In order to find answers to these objectives, which were developed prior to the fieldwork, the decision to have a qualitative study was imperative due to the sensitive nature of the main topic; religion. The research questions have been altered as a reflection of the data processing, especially with the results from the coding, and have been narrowed down to focus on change over time with special attention to the post-war development. The claims to the place are especially affected by this – yet the most important aspect is to see whether Kataragama still is a place that is experienced as inclusive and spatially open by the devotees belonging to different religions and ethnic groups.

The analysis in the two prior chapters has led to the following findings from the semi-structured interviews held in Kataragama with religious representatives of the main religions with physical temples at the place. There were respondents on different sides of the ethnic divide, and there were also disagreements in their statements that have been discussed by using my own observations, the contextual situation and secondary sources. This is not surprising when taking into consideration the sensitivity of the topic, and my own positionality - especially as the project was presented as it is in the informed consent form (appendix 4) where the focus is on religious heterogeneity.

Kataragama as a place, and especially as a sacred area, has changed over time in accordance with the traces of the people from different cultures who frequent the temple and the governing force's interest in it – this is due to its power through symbolism, historical figures and physical monuments as a place is an on-going process of creation. There have been changes taking place over many decades as many have analysed before me, therefore my focus has been on the post-war development which marked a new beginning with physically open borders that make it safe for any to travel to Kataragama. After 2009 there has been an especial increase in the participation of youths, where many wish for good grades, and also tourists as the tourism on the island in general has increased drastically after the conflict ended. The conflict also made it more difficult for the northern population, (of which the

majority are Tamil as appendix 9 shows) to come to Kataragama, as most of the fighting occurred in the northern and eastern areas that go along the Pada Yatra pilgrimage route, thus the increase in devotees after the end of the conflict reflects that it now is safer to travel for all[22]. The infrastructure developments do affect the increase in southern pilgrimage today as it did before as noted by Nichols-Barrer, but as my Hindu informant also recognised an increase in visitors at the Ganesh temple it is likely that the eastern and northern population are increasingly drawn to the place due to the higher safety along the route – despite less investments in infrastructure along it. The investments in Kataragama, as exemplified by the non-representational museum, have been affected by the Buddhist hegemony but this does not defer devotees from attending the festival as they also have a power over the place and affect it with their culture and customs, and mere presence as the multitude of people in the same place is what distinguishes Kataragama; they mingle together, eat together and worship at the same place.

When considering how the place has changed, it is important to consider how the shifting political landscapes have affected the religious landscape – and especially the claims to the place. While the informants were adamant about how religion and politics are separate the influence by the various governments says otherwise – the political claim through Sinhalese-Buddhist hegemony does affect the place as it has the power to place the ceremonial duties and management of the devales under the Kapuralas who are Sinhalese by caste and can only be appointed through genealogical claims. Yet this does not affect all the sacred places within the complex; the Hindus, Muslims and Vädda do not have the same genealogical claim but they verify their connection through physical structures that are connected to religious figures.

The shifting political landscape in the post-war era has not had a notable effect on the people's claim to the place as it is still a multicultural celebration; most of the changes occurred prior to or during the early stages of the civil war, and are extensively documented by Frydenlund (2003), Goonasekera (2007), Pfaffenberger (1979), Obeyesekere (1981; 1984; 2004) and more.

In regards to the claim to the Kataragama temple it is the ethnic group of Sinhalese, but when it comes to religious practice it is not only the Buddhists despite the obvious (b)ordering

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[22] Goodhand et al. (2009) especially makes note of how identity was connected to safety during the civil war, and how drastically the ethnic signifiers could affect one's security based on location as different places were under control of opposing ethnic groups.

practices that have increased over time, and been noted upon by many researchers through the term Buddhicization. The claim to the temple itself comes with the experience the devotees have, their sense of place and the belief and veneration of the Kataragama deity; and this is open to all - especially during the festival when the deity is paraded every night. The origin story of Kataragama is tied to the indigenous Vädda and Valli Amma, which inherently includes their claim to the place, and as was pointed out from the Kataragama deity informant's account of the history the Muslims and Hindus also have a place from the same time-period. The Kataragama temple is considered sacred because of the tight connection to the deity, and it is in the inner sanctum that is the holiest and where a religious cleanliness is normally demanded – but when it comes to this particular temple an added ethnic claim is added as one must belong to a traceable genealogical caste in order to be considered as a Kapurala.

The Kataragama temple specifically is among the less inclusive religious places at the KSA, at least outside of the festival as the discussion of ritual union shed light on, and as the Hindu informant personally felt. The deity is encompassed within the Buddhist pantheon and power-structures that are linked to the Kandyan kingdom, and this is showcased by the rituals held by strictly Sinhalese ceremonial masters and by the inclusion of having pali-verses read by a Buddhist monk during the pooja. This illustrates the power of Buddhism hegemony in Sri Lanka that has been used by Sinhalese nationalists in campaigns such as Sinhale.

Despite this the Kataragama deity is connected to the whole place, not only within the devale and the festival is a clear example on resistance towards not only Colonial force but also current political climates as it is inclusive and open to absolutely all, both Muslims, Christians, tourists and so on. During the festival religion is practiced on the entire sacred area, at the space that Kataragama is connected to, as all devotees can perform their religion in an embodied manner through for instance the Pada Yatra pilgrimage. Thus the whole religious area across the Menik Ganga river represents a sacred space due to the sense of shared religion through the devotees sense of place with a connection to the deity through their personal devotion. The devotees can venerate their religion in a different manner than the religious representatives as they do not have the same expectations connected to them and that is also why they can affect the place by making it inclusive and create a transgression in the communal feeling.

Based on these findings I suggest that the embodied experience of shared worship and sense of place creates a blurred line, where the transgression shows the devotion to religion in general. Shared participation among the religions in rituals and ceremonies at Kataragama is a clear example of this; both Hindus and Buddhists fire-walk, and the mosque starts the festival with the raising of their flag (Frydenlund, 2003). The impression left with me immediately after conducting my fieldwork was that Kataragama is a religious space consisting of different places that in turn are affected by the culture that creates new traces and the lingering context of the claims. This means that both the festival and the everyday religious practice is the culture which creates Kataragama; it is the shared sacred space that makes people come in increasing numbers to worship not only god Kataragama, but also saints and people who have made an impact on the place. The personal experience of the sanctity and worship, as well as higher scale developments such as infrastructure investments and the end of the civil war are some of the aspects I will use these theories to, in order to understand not only the importance of but also the development of Kataragama.

Because Kataragama is an ancient sacred place there are many different stories about it, and thus claims to it, which is typical for a religious place. However, most of the stories of Kataragama include the Kataragama deity as a real entity and include the different religions in different ways depending on their context and predispositions, which makes the generally recognised story both important and powerful. There are variations to the stories, which is expected when considering how old it is, but what draws the pilgrims out on a long journey to Kataragama annually at the same time by participating in the Esala festival is - as the Valli Amma informant summed up above - that the Kataragama deity married Valli Amma at the time when the festival is held. The claims to Kataragama come through this story, but it is the timing of when and how events happened that varies, in addition to the spatial aspect of when certain physical manifestations such as buildings and plants came about; thus there is contestation about when memorials were introduced and what they mean. There is much variation in regards to when events occurred, and whether something came before another is highlighted in several interviews as will be noticeable below.

Everything that affects and creates Kataragama is interpreted at several scales; at the micro-level it is the devotees perception of it and experience at the festival and sense of the place – which can become an embodied experience – while the medium level is how the entire town is affected by the festival and devotees with for instance such high increases in demand for

flowers for worship that they have to import it from other parts of the country, as was revealed by talking with the female vendors of flowers and incense along the Kiri Vehera road. The devotees at the micro level have a different experience than the temple employees due to their status and expectations, as they are connected to the temples and religions through social structures like caste.

Kataragama as a place is affected by the different people who are vehicles of power through their different identities, all the cultures of the island are represented during the festival – as the religious procession is an example of - and ensures that the place is experienced as inclusive during this specific annual period, and adds to the sanctity of the place as the multi-religious pilgrimage is an indicator of (Foucault, 1980; Park, 1994). Within the context of Buddhist hegemony and when comparing it to other previously shared sacred places the power of the devotees at Kataragama is clearly strong as they not only continued veneration during the civil war, but also kept the place from being taken over by the Buddhist religion despite the (b)ordering techniques. While the traces of the Buddhist culture is being used to persuade a Sinhalese domination, as is very clear in the Kataragama museum, it does not keep the devotees from coming and sharing a religious experience – thus the specific places within the temples may be deemed sacred but the shared *religious space* is actually what makes Kataragama special and important, and truly religious as borders are crossed not only physically but also mentally. As this thesis was opened by a quote by Goonasekera that was based on his experience of taking part in the Pada Yatra pilgrimage and experienced the social inclusion of shared religion first-hand, it will now end with a notion of his which is vital to understanding the place and the devotees relation to the Kataragama deity: *"The necessity for spiritual cleanliness preludes social cleanliness. For the belief is that the god treats all equally, and punishes those who harm his devotees."* (2007, p. 499-500)

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Pictures from fieldwork: August – September 2017

Credit: Guri Strand Karlsen
1: Sign at Polonnaruwa ruins which designates how to behave
and dress appropriately: "This is a Sacred Place. Please behave
well within the premises and remove your shoes and hats before
entering."

Credit: Guri Strand Karlsen
2: Layers of fabric covering entrance to inner room in Kataragama
Maha Devale, and ceremonial tools such as a conch.

Credit: Guri Strand Karlsen

3: Water-cutting ceremony in Menik Ganga River. The reeds hide the tools for the ritual that is brought from the Maha Devale to the river.

Credit: Guri Strand Karlsen

4: Protected branch from Sri Maha Bodhi-tree in Anuradhapura. Buddhist flags in front.

Credit: Asna Siyad

5: Valli Amma statue under the Tamarind tree, which is propped up and protected by fences.

Credit: Asna Siyad

6: Bonds tied to rail inside Mosque at Kataragama.

Credit: Asna Siyad

7: Three-branched palm tree inside Kataragama Mosque area.

Credit: Guri Strand Karlsen

8: Kiri Vehera Stupa at Kataragama on the morning of the water-cutting ceremony. Notice the Buddhist flags and ribbons in the same colour around the stupa.

Appendix 2: Primary interview guide made prior to fieldwork

INTERVIEW GUIDE; KATARAGAMA

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Age	
Role/position/job	
Education	
Religious group	

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

- What is your relationship to the Kataragama temple grounds?
  - In whay way is it important to you?
  - How is Kataragama sacred to you?
  - What does sacred mean to you?
- How long have you had a relation to it?
- Are there areas within the temple grounds that are exclusive to certain groups?
  - If yes, how can you distinguish them from each other?
    Physically and mentally?
- Do some have a stronger claim to the Kataragama temple grounds?
  - Who uses the temple on a daily basis?
  - Is there a difference between who uses it normally and during the festivals?

CHANGE OVER TIME

- How did you come to know about Kataragama?
- Has the use of the temple changed?
  - Are different people more present now than before the civil war in the 1980s or during in the 2000s?
  - Do you have any examples of changes with e.g. tourists?
- How was it before/during/after the civil war?
- If you are a recurring visitor, why are you coming back?
  - Is Kataragama still important to you? And in the same way?
- Has the following events/developments had an effect?
  - Conflict
  - Tsunami
  - Modernization - new generation?
  - Economy
  - Politics – election of 2015

FOR RELIGIOUS REPRESENTATIVES

- How do you relate to the temple grounds?
- Do you identify with what Skanda represents?
    - If so/not how and why?
    - Is worship of Skanda the main reason why you are at Kataragama?
- Do you think/feel that there have been changes to Kataragama?
    - If so, which are these, why and how?
- How do you think Kataragama will look like in five years?

FOR PILGRIMS

- Why do you take part in the pilgrimage?
    - Purification?
    - Tradition?
- Who takes part in it today?
- Have you done it before?
    - If so, when?
    - Why?
    - Have you seen any changes to it?
    - Who participates?
    - Who participated during the civil war? Or before even?
- Is the pilgrimage changing character?
    - Has it become more accessible with for instance people travelling to the festival by bus?
    - Is there a difference between the recent generations?
    - Do young people partake in the pilgrimage?
    - Assuming that the actual pilgrim pathway is more available in the post-war period than it was during the years of conflic, is there a drastic difference now?
    - Do tourists take part in it? And if so, how do you feel about this?

Appendix 3: Secondary interview guide edited during fieldwork

INTERVIEW GUIDE; KATARAGAMA

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Age	
Role/position/job	
Education	
Religious group	

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

- What is your relationship to the Kataragama temple grounds?
  - In what way is it important to you?
  - How is Kataragama sacred to you?
  - What does sacred mean to you?
- How long have you had a relation to it?
- Are there areas within the temple grounds that are exclusive to certain groups?
  - If yes, how can you distinguish them from each other? Physically and mentally?
- Do some have a stronger claim to the Kataragama temple grounds?
  - Who uses the temple on a daily basis?
    - Which religions do they belong to?
    - What social background do they have?
  - Is there a difference between who uses it normally and during the festivals?

CHANGE OVER TIME

- How did you come to know about the place Kataragama?
- Has the use of the temple changed?
  - Why do people come?
  - Are different people more present now than before the civil war in the 1980s or during in the 2000s?
  - Do you have any examples of changes with e.g. tourists?
- How was it before/during/after the civil war?
- If you are a recurring visitor, why are you coming back?
  - Is Kataragama still important to you? And in the same way?
- Has the following events/developments had an effect on the use of the temple?
  - Conflict
  - Tsunami
  - Modernization - new generation?
  - Economy
  - Politics – election of 2015

FOR RELIGIOUS REPRESENTATIVES

- How do you relate to the temple grounds?
- Do you identify with what Lord Kataragama represents?
    - If so/not how and why?
    - Is worship of Lord Kataragama the main reason why you are at Kataragama?
- Do you think/feel that there have been changes to Kataragama?
    - If so, which are these, why and how?
- How do you think Kataragama will look like in five years?

FOR LORD KATARAGAMA DEVOTEES

- Can you clarify the different interpretations of Lord Kataragama?
- Why do people give offerings?
- What does Lord Kataragama symbolise to you?
- Is there cooperation between different religions?
    - At the sacred area?
    - During the festival?

FOR GATEKEEPER
- What does Lord Kataragama symbolise to you?
    - Has this meaning changed over time?
- Do you think there are different interpretations of Lord Kataragama among the different religions?
- Can you explain the significance of the devotees' pooja offering with car keys?
    - Is it a new development, or an adjustment?
- Who buys fruit from your shop?
    - Which age group, social background? Are they locals, pilgrims or tourists?
- When is the high season?
- Do different people come during the festival?
    - Has there been a change to this after the end of the civil war?
- Can you elaborate on the cooperation between the religions during the festival?
    - Do all actively take part?
    - What is the Nilame's role in Kataragama?
    - Who are the green clad ladies who take part in the Kataragama pooja?

Appendix 4: Informed consent form

NTNU – Trondheim
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

INFORMED CONSENT FORM - RESEARCH STUDY ON:

"Role of religious heterogeneity at Kataragama in Post-war Sri Lanka"

RESEARCH PURPOSE AND PROCEDURES:

The study is part of an academic research project led by the Master Student, Guri Strand Karlsen. The institution responsible for this study is **the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)**. The study will look into how whether the levels of tolerance and the different claims to the shared sacred space at the Kataragama temple has been affected by the recent conflict, and if there has been created new borders between pilgrims as the ethnical dividers transcend religious markers. The study will also look into if this has affected the minorities frequenting the temple. The main themes are interreligious coexistence, place identity and pilgrimage trends.

We will use qualitative methods involving an interview session where you answer the questions we have in the best way that you can. This will take you approximately 20-40 minutes.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:

There should not be any, or minimal risk or discomfort following the participation of this study. Risks here refer to any physical, psychological, social, or economic risks.

POTENTIAL BENEFIT OF THE RESEARCH STUDY:

Your contribution will help strengthen the study and its outcome.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMTY:

We will need your age, profession and religious belief to categorise the participants. This information will only be used for administrative purposes. Participants will be kept anonymous in the final report, meaning that no individuals could be recognised in the final report.

This information is only available to my research assistant and myself. This information will be kept confidential and deleted at the end of the project.
Expected end date is 20 June 2017.

VOLUNTARINESS IN PARTICIPATION AND THE RIGHT TO WITHDRAW PARTICIPATION:

Involvement and participation in this study is voluntary. You will not receive any penalty for not participating. You have also the right to withdraw your participation at any time without a reason and without any penalty.

Date/place: _____

Name: _____   Witness signature:

Signature: _____   _____

TURN THE PAGE FOR CONTACT INFORMATION

Appendix 5: Agreement with the Norwegian centre for research data (NSD)

NSD

Ragnhild Lund
Geografisk institutt NTNU
Dragvoll
7491 TRONDHEIM

Vår dato: 04.08.2016   Vår ref: 49088 / 3 / BGH   Deres dato: Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 28.06.2016. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

49088	*The role of religious heterogeneity in post-war Sri Lanka*
Behandlingsansvarlig	*NTNU, ved institusjonens øverste leder*
Daglig ansvarlig	*Ragnhild Lund*
Student	*Guri Strand Karlsen*

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. Personvernombudet tilrår at prosjektet gjennomføres.

Personvernombudets tilråding forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 20.06.2017, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Kjersti Haugstvedt

Belinda Gloppen Helle

Kontaktperson: Belinda Gloppen Helle tlf: 55 58 28 74
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

Appendix 6: Pada Yatra pilgrimage route

"THE MUSIUM OF RELLIGIUOS FAITH AND PILGRIMAGE"- Kataragama

Target groups:
School teachers and children, pilgrims, researchers, foreign visitors

The display inside and out side museum:
(Based on 4 factors in section B-Themes of the concept purposed for the museum presented by the museum committee in November 2007)

Secter A
Historical sequence;

1. Pre historical background of Kataragama (PH sites map)
2. Early Iron Age: burial, industrial and EBI sites)
3. Historical period- a. religious and royal places around Kataragama
                b. Mahayana and Ruhuna (combination of Buddhism and
                  Hinduism)-**Natha and Skandha**
                c. Kiri Vehera
                d. military routs to Rajarata via Kataragama
                e. Pre colonial and colonial Kataragama- **God of liberty**

Secter B.
God and Faith
1. Kataragama Deviyo –arrival to Kataragama, Valli amma and Tevani amma, peacock (based on legends)
2. Kartikeya, Skhanda, Muruga, Kadira and Kataragama(Comparative study with Hindu believes- with special reference to South Indian influence)
3. Other Deviyo and Yakkhu (South Indian transition to Southern Sri Lanka- social history and religious faith)
4. Story of Gana and Skhanda (Kataragama legend)
5. Valli amma, Tevani amma (The concept of "Amma"-regional believes)
6. Vedda and Valli amma
7. Teritory of Kataragama god (a map showing the geographical area with his power, regional gods and power of Kataragama god (visual presentation of power higherachy)
8. God in the jungle (The god of hunting and gathering)
9. The god of harmony (Sinhala, Tamil, Muslims and Vadda)
10. Adem's bridge and Kadira's bridge (a. The bridge between India and Sri Lanka, b. The bridge between North and South via Eastern coast)

Secter C.
God and rituals
1. Devalaya –Historical evolution (changing of physical features)
2. Preahara (procession) –evolution
3. Kataragama festival-
    a. It's rituals

       b. April to July –regional rituals associated with Kataragama

4. Devalaya and services (Nila pangu)- map of villages of services
5. Higherachy of Nila- (visual)
6. coconut and god- origin and evolution
7. fire and god
8. hooks and god
9. Walking to Kataragama (Its history, route map, rituals up to Kataragama, Kovils and other archaeological sites on route)
10. Other interesting rituals and belives- dedicating objects- *Bahara Oppu*- human, animal, vehicles, chairs and other, ritual bathing
     - Kataragama and politics (*Bhaara*) – interesting occasions

11. Vanishing rituals- absorbing other regional practices, looting heritage

Other suggestions_
1. Should display maps showing
     - Kataragama in Sri Lanka (routs from major cities- with a package of natural and cultural heritage sites)
     - Important historical, religious places in Kataragama
2. museum plan
3. model of Kataragama
4. guide to Kataragama (information)
5. Collection of publications
6. video, audio and photo collection
7. The outer space of the museum can be use for displaying some objects available in museum collection such as gates, stone pillars, slabs, fragments of statues, replicas, torches (willakku) etc.
     - **Placing a Buddha statue on especially prepared platform of entrance is not giving any idea of museum theme**. Placing the head of Dambegoda image(replica) will be a better representation because it gives the concept of combination and further it will be the **head line** of museum.

Appendix 8: Ticket to the Kataragama Museum & Information Centre

This museum represents the multi-religious and multi-cultural personality of the sacred space at Kataragama. It is a visual narration of the history of this site from 3rd century B.C. to present times. The museum is a gift to Sri Lanka by the Royal Netherlands Government.

No. K -

№ 000673

Thank you for your contribution of

US $ 5.00

To the preservation of the
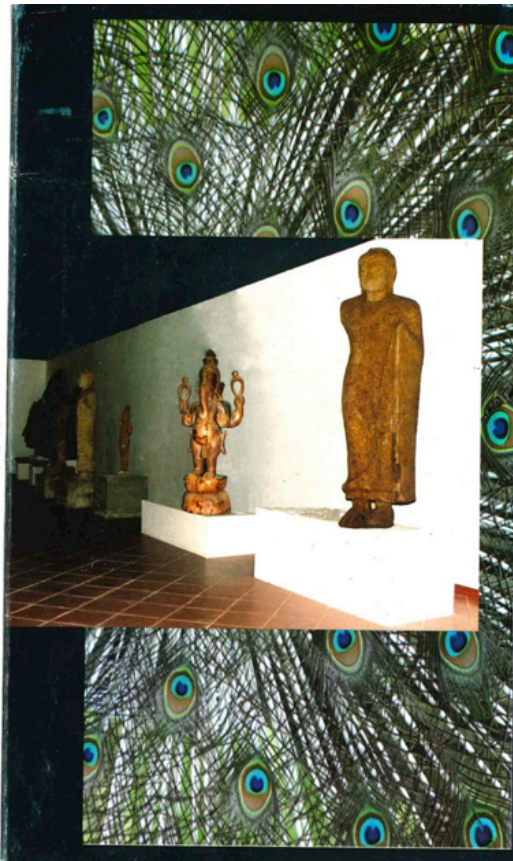World Heritage Sites in
Sri Lanka

KATARAGAMA
Museum & Information Centre

This contribution will permit
bearer to visit the museum
and to take photographs

Central Cultural Fund
Custodian Organization for UNESCO declared World Heritage Sites)

" Help save the Glory that is Lanka "
Printed at the State Printing Corporation

Appendix 9: Spatial distribution of religions based on province

Map: P1.5.1 **Population by Religion and Province, 2012**

Legend

Provincial Boundaries

Religion

270,000

Buddhist
Hindu
Islam
Roman Catholic
Other Christian
Other

Northern Province

North Central Province

North Western Province

Eastern Province

Indian Ocean

Central Province

Western Province

Uva Province

Sabaragamuwa Province

Southern Province

Location

0   20   40   80 Kilometers

9

113