

Neena Mahadev

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ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Professor, Yale-NUS College, Singapore

Anthropology, Social Sciences Division, July 2017 – present

Research Associate, Asia Research Institute (ARI), National University of Singapore

Religion and Globalization Cluster, July 2018 – present

Research Fellow, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity

Religious Diversity Department, Göttingen, October 2015 – July 2017

Research project: “Itineraries of Religious Arrival and Revival: Multi-ethnic Religious Spaces in Sri Lanka and Singapore”

Postdoctoral Research Fellow, University of Göttingen

Trans-regional Research Network (CETREN), October 2013 – September 2015

Working group on “The Politics of Secularism and the Emergence of New Religiosities”, a collaboration between the Centers for Modern Indian and for Modern East Asian Studies

EDUCATION

PhD Johns Hopkins University, Anthropology, degree conferred October 2013

Dissertation title: “Buddhist Nationalism, Christian Evangelism, and the Rearticulations of Conflict and Belonging in Postwar Sri Lanka.” Defense hearing result: unconditional pass

Dissertation Committee and External Examiners: Veena Das, Jane Guyer, Naveeda Khan, William E. Connolly (Political Theory, JHU), John D. Kelly (Anthropology, U. Chicago)

MA and ABD qualified December 2008. Comprehensive exam essay titles:

“Two Forms of Vision—one Enlightened and one Enchanted: Reason and Ineffability as Vicissitudes of Religious Pluralism”

“Selfish Giving?: Theravāda Buddhism and her Mahāyāna Buddhist and Christian Critics”

MA University of Chicago, Social Sciences, degree conferred August 29, 2003

MA thesis title: “The Dialogics of Class and Ethnic Identity Politics within Sri Lanka’s Tamil Plantation Community: Nationalisms, Unions, and the Struggle for Representation”

BA Carleton College, Sociology/Anthropology, concentration South Asian Studies, 2000

Winner of *Dave Okada Memorial Prize in the Social Sciences*, “awarded annually to the social sciences major who has demonstrated the most remarkable intellectual achievement in his or her studies”.

Awarded ‘Academic Distinction’ for Comprehensive Thesis (Capstone/Honors Thesis).

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

“Karma & Grace: Rivalrous Reckonings of Fortune and Misfortune.” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, Volume 9(2). 2019. 421-438.

(co-authored with Jeremy F. Walton), “Introduction: Religious Plurality, Interreligious Pluralism, and Spatial Practices of Religious Difference,” editors to special section entitled “Siting Pluralism: Spatialities of Religious Difference,” with commentary by Winnifred F. Sullivan. *Religion & Society: Advances in Research*. Volume 10. 2019(b). *In Press*.

“Postwar Blood: Sacrifice, Anti-Sacrifice, and Inter-Religious Relations in Sri Lanka.” *Religion & Society: Advances in Research*. Volume 10. 2019(c). *In Press*.

“Economies of Conversion and Ontologies of Difference: Buddhism, Christianity, and Adversarial Political Perception in Sri Lanka.” (Published with commentary by five scholars in my field, plus a reply.) *Current Anthropology*. December 2018(a). 59(6): 665-690.

“The Maverick Dialogics of Religious Rivalry in Contemporary Sri Lanka: Inspiration and Contestation in a New Messianic Buddhist Movement.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. March 2016, Vol. 22(1): 127-147.

Book Chapters

“Kuweni & Vijaya Retold: Sri Lanka’s Postwar Iconography as an Affirmation of Inter-Community Mixing.” In *Innovative Religiosities in Postwar Sri Lanka*, edited by Mark Whitaker, Darini Rajasingham, and S. Pathmanesan. (Publication sponsored by National Science Foundation (US), and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research.) *Routledge*. *Accepted 2019(d)*.

“Secularism and Religious Modernity in Singapore and Sri Lanka: Transregional Revivalism Considered.” In *Secularism in South, East and Southeast Asia*, Peter van der Veer and Kenneth Dean (eds). Global Diversities series, Palgrave Press. 2018(b).

“Conversion and Anti-Conversion in Contemporary Sri Lanka: Christian Evangelism and Theravāda Buddhist Views of the Ethics of Religious Attraction,” in *Proselytizing and the Limits of Religious Pluralism in Contemporary Asia*, Finucane, Feener (eds). Singapore: Asia Research Institute (ARI)-Springer. 2014. p. 211-235

Under Preparation

Of Karma and Grace: Conversion, Conflict, and the Politics of Belonging in Millennial Sri Lanka. Book manuscript under preparation

“Conversions on the Move: Trans-regional Religious Revival & the Politics of Mobility” (presented at St. Anthony’s College, Oxford, June 2018.)

“Antagonistically Plural?: the case of a ‘Hindu’ Temple in the Postwar ‘Sinhala South.’”

“Are the New Politics Secular?: BRI Development, Social Protest, and Religious Habit,” (presented at U. Melbourne, March 2018.)

“Conversion as Contagion: Conversion, Boundaries, and Religious Purity in Sri Lanka.” Co-authored with Bart Klem, under preparation.

RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS & AWARDS

Research Grants and Fellowships (External)

Pending Application (invited as Collaborator), the John Templeton Foundation.

Religious Innovation Research Project, with Dr. Richard Flory (Centre for Religion and Civic Culture, University of Southern California), Primary Investigator. Overall project focus is on 7 urban research sites around the world. If granted, I will lead the project in Singapore (funding amount \$100,000 over 2 years). Submitted 2019.

Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious & Ethnic Diversity, Research Fellow, 2015-2017

Transregional Research Network, University of Göttingen, Postdoctoral Fellow, 2013-2015

Philanthropic Educational Organization (PEO), Scholar Award, 2010

Fellowship awarded to finalize fieldwork, 2010-11.

Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Dissertation Fieldwork Grant, 2009

Awarded funds for ethnographic fieldwork “Buddhist and Christian Ethical Endeavors: Charitable Works, Conversions, and Unstable Religious Commitments in Post-Tsunami Sri Lanka”

National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship, 2004—2007

Awarded competitive fellowship for early stages of doctoral study at Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology.

Teaching, and Language Acquisition Fellowships (Internal Grants)

Dean’s Teaching Fellowship, Johns Hopkins University, 2012

Awarded to design and teach an undergraduate seminar-style class during Fall 2012.

Mellon Language Fellowship, Johns Hopkins University, 2008

For advanced language study in the Sinhala Language.

Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Fellowship Recipient, Summers 2007 & 2008

For study of Sinhala Language, at the Madison South Asia Language Institute.

Women, Gender and Sexuality Program, Travel Grant, Johns Hopkins University, Summer 2005

For preliminary Ethnographic Field Research in Sri Lanka

Honors and Awards

Dave Okada Memorial Prize in the Social Sciences, Carleton College, 2000.

“Awarded annually to the social sciences major who has demonstrated the most remarkable intellectual achievement in his or her studies”.

Academic Distinction, Carleton College for Senior Comprehensive Research Project (BA thesis)

INVITED LECTURES AND WORKSHOP PRESENTATIONS

Centre d'études interdisciplinaire sur le Bouddhisme (CEIB), Paris. Invited (and fully paid) participation in conference, March 2019. In collaboration with Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, École Pratique des Hautes Études, and Collège de France.

University of Toronto, Connaught Initiative, *Entangled World: Sovereignty, Sanctities and Soil*. Invited (and fully paid) workshop participation, September 2019.

Invited by Dr. Valentina Napolitano and Dr. Simon Coleman, prominent scholars both in the fields of Anthropology and Religious Studies.

“The initiative fosters an interdisciplinary discussion between theologies and the social and the natural sciences. The organizers intend to create international collaborations with scholars on issues relating to new populism(s), sanctity and soil, the changing nature of theopolitical charisma, and the sacralisation of new and old forms of sovereignty and urban spaces.”

NUS South Asia Studies Program, Speaker Series, invited presentation, August 2019.

Paper title: “Buddhist Territoriality and Pneumatic ‘Encroachment’: Buddhist-Pentecostal Rivalries over Sanctity, Sovereignty, and Soil”

Oxford University, St. Anthony’s College, *Social Categorization & Religiously Framed State-Making in Southeast Asia*. Invited (and fully paid) workshop participation, June 2018

Invited by Dr. Matthew Walton, Dr. Dominik Mueller, and Dr. Kevin Fogg, scholars of Religion and Anthropology of Religion, sponsored by the Emmy Noerther Project and Oxford University.

Paper title: “Migrant Conversions: Trans-regional Religiosity & the Politics of Religious Mobility”

Keynote Speaker, *New Politics* Conference, University of Melbourne. Invited (and fully paid) keynote lecture, March 2018

Invited by Dr. Craig Jeffrey (Social Geographer), Director of Australia-India Institute, Melbourne. Travel expenses and accommodation provided by University of Melbourne.

Keynote title: “Is the New Politics Secular?: BRI Development, Social Protest, and Religious Habit”

***Innovative Religiosities in Post-war Sri Lanka*, Open University, Colombo. Invited (and fully paid) paper presentation, July 2017**

Sponsored by the National Science Foundation, and the Wenner-Gren Foundation, organized by Dr. Mark Whitaker, Dr. Darini Senanayake-Rajasingham.

Paper title: Post-war Blood: Sacrifice & Anti-Sacrificial Politics in Post-war Sri Lanka

***Sacrifice, Vitality, and Utopia* Workshop, sponsored by European Association for Social Anthropology (EASA), HAU Journal, and University of Bergen. Invited paper, June 2016.**

Paper title: Postwar Blood: Sacrifice, Anti-Sacrifice, and Inter-Religious Relations in Sri Lanka

Siting Pluralism: Practices of Religious Difference, University of Göttingen, January 2015

Workshop co-organizer (with Jeremy Walton. Keynote by Winnifred F. Sullivan).

Religion and Nationalism Workshop, Max Planck Institute for the Study of Ethnic & Religious Diversity, Göttingen. Invited paper, May 2014

Invited by the Governance of Diversity Research Group to present at a workshop on religion and nationalism, with Prof. Genevieve Zubrzycki (U. Michigan) as discussant.

***Charity, Philanthropy and Development* workshop sponsored by the Department of Anthropology, University of Sussex, in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Invited (and fully paid) paper presentation, July 2013**

Paper title: “Selfish giving? Buddhist and Christian charity in the context of inter-religious rivalry.”

National University of Singapore, South Asian Studies. Invited lecture, March 2016

Conversion Economies and Ontologies of Difference: *Karma*, Grace, and the Politics of Nationalist Perception in Sri Lanka.

University of California, Riverside, Department of Religious Studies. Invited (and fully paid) lecture. January 2015

Paper title: “Modulating Miracles, Defending Sovereignty: Petrine and Pauline Theologies and the Obligations of Sri Lankan Nationalism”

University of Durham (UK), Department of Theology and Religion. Invited (and fully paid) lecture, January 2015

Paper title: “Catholic Charismatic Revival (Sinhala *Pubudurwa* Movement), and the Negotiations of Political Perception in Postwar Sri Lanka”

Augustana College, Rock Island, IL, Department of Religion. Invited (and fully paid) lecture, February 2015

Paper title: “No Sympathy for the Devil: ‘Persecution Complexes,’ and the Spectrum of Evangelical-Ecumenical Approaches to Religious Difference”

NYU Department of Anthropology and the Religious Studies Program. Invited (and fully paid) lecture, February 2014

Paper title: “‘Fraudulent’ Christians amongst Sinhala Buddhist Skeptics: Conversion Economies and the Politics of Perception in Sri Lanka”

International Center for Ethnic Studies (ICES), Colombo. Invited lecture, April 2011

Paper title: “Buddhist Nationalism and Christian Evangelism: An Ethnographic Contextualization of the Controversies over Conversion, Proselytism and Perceived Religious Persecution in Sri Lanka”

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Yale-NUS College, 2017 - present

Anthropology of Violence (cross-listed, Anthropology & Global Affairs)

Religion and the Media Turn (cross-listed, Anthropology & Global Affairs)

Introduction to Anthropology

Modern Social Thought, Common Curriculum

Course Proposals:

Christianities in Cross-Cultural Perspective (proposal accepted, Anthropology & Global Affairs)

Religious Economies (to be proposed)

Island Ethnographies (to be proposed)

Dean's Teaching Fellow, Johns Hopkins University, Fall Semester, 2012

Awarded a competitive fellowship to teach a one-semester undergraduate course of my design.

“Christianities in Cross-Cultural Perspective”

Guest Lecture and Teaching Demo: Religion Department, Augustana College, 2015

“How do Christians Talk to their God? Vernacular and Sacred Language in Global Christianities,”

“Gift and Sacrifice,” Teaching Assistant, with Professor Juan Obarrio, Johns Hopkins, 2011

Study Leader, University of Chicago Alumni Association tour of India, 2011

Delhi, Jaipur, Ranthambore, Agra, Varanasi, Sarnath. October – November 2011

University of Chicago alumni representative and Study Leader for a small group tour of several northern Indian cities and villages, in association with Odysseys Unlimited and University of Chicago Alumni Relations Office. .

“Religions of the World: an Introduction,” Co-Lecturer, Johns Hopkins University, 2007

Co-designed and co-taught course to introduce undergraduates to the anthropology of religion.

“Kinship,” Teaching Assistant, with Professor Sonia Ryang, Johns Hopkins University, 2005

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

HAU Journal for Ethnographic Theory, Editorial Board Member, 2018-2019

HAU Journal for Ethnographic Theory, Associate Editor, 2016-2018

European Research Council, Starting Grant Proposal Evaluator (Remote Reviewer), 2017

European Research Council, Grant Evaluator on urban terrorism in Europe, 2019 (invited but declined).

Chinese Studies Research Grant, Yale-NUS College, Proposal Evaluator, 2019

Served as Peer Reviewer:

Cultural Anthropology (2018)
Modern Asian Studies (2017)
HAU Journal of Ethnographic Theory (2016-2018, multiple manuscripts and collections)
Journal of the American Academy of Religion (2019)
Journal of Asian Studies (2015)
Religion and Society: Advances in Research (2016)
Nations and Nationalism (2015)
Religions (2017)
Religion (2014)
Asian Ethnicity (2016)
Borderlands (2008)

Media Features

Expert radio interview, featured on APEX (Asia Pacific Express), KPEX 94.1 (California), on the state of affairs in Sri Lanka after the Easter Sunday Bombings. April 2019.

Interview for the Connaught Initiative website, *Entangled Worlds*, on the theme of Sanctities, Soil, and Contested Sovereignities in Sri Lanka. September 2019.

Quoted in *The Straits Times*, as an expert on New Religious Movements, October 20, 2019.

Published Book Reviews

“Legends of People, Myths of State: Violence, Intolerance and Political Culture of Sri Lanka and Australia,” by Bruce Kapferer. New and Revised Edition, Berghahn Books 2012. For *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. September 2013 issue.

“Language, Creativity, and Charisma: Ritual Life in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal” by Thomas Csordas. Re-release, Palgrave Press 2012. For *Anthropology News online*.

“The Golden Wave: Culture and Politics after Sri Lanka’s Tsunami Disaster” by Michele Gamburd. Indiana University Press, 2013. For *Journal of Modern Asian Studies*. May 2015 issue.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS & DISCUSSANT INVITATIONS**Association for Asian Studies (AAS) in Asia, Bangkok Thailand**

“Conversion on the Move: Trans-regional Religiosity & Revival,” panel on Religious Networks in Southeast Asia.

Yale-NUS College, Saga Lecture Theatre 1

“The Easter Sunday Bombings and Sri Lanka’s Fragile Peace.” May 3rd, 2019.

South Asian Studies Program, Graduate Studies Conference, “Region as Method.” 2019.

Discussant for panel on Religion in South Asia.

Madison South Asia Conference, panelist, “Under Surveillance: Women Researchers in Securitized South Asia.”

Paper presenter: “Notes on fieldwork in Times of Counter-insurgency.”

Empires of Memory Research Group, Max Planck Institute, “Ambivalent Legacies: Memory and Amnesia in Post-Habsburg and Post-Ottoman Cities,” conference, May 2017

Discussant for panel on “Cultivating Pasts.”

American Anthropological Association Meetings, November 2016

Panel co-organizer: The Politics of Revelation

Paper title: “Revelation and Religious Futures in Singapore.”

Temple Networks in Southeast Asia Workshop, ARI, NUS, Singapore, March 2016

Paper title: “Transregional Economies of Religious Commitment: notes on Buddhist & Christian religious Networks in Singapore & Sri Lanka”

American Anthropological Association Meetings, November 2015

Paper title: “Conversion Economies and Ontologies of Difference: *Karma*, Grace, and Adversarial Political Perception in Postwar Sri Lanka”

Panel title: The Strange Self: Exploration of Mind through Buddhism and Christianity”

Religious Networks in Southeast Asia Workshop, Max Planck, Göttingen, June 2015

Presentation of Project Plan: “Itineraries of Arrival & Revival: Buddhism & Christianity in Singapore & Sri Lanka”

American Anthropological Association Meetings, December 2014

Chair for a panel entitled, *Mediation, Circulation, and the Social*

Paper title: “Rivalrous Circulations and Mediated Affects: the Competitive “Sting” of Evangelical Urgencies and Buddhist Nationalist Anxieties in Sri Lanka”

43rd Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, WI, October 2014

Panel entitled, *Accommodating Religious Identity, Governing Religious Difference*

Paper title: “Modulating Miracles, Defending Sovereignty: Christianities and the Obligations of Sri Lankan Nationalism”

42nd Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, WI, October 2013

Presenter on panel entitled, *Spaces of Utopia Out of South Asia*, organized by Dr. Smriti Srinivas

Paper title: “Christian ‘Spiritual Warfare’ and Postwar Territoriality in Sri Lanka”

Society for the Anthropology of Religion, Biennial Meeting, Pasadena, CA April, 2013

Presenter on a panel on *Political Theologies*, organized by Dr. Mayfair Yang.

Paper title: “Modulating Miracles, Defending Sovereignty: Petrine and Pauline Theologies and the Obligations of Sri Lankan Nationalism”

Association for Asian Studies, Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA March 2013

“‘Fraudulent’ Christians: a New Formation within the Politics of Sinhala Buddhist Perception”

American Anthropological Association 111th Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA, November 2012

Paper title: “An Emergent Theravāda Buddhist Millennialism?”

Panel entitled: Apocalyptic Visions: Reflections on Crossing the Ultimate Boundary

41st Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, Wisconsin, October, 2012

Panel Organizer and presenter for panel entitled: “Making Merit, Fortifying the Nation: Ritual Currencies of Buddhist Nationalism in Sri Lanka”

Paper title: “The Maverick Dialogics of Religious Rivalry in Sri Lanka: An Emergent and Contested Theravāda Buddhist Messianism”

Discussant for a panel entitled: Risking a Claim: Language, Acknowledgment and the Everyday.

“Sri Lanka in the World, the World in Sri Lanka,” Roundtable at University of Zurich, Department of Human Geography, November, 2011

Paper title: “Buddhist Nationalism and the Evangelical Christian ‘Gifts’ of Attraction: The Ethics and Politics of Inter-Religious Encounters”

“Christianity in the History of India,” Conference at Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, February 2011

Paper title: “National, Transnational, or Anti-National?: Perceptions of Religious and National Belonging in the Varieties of Sri Lankan Christianities.”

“Proselytizing and the Limits of Religious Pluralism in the Era of Globalization,” Workshop at Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore, September 2010

Paper title: “Conversion and Anti-Conversion in Contemporary Sri Lanka: Christian Evangelism and the Theravāda Buddhist View of the Ethics of Religious Attraction.”

Society for the Anthropology of Religion Conference, Phoenix, AZ, April 2007

Paper title: “Ordinary Ethics and the Problem of Conversion by way of ‘Allurement’: A View through the Practical-Theological Lens of Sri Lankan Buddhist and Hindu Piety.”

STUDENT ADVISING***Capstone Advisees and Research Topics:***

Ilya Katrinnada Binte Zubaidi – Art & Politics in Post-tsunami Aceh: Community-Based Art Spaces
 Jamie Buitelaar – Chinese Dialect Group Opera in Singapore
 Hui Min Tan – Intangible Value: Soft Power and Heritage ‘Safeguarding’ in Kanazawa Japan
 Kristian-Marc Paul – Masculinity, Pageantry, and the Racialized Body in Singapore
 Sylvia Ang Yu Hui – Public Fitness Initiatives and Singaporean Governmentality
 Jing Wen Lim – Rhizomatic Selves: Community-Based Agriculture in Singapore
 Fiona Freeman-Grundeir – LGBTQ+ Christians in Singapore: Negotiating Sexual Identity in Church

Academic Advisor to 9 students in AY 2019-20, 6 in AY 2018-19, and 4 in AY 2017-18.

OTHER WORK & SERVICE

Job Candidate Search Committee, Anthropology, Yale-NUS College, 2019-2020

Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Yale-NUS College, January 2018 - May 2019

Ad-Hoc Committee for Internal Grant Selection, Social Sciences, Yale-NUS College, March 2019

Convener, Speaker Series, Yale-NUS College Anthropology program, 2018-2019

Social Media Overseer, Yale-NUS College Anthropology program, 2019-2020

Keynote Speaker, Peace Studies Conference, Yale-NUS College, 2017

Chair, Graduate Representative Organization (GRO), Johns Hopkins University, 2006-07

Elected to serve as the Chair of the Graduate Representative Organization, which advocates for graduate student concerns at Johns Hopkins University.

Academic Policy Coordinator, GRO, Johns Hopkins University, 2007-08

Served as the GRO Academic Policy Coordinator to advise Deans of the University on academic policies that affected graduate students. Elected to the position by other graduate students involved in the organization.

Scholars At-Risk Network Case Manager, Human Rights Program, University of Chicago, 2002-03

Managed confidential case files of international scholars who were subject to harassment, violence, and threats to their academic freedom. Work entailed identifying fellowship exchanges for scholars, offering them temporary refuge and possibilities for academic growth, with the aim of allowing them to return to their home countries when safe to do so.

Writing Tutor, *The Write Place*, Carleton College, 1999-00

Tutored students in history and anthropology courses to help them develop effective writing skills. Nominated for position based upon strong writing and interpersonal skills.

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCIES

English – Native; Sinhala – Advanced; Tamil – Intermediate; French – Intermediate (written).

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS - American Anthropological Association (AAA); Society for the Anthropology of Religion (SAR); American Institute for Sri Lankan Studies (AISLS); European Association for Social Anthropology (EASA); American Academy of Religion (AAR); Theravāda Civilizations Project; Association for Asian Studies.