

WANING MULTI-RELIGIOSITY: BUDDHICIZATION OF A SACRED SITE IN SRI LANKA

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This paper is based on one major pilgrimage site in Sri Lanka, known as Sri Pada (Adam's Peak), where hundreds of thousands of pilgrims annually visit to worship the sacred footprint which is located in the mountain top temple. This sacred footprint has different sacred connotations for Sri Lanka's major religious groups (Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Catholic). However, this pilgrimage site, which was considered a multi-religious site until the turn of the twentieth century, has now been constructed or ordered into an ethnic majoritarian Buddhist space.

My paper therefore, concentrates in part on the historical process which has led to the construction of the pilgrimage site as a Buddhist space, and then locates this process within the wider context of the rise of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism in Sri Lanka. My work highlights the powerful role pilgrimage can play in particular religious discourses and the manner it legitimates certain ways of envisaging power and relationships of domination at particular conjunctures, which is clearly apparent in the contemporary Sinhala Buddhist cultural nationalism in Sri Lanka.

Key words: Religion, Buddhism, Nationalism, Pilgrimage

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