

LAW & RELIGION SPEAKER SERIES

Dominion Status, Compromised Independence and Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalist Responses, 1931-1956

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Griffith University

Chairperson: Prof. Andrew Harding, NUS Law

DATE: 2 August 2018, Thursday

TIME: 4.00pm – 5.30pm

Venue has been changed to: Lee Sheridan Conference Room, Eu Tong Sen Building, Level 1
NUS (Bukit Timah Campus)

Ceylon's brush with self-government dates back to the introduction of the Donoughmore Constitution in 1931. That experiment was motivated by the increase in nationalist sentiments among various ethno-religious communities in the island which were exacerbated by the establishment of communal constituencies under the reforms of the 1920s. The period of government under the Donoughmore Constitution provided a canvas for ethnic tensions to emerge and find parliamentary representation. By the time Lord Soulbury arrived in the island in 1944 as chair of the Soulbury Commission Sinhalese nationalist sentiments had found a political platform through the Donoughmore Reforms. The resultant Dominion Constitution that the Soulbury Commission helped shape was the first migration of the British Westminster model to a non-settler territory in the British Empire/Commonwealth of Nations. Dominion government in Ceylon till 1972 (when a Republican Constitution was promulgated) saw a liberal system of government with limited judicial review (all in Sir Ivor Jennings' image) established in the hope that the Ceylonese elites would be able to manage the propensity of sectarian ethno-religious nationalism to unravel what had been put in place. Instead the Dominion Constitution provided a platform for both Sinhalese nationalists and the secular Left to mobilise opposition to the residual symbolic, as well as real links to the British Crown, Parliament and superior courts that Dominion status left in place. Not surprisingly these links ultimately allowed for the eventual triumph of a Sinhalese nationalist agenda.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



Roshan de Silva Wijeyeratne graduated from the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London) and completed his doctorate at the University of Kent. He teaches courses in 'Property Law', and 'Law, Culture and Anthropology'. He is the author of 'Nation, Constitutionalism and Buddhism in Sri Lanka' (2014), published by Routledge. He has recently published a co-authored article on the Benthamite legacy in Ceylon published in the journal *Comparative Legal History*. Roshan is currently working on a second (co-authored) monograph for Macmillan (Pivot) on comparative colonial legal history. He is an external Research Associate of the Centre for Policy Alternatives in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

REGISTRATION

There is no registration fee for this seminar, but seats are limited.
Light refreshments will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis.
Please register by **30 July 2018, Monday**.
For enquiries, please contact Alexandria at cals@nus.edu.sg

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