Introduction - Hindus and Others: A Sri Lankan Perspective

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Who is a Hindu? was the famous subtitle chosen by Savarkar for his nationalist pamphlet founding the Hindutva ideology in 1923[1]. We know about the legal difficulties faced by the British (among others) to define Hindus and Hinduism, and the resulting solution, which defined being Hindu by default: being Hindu meant *not being* Muslim, nor Christian, nor Sikh, nor Buddhist, nor anything else. This is a rather extreme example of the necessity to define the Other when it comes to defining oneself (Mohammad-Arid & Ripert 2014).

Following a workshop held in Paris in 2015[2], the purpose of this special issue is to start from the Sri Lankan case to study how Hinduism and Hindus define others and

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[1] Originally *Essentials of Hindutva* (1923), it was changed to *Who is a Hindu* in the 1928 edition.

[2] Organised upon the initiative of Delon Madavan, and within the framework of a research team with Mathieu Claveyrolas and Pierre-Yves Trouillet, the workshop: "Hindus and Others in South Asia and Overseas" was held in February 2015 within the *Centre for South Asian Studies* (CEIAS-EHESS/CNRS), in Paris (2014-2018: http://ceias.ehess.fr/index.php?3548). The workshop was co-organised by the *Centre for South Asian Studies* of Paris and the *Centre for Studies and Research on India, South Asia and its Diaspora* of Montréal (CERIAS-UQÀM).

interact with them, and what these interactions reveal about Hinduism in general and about Sri Lankan Hinduism in particular, especially regarding religious, social, political and territorial issues. By addressing relations to the Other from the Hindu point of view, the issue proposes more broadly to develop a critical conception of Hinduism that considers this religion as a point of contact between various social and religious groups. Indeed, we argue that questioning the importance of these multiple realities of contact, whether they are recognised or denied, also helps to renew the debate about the challenges of defining Hinduism, articulated by both Hindus and scholars.

It is indeed crucial to remind ourselves of the great heterogeneity in the practices and representations of Hinduism, and of how recent the appearance (driven by colonialisation) of the idea of Hinduism is (Halfbass 1988, Stietencron 2005 [1989], Pandey 1993, Tarabout 1997, Frazier 2011). Also well documented is the instrumentalisation of the 'ethnic' dimension of Hinduism by the 19th century nationalist elites in order to give a sense of unity to Indians fighting the British (King 1999, Ramaswamy 2006, Claveyrolas 2008), and to Hindus in a context of demographic struggle against Muslims (Pandey 1993, Roberts 2016). Although Andrew J. Nicholson (2010) recently argued that a first philosophical unification of Hinduism occurred in the Middle Ages, there is historical evidence that the very word 'Hinduism', as well as the category, were invented during the process of colonialisation, a contact point if ever there was one. Both the category and the word are largely to be understood as the result of such contacts.

This relatively recent notion of Hinduism does more than just posit a misleading unity. It is also grounded in an elitist Hindu 'xenology' (Halfbass 1988) that presents the Other as highly impure, and Hinduism (*Sanatana Dharma*) as particularly susceptible when it comes to impurity. According to this concept, which goes against obvious historical evidence, 'Hinduism' is supposed to be a monolithic religion that is closed in upon itself, incapable of being open, of welcoming in, coming to terms with or incorporating other traditions. This is of course opposite to the version of Hinduism depicted in this issue, grounded as it is in the many points of contact with the Other that the Sri Lankan case illustrates.

Besides, the barriers constructed around 'Hinduism' and 'Hindus' also take on spatial dimensions, as the Other is often located in – or relegated to – other places and spaces; for example, other places in the same settlement (such as Untouchable or Muslim neighbourhoods) or other spaces in the world. Indeed, on the continental or even global scale, the space located beyond the 'black waters' (*kala pani*) of the Indian Ocean is presented as impure by Brahmin orthodoxy (*Dharmashastra*) (Carroll 1979, Clémentin-Ojha 2012 & 2016). But how does this concept of Hindu territory come to terms with the history of population movements beyond the boundaries of the sub-continent, and ultimately with the constitution of what many observers call the 'Hindu Diaspora' (Rukmani 1999; Vertovek 2000)? And, more broadly, what do the numerous shrines

shared by Hindus and other communities (be they Muslim, Buddhist or Christian) in South Asia and overseas reveal about the so-called Hindu ritual 'purity' and specificity? Concerning our special issue: how can the barriers constructed around Hinduism come to terms with the Sri Lankan case?

In our perspective, the Sri Lankan situation is a heuristic for several reasons. First, it provides an original point of view on Hinduism, which differs from classical Indian fieldwork, as well as from the countless studies dealing with the relations between Hindus and Muslims in India (see Pandey 1993, Van der Veer 1994, Assayag 2004, Sila-Khan 2004, for instance), since the main religion encountered by the Sri Lankan Hindus is Buddhism, in a context where Hindus are a religious minority (12%). Sri Lanka is also an important context for the study of Hinduism, for this 'religion' has been present on the island at least since the 2nd century BCE[3], and developed, coexisted and interfered for centuries with other religious traditions (mainly Buddhism, Islam, Christianity and tribal religions). Besides, nine years after the end of the 26-year-conflict between the Tamil Tigers and the pro-Buddhist[4] government, paying attention to the relations to others from the Sri Lankan Hindus' point of view appears to be an important issue in terms of socio-religious reconstruction (Derges 2013) as well as national cohesion (Goodhand *et al.* 2011). Indeed, one should bear in mind that Hindu Tamils became 'construed as indigenised others' (Derges *ibid.*: 29) in the Sri Lankan national narrative, pointing out the failures in the post-colonial era to build a broad and integrative national identity. Moreover, ethnicity in Sri Lanka is often portrayed, especially in relation to ethnic nationalism, as a simple binary division between Sinhalese and Tamils. This dominant "bi-polar ethnic imagination", as Darini Rajasingham-Senanayake (1999: 101) has termed it, "constructs Sinhalas and Tamils mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive of the island's diverse and hybrid communities", rendering all other groups "culturally invisible and politically inconsequential" to the national imagination. Finally, it must also be emphasised that Sri Lankan Hindus are particularly active in the 'Hindu diaspora' (especially in recent temple buildings[5]), a point that also deserves attention when one investigates Hindu relations with the Other.

Spatial issues also matter in the shaping of Sri Lankan Hinduism at the transnational, national and local scales. For instance, beyond the diaspora topic we just mentioned, Hindu castes and religious groups are spatially segregated in Jaffna (Madavan 2011a), and spatial divisions exist today between Hindus (mainly located in Northern and Eastern provinces) and 'mainland' Buddhists, as well as between coastal Hindus and Up-country

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[3] The first 'Hindu' practices in Sri Lanka were dedicated to deities similar to those that were present in South India, but it must be underlined that the active presence of Brahmins was very limited before the second half of the first millennium, which corresponds to the emergence of Saivism on the island.

[4] It was particularly true when Mahinda Rajapaksa was President (2005-2015), since he supported the extremist Buddhist monks of the JHU (Jathika Hela Urumaya, or National Heritage Party).

[5] See Punzo-Whaghorne 2004, Baumann 2009, Bradley 2006, Jacobsen 2009, Bradley & Trouillet 2011, Trouillet 2012, Goreau-Ponceaud 2014, Whitaker 2015, Maunaguru & Spencer 2018, among others.

Hindus (established in the 19th century). Furthermore, Sri Lanka's famous shared religious centres, such as Kataragama, Munneswaram (cf. infra) or Sri Pada/Adam's Peak (De Silva, this issue), make the Sri Lankan case very relevant for our discussion.

As far as Hindus are concerned, one must consider at least three types of 'otherness': Firstly, Hinduism does not merely construct itself through occasional encounters with the Other and other spaces. As we suggested, it must also be considered a contact point in and of itself. Let us only think about the caste system: differentiation, hierarchy and even segregation also go hand in hand with shared spaces and structural interactions in India (Fuller 1992, Michaels 2004, Mittal 2004, Mosse 2015, Roberts 2016) as well as in Sri Lanka[6] (Pfaffenberger 1982, Siva 2000, Ravikumar 2002, Madavan 2011a, Kuganathan 2014). The very structures of Hindu society and ideology are based on articulating together the various traditions of Hinduism (Stietencron 2005 [1989], Frazier 2011).

In this matter also, the Sri Lankan case generally opposes high caste Vellalars from the Jaffna region to their low caste and low-class counterparts from both coastal areas and from Up-country untouchables. For instance, the fact that Up-country labourers were less concerned with the ethnic conflict, mainly opposing Jaffna Tamils to Sinhalese Buddhists, indicates the necessity to problematise the notion that Sri Lankan Hindus are a homogeneous community (see the articles of Bass and de Silva in this issue). Even among the Jaffna Hindus, internal cohesion appears fragmented, for it has been undermined for decades by different political orientations and opinions regarding the war between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the government.

Secondly, the history of Hinduism is not that of a closed-off religion. In India itself, the encounters with Islam and Christianity (Assayag & Tarabout 1997, Assayag 2004, Clémentin-Ojha 2008), the challenges brought by Buddhism and Jainism, the relationships with Sikhism, or the contacts with tribal religions, far from being innocuous or unusual incidents, have all significantly shaped Hinduism over the centuries. Contact, whether or not it features conflict, has left its mark on practices, representations, architecture, both on the side of Hinduism and on that of the other religions involved. In Sri Lanka too, one should not neglect the influence of Islam and Christianity. Neither should one assume that contacts between religions have always been conflictual. Malathi de Alwis and Shobhana Xavier, but also de Silva (this issue) clearly demonstrate the significance of overlapping practices and representations in the historical and contemporary Sri Lankan religious context (see also Bastin, 2002).

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[6] Jane Derges considers that even if some have argued that caste no longer has the same status than it had before the war, "It still exerts significant influence. Its position has changed and it has become more covert, but it still has the power to affect social, political and educational opportunities." (Derges 2013: 186).

Thirdly, contacts between Indian as well as Sri Lankan Hindus and other religious groups and traditions have also taken place *elsewhere*, as shown by Hindu diasporic communities worldwide, whether you consider those recently installed (Baumann 2009, Kurien 2007), those who came as a result of the colonial practice of indenture (Benoist 1998, Claveyrolas 2017, Khan 2004), or contacts between Hindu indentured labourers and Hindus working in the colonial administration (Madavan, 2011b). As a consequence of the war, Tamil Sri Lankans, mostly Hindus, were forced into exile. Anthony Goreau-Ponceaud and Mark Bradley (this issue) illustrate how contacts between Sri Lankan Hindus and other groups rapidly came to re-define Sri Lankan Hinduism in the diasporic contexts of Paris and Montreal. Both (but also Xavier) point to yet another type of otherness: one that links Sri Lankan Hindus and their diasporic communities (see also Maunaguru & Spencer 2018, Madavan 2012).

Hindus and Others in Sri Lanka

A review of the literature
What is striking in examining research on the subject is that, until only recently, it has attracted little scholarly attention as compared to studies on Hinduism in South India or among the Indian diaspora, or indeed Buddhism in Sri Lanka. The only general study was published in 1957 by a Methodist cleric (Cartman 1957). A couple of historical studies have been devoted to the encounter between Christianity and Hinduism, and again they have been written from the Christian viewpoint (Saveri 1993, Young 1995). A thesis on astrology in Jaffna (Perinbanayagam 1982) provides a side view of Hindu religious practices in the North, and there is a good analysis of the process of 'textualisation' of Saivism by Arumuga Navalar, the Ceylon Tamil promoter of the 'Hindu Renaissance' in the mid-19th century, a decisive turning point that is amply documented by Pfaffenberger (1982).

But on religious practice in the major Saivite temples of Jaffna such as Nallur and Maviddapuram, and of Trincomalee (Koneswaram), the literature is quite limited, and the collective work published by the Ministry of Hindu Affairs resulting from an initiative by Western devotee Patrick Harrigan, lacks scholarly rigour (Ministry of Cultural Hindu Affairs 2003). On the other hand, the non-agamic (non-Sanskritised) cults of 'Hindu' deities, especially by Sinhalese or Tamil-Sinhalese speaking groups, and various religious practices connected with them, have been the subject of in-depth research by well-known social anthropologists such as Gananath Obeyesekere (Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1983 ; Obeyesekere 1981, 1988), Bryan Pfaffenberger (1979), Tanaka (1997), and John Clifford Holt (2004, 2006), with a focus on the historical roots of these cults (Pattini, Vishnu) and on the religious practices of the Sinhalese devotees in and around sanctuaries such as Kataragama.

The first scientific monographs on Hindu temples in Sri Lanka appeared at the turn of the 19th century and were followed in the latter part of the 20th century (during the 1983-2009 war) by others, for example, a valuable work on Munneswaram, which again focused on the Hindu practices of Buddhists (Bastin 2002). Moreover, there is a study of religious practices and power struggles in and around the Mandur temple near Batticaloa (Whitaker 1999), and monographs on new cults and religious practices in Jaffna and the Eastern province in the war and post-war contexts (Lawrence 1999; Shanmugalingam 2002; Spencer 2013, 2015; and Derges 2013). The contributions in the present publication by Daniel Bass, Malathi de Alwis and Premakumara de Silva offer new perspectives on non-Brahmanical Hinduism in Sri Lanka and its relation with Buddhism.

Hindu practices among Sinhalese Buddhists
In the context of the political instrumentalisation of Buddhism as the 'national' religion in Sri Lanka, even after the war period, coexistence of Buddhism with Hindu cults, generally associated with their Tamil origins, might appear problematic. On the other hand, Hinduism in Sri Lanka has never been politically instrumentalised in the way it has in India, and its resilience is linked to its popular appeal rather than to any organised defence based on 'agamic' principles. In fact, actual practice - the booming success of certain Hindu shrines, contradicts public discourse - cleansing Buddhism of impure accretions. Recent research tends to question the very nature of 'Hinduism' and to forge concepts such as that of multi-religiosity to account for the forms of religious practice found in largely non-Brahmanical societies such as those of Tamil Hindu and Sinhalese Buddhist Sri Lanka.

Images and cults of Hindu gods in Buddhist sacred places are recorded from the remote past (especially in 12th century Polonnaruwa). They became extremely popular after the 14th century in the Kotte, Gampola and Kandy kingdoms, and persist in old or new forms in most present-day Buddhist temples. Cults recognising Vishnu as a previous Buddha were quite common among the Sinhalese, as shown by research by John Holt (2004, 2006). These cults were sometimes located in separate sacred places such as Dondra (at the southern tip of the island), which is still a very popular sanctuary. But more often they were incorporated within Buddhist image houses together with the cults of other guardian deities, considered to be servants of the Buddha. The most interesting place in that respect is the Lankatilaka royal temple in the Kandyan highlands, where a Buddhist image house accessed through the east is surrounded by altars of various deities, the principal being Vishnu accessed through the west. In all these sacred places, Vishnu and other 'Hindu' gods were serviced by non-Brahmin priests, either belonging to the *pandaram* group (of Tamil origin), or to the *kapurala* category (Sinhalese). In the 18th century, kings of South Indian origin, the Nayakkar, brought Hindu gods with them to their capital city of Kandy, and shrines to these gods were accommodated in the palace area of the city as guardian deities, close to the Temple of the Tooth of the Buddha, which housed the palladium of

the kings. The two major Buddhist monasteries, Asgiriya and Malwatte, were located at a distance, but their monks participated in the palace rituals (Seneviratne 1978).

Cults of goddesses were probably more popular than those of the great Hindu gods, especially those of Pattini/Kannaki, two faces, one Sinhalese, the other Tamil, of the same goddess. Drawing on the research of Obeyesekere (1988) on Pattini cults in southern Sri Lanka, on various studies of the Kannaki myth in Tamil culture, and on present rituals she observed in North-Eastern Sri Lanka, Malathi de Alwis in her contribution to this volume shows the historical 'incorporation' of Kannaki into Pattini and develops the concept of 'spaces of multireligiosity' as a methodological tool to understand the Sri Lankan religious scene.

Saivite influences, initially connected with the Cola domination of the north of Sri Lanka, developed in the south west when the population shifted towards that region and new migrants from Kerala settled in the island. By the end of the 16th century, King Rajasinha I of Sitawaka had attracted Brahmins and openly abandoned Buddhism for Saivism. But incorporation of local deities, most often 'tribal', within the pantheon of Hindu gods, and coexistence, or rather functional complementarity, between these cults and Buddhist practice, was more common than mutual exclusion.

The paper offered by Premakumara de Silva in this issue shows that, after centuries of peaceful coexistence, the process took a new turn in the most celebrated and least studied multi-religious pilgrimage in Sri Lanka, that of Sri Pada (Adam's Peak). An ancient Saivite cult was taken over and erased by the Buddhicisation of the sacred place, but the recent role played by Up-country Tamils in the functioning of the pilgrimage led to a revival of the cult.

It appears that there is now a general tendency among urban Buddhists to verbally condemn Hindu practices while actually continuing to believe in their efficiency and practicing them covertly or openly. A case in point is that of Dondra, where a huge statue of the Buddha has been erected at the entrance but where the devotees, all Buddhists, come to worship Vishnu and various other deities. But the most popular sanctuaries with the Sinhalese are Munneswaram and Kataragama, two Saivite places located at the border between Tamil and Sinhalese speaking territories, one in the North West, the other in the South East.

The temple complex of Munneswaram (Bastin 2002) combines a major Saivite temple (Muni Eswara*kovil*) with a minor Bhadra Kali temple. The power of the place is such that despite the destruction of the ancient temple by the Portuguese Jesuits in the 17th century, it is still very popular among both Tamils and Sinhalese. The Shiva temple is serviced by Tamil Brahmin priests, although most of the devotees are now Sinhalese; while the non-Brahmin Kali temple is still the locus of bloody sacrifices. In the context of ethnic tensions, political interference with the cults is growing, but at the same time the belief in the power of the place attracts a host of ambitious politicians and entrepreneurs, and until now, attempts to Buddhicise the place have failed.

Kataragama is very different. Located in the jungle of the dry zone in the South East, there is no Hindu agamic temple (*kovil*) there, but a multi-religious sacred space where sanctuaries (*devale*) of deities serviced by Sinhalese *kapurala* (priests), a separate Buddhist shrine (*vihara*), and the tomb of a Muslim Sufi coexist side by side. The chief deity is Murugan, a son of Shiva, but the cult is that of his union with his 'tribal' mistress Valli and was initially a ritual of the local Adivasis, the Veddas. Many devotees are Hindu Tamils from the plantations, and, with the end of the war, Tamils from the North East are returning, a few are Muslims, but the great majority of the pilgrims and visitors are Sinhalese. The lay chief is a Sinhalese with political connections. According to Pfaffenberger (1979), there is no syncretism but practice side by side, with a declining role played by the Tamils, even if the founding myth symbolises the union of Tamils and Sinhalese Veddas. On the contrary, Obeyesekere (1981) interprets religious practice at Kataragama by the Sinhalese as a form of an increasing Hindu-Buddhist syncretism, and the founding myth as representing incorporation of the Veddas in the larger society.

Hindu cults in the war and post-war context
Did the war that affected the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka for a quarter of a century (1983-2009), give birth to new religious tends in Hinduism? Whitaker's study (1999) of the Mandur temple in Batticaloa (Eastern province) seems to minimise the impact of the war. It provides the reader with a good description of religious ritual and yearly festivals: as in Kataragama, the god Skanda-Murugan consorts with a Vedda goddess and leaves his spear in the jungle for his devotees to find it and establish a temple; the difference is that the temple is patronised by Tamil high castes and has agamic rituals. But the major focus of Whitaker is on the history of the shrine in its relations with outside powers - the British Raj, independent Sri Lanka, and the short-lived Tiger supremacy. According to him, the life of the temple, dedicated to Sri Kandaswamy, remained largely untouched by outside events because, although exerting its authority upon a territory, it was upheld by an 'alter' discourse, indifferent to political powers; the two world views functioned in an 'amicable incoherence' (Ibid., 1999). Indeed, according to a leader of the Tamil rebellion: "religion [was] not part of the consciousness of the struggle" (Lawrence 1999: 40). During the war, temples were the only places where people could freely gather; but in the North some of them were bombed by government forces.

Patricia Lawrence's study (1999), again located in the Eastern province, tells a different tale. It is by far the best analysis of the rise of cults of Mother Goddesses (Amman) in the context of war, torture, extrajudicial killings, disappearances and forced recruit ment of children. For people, and especially for widowed or abandoned women, who could not tell their 'unspeakable' suffering, religious language and practice offered a way of expressing violence and of feeling a sort of protection that the State no longer offered. Self-appointed priestesses were able to 'embody' the pain of others and could help reconstitute persons 'fragmented by torture and anxiety. Moreover, in the words of the

author, "in the Amman oracle expanding work is found a counterpoint to the muteness of political silencing (…) it is the work of Amman oracles to speak, that is to embody memory" (1999: 212). In her contribution to this issue, Malathi de Alwis shows that Pattini oracles played the same role in the southern areas affected by the repression of the JVP rebellion in the late 1980s by the police.

In *The New Face of Durga,* Shanmugalingam (2002) shows a similar trend at work in Tellipalai in the northern peninsula of Jaffna, that is the birth of new cults in the context of war and subsequent disruption of family networks. Durga is especially worshipped by people with marital problems; she is the object of an agamic cult, just as in Munneswaram; at the same time, under the form of Kali, she is the goddess of violence, requiring blood offerings. A new Durga temple developed in Tellipalai in the late 1970s in relation with the tensions in Jaffnese society, under the guidance of a former female teacher in the local school, Thangamma, who became President of the board of trustees, a renowned preacher, and a dedicated social worker. As a result of the war, transport became insecure in the peninsula and several other local Durga shrines developed in the villages. In these numerous shrines, women acted as counsellors, oracles and healers, often irrespective of caste status.

In a recent book, Jane Derges (2013) shows that exceptional Hindu bodily practices, especially hook swinging (*thûkkûkkâvadi*) and mouth piercing, re-invented in the late 1960s in Jaffna by an 'organiser', became very popular among young male Tamils during the ceasefire (2002-2006), and after the end of the war (2009), and she interprets the phenomenon as a sort of self-inflicted violence to ward off the memory and effects of war-inflicted wounds, mouth piercing expressing symbolically unspeakable torture. Originally these practices were linked with the cult of Murugan (as in Kataragama, where they were developed by Up-country Tamil devotees) and considered degrading by the Hindu high caste elite, but they are now practiced by every caste and class, including members of the diaspora visiting their motherland, and they are extending to temple festivals of the goddess Mariyamman in other parts of the island, notably in plantation areas unaffected by the war (see also Bass in this issue). According to Derges, challenging the established values of an agamic religion no longer upheld by the high caste Hindus who have left the country is becoming a sort of addiction or sport among the youth. In these new practices, she sees the signs and tools of a resilience of post-war Tamil society. At the same time, numerous old agamic temples, such as Naguleswaram in the north of the peninsula, are being restored, in most cases with funds from high caste families living abroad. And new ones, such as the gorgeous and kitschy Vaishnava temple north of Trincomalee, are being built, often by wealthy businessmen enriched by trafficking during the war period.[7]

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[7] Online source: http://slnp.org

The practices described by Derges are new in Jaffna, but well established among the Up-country Tamils working on the tea and rubber estates. In this issue, Daniel Bass analyses the central role played by non-agamic cults of Hindu deities, especially the goddess Mariyamman, and by practices such as hook swinging and fire walking, in the identity assertion of that endangered community (also Bass 2012). In his words, these festivals while explicitly Hindu involve the active participation of non-Hindus; they transcend the barriers of caste and of religion to unite the group on an ethnic and residential basis.

The ethnographic studies on war and religious practices in the East collected by Jonathan Spencer et al. (2014) converge to show that "the signs of religious activity are undiminished by the years of war" (p. 21). Hinduism is numerically dominant, its temples provide shelter and its self-appointed priestesses provide solace to war-affected individuals of whatever religious affiliation, but it lacks leadership, while Catholic priests and Muslim mosques are better organised. The authors consider that, despite an apparent religious diversity, which could lead to the view that the Eastern province is a juxtaposition of unconnected Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Buddhist clusters, it is actually a single complex multi-religious field, where interactions at the grassroots-level develop independently from top-level political power games.

Finally, the most of these studies show that religious otherness is better understood if it is replaced in a multi-religious field characterised by its locality and its historical experience, rather than considering each religion as a self-contained unit.

Hindus and Others in the Sri Lankan Diaspora

The nature of contacts between Sri Lankan Hindus and others outside the island depends on complex interactions between the global and historical contexts (colonial or non-colonial framework), the national context (political ideologies and state policies regarding immigration and ethnic minorities) and even local contexts (to determine the bonding and bridging process between Tamils and others, as well as amongst Tamils).

Migration, politicisation and transnationalisation
The Sri Lankan diaspora is heterogeneous in terms of castes, social classes, religions, and political ideologies, but also in terms of the various historical settings that led to its constitution. Limited emigration first occurred within the framework of the colonial system, when many Hindu Tamils from Jaffna were recruited by various departments of the British administration, most of all in the Malay Peninsula. Other forms of emigration have taken place since the independence of Ceylon (1948) and are characterised by highly diverse conditions and destinations of migration. After independence, the Sinhalese nationalists abandoned English as an official language, resulting in the emigra-

tion of English-speaking elites to Britain and the Commonwealth countries. Since the 1970s, the oil boom has brought Gulf countries to recruit labourers under a temporary contract to work on their construction sites, in the restaurant industry or as engineers or maids. Unfortunately, current research in this area takes little account of religious practices.

In addition to emigration for work, the succession of conflicts and war since the 1980s created a massive political emigration of Sri Lankan Tamils, eventually leading to the creation of a 'refugee diaspora' (Van Hear 2014). Apart from the Indian province of Tamil Nadu, home of 110,000 to 170,000 Sri Lankan Tamils, most refugees reached Western countries: Canada (300,000 individuals, mostly in Toronto), or Western Europe (at least 200,000, primarily in Britain, Germany, Switzerland, and France (Wayland 2004: 418). In this 'refugee diaspora', Sri Lankan Tamils coexist with other Indian (and Tamil) communities, whether Hindus or Christians (see for instance the article by Bradley in this issue). There is also a small number of Muslim refugees who fled from the war zone in the east of the island, along with a group of Sinhalese individuals or families who applied for political refugee status in western countries as JVPers[8].

Indeed, ethnic persecution became the primary factor for migration out of the country and many Tamils were accepted as refugees in liberal democratic host countries. As such, even those migrants, and especially their children, who desire integration into the host societies, may remain active players in the conflicts left behind. The political activism of the diaspora[9] had begun long before the civil war and before the political monopoly of the LTTE (Sriskandarajah 2005, p. 497). Such activism has been the subject of many studies attempting to analyse the patterns of the Tamil community political mobilisation in different countries, and the growing "long-distance nationalism" (Chalk 2008 & 1999; Dequirez 2011a & 2011b; Goreau-Ponceaud 2011; Madavan 2013; Maunaguru & Spencer 2012 & 2018; Orjuela 2012).

The literature on Sri Lankan Hinduism in the diaspora is much less abundant, and it tends to focus on political dimensions, as is the case with the crucial issue of the politicisation of Hinduism in the diaspora. In their work on LTTE-controlled Sri Lankan temples in London, Sidharthan Maunaguru and Jonathan Spencer (2013, 2018) describe the leadership struggles within the boards of the temples, between those who want the temple to be, primarily, a ritual space and those who want it to serve political and funding purposes in favour of the Tamil Eelam and the LTTE (also see Dequirez 2011a & 2011b;

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[8] JVP (*JanathaVimikhtiPeramuna* or People's Liberation Front): a Marxist revolutionary movement of Sinhalese origin launched in the 1960s. This ultranationalist group was banned several times because of the violent actions it launched to destabilise the governments in place and was the target of fierce repression.
[9] Following Brubaker (2005: 12) and Sökefeld's (2006: 265), we consider the Sri Lankan diaspora as a type of transnational community that has been dispersed from its homeland, whose members permanently reside in one or more 'host' countries and possess a collective, sometimes idealized, myth of the homeland and will to return.

Goreau-Ponceaud 2011). As has been the case for the Paris Muthumari Amman Temple (operating in the 1990s in direct support of the LTTE), we can imagine that the end of the war would have temples distance themselves from these political issues.

The private actors who act transnationally to influence domestic and international politics are well documented (Cheran 2004; Chalk 1999 & 2008; Dequirez 2011; Fair 2007; Fuglerud 1999; McDowell 1996; Madavan 2013; Wayland 2004). Indeed, migration from Sri Lanka and the founding of many Hindu temples have resulted in Tamil identity-building from abroad, mixing religion and ethnicity. The development of a transnational Hinduism in the Sri Lankan diaspora helped maintain the links with the home-country (Bradley & Trouillet 2011, Goreau-Ponceaud 2011; Maunaguru & Spencer 2013 & 2018; Trouillet 2012 & forthcoming).

Internal diversity and relations with other (Tamil) Hindus
In the diaspora, Jaffnese Hindu Tamils experience various forms of otherness even among the Hindu community, which is linked to their internal diversity and to the encounter with other Hindus abroad. Caste identity and political support to the LTTE and/or BJP policy in India may influence the choice of Jaffnese Hindus to attend one temple over another. The Vaisnava Hindus, mainly from Northern India or descendants of Vaisnavas who left the Indian subcontinent during the colonial period, represent another 'Other' encountered within the Hindu community in the countries of settlement. Within the Saiva Hindu community itself, there are several factors of internal segmentation. Geographical origin distinguishes Jaffnese Tamil from Indian Tamils, but also from other Indian Saiva groups from Kerala, Andhra Pradesh or Karnataka. Among the Saivites, the language criteria have to be considered too, especially when it comes to interacting with the populations from older colonial migrations. If the Tamil-speaking Malaysian and Singaporean Tamils can interact with Jaffnese Tamils, this is not the case for the Tamils from the Mascarene or Caribbean Islands who do not speak Tamil anymore. In many cases, the recent migration and thus close ties to the homeland, may explain how Jaffnese Tamils were perceived as a model for 'proper' Hindu practices among other Tamil Hindu diasporic communities.

In Singapore and Malaysia, during colonial times, Ceylon Tamils distanced themselves from other Tamil Hindus. They set up their own temples and recruited priests from Jaffna, which helped to reinforce their uniqueness (Ramanathan 2001, Madavan 2013). Up to the mid-20th century, they also used to return to Jaffna when they retired. The prospect of return encouraged them to preserve their distinct identity, leading them to avoid mixing with the Tamils from India, due to considerations founded both on cultural bases and social status. Indeed, the Ceylonese Tamil community came as skilled professionals, mainly composed of members of the upper and dominant caste of Jaffna, the Vellalar. In comparison, the majority of Indian Tamils came as lower caste coolies. Such social detachment is also reflected in the founding of distinct organisations and rit-

ual places. During the colonial period, this social segregation was accompanied by a geographic segregation between upper castes and 'untouchables' castes (Walker 1994, Schooling 1959). Religious practices were also segregated: untouchables were prohibited from entering Hindu temples ran by Vellalars, and members of higher castes refused to participate in major Hindu festivals (like *Tai Pusam*) organised by lower castes.

In the process of the redefinition of diasporic identities, religion tends to become a major component of ethnic identity (Vertovec 2000). This is due to the disruptive nature of migration that propels some migrants to turn to what they perceive as unchanging, genuine values and traditions of their past. Indeed, for Hindus of Sri Lanka, temples are also places for cultural interaction with other Hindu groups from Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Mauritius or North India. The example of the Jaffna Hindus in Montreal, described by Bradley *et al* (2006), is very telling. It was not until 1995 that Hindus from Sri Lanka inaugurated a prayer hall and a temporary temple was installed at the site of the present Thiru Murugan temple, in Dollard-des-Ormeaux, in the northwest suburbs of the island of Montreal. This temple was officially consecrated in 2006. From 1980 to 1995, Hindu Jaffnese had to go to temples built by North Indian origin communities. Hence, the Sri Satanan Temple, opened in 1985, has long been an 'ecumenical' place, frequented by Sri Lankan Tamils, Bengalis from Bangladesh and Vaisnavas from Gujarat. To accommodate both the Vishnu and the Shiva faithful, this temple made several arrangements inside the building. Deities revered by both streams of Hinduism were installed in the same location. The cohabitation between North Indian Vaisnavas and South Indian and Sri Lankan Saivites has not gone undebated. The representation of Murugan (Subrahmanya), omnipresent in South Indian Saivite temples but much less worshipped in North India, was one major issue. Some Saiva ritual practices, like *abhiséka* (i.e. the bathing of divine representations with milk, fruit juice, honey and water) and their dressing with clothes by the priests was not greatly favoured by North Indians either.

Dealing with other religions in non-Hindu contexts
Of course, Jaffnese Hindu Tamils also interact with other religious groups in the diaspora, since the host country population may be predominantly Hindu (as is the case in India), Christian (in the Western countries), Muslim (in the Gulf Countries and Malaysia) or Buddhist (in Singapore). Some of these religions are familiar with Jaffnese Tamils back in Sri Lanka through transnational Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist networks, though not always familiar with the internal divisions among Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox Christians; Sunni and Shia Muslims; Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana Buddhists.

In the countries where the refugees have settled, state policies *vis-à-vis* religious minorities matter a lot. While Malaysian authorities officially promote Islam and have destroyed several informal Hindu temples, causing tension between the two communities, Hinduism is recognised in Singapore as the official religion of the Indian

community (South Asians), leading to the Sri Sengapa Vinayagar Temple to be classified as a National Heritage Site in 2003 (Madavan 2013). As a result of these many contacts and contexts, Hindu Tamils in the diaspora have to negotiate and sometimes transform their practices through specific territorial, religious and social dynamics to be (better) accepted in the host country (Jacobsen 2009, Goreau-Ponceaud 2011).

Moreover, Sri Lankan Tamil temples in host countries often become, in such contexts, a nexus for interaction within the community, through the reproduction of shared ritual practices, but also other 'ethnic congregations' functioning as spaces where community is created, as platforms for claim-making, and as access points to the resources and networks required by the emplacement in the new society. Baumann (2010) for instance argues that some Tamil Hindus priests and temple presidents have been successful in bridging and linking capital to enhance their status and prestige, as well as to provide enhanced visibility to the previously unnoticed Hindu Tamil minority in Switzerland. This issue of visibility varies greatly between the host countries. The contrast is most obvious, for instance, between London East Ham's big temples with their *gopuram* ethnically marking the urban landscape, and the small, almost invisible temples of Paris (especially in La Chapelle area known as "Little Jaffna"). In Paris, the contrast between the neutral frontage of the *kovils* and their inside decoration is revealing, and is the result of the French secularist model (*laïcité*), which aims to reduce signs of religion in the public space.

More broadly, as pointed by Laurent Gayer, "constructions of the Other, in diasporic environments, have two major attributes: their multiplicity and their volatility" (Gayer 2007). True enough, Sri Lankan migration also sometimes reinforces antagonistic perceptions of 'us and them' and strengthens national/ethnic/religious identifications. There are indeed greatly differing realities within the Western diaspora, depending on the model of integration (whether so-called multicultural or assimilationist)[10]. Criteria such as the existence of chain migration, population density, the localisation of the group and its degree of polarisation, the presence of ethnic or identity entrepreneurs all matter. In Great Britain, for instance, Demelza Jones (2016) has shown that the absence of Tamil Hindu temples (out of the London area[11]) could be negotiated by Tamilians, on the one hand, through participation in alternate religious spaces orientated towards a broad Hindu constituency or towards a non-Tamil ethno-linguistic or sectarian Hindu tradition; or, on the other hand, through the temporary transformation of profane settings into spaces devoted to ethnic devotion and ritual.

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[10] Historical fact such as colonial framework or an orientalist tradition are important. For instance, as mentioned by Kamala Ganesh (2016: 233): "In Europe, Germany stands alone in having a special relationship with its immigrants from India, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, which derives from its deep historical engagement with sanskrit texts and within a non-colonial framework".

[11]Unlike the majority of the British Tamil population living in the London area, the participants in Jones' study did not have ready access to an ethno-religious infrastructure of Tamil-orientated Hindu temples.

In addition, the overall tendency towards religious syncretism and shrine-sharing already noticed in Sri Lanka has also survived displacement. According to Baumann and Salentin (2006), about 8% of the Sri Lankan Tamils living in Germany consider themselves both Hindus *and* Catholics. In France, several Catholic places of worship were adopted by many Sri Lankan Tamil Hindus. The *Sacré Coeur* basilica in Montmartre (the 'White Church' as Tamils know it), and Lourdes are two Christian holy places frequently visited by Sri Lankan Hindu Tamils (Robuchon 1987). In a very interesting paper, Stine Bruland (2013) discusses the material culture and sensorial practices shared by Hindu and Catholic Tamils in Paris, such as the clockwise circling of incense, the use of flower garlands, and the worship of Mother Mary. In Montréal, many Hindus regularly attend the church of Saint-Joseph, and many have included Saint Joseph in the Hindu religious pantheon (Bouchard 2009: 13, and Bradley in this issue). In Canada, some Hindus participating in Catholic religious festivals, have even tried to take the Holy Communion (Bouchard 2009: 100)! In Palermo too, Hindus regularly attend the shrine of Saint Rosalia, the patron saint of the city (Burgio 2013).

Such shared participation ends up strengthening the common Tamil identity and differentiating it from others. It reconstructs a piece of homeland in the hostland, a sense of unity and belonging among the Tamils beyond confessional barriers. Many Tamil Catholics consider Hinduism as a special feature of their culture, as a source of identity (Amarasingam 2015: 74). Such shared Tamil religions may also be seen as a kind of resistance to assimilation into the receiving society (Schalk 2007: 107). The closeness of Tamil Catholics to Tamil Hindus distinguishes them from other non-Tamil Catholics; similarly, the proximity of Tamil Hindus to Tamil Catholics differentiates them from other Hindus. In parallel, a transnational spiritual network seems to occur, focused on a kind of 'spiritual cosmopolitanism' (Amarasingam 2014: 216) characterised by a common cultural identity: being Tamil.

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