

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/46526338>

# Religion, Conflict and Boundary Politics in Sri Lanka

Article in *European Journal of Development Research* · December 2009

DOI: 10.1057/ejdr.2009.41 · Source: RePEc

---

CITATIONS

13

---

READS

118

3 authors, including:



**Jonathan Goodhand**

SOAS, University of London

57 PUBLICATIONS 927 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



**Bart Klem**

University of Melbourne

36 PUBLICATIONS 142 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Borderlands, brokers and peacebuilding in Nepal and Sri Lanka: War to peace transitions viewed from the margins [View project](#)

**Goodhand, J., B. Klem and B. Korf (2009) 'Religion, Conflict and Boundary Politics in Sri Lanka', *European Journal for Development Research*, 21(5): 679-898.**

**Religion, conflict and boundary politics in Sri Lanka**

*Jonathan Goodhand\**, *Bart Klem\*\**, and *Benedikt Korf\*\*<sup>1</sup>*

\*School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London

\*\*Department of Geography, University of Zurich

**ABSTRACT**

Boundaries have always been central to the dynamics of armed conflicts. Wars involve the activation and hardening of certain boundaries, thus dividing friend from foe. But despite the efforts of political potentates to carve out clearly delineated, impermeable boundaries, people continue to travel across, and sometimes challenge these boundaries. In this paper, we study the boundary crossing practices of religious actors in eastern Sri Lanka, a multi-ethnic and multi-religious context affected by protracted war and a tsunami. We discuss two case studies, one on local conflict mediation activities and another on post-tsunami humanitarian work, to examine how religious actors engage with boundaries. We find that paradoxically, religious actors derive their ability to intervene in politically controversial issues because of their perceived distance from the “dirty” world of politics. But conversely their religious and institutional identities are threatened when they become too visibly enmeshed in everyday politics.

**1. Introduction**

Our analysis starts with the reconstruction of an event in the town of Akkaraipattu on Sri Lanka's east coast on a Friday morning in November 2005. A Tamil rebel grenade attack had just killed eight

---

<sup>1</sup> The authors would like to thank Shahul Hasbullah who was part of the field research team on which this article is built. We partly draw on some of his field material in this article. We also thank Jonathan Spencer, Tudor Silva and Timmo Gaasbeek for ongoing discussions and two anonymous reviewers and the participants to the workshop on “Conflict community and Faith: the Politics of Public Action in Sri Lanka” in Edinburgh, 12 and 13 March 2009 for useful comments and suggestions on previous versions of the paper. Jonathan Spencer provided some particularly thoughtful comments that helped clarify the conceptual focus of the article. Support in the field work by Mr. Faleel Haque, Mr. Gunapalan and Mr. Suresh is gratefully acknowledged. Field work was funded by the Non-Governmental Public Action Programme (NGPA) of the British Economic and Social Science Research Council (ESRC, grant no. RES-155-25-0096).

Muslims and injured thirty-five. An angry crowd gathered demanding immediate retribution on the Tamil population. The situation was primed for a familiar pattern of violence escalation leading to more deaths and a hardening of ethnic fault lines. However, this case was different because the religious leaders of Akkaraipattu stepped in. The *maulavi* who had been preaching in the mosque when the grenade attack occurred addressed the crowd, saying: “please behave like real human beings. Don’t do any harm to anyone”. Talking through the mosque loudspeakers he and other Islamic leaders implored the crowd not to harm anyone. “This is the result of madness. Don’t go hurt the Tamils. [...] Allah will take care of it, you go home”. Ultimately people listened to him and an ethnic clash was averted.

This incident raises some important questions about boundaries. First it shows the role that violence plays in activating boundaries. The incident instantaneously divided Akkaraipattu into two opposing groups ready to fight and this was the clear intention of the rebels. Second, and perhaps most interesting is how religious leaders were prepared to take a stand and by so doing challenge the boundary making project of political entrepreneurs<sup>2</sup> on both sides. To what extent do religious leaders have a unique capacity to travel across ethnic, political and other boundaries in a context of violence and communal tension? What happens to these boundaries when they are travelled across or indeed transgressed? What are the limits on religious actors? Are there important differences between political and religious leadership in this respect? What does this tell us about the nexus between political and religious entrepreneurship in a context of enduring conflict? These are the core questions that we seek to address in this article.

A useful starting point for a discussion of boundaries is the seminal work of Norwegian anthropologist Fredrick Barth. He rejected a view of ethnicity that stressed shared culture in favour of a relational approach, arguing that one should study “the ethnic boundary that defines a group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses” (Barth, 1969:14). As Benedict Anderson shows so powerfully in relation to nation states, communities are “imagined”. They are actively constructed by forging oppositional identities. Out-groups are identified or created so as to build in-group solidarity. Processes of territorial socialization create citizens with a particular understanding of history and nationhood (Anderson 1983). Notwithstanding Barth’s position, Anderson reminds us that boundaries are intricately linked to the identities they enclose. Maintaining the purity of such identities is vital for the way people imagine and construct boundaries and vice versa.

Boundary making thus involves processes of classification and purification, as captured in Mary Douglas’ famous quote that dirt is “matter out of place” (1966). Boundaries perform a number of functions including providing a sense of belonging, a way of describing how things ought to be. Given that such orders and purities are under continuous threat from a world that is more anarchic and fluid, continuous constructive and reproductive work is required to preserve such boundaries. As Appadurai (2006:44) has pointed out, moral and social taxonomies tend to abhor anything that blurs their boundaries. Jonathan Spencer borrows the purification metaphor from Bruno Latour (1993) to denote ways of restricting people’s movement to maintain the illusion that “the nation is the same people living in the same place” (Spencer, 2003:27). Purification and boundary making are thus about creating order, by putting things in their place (Mosse, 1996). They draw the line between a purified space – a homogeneous identity (Krishna, 2004) – and the outside, the other that is potentially a

---

<sup>2</sup> We understand political entrepreneurs as opportunistic political players who seek to gain benefits and further their political career by providing public goods and patronage to members of their constituency. For further elaboration see Tilly (2003: 34).

source of threat, pollution, or impurity. Boundaries and purification thus produce norms and imperatives that reinforce nationalist discourses and notions of belonging, “sons of the soil”, “traditional homelands” and so forth.

Clearly, such existential notions do not confine themselves to ethnicity. They draw in a much wider range of boundaries and sources of identity, including gender, class, caste, place-based identities and religion. Jack Goody suggests that religious boundaries are particularly contested, because they are under existential danger, calling upon “supreme defence measures against any threat of corrosion or contamination” (Goody, 2001:14). However religious boundaries interact with other boundary making processes, and the precise dynamics vary from one context to another. In Sri Lanka, ethnicity sometimes overlaps with and sometimes diverges from religion: Tamils can be Christian or Hindu, and Christians can be Sinhala or Tamil. Moreover, *ethno-nationalism* holds an uneven relationship with religion. Some Sinhala nationalists explicitly use Buddhism to spearhead their claims, but others do not, whilst the Tamil separatist discourse steers clear of religion altogether. Therefore the religious field in Sri Lanka is not characterized by clearly delineated boundaries enclosing ‘pure’ spaces, but is a highly contested and hybrid zone, fraught with internal boundaries and enmeshed with politics. In fact, it is only through the dynamics of contestation that religion and identity derive their meaning, as Abeysekera (2002) argues in his book on Sri Lankan Buddhism. After all, such categories are far from self-evident and have to be located in ‘the specific conjunctures of debates that authorize differing persons, practices, and institutions to come into central view and fade from view, defining and contesting the terms of what does and does not count as religion or politics, identity or difference, civilization or terror.’ (Abeysekara, 2002:236) Similar points have been made in relation to Sri Lankan Muslims and the antagonism involved in the interaction between Islam and politics. Qadri Ismail (1995:91) underlines that identity is ‘always overdetermined’ – identifying commonalities in itself highlights differences – and hegemony is always resisted.

The boundaries discussed here may be imagined and constructed, but they have “real” consequences. Like all discursive concepts, they do something. They frame and structure everyday life. As pointed out by Joel Migdal, the “ability to identify boundaries of social groups is tremendously important for people simply to make out the lay of the land – where they believe that threats lurk and where safety resides” (Migdal, 2004:10). Therefore markers of identity may be crucial for survival – for instance wearing Muslim garb in eastern Sri Lanka may be as much about security as religious beliefs. In a Muslim dominated area, it denotes membership of a group that provides protection. But, if the same Muslim travels to a Tamil majority area, these markers become a source of insecurity. The distinction between Muslims and Tamils is an imagined and constructed one, but nonetheless, people kill and die for it, as the case of Akkaraipattu testifies. Therefore boundaries can be simultaneously a source of protection and a source of antagonism (for a discussion of such paradoxes and the contemporary discursive practices related to it, see for example Ismail, 1995; Maunaguru, 1995 and Thangarajah, 1995).

Yet, whilst boundaries are collectively lived and interpreted, as the Muslim leadership in Akkaraipattu showed, it is possible for people to challenge or circumvent such logics, depending upon the context, timing and a person’s position in society. The evidence from eastern Sri Lanka suggests that religious leaders may have the authority and legitimacy to travel across boundaries, but there are significant constraints. Paradoxically in order to traverse a boundary they must present themselves as apolitical, drawing a clear distinction between the religious and the political, purity and power. By so doing they appear not to threaten to existing orders, loyalties, and spheres of influence and therefore do not

transgress the boundaries drawn by political potentates. In practice, as noted above, this separation between religion and politics is an imagined boundary that is constantly unsettled. As explored below, rather than taking for granted the ontological separation of the “religious” – a space of purity – from the “contaminated”, “dirty”, and “mundane” sphere of politics, we see this separation as the product of continuous contestation and reproduction. The ability of religious actors to cross boundaries can easily be thwarted when the purity of their intent is called in doubt, when they are perceived to have hidden agendas, or when they are accused of engaging in politics. Public action by religious actors is thus under continuous strain. Paradoxically, they derive their ability to intervene in politically controversial issues from their perceived distance to the “dirty” world of politics. But their religious and institutional identity are jeopardised when they become too enmeshed in politics.

These dilemmas come out in sharp relief in our analysis of religious actors’ involvement in local conflict mediation and humanitarian aid in Sri Lanka’s east. The first set of case studies reviews the conflict mediation work of the Inter Religious Organisation for Peace (IROP) in Batticaloa District. The second set of case studies explores the dilemmas that Muslim and Christian organisations faced in post-tsunami assistance. Both case studies build on empirical material drawn from semi-structured interviews with faith-based institutions, other key informants, aid workers as well as so-called “beneficiaries” of aid. Interviews were conducted in the period from July 2007 until December 2008 in a succession of short field trips to both districts by a team of European and Sri Lankan researchers.

## **2. Boundaries**

Boundaries, writes Joel Migdal (2004:5), “signify the point at which something becomes something else, at which the way things are done changes”. Boundaries have a spatial and a relational component. Boundaries include symbolic and social dimensions that are spatially marked in maps, but may also signify other dividing lines that cannot be found on maps. They are social constructions in need of continuous renewal, re-composition and re-alignment. In other words, boundaries need to be performed. This boundary performance is marked through what Migdal calls “mental maps”, which “divide home from alien territory” and signify elements of meaning people “attach to spatial configurations, the loyalties they hold, the emotions and passions that groupings evoke, and their cognitive ideas about [...] the world” (Migdal, 2004:7). Migdal suggests boundaries are constructed at actual and virtual “checkpoints”, which divide one space from another. Checkpoints are sites and practices to enforce separation (Migdal, 2004:6). These checkpoints may be material – the barbed wire fences and watchtowers and road blocks, which denote the boundary between one governing authority and another – or they may be symbolic, such as the markers of identity like accents, clothing or religious practices which enable us to distinguish between insider and outsider, us and them (Goodhand, 2008; Hyndman and de Alwis, 2004; Jeganathan, 2004). Checkpoints are actively policed, either discursively through the use of imagery, symbols or language creating particular subjectivities, or physically by deploying guards or gatekeepers.

Central to conflict dynamics are processes of boundary activation, which is defined by Charles Tilly (2003:21) as a shift in social relations towards a singling out of a dominating ‘us-them’ boundary and a differentiation between within-boundary and cross-boundary interactions. Boundary activation involves a reconfiguration of friends and foes, thus rendering the enemy “not like us” (Richards, 2005:17). Moderate actors who potentially threaten or unsettle the boundaries are forced to

gravitate towards the opposing extremes or risk being eliminated. Conflicts thus tend to reproduce themselves through boundaries: certain types of boundaries produce and frame conflict, and violent contestation in turn shapes boundaries. Appadurai's (2006) term "vivisectionist violence" is useful here, as it reminds us that violence is not merely a military instrument against enemies; it is an extremely effective means of forging new boundaries or reinforcing old ones. It very powerfully redraws people's mental maps, and forces them to make choices between different sources of identity.

Wherever there are boundaries, there will be agents who cross, reformulate and reconfigure these boundaries. Tilly deploys the term "brokerage" as a relational mechanism that connects two social sites more than they were previously. Brokerage activates certain boundaries by connecting two social sites and inadvertently de-activates others (Tilly, 2003:21). Similarly Edward Said (1994) writing about intellectual boundaries, distinguishes between "potentates" and "travellers"; the former are concerned with "pulling up the drawbridges" and establishing fixed positions in an attempt to maintain intellectual purity and defend territory. Travellers on the other hand, see boundaries as places of connection rather than separation, hybridity rather than purity. Boundaries in this sense are conditions not only for separation and exclusion, but for communication, bridging and inclusion (Lamont and Molnar, 2002:181). Said's terminology is useful, because it emphasizes that boundaries are constructed and also that a great deal of intellectual, political and sometimes coercive energy needs to be deployed to maintain them. People are creating and maintaining boundaries as well as crossing, de-activating or recomposing them, and these processes are likely to be intensified in war zones.

We employ Said's terminology in a non-essentialist sense, not fixing certain actors to certain behaviour, as people tend to engage in both potentate and traveller behaviour depending on the context. Whilst they travel across one boundary they may adamantly defend another one. This certainly applies to political and military leaders in conflict zones. In order to defend and further their interests they tend to be quite entrepreneurial in the way they use boundaries, being a potentate in one instant and a traveller the next. Depending on the situation, they may activate the ethnic boundary – e.g. by throwing a grenade into a mosque – or seek alliances across the ethnic fault line. There appear to be important differences between political and religious entrepreneurs, however. The standing and legitimacy of the former is largely derived from their ability to deliver patronage and protection to a constituency. They need to harden external boundaries so as to carve out a clearly defined constituency, but they also need to be able to mediate across this boundary – to "do deals" with diverse, often competing actors. The political entrepreneur aims to increase the constituency's dependence on their capacity to mediate across boundaries, ostensibly on their behalf. Their ability to "do deals" and "make things happen" inevitably means that they are mired in the dirty and divisive world of politics. Instigated riots and other incidents of violence tend to be attributed to them and it is for that reason that people tend to stand back from politics.

Those who do not have such military and political power thus need to distance themselves from these entrepreneurs to cross boundaries. Humanitarian agencies often travel across boundaries and derive a great deal of legitimacy, precisely because of their ability to do so. They are able to cut across prevalent mental maps and checkpoints, whether imagined or real, because they conceive of themselves as "neutral". Their language is steeped in terms like "humanitarian space", "humanitarian access", humanitarian principles, codes of conduct and other technologies of intervention (Bastian, 1997; Hilhorst, 2003; Hyndman and de Alwis, 2004; Korf, 2006a; Lewis and Mosse, 2006). All of these

concepts and modalities work to separate the delivery of aid from political struggles and violent confrontations. Aid agencies travel across boundaries of ethnicity, regions, territorial control and so on, by purporting to serve a collective good. The claim to be “independent”, “impartial” and “neutral” (ICRC/IFRC, 1994), enables them to cross boundaries without challenging them. The assumed dichotomy between humanitarianism and politics – like the division between religion and politics – is of course problematic (e.g. Leader, 2002; Stoddard, 2003; Studer, 2001), and can be understood as part of the discursive logic of negotiating access. Boundary crossing is facilitated by suspending judgment about the rights and wrongs of a conflict and refusing to contest the boundary making projects of political actors.

This paradox is prone to exploitation by parties who see their interests threatened by humanitarian aid. As the Sri Lankan case shows, the discourse of neutrality is vulnerable to accounts that claim otherwise. With a strong concentration of visible aid projects in the war-torn and tsunami affected north and east, the aid industry has been charged with being pro-Tamil. These accusations were further bolstered by anxieties of Christian domination (most aid agencies are seen as Christian, in a Buddhist majority country) and pro-peace agendas that were seen as Western infringements on Sri Lanka’s sovereignty (Walton, 2008). Therefore as explored further below, being involved directly in matters to do with conflict and peace is extremely controversial; actors and agencies attempting to manage conflict and build peace, rather than provide humanitarian assistance, find it much more difficult to maintain the image that they are apolitical.

Although there is a long history of criticism of “NGOs” and humanitarian agencies, as an elite project creating new circles of power in Sri Lanka (Orjuela, 2004; Ruwanpura, 2007; Wickremasinghe, 2001), the backlash against “NGOs” became particularly intense after the peace process broke down in 2006 (Walton, 2008). Evidently there are very different types of NGOs – from local groups up to international, professional aid agencies – and their engagement may take place at very different levels of politics and humanitarianism (Hyndmann and de Alwis, 2003; Goodhand, 2006; Ruwanpura, 2007), but what matters here is how turf battles around the “neutrality” of aid agencies are played out and how they have constrained the ability of these agencies to travel across boundaries.

Whilst this dynamic has been documented in relation to NGOs, much less has been written about religious actors in Sri Lanka. This is remarkable given that churches, the Buddhist sangha, Islamic leaders and Hindu priests are known to fulfil pivotal roles in public life—though there are significant differences between them in terms of their willingness and capacity to engage in public action. As explored below, Muslim and Christian leaders have been particularly active in the east as conflict mediators and providers of relief. Additionally, religious identities and boundaries have played an important – but not unambiguous – role in the dynamics of ethno-political conflict. Questions thus arise about the way religious actors travel across boundaries, why they do so, and the effects that they have on processes of boundary formation. While religion is an important boundary marker, it also cuts across some boundaries. This is most obviously the case for the Catholic and Methodist churches whose constituencies are both Sinhalese and Tamil. But other (mono-ethnic) religious organisations play important roles in crossing boundaries as well: for example, many mosque federations merge together Muslims from various schools of Islamic faith in a given place and they cross boundaries to negotiate with “the other side”, for example the LTTE. It is to these kinds of “travelling practices” that the paper alludes to.

### 3. Boundary politics in Sri Lanka: two case studies

The following two case studies from Sri Lanka's east examine how and with what effects religious non-governmental organisations acted as travellers across boundaries. The first case study investigates the role of religious actors in local conflict mediation and peace building. The second case study analyses the ambivalent work of religious actors when travelling across boundaries for humanitarian purposes.

Eastern Sri Lanka represents a promising site to study the complex dynamics of boundary politics over time. There are multiple sources of identity around which boundaries can be constructed, including caste, religion, gender and locality (Hyndman and de Alwis, 2004; Korf, 2006b; Lewer and Ismail, forthcoming; Maunaguru, 1995; McGilvray, 1997; 2008; Rajasingham-Senanayake 2001; Ruwanpura and Humphries 2004; Thangarajah 2000; 2003). The region has historically been a marginal borderland located at the interstices of the competing spheres of influence of the Sinhala and Tamil kingdoms in pre-colonial times (Ruhuna, Kandy and Jaffna) and foreign (South Indian and European) invasions. The region carries the marks of these diverse influences (McGilvray, 2008). It is the most ethnically and religiously diverse part of the country. Tamil, Sinhalese and Muslim communities (as well as less populous groups like Burghers) live alongside one another in smaller and larger pockets. Similarly, Christians, Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus often live within walking distance from each other (Maunaguru, 1995; Thangarajah, 1995). The diversity and complexity of the area thus defies the simplified ethnic logics of the competing Sinhala and Tamil nationalist projects. However, the escalation of armed conflict in the 1980s forced historically mixed, multicultural and hybrid communities to "reinvent themselves in terms of biological, cultural and *territorial* purity" (Rajasingham-Senanayake, 2001:44, emphasis in original). The proliferation of ethno-nationalist histories of a Sinhala or Tamil nation as mutually exclusive ethno-nations (Guneratne, 2001; Stokke, 1998) elided other storylines of mixed settlements, intermarriages, and multi-cultural identities.

As the armed conflict escalated in the 1980s and 1990s, the Tamil separatists – mainly the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) – managed to establish *de facto* state structures in many rural areas of the east, thus creating a complicated geography of rebel controlled and government controlled territory. The boundaries between the three ethnic communities have hardened as a result of these developments, but they remain culturally connected and economically inter-dependent.

The ceasefire agreement signed by the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE in February 2002 heralded a period of "no war no peace", which was fraught with new anxieties and uncertainties. New tensions and power struggles manifested themselves in the form of riots and violence between Muslims and Tamils along the east coast from the mid-2002 onwards. The LTTE used its new manoeuvring space after the ceasefire to consolidate its hold in government-controlled territories and assassinate political adversaries. Following the breakdown of peace talks, a split occurred within the LTTE in the east in 2004. This triggered an outbreak of "fratricidal" violence between those loyal to the LTTE and those loyal to the new break away faction, which was later named Tamileelam Makkal Viduthalai Puligal (TMVP) (Uyangoda, 2005; 2007). Both sides demanded unquestioned loyalty from the Tamil community, further eroding the space for alternative political or community leadership. Similarly, the Muslim and Sinhala polity were fragmented by the expectations and fears embodied in the peace process (Goodhand and Klem, 2005; Lewer and Ismail, forthcoming; McGilvray and Raheem, 2007). The intensifying shadow war between the LTTE and the TMVP, the army and other armed actors created a situation of chronic insecurity, which hardened existing



boundaries, whilst activating new ones. The east became a region of overlapping regulatory regimes, competing political entrepreneurs and outbreaks of unpredictable and geographically diffuse violence.

**Map 1: Sri Lanka**



**Map 2: The east coast**



Comment: These sketch maps indicate the location of the various places discussed in the two case studies.

### ***Case study 1: Religious organisations and the boundary politics of peacebuilding***

In this next section we briefly examine the efforts of religious leaders and organisations to prevent and manage violent conflict in the east. As the case of Akkaraipattu shows, it is in the areas where Tamils and Muslims live alongside one another, that underlying tensions frequently erupt into outbreaks of inter-communal violence, stirred up by ethnic entrepreneurs. These outbreaks cannot be understood as random, senseless violence, but follow their own logic and rehearsed ‘scripts’<sup>3</sup>, which are in a sense ‘choreographed’ by political agents. Therefore leaders who seek to manage and de-escalate such conflicts do so at great risk to themselves.

The *maulavis* in Akkaraipattu aimed to contain violence in the first instant, not by mediating across the Muslim-Tamil boundary, but by doing the opposite; they policed and hardened the boundary, thus maintaining a zone of separation in order to build in-group cohesion and encourage Muslims to exercise restraint. As a result the *maulavis* disrupted a communal reflex, the result of mental maps coloured by the anxieties generated by war and the resultant checkerboard geography of ethnic enclaves. What this case shows is how the same boundary was hardened by political and religious

---

<sup>3</sup> Timmo Gaasbeek is presently working on more detailed analyses of such processes in relation to the 2003 Muthur riots.

entrepreneurs for very different purposes; those who threw the grenade into the mosque sought to reinforce antagonist mental maps through violence, whilst the *maulavis* aimed at least initially to harden the inter-group boundary as a way of containing violence. Their discursive strategy was to deploy Islam and to enjoin their followers to preserve their dignity and withstand provocation. Islam was positioned not in opposition to Tamils, but as the antithesis of the political, impure and irrational. This relates to a wider discourse amongst Islamic leaders, particularly those belonging to *Tableegh Jamaath* the biggest Islamic movement in Akkaraipattu, which emphasizes the need to preserve the purity of religion, by staying out of the divisive world of politics. Therefore being a ‘good Muslim’ means keeping a distance from the profane and the worldly. Conflict is viewed as something that comes from outside the community, in this case through an attack that was meant to provoke ethnic clashes.

Subsequently, after several days of tensions and a hartal (an enforced public shut-down), the *maulavis* did venture across the boundary – in a literal sense – to hold a meeting with the authorities and Tamil representatives, which enabled the resumption of “normal” life. Whilst resolving the prevalent tensions, the underlying mental maps remained unchanged and the validity of the ethnic boundary was not challenged. Their ambition was merely to manage that boundary in a non-violent way.

Another example of religious leaders’ engagement with conflict management is the case of the Inter Religious Organisation for Peace (IROP) in Batticaloa, which intervened in response to a spate of post-election violence in the east. IROP was founded in 2003, in order to address the “absence of leadership” at the local level to mediate and address inter- and intra-community conflicts. The main catalyst behind its formation was the Catholic Bishop of the Batticaloa and Trincomalee diocese who called together representatives from all four religions to form the organisation. The Catholic Church continues to be the driving force behind IROP. The Bishop has been a central actor for all significant interventions, the church is the main financial supporter<sup>4</sup>, and other Catholic priests have been active participants. IROP’s members tend to be senior men from the English speaking professional class. It is clear that for high-level interventions the Bishop must be involved and IROP needs the Bishop more than the Bishop needs IROP.

In May 2008, IROP became involved in the negotiations between the TMVP and the Muslims of Kattankudy following post-election violence. These elections need to be contextualised within the government’s project of pacifying the east following its largely successful campaign to oust the LTTE from the region from 2006 onwards. The TMVP – the LTTE’s break-away faction – was instrumental in the government’s military success, however, a lower ranking TMVP cadre, Pillayan, split from the party leader Karuna and the security environment became increasingly complex. Political and criminal violence including robbery and kidnappings merged into each other. The re-appearance of “white vans” in the east – vehicles used by unidentified groups to abduct people – was symptomatic of this deteriorating environment. The military takeover of the east transformed the political landscape for local peacebuilding, as the government kept human rights and peace organisations on a tight leash. There was a great deal of pressure on NGOs and donors to support the government programme to resettle displaced Tamils and reconstruct these formerly LTTE controlled areas. The

---

<sup>4</sup> Other sources of funding came from a diaspora group called the Batticaloa Development Society and support from Germany and Canada, directed to IROP via the Bishop. Following the tsunami, they received funding from some INGOs, as well as support to implement livelihood programmes from Jesuit Relief Services (JRS).

government marginalised human rights organisations, which were seen as an irritant to the government strategy. Meanwhile, they tried to integrate peacebuilding organisations into military and political efforts to manage conflicts in the area. Conflict resolution organisations thus have a role in stabilizing the “peace” in the east, so long as they did not contradict the government’s paradigm of peace.

The elections were a vital plank in the government strategy of legitimizing the new political dispensation in the east. Along with the delivery of a peace dividend (a donor-funded reconstruction programme), the government hoped they would legitimize the new political dispensation. Local council elections were held in March 2008 followed by Provincial Council elections on 10 May 2008. Both events were shaped by a deteriorating security environment and the violent jockeying around electoral campaigns. Government thugs were brought in so that it was virtually impossible for opposition candidates to electioneer. Both TMVP fractions (Pillayan and Karuna) remained armed throughout the campaign and the international consensus was that serious malpractices were rife. TMVP cadres intimidated opponents, impersonated voters and took over polling stations to stuff ballots (International Crisis Group, 2008:11). Anger and animosity among the Muslims was further accentuated when the Tamil militant Pillayan (TMVP) was appointed Chief Minister (CM), though he received fewer votes than his Muslim opponent Hizbullah. President Rajapakse thus contradicted his pre-election promise to grant the CM post to the candidate of the ethnic group yielding most seats in the council.

This was the context in which violence broke out. Just south of Batticaloa, on the border between Kattankudy – Hizbullah’s constituency – and the neighbouring division Ariyampathy (mainly inhabited by Tamils), the animosities escalated into violence. On 22 May in Kattankudy, two men on a motorcycle killed the TMVP leader for Ariyampathy. He had reportedly been stirring up inter-communal tensions during the election campaign and many interpreted the assassination as a payback by militant young Muslims. Others suggested the attack might have been executed by the LTTE or should be placed in the context of the intra-TMVP Karuna-Pillayan clash. In the neighbourhood, however, people interpreted the event as an attack by Muslims on Tamils and it triggered an immediate retaliation. As soon as TMVP cadres heard the news, they left their compounds in Ariyampathy and fired randomly on Muslims. Three people were killed on the spot. On that same day, violence spread to other areas, with the kidnapping and killing of two Muslims from Eravur, some 20 km north, who were travelling to Batticaloa to pay their electricity bills. The police called a two-day curfew and the Muslims proclaimed a “hartal”. Transportation routes with Colombo were blocked. There were rumours that Muslims were planning to attack the Tamils bordering the Muslim enclave Eravur. Around 2000 Tamils thus fled the area. Muslims organised a protest march in Eravur, which culminated into violent clashes. The security forces shot into the crowd and killed a Muslim woman. A Muslim man from Eravur was killed when he went to sell vegetables in a neighbouring town.

The precise details of the negotiations that followed are hard to ascertain, but most accounts appear to agree on the following. A high level meeting was held on 22 May which involved direct talks between Pillayan’s personal secretary, Ragu, the Superintendent of Police and representatives of the Kattankudy Mosque Federation. The Bishop, IROP, EHED and the Non-Violent Peace Force were reported to be external facilitators of this process. Whilst supporting the meeting, IROP however, took a backseat position: “when the conflicting parties came together they talked directly and we stood behind”. As a result of the meeting, an agreement was made about transporting the bodies of

the Muslims back from Batticaloa to Kattankuddy. Both sides agreed to a joint statement which emphasized peaceful co-existence and this was subsequently disseminated in Batticaloa and Kattankuddy. In addition, negotiations were held with community leaders from Eravur, a Muslim government minister and Pillayan. As a result of these meetings, the displaced Tamils moved back to their homes on 24 May. The intervention by IROP and others helped prevent the conflict from escalating, and allowed a new equilibrium to emerge. After the meeting, a *détente* of sorts developed between Pillayan and Hizbullah, the leading Muslim politician from Kattankudy, but the situation remained inherently unstable.

IROP's intervention kept violence within certain bounds, helped to temporarily dampen conflict escalation, but did not engage in the transformation of the structures and incentives underlying the antagonism. In line with Appadurai's (2006) concept of vivisectionist violence, this "low intensity" conflict is clearly not random. It fulfils important functions for powerful actors. For the state, "top down" violence is an instrument of governance – a level of instability prevents the emergence of powerful coalitions that might challenge its particular brand of statebuilding in the east. The means of violence are franchised out to non-state actors so as to evade accountability, but these actors are never allowed to become too powerful. "Bottom up" violence is a means of hardening in-group/out-group boundaries; extending their control; or extracting resources locally and from the centre. Violence can be understood as a dramatic production, part of an ongoing "conversation" between competing military and political potentates.

Paradoxically, such conflict mediation activities may inadvertently be useful for political potentates. As one interviewee noted, "the leadership are using mediation to generate good publicity for themselves".<sup>5</sup> Resolving conflict once and for all would undermine the power base of many political potentates who rely on violence or the threat of violence. Mirroring the case of the Akkaraipattu *maulavi*'s, IROP travelled across boundaries, without actually challenging them. With its quota system of religious representation it may even play a role in reproducing and reinforcing the religious boundaries underlying the conflict itself. At the same time, IROP has established a niche in the complex ecology of violence and conflict management in the east. Their religious base provides them with some authority and legitimacy, as they are seen to be separate from the dirty and dangerous world of politics. IROP members are not naive about their ambivalent role and the limited space within which they intervene and cross boundaries as is reflected in the following two statements: "We can't solve the problem as it occurs again and again. We should address the root causes, but the problems are coming from Colombo and can't be solved locally".<sup>6</sup> "Religious leaders have a role in dealing with tensions, but without political support they can't do anything".<sup>7</sup>

### ***Case study 2: Religious organisations and the boundary politics of post-tsunami aid***<sup>8</sup>

The Indian Ocean tsunami that hit Sri Lanka on 26 December 2004 compounded the already complicated sequence of political struggles and violent incidents in eastern Sri Lanka. The way

---

<sup>5</sup> Muslim religious leader, interviewed 14/10/08, Batticaloa

<sup>6</sup> Member of IROP, interviewed 23/09/08, Batticaloa.

<sup>7</sup> Catholic priest, interviewed 4/10/08, Batticaloa.

<sup>8</sup> Part of the empirical material discusses in this section was used elsewhere to analyse and scrutinize the notion of gift (Korf et.al. forthcoming). The analytical angle is obviously different.

religious actors dealt with the subsequent dilemmas of humanitarianism sheds further light on the complexities of involved with handling politically sensitive boundaries. In the face of massive suffering, solidarity temporarily dissolved old political, religious and ethnic boundaries. Temple committees, for example, worked alongside mosque federations or LTTE cadres assisted government troops (Hasbullah and Korf, 2009). But these exceptional forms of collaboration were short-lived. After a brief pause, political contestation over an influx of aid fragmented the different polities along ethnic lines as well as other sources of identity, such as religion, caste and class (Hyndman, 2007). The inflow of foreign aid had important effects on political relations and governance structures in the east. It fed the patronage networks of political leaders, and the control of aid resources provided new sources of legitimacy for both the government and LTTE (Brun and Lund, 2008; Frerks and Klem, forthcoming; Korf et al., forthcoming; Ruwanpura, 2008). At the same time, high profile, but often insensitive aid practices sparked angry and frustrated reactions against the “neo-colonial” interventions of outsiders, further aggravated by rumours of foreign aid workers abusing local women and alleged conversions by Christian aid agencies. The “competitive humanitarianism” (Stirrat, 2006) that developed as a result of an over-supply of aid exacerbated controversies around humanitarian agencies and led to an increasing legitimacy crisis of the NGO sector (Hyndman and de Alwis, 2003; Ruwanpura, 2007; Walton, 2008). This created pressure and anxiety between the state, the NGO sector and local political entrepreneurs. In this situation, religious actors and faith-based NGOs had to deal with the tensions between their religious identities and the pressures of “secular” humanitarianism and political patronage.

The tsunami hit Sri Lanka’s coast with particular gravity in the east, where Muslims and Tamils live in a jigsaw of coastal settlements. International aid, however, arrived only after a time lag of several weeks, as the southern coast was more easily accessible and received greater media attention. In this initial phase, local religious actors became important agents in coordinating and executing relief efforts as the state bureaucracy was also paralysed. Maruthamunai, a small coastal Muslim town in Ampara District, offers a telling example of this: the local Mosque Federation (*palibail samasam*) – a federation of leaders from various mosques in Maruthamunai – assumed a prominent role in organizing the distribution of relief items, the burial of corpses and the provision of temporary shelter.<sup>9</sup> The mosques became natural places of refuge for displaced people who sought material and spiritual support after the terrible event. The federation received food from local people of the area and relief items from other parts of Sri Lanka. In order to distribute this assistance – still in short supply at the time – the federation implemented a strict system which distinguished between three degrees of affectedness according to which people could receive the appropriate relief items.

The federation explained it adopted this transparent and accountable style, to distance itself from what they considered the dirty practices of patronage politics, where political patrons (e.g. a member of Parliament) link aid and favours to electoral loyalty. The Mosque Federation presented itself as a place of “anti-politics” (Hansen, 2001:35-38; Spencer, 2007:142), devoid of the dirty, mundane practices of politics. Distributing relief items was seen as a religious practice of solidarity, not a political act of patronage. It was such anti-political posturing that enabled organisations from different backgrounds – e.g. the Mosque Federation and temple societies – to collaborate. However, the apolitical space of charity (as religious service), could not be maintained when international humanitarian agencies came to Maruthamunai and brought large amounts of relief items, aid money

---

<sup>9</sup> We draw here from field work done by Shahul Hasbullah. A more detailed discussion of this case can be found in Hasbullah and Korf (2008).

and job opportunities for development workers. The relief distribution system that the federation had installed collapsed when different local and international aid agencies started competing for beneficiaries and local politicians used aid moneys and housing reconstruction schemes to secure their vote banks.

As a result, ethnic, religious, political and other boundaries remerged and competing providers came to be seen as potential threats to received boundaries and purities. The Mosque Federation bemoaned the intrusion of cosmopolitan and alien identities and ideas into the purity of a “Muslim space.” Mosque leaders, for example, expressed anxiety and discomfort about the intrusion of Christian symbols in a predominantly Muslim area.<sup>10</sup> Much humanitarian relief and reconstruction work was implemented by Christian NGOs. Many Muslim IDPs were beneficiaries in housing reconstruction schemes implemented by the Catholic aid agency EHED, for example. In Maruthamunai, EHED’s housing scheme was quite popular among Muslims as their houses were considered to be the most solid and spacious, whereas the schemes of Islamic Relief seemed to be less attractive. The trouble with the houses was that EHED insisted in placing its organisational logo on all houses it had built (as a means to claim “ownership” for its private and institutional donors). EHED’s logo contains several Christian symbols, including a cross. The Mosque Federation expressed their disapproval about what they considered as a disruption of purity in a Muslim area. They also criticised Christian and other international aid agencies for their developmental jargon around “women empowerment”. They considered this incompatible with Islam. The Mosque Federation obviously was concerned about keeping up the boundary to protect a Muslim space, but failed to effectively do so as the influx of international aid agencies deprived them of the material leverage to keep these boundary politics intact.

While the Mosque Federation in Maruthamunai attempted a kind of top down boundary and purification work, boundary politics were also at times forcefully propagated “from below.” We return to Akkaraipattu, some thirty kilometres south from Maruthamunai, where a large number of Christian Tamil families had to be relocated after the tsunami. Their settlement, Sinna Muhattuvaram, was located south of Akkaraipattu on a thin strip of land between the lagoon and the sea; it was washed away almost entirely by the tsunami. The Divisional Secretary (DS) allocated beneficiaries for the relocation scheme to three faith-based aid agencies who were to construct new houses: the US-based evangelical church Smyrna Fellowship, the Catholic EHED and the Methodist church. While the latter two were the established developmental wings of two traditional churches and had been present in the east for a long time, Smyrna Fellowship appeared on the spot after the tsunami with funds from private sources. Both EHED and the Methodist church were eager to present themselves as professional humanitarian agencies that were non-partisan, i.e. they subscribed to the ICRC code of conduct and claimed to help the needy regardless of their faith. Aid workers from both organisations explained that their motivation, mission and mandate were derived from Methodist and Catholic teachings of the Gospel respectively, but also acknowledged non-partisanship as a secular humanitarian principle. In fact, aid agencies were very conscious about the need to be perceived as ‘professional’ and neutral, particularly in the light of rising controversies and rumours about alleged conversions by Christian agencies.

---

<sup>10</sup> We draw the empirical material concerning EHED’s work in Maruthamunai from more recent research by Shahul Hasbullah.

However, the idea of non-partisan professionalism invoked criticism among Methodist and Catholic constituencies. Some Christian beneficiaries argued that their churches failed to deliver to their own followers. While the DS had allocated beneficiaries to the three aid agencies irrespective of their church affiliation, the beneficiaries attached significant importance to their own religious identities and had great faith and expected religious leaders to care for their flock. Whilst the aid workers of EHED and the Methodist church explicitly rejected the practice of providing gifts for conversion or faith-based patronage, their lay constituencies expected precisely that. Catholic and Methodist beneficiaries who received houses from Smyrna Fellowship complained bitterly that their own churches had neglected them. Some were prepared to convert, but Smyrna had left the area after completing the housing programme. According to one beneficiary: "The [Catholic] priest was worried, people might join Smyrna, but no church came. If Smyrna builds a church, certainly we will go there. They built all the houses and the playground".<sup>11</sup> The beneficiaries apparently did not know that a state bureaucrat had allocated the houses to different organisations. For the Catholic and Methodist agencies, this was a problem. One EHED aid worker said: "The Catholics expected us to help them, but actually we are not the ones to decide who helps whom. The DS does that".<sup>12</sup>

The opposite criticism came from inside the Methodist community in Akkaraipattu, the neighbouring town. Contrary to their Christian brethren in the relocation scheme, the congregation of the town church felt that the priest was too strongly involved in development work and neglected his clerical duties. As the Methodists living in Akkaraipattu town itself had suffered less from the tsunami, their priest was mainly servicing victims from Sinna Muhattuvaram and other locations. Some congregation members charged that the church had transformed *caritas* from a service of faith into an NGO business. Rather than focusing on his devotional role, the priest was busy with the worldly affairs of managing donors, funds and projects. Rushing from one meeting or project site to the other, he was not spending much time with his people to talk and pray. Some aid workers inside the Christian NGO sector acknowledged that the pressure to deliver aid compromised the purity of Christian values of *caritas*.

These narratives from Maruthamunai and Akkaraipattu underline the difficult work to preserve religious boundaries and purities at a time of radical social and political change. The tsunami and the subsequent aid response put pressure on existing boundaries and added political charge to issues that previously had not been controversial. The Mosque Federation in Maruthamunai attempted to bound off a pure Muslim space by shutting out dirty politics and alien cosmopolitan ideas. As aid became increasingly enmeshed in patronage politics, the federation withdrew from its initial role as a distributor of assistance in order to preserve its purity. The Catholic and Methodist developmental wings in Akkaraipattu were confronted with tensions and anxieties from within their constituency. On the one hand, part of their congregation attempted to draw boundaries around the Christian flock to secure access to tsunami relief. They propagated a kind of religious patrimonialism from below. On the other hand, the more affluent and less tsunami affected Methodists in Akkaraipattu town were concerned about maintaining the purity of their church as container of faith; they called on the priest to refrain from the "NGO business" to preserve his primary role as a religious leader. Religious organisations employed very different discourses and practices to travel across or seal off religious and ethnic boundaries during their post-tsunami activities. They presented themselves as apolitical, either by emphasizing their purely religious nature (Mosque Federation) or by employing

---

<sup>11</sup> Beneficiary of Smyrna's housing programme, interviewed 15/04/08, Akkaraipattu.

<sup>12</sup> EHED aid worker, interviewed 16/04/08, Kalmunai.



the development discourse of neutrality and non-partisanship (EHED and Methodist church). This way, they could engage in activities and access constituencies that had previously been off limits to them. The ability to travel across these boundaries was, however contingent on broader developments and public perceptions. The Mosque Federation ceased its aid activities when the aid industry descended and charity gave way to competitive humanitarianism. The development discourse of the churches came under fire when their activities failed to live up both to the boundaries of Christian tsunami victims (“our church should serve us”) and the purities of Christian non-victims (“the priest neglects his religious duties”).

#### 4. Conclusions

Boundaries are not seamless, impermeable dividers. Depending on the time, the situation, and the people involved, they can be crossed. People do this all the time. In eastern Sri Lanka, Tamils and Muslims move in and out of each other’s areas for cultivation, trade, travel and so on. But when a grenade is thrown into a mosque, ethnic boundaries instantaneously become harder and more salient than others. We have argued that even in these situations, some people manage to travel across ethnic and other boundaries to resolve pressing problems. This, however, requires particular discursive strategies. A common theme from the case studies is that certain religious actors may have the institutional base and legitimacy to cross boundaries, but they can only do so, at least in the public sphere<sup>13</sup>, when they explicitly present themselves as apolitical. Whether for reasons of religious purity (politics is dirty), pragmatism (politics is dangerous) or humanitarian imperative (the need to help trumps political considerations), boundary crossing can only occur if one does not unsettle the checkpoints and mental maps which underpin the boundary. Here it is important to distinguish between boundary crossing and transgression. As the case studies show, religious leaders for the most part attempted to cross boundaries in order to manage and mitigate the effects of the conflict. They were able to get things done precisely because they did not publicly question or attempt to change the boundaries themselves. To do this, to transgress boundaries and participate in their unsettling and redrawing is the work of politics. But as already mentioned those who entered the political fray to reframe or transform the boundaries of the conflict have been systematically eliminated or forced to take sides.

Therefore because the political field is so over-determined, both Islamic and Christian organisations and leaders have deployed deliberate discursive strategies to distance themselves from everyday Sri Lankan politics. This is particularly clear in the case of the Maruthamunai Mosque Federation, which provided tsunami relief on the local level, but abstained from entering the dynamics of “competitive humanitarianism” when the aid industry descended on the region. Aid delivery became increasingly politicized, upsetting pre-existing boundaries and lines of patronage. The federation desisted from its tsunami aid distribution so as to preserve its perceived purity as an apolitical entity. Very similar pressures emerged in Akkaraipattu town where Methodist church members criticized their leaders for becoming increasingly like an NGO to the detriment of services, praying sessions and general proximity to the community. Christian and Islamic leaders could engage in new aid activities and

---

<sup>13</sup> Boundary crossing and transgression in the private sphere may follow very different dynamics, e.g. in inter-ethnic marriages, a theme, we could not adequately address in this paper. We thank Timmo Gaasbeek who pointed this out to us.

access new constituencies, but when they moved beyond a certain point, their own boundaries and perceived legitimacy are put at risk.

Similarly, IROP were able to travel across ethnic, religious, political, even military boundaries that were impermeable to most other actors. Its multi-religious character and the backing of the Bishop gave it the authority to engage in dialogue between Muslim politicians and Tamil militiamen without endangering themselves or their constituencies. IROP is thus an example of a religious organisation that imbibes both a level of authority and a sense of political “neutrality”. They command respect, but they don’t automatically constitute a political threat, because they present themselves as apolitical. Therefore in some respects religious organisations may have particular qualities which enable them to cross boundaries in order to contribute to peacebuilding and – as the case of Maruthamunai shows – post-disaster rehabilitation.

However, the paradox of adopting an apolitical posture in order to engage in politically sensitive activities, exposes the limitations of religious actors in addressing and transforming the underlying structures of the problems they try to resolve. Religious organisations can travel across boundaries, thus spanning political divides, but by doing so they also risk losing their perceived legitimacy and authority. IROP could not address the underlying structures of conflict, which ultimately could only be dealt with by more powerful political actors. It could dampen escalations of violence and facilitate short-term *détentes*, because the different protagonists accepted them. The organisation thus provides political and military actors with a channel to manage the conflicts they had themselves created. However, IROP would lose that access and cross-boundary capacity if it were to challenge the positions of those actors. In Migdal’s terms, IROP can cross checkpoints as long as it does not challenge their very existence; it is relatively flexible to move across the “mental maps” of protagonists, but it can’t change those maps altogether.

The Maruthamunai case highlights similar limitations. The Mosque Federation could engage in “development” by providing tsunami relief, but only up to a certain point. Similarly, Christian churches were confronted with the dilemma of maintaining both their developmental discourse as professional neutral aid agencies and their religious identity, as evident in the Sinna Muhattuvaram housing scheme. On the one hand the churches’ clergy was criticised for investing excessive time and resources in NGO work, but on the other hand there were bottom up pressures from their lay communities to deliver assistance. The boundary propagated by one group (we deserve help because we belong to the church) thus clashed with the purity discourse of the other (the priest should focus on devotion, rather than the development business).

Religious organisations are thus faced with the paradox that they are both constituted by and a constituent of boundary politics. They take part in constructing, deconstructing or recomposing demarcations whilst engaging in peacebuilding or post-tsunami aid, but their ability is constrained by boundaries as well. By defining themselves as non-political, religious organisations can cross important fault lines, but by doing so they risk jeopardising the “purity” of being apolitical. And by accepting certain boundaries – by accepting the “mental maps” of political players and by withdrawing from tsunami aid as something “too political” – they reproduce those boundaries as well.

- Abeysekara, A. (2002) *Colors of the Robe: Religion, Identity and Difference*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Anderson, B. (1983) *Imagined communities: Reflections of the origin and spread of nationalism*. London and New York: Verso.
- Appadurai, A. (2006) *Fear of small number: An essay on the geography of anger*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Barth, F. (1969) *Ethnic Group and Boundaries*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Bastian, S. (1997) Development NGOs and ethnic conflicts. *Nethra* 1: 41–75.
- Brun, C. and Lund, R. (2008) Making a home during crisis: Post-tsunami recovery in a context of war, Sri Lanka. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 29: 274-287.
- Douglas, M. (1966) *Purity and Danger: an analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo*. London: Routledge.
- Ellis, S. and Ter Haar, G. (2004) *Worlds of power: Religious thought and political practice in Africa*. London: Hurst.
- Frerks, G. and Klem, B. (forthcoming) Muddling the peace process: The politics of the tsunami, aid and conflict. In: J. Goodhand, B. Korf and J. Spencer (eds.) *Conflict, aid and peacebuilding in Sri Lanka*. London: Routledge.
- Goodhand (2006) *Aiding peace: The role of NGOs in armed conflict*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Goodhand, J. (2008) War, peace and the places in between: Why borderlands are central. In: M. Pugh, N. Cooper & M. Turner (eds.) *Whose peace? Critical perspectives on the political economy of peacebuilding*. London: Palgrave, pp. 225-244.
- Goodhand, J. and Klem, B., with Fonseka, D., Keethaponcalan, and S.I., Sardesai, S. (2005) *Aid, conflict, and peacebuilding in Sri Lanka: 2000-2005*. Washington, DC: the Asia Foundation.
- Goody, J. (2001) Bitter icons. *New Left Review* 7(January-February): 5-15.
- Guneratne, A. (2001) What's in a Name? Aryans and Dravidians in the making of Sri Lankan identities. In: N. Silva (ed.) *The Hybrid Island: Culture crossings and the invention of identity in Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, pp. 20-40.
- Hansen, T.B. (2001) Governance and Myths of State in Mumbai. In: C.J. Fuller and V. Bénei (eds.) *The Everyday State and Society in Modern India*. London: Hurst, pp. 31-67.
- Hasbullah, S.H. and Korf, B. (2009) Muslim geographies and the politics of purification in Sri Lanka 'after' the tsunami. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* (Forthcoming).
- Hilhorst, D. (2003) *The real world of NGOs: Discourses, power and development*. London: Zed Books.
- Hyndman, J. (2007) The securitization of fear in post-tsunami Sri Lanka. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 97(2): 361–372.

- Hyndman, J. and De Alwis, M. (2004) Bodies, Shrines, and Roads: violence, (im)mobility and displacement in Sri Lanka. *Gender, Place and Culture* 11 (4): 535-556.
- Hyndman, J. and De Alwis, M. (2003) Beyond Gender: Towards A Feminist Analysis of Humanitarianism and Development in Sri Lanka. *Women's Studies Quarterly* 31 (3-4): 212-226.
- ICRC/IFRC (1994) *Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Disaster Relief*. Geneva: ICRC/IFRC.
- International Crisis Group (2008) *Sri Lanka's Eastern Province: Land, Development, Conflict*. Asia Report 159. Brussels: International Crisis Group.
- Ismail, Q. (1995) Unmooring Identity: The Antinomies of Elite Muslim Self-Representation in Modern Sri Lanka. In P. Jeganathan and Q. Ismail (eds.) *Unmaking the Nation: The Politics of Identity and History in Modern Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, pp. 55-105.
- Lewer, N. and Ismail, M. (forthcoming) A genealogy of a Muslim political voice. In J. Goodhand, B. Korf and J. Spencer (eds.) *Conflict, aid and peacebuilding in Sri Lanka*. London: Routledge.
- Jeganathan, P. (2004) Checkpoint: Anthropology, Identity and the State. In: V. Das and D. Poole (eds.) *Anthropology in the Margins of the State*. Oxford: James Currey, pp. 67-80.
- Korf, B. (2006a) Dining with Devils? An Ethnographic Enquiry into the Conflict-Development Nexus in Sri Lanka. *Oxford Development Studies* 44 (1): 47-64.
- Korf, B. (2006b) Who is the rogue? Discourse, power and spatial politics in Sri Lanka. *Political Geography* 25 (3): 279-297.
- Korf, B., S.H. Hasbullah, P. Hollenbach and B. Klem (forthcoming) The gift of disaster: the commodification of good intentions in post-tsunami Sri Lanka. *Disasters*.
- Krishna, S. (2004) Fictions of homogeneity. *Daily Times*. Lahore, Pakistan, 29 March.
- Lamont, M. and Molnár, V. (2002) The study of boundaries in social science. *Annual Review of Sociology* 28: 167-195.
- Latour, B. (1993) *We have never been modern*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Leader, N. (2002) *The Politics of Principle: The Principles of Humanitarian Action in Practice*. HPG Report 2. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Lewis, D. and Mosse, D. (2006) Encountering order and disjuncture: Contemporary anthropological perspectives on the organisation of development. *Oxford Development Studies* 34(1): 1-13.
- Maunaguru, S. (1995) Gendering Tamil Nationalism: The construction of 'woman'? In projects of protest and control. In: P. Jeganathan and Q. Ismail (eds.) *Unmaking the Nation: The politics of identity and history in Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, pp. 158-175.
- McGilvray, D. (2008) *Crucible of Conflict: Tamil and Muslim Society on the East Coast of Sri Lanka*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.
- McGilvray, D. (1997) Tamils and Muslims in the shadow of war: Schism or continuity? *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 20(1): 239-253.

- McGilvray, D. and Raheem, M. (2007) *Muslim Perspectives on the Sri Lankan Conflict*. Washington, DC: East-West Center.
- Migdal, J. (2004) Mental maps and virtual checkpoints: Struggles to construct and maintain state and social boundaries. In: J. Migdal (ed.) *Boundaries and belonging: States and societies in the struggle to shape identities and local practices*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp 3-26.
- Mosse, D. (1996) South Asian Christians, purity/impurity and the caste system: death ritual in a Tamil Roman Catholic community. [\*Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute\* 2: 461-483.](#)
- Orjuela, C. (2004) *Civil society in civil war: Peace work and identity politics in Sri Lanka*. PhD dissertation, University of Göteborg.
- Rajasingam-Senanayake, D. (2001) Identity on the Borderline: Modernity, new ethnicities, and the unmaking of multiculturalism in Sri Lanka. In: N. Silva (ed.) *The Hybrid Island: Culture crossings and the invention of identity in Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, pp. 41-70.
- Richards, P. (2005) New war and ethnographic approach. In: P. Richards (ed.) *No peace, no war: An anthropology of contemporary armed conflicts*. Oxford: James Currey, pp 1-21.
- Ruwanpura, K.N. (2007) Awareness and Action: The ethno-gender dynamics of Sri Lankan NGOs. [\*Gender, Place and Culture\* 14 \(3\): 317-333.](#)
- Ruwanpura, K.N. (2008) Putting houses in place: rebuilding communities in post-tsunami Sri Lanka. [\*Disasters\* 33\(3\): 436-456.](#)
- Ruwanpura, K.N. and J. Humphries (2004) Mundane heroines: Conflict, Ethnicity, Gender, and Female Headship in Eastern Sri Lanka. *Feminist Economics* 10 (2): 173-205.
- Said, E. (1994) Identity, authority and freedom: The potentate and the traveller. *Boundary* 21 (3): 1-18.
- Spencer, J. (2003) A nation 'living in different places': Notes on the impossible work of purification in postcolonial Sri Lanka. [\*Contributions to Indian Sociology \(n.s.\)\* 37 \(1+2\): 25-47.](#)
- Spencer, J. (2007) *Anthropology, Politics and the State*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Stirrat, J. (2006) Competitive humanitarianism: Relief and the tsunami in Sri Lanka. [\*Anthropology Today\* 22\(5\): 11-16.](#)
- Stoddard, A. (2003) Humanitarian NGOs: challenges and trends. *HPG Briefing* 12. London: ODI.
- Stokke, K. (1998) Sinhalese and Tamil nationalism as post-colonial political projects from 'above', 1948-1983. [\*Political Geography\* 17 \(1\): 83-113.](#)
- Studer, M. (2001) The ICRC and civil-military relations in armed conflict. *ICRC* 83(842): 367-391.
- Thangarajah, Y. (1995) Narratives of victimhood as ethnic identity: Among the Veddhas of the East Coast. In: P. Jeganathan and Q. Ismail (eds.) *Unmaking the Nation: The politics of identity and history in Sri Lanka*. Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, pp. 191-218.

Thangarajah, Y. (2000) The Genealogy of Tamil Nationalism in Post-Independent Sri Lanka. In: S.T. Hettige and M. Mayer (eds.) *Sri Lanka at Crossroads: Dilemmas and Prospects After 50 Years of Independence*. Delhi: Macmillan, pp 119-38.

Thangarajah, Y. (2003) Ethnicization of the Devolution Debate and the Militarization of Civil Society in North-Eastern Sri Lanka. In: M. Mayer, D. Rajasingham-Senanayake and Y. Thangarajah (eds.) *Building Local Capacities for Peace: Rethinking Conflict and Development in Sri Lanka*. Delhi: Macmillan, pp. 15-36.

Tilly, C. (2003) *The politics of collective violence*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Uyangoda, J. (2007) *Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: Changing dynamics*. Washington, DC: East-West Center.

Uyangoda, J. (2005) Ethnic conflict, the state and the tsunami disaster in Sri Lanka. [Inter-Asia Cultural Studies 6 \(3\): 341-52.](#)

Walton, O. (2008) Conflict, peacebuilding and NGO legitimacy: National NGOs in Sri Lanka. [Conflict, Security and Development 8\(1\): 133-167.](#)

Wickremasinghe, N. (2001) *Civil Society in Sri Lanka: New Circles of Power*. New Delhi: Sage.