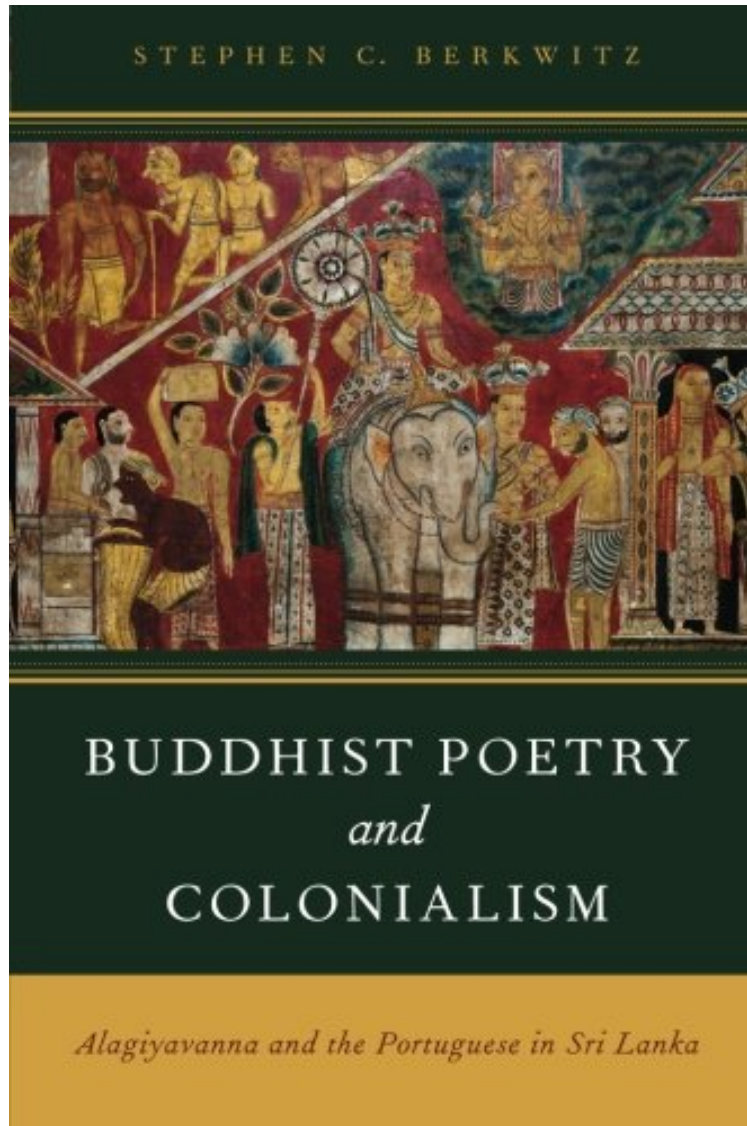


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Buddhist Poetry and Colonialism: Alagiyavanna and the Portuguese in Sri Lanka

Stephen C. Berkwitz

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Stephen C. Berkwitz : Buddhist Poetry and Colonialism: Alagiyavanna and the Portuguese in Sri Lanka before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Buddhist Poetry and Colonialism: Alagiyavanna and the Portuguese in Sri Lanka:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Masterful work! By Daniel Jones Dr. Berkwitz's work is a great addition to the scholarship of South Asian Buddhism. This is a must read for scholars and students of Buddhism,

religion and colonialism and especially in Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Masterful work!

Many researchers have explored the impact of British and French Orientalism in the reinterpretations of Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Less noticed, however, and infrequently discussed is the impact of Portuguese colonialists and missionaries upon Buddhist communities in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries across Asia. Stephen C. Berkwitz addresses this theme by examining five poetic works by Alagiyavanna Mukaveti (b.1552), a renowned Sinhala poet who participated directly in the convergence of local and trans-local cultures in early modern Sri Lanka. Berkwitz follows the written works of the poet from his position in the court of a Sinhala king, through the cultural upheavals of warfare and the expansion of colonial rule, and finally to his eventual conversion to Catholicism and employment under the Portuguese Crown. In so doing, Berkwitz explores the transformations in religion and literature rendered by what was arguably the earliest sustained encounter between Asian Buddhists and European colonialists in world history. Alagiyavanna's poetic works give expression to both a discourse of nostalgia for the local religious and cultural order in the late sixteenth century, and a discourse of cultural assimilation with the new colonial order during its ascendancy in the early seventeenth century. Employing an interdisciplinary approach that combines Buddhist Studies, History, Literary Criticism, and Postcolonial Studies, this book yields important insights into how the colonial experience contributed to the transformation of Buddhist culture in early modernity.

"This is a valuable complement to our understanding of Sri Lanka's experience of the first wave of European imperialism. Berkwitz's analysis of the poems of Alagiyavanna offers English-readers a rare glimpse of a Sinhalese perspective on this fascinating and turbulent period in Sri Lankan history, and the corresponding shifts in sensibility the poet must undergo as the political and religious landscape alters around him."--Alan Strathern, Tutorial Fellow and University Lecturer in History, Brasenose College, Oxford

"Buddhist Poetry and Colonialism is a work of prodigious scholarship. With close readings of much neglected works of Alagiyavanna, Berkwitz takes us to a world of poetic 'expression' and embodiment of what it means to be Buddhist during the Portuguese colonial rule in Sri Lanka. Beyond a 'critique' of colonialism or emphasis on native 'agency,' the work complicates the stories about religion and modernity available in postcolonial literature."--Ananda Abeysekara, author of *Politics of Postsecular Religion: Mourning Secular Futures*

About the Author Stephen C. Berkwitz is Professor of Religious Studies at Missouri State University and is the author of numerous books and articles on Sri Lankan Buddhism, including *The History of the Buddha's Relic Shrine: A Translation of the Sinhala Thupavamsa* (Oxford University Press, 2007) and *Buddhist History in the Vernacular: The Power of the Past in Medieval Sri Lanka* (2004).