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This study of religious change and cultural fragmentation in contemporary Sri Lanka focuses on a series of new Catholic shrines that attract hundreds of pilgrims. Their fame is based, among other things, on their efficacy as centres for demonic exorcism, for alleviating suffering, and helping people to find jobs. The book examines the rise of these shrines in relation to the historical experience of the Catholic community in Sri Lanka, rather than in terms of narrowly defined religious criteria. Central to this broader non-religious context is the role of power, and especially the impact of post-colonialism on the small Roman Catholic population.

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POWER AND RELIGIOSITY IN A POST-COLONIAL SETTING

*Sinhala Catholics in contemporary
Sri Lanka*

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In the text that follows, there has been little possibility of using synonyms for places and people. Shrines such as Kudagama and individuals such as Father Jayamanne are too well known in Sri Lanka to be disguised with false names. However, I have changed many personal names of individuals and in some cases deliberately ‘scrambled’ stories to hide identities. I only hope that I have not offended too many people and that they can at least sympathise with the attempts of a non-Catholic, non-Sri Lankan to understand sympathetically their religious convictions.

Abbreviations

ACBC	All Ceylon Buddhist Congress
AGA	Assistant Government Agent
AR	Administration Reports
CM	<i>The Catholic Messenger</i> (also known as <i>The Messenger</i>)
GA	Government Agent
OMI	Oblates of Mary Immaculate
OSB	Order of the Sylestrine Benedictines
SEDEC	Social and Economic Development Centre
SLFP	Sri Lanka Freedom Party
SLNA	Sri Lanka National Archives
UNP	United National Party

Note on transliteration

In the text I have used an extremely simple form of transliteration without diacritics. More correct forms are given in the glossary.

Glossary

<i>āgama</i>	religion
<i>āṅgaṭa ātulen</i>	‘inside the body’
<i>āṅgaṭa eliyen</i>	‘outside the body’
<i>anjamankārayā</i>	lightreader (a technique of fortune telling)
<i>annāvi</i>	lay leader of congregation
<i>ārakshā karanavā</i>	to protect
<i>ārakshā pot</i>	‘books of protection’
<i>ārakshākārayā</i>	protector
<i>ārūdē</i>	possessed, ‘mounted’ (by a spirit)
<i>āsīrvādaya</i>	blessings, grace
<i>ās vaha</i>	evil eye
<i>ātmaya</i>	soul
<i>āvēsa</i>	possessed, ‘entered’ (by a spirit)
<i>ayitikārayā</i>	possessor, owner
<i>balla</i>	dog
<i>bālma</i>	glance (usually of a demon)
<i>bandinavā (bāndilā)</i>	to tie (tied)
<i>bāra</i>	vow
<i>bhakti</i>	devotion
<i>bhikkhu</i>	Buddhist monk
<i>boralikkama</i>	medallion
<i>boru</i>	lies
<i>dānē</i>	alms
<i>darshana</i>	vision
<i>dāvādda</i>	dowry
<i>dāyaka maṅḍalaya</i>	parish council
<i>dēvālē</i>	temple of the gods

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<i>dhātuva</i>	relic
<i>disṭiya</i>	look, essence, also the state of being inhabited by a demon
<i>dukkha</i>	sorrow, suffering
<i>duk vindinavā</i>	to experience suffering
<i>dum allanavā</i>	to catch the smoke
<i>ekavagē</i>	similar
<i>ekayī</i>	identical
<i>gālavāma</i>	salvation
<i>garbavasa māṇiyō</i>	Our Lady of Good Expectation
<i>gātā</i>	prayers
<i>gnānasaktiya</i>	mental power
<i>gōlayō</i>	disciples, followers
<i>hēvisi</i>	a type of drum, also used to denote a particular sort of musical band
<i>hrudasākṣiya</i>	conscience
<i>hūṇiyam</i>	sorcery, also the name of a god
<i>jaṣamālaya</i>	rosary (literally, ‘muttering beads’)
<i>kapumahattayā</i>	priest of the gods
<i>kapurāla</i>	priest of the gods
<i>karma</i>	action, deed, law of rebirth
<i>kaṭa vaha</i>	evil mouth
<i>kaṭṭadiya</i>	Sinhala Buddhist exorcist, also, sorcerer
<i>kaṭuva</i>	thorn, pin
<i>kāvaḍi</i>	dance in honour of Kataragama
<i>kavi</i>	verses
<i>kavum</i>	oil cake
<i>kembura davas</i>	days of week suitable for worshipping gods
<i>killā</i>	pollution
<i>koṇṭaya</i>	rosary, spear, javelin
<i>lajjāva</i>	shame
<i>lakuna</i>	sign, symbol
<i>laukika</i>	worldly, mundane
<i>leḍā</i>	patient
<i>lēkama</i>	secretary
<i>lokkā</i>	boss
<i>lokottara</i>	supra-mundane
<i>mala perētayō</i>	malevolent spirits of the dead
<i>māyam</i>	possessed, unconscious
<i>miṣēma</i>	mission

<i>misēma sēvaka</i>	parish priest (literally, ‘servant of the mission’)
<i>mudalāli</i>	trader
<i>munivarayā</i>	saint
<i>muppu</i>	lay leader of the congregation
<i>nidahas kāmātta</i>	free will
<i>nikan innavā</i>	a state of inactivity (literally, ‘nothing being’)
<i>nirvāna</i>	state of non-being
<i>pāda namaskāraya</i>	Way of the Cross
<i>panḍuru</i>	coins tied in cloth which accompany a vow
<i>pasan pot</i>	passion books
<i>pavula pota</i>	family book
<i>perahāra</i>	procession
<i>perētayō</i>	malevolent spirits of the dead (singular form: <i>perētaya</i>)
<i>pilli, pilliya</i>	a type of sorcery
<i>pin</i>	merit
<i>pirisa</i>	following
<i>pirit pot</i>	books containing Pali texts
<i>poya</i>	the four quarter-days of the lunar calendar
<i>prārthanākārayā</i>	litany reader
<i>pūjā</i>	literally, ‘sacrifice’ but used by Catholics for the mass
<i>rēnda</i>	the tithe or its substitute paid by the faithful to the Church
<i>sadhara</i>	fortune
<i>sahōdarayō</i>	siblings
<i>samayam velāva</i>	times when demons are active
<i>sangha</i>	order of Buddhist monks
<i>sannyasin</i>	Hindu world renouncer
<i>siddhastanaya</i>	holy or sacred place
<i>sirita</i>	custom, tradition
<i>suddha</i>	pure, unsullied
<i>suruvama</i>	religious statue
<i>swāmi, swāminvahansē</i>	priest
<i>tanikama</i>	‘aleness’
<i>tāpasa</i>	ascetic, penance
<i>telkāma</i>	‘oil food’
<i>vandanā gamanā</i>	pilgrimage (literally, ‘worship journey’)
<i>varam</i>	delegated authority, warrant

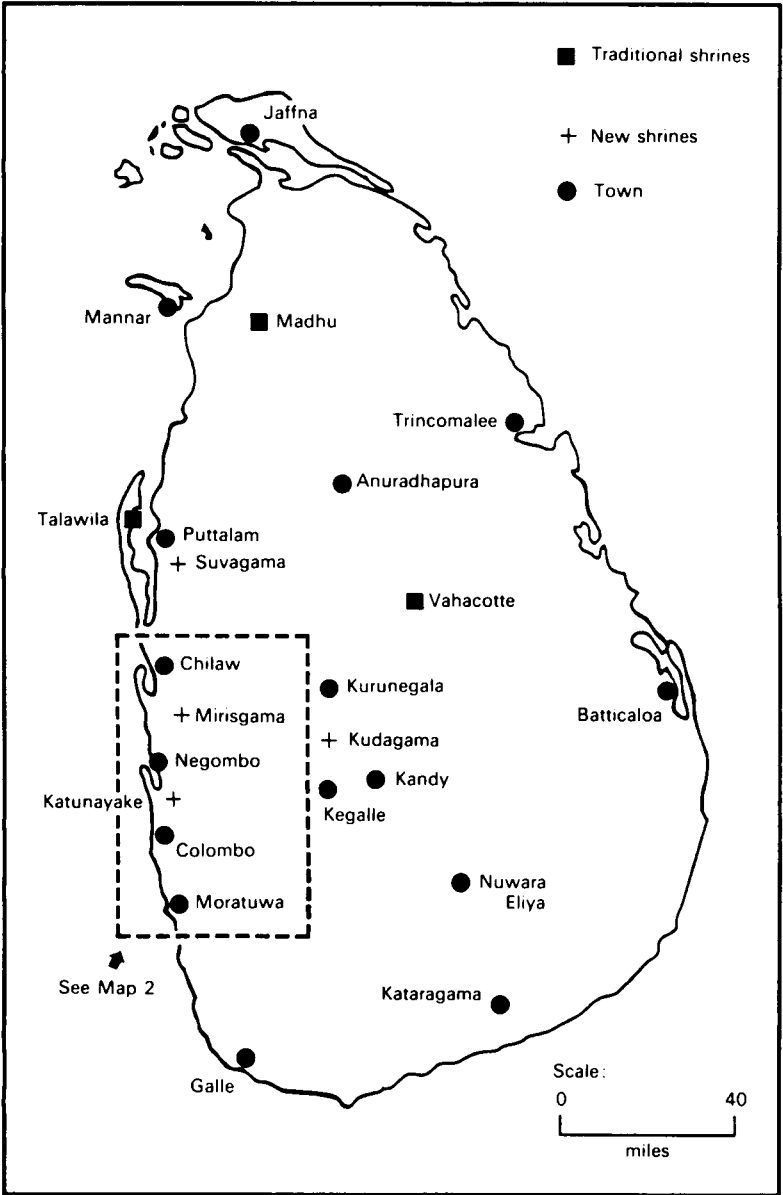
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<i>vidyāva</i>	science
<i>vihāra</i>	Buddhist temple
<i>viksopa māṇiyō</i>	Our Lady of Sorrows
<i>viruddha</i>	against, opposed
<i>viswāsa</i>	knowledge, faith, understanding
<i>yakā</i>	demons
<i>yakshā dōsaya</i>	‘demon poison’

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Map 1: Sri Lanka



Map 2: The west coast of Sri Lanka

