AN ARABIC DHAMMA? – ON SRI LANKAN THERAVĀDINS IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

BY ALEX WRONA AT THE OCBS (19TH MAY 2016)
OVERVIEW

• Caveats
• Sri Lankan Migration to the Sultanate of Oman
• My Research
• My Findings
• Preliminary Explanations
• Future Research

by Alex Wrona at the OCBS (19th May 2016)
CAVEATS

• Very first time this kind of research has been done

• My living situation in the Sultanate of Oman

• (Lack of) funding
THE SRI LANKAN MIGRATION TO THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

Departures (2013)

- Saudi Arabia: 27%
- Qatar: 17%
- UAE: 15%
- Kuwait: 7%
- Jordan: 2%
- Oman: 2%
- Bahrain: 2%
- Lebanon: 2%
- Other: 1%

Data from SLBFE’s Annual Report 2013

by Alex Wrona at the OCBS (19th May 2016)
HOW TO GET THERE?

The Sri Lankan Bureau of Foreign Employment

- Foreign Employment Agencies or private

- 25 Training Centres which offer preparation courses

Training Courses

Cyprus (House Keeping Assistant & Care Giving)
Israel (House Keeping & Care Giving)
Middle East (House Keeping Assistant) Sinhala/Tamil
Middle East (Non Domestic) Sinhala/Tamil
Middle East (Literacy) Sinhala/Tamil
Singapore/ Hong Kong / Malaysia (House Keeping Assistant & Care Giving)
Middle East Countries, Maldives – Non Domestic Sector (Other than Housemaid/5 Days course)
Nationality of Expats in Oman (April 2016)

1.730.438

16.659

Sri Lankan Other

Data from NCSI's Monthly Bulletin April 2016
IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

Data from NCSI's Monthly Bulletin April 2016

Nationality of Expats [Female/Male] in Oman (April 2016)

- Sri Lankans
- Indians
- Ethiopian
- Indonesian
- Total

Female | Male
---|---
Sri Lankans | 60% | 40%
Indians | 90% | 10%
Ethiopian | 100% | 0%
Indonesian | 95% | 5%
Total | 100% | 0%

Data from NCSI's Monthly Bulletin April 2016
IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

Data from NCSI's Monthly Bulletin April 2016

Expats by Governorates in Oman

- Muscat: 44%
- Al-Batinah North: 20%
- Dhofar: 11%
- Al-Batinah South: 13%
- Ad-Dakhliyah: 6%
- Other: 6%
MY RESEARCH

• Buddhist minority in a very conservative (Arab-) Muslim majority country

• Research question:

   *How do those Sri Lankan Theravāda Buddhists experience and develop their religious identity?*

• Why this question?
MY RESEARCH

• What did I do?
  - biographical/narrative interviews and participant observation

• Sampling: Male; age varying from mid-20s to mid-40s; all professionals

• From Sep ’15 – Dec ’15; in Muscat
MY FINDINGS

• How do the Sri Lankan Theravāda Buddhists experience and develop their religious identity?

• Can the Sri Lankans express their religion freely?

• How do they experience and develop their religious identity?
Recorded Videos and photographs made by me which were shown at the presentation are not in this document.

If I were to publish an article about this research in the Journal of the Oxford Centre for Buddhist Studies, it would be accompanied by such photographs. There are also going to be photographs in my Master’s thesis that is going to be published by the University of Vienna and made available online for free.
MY FINDINGS

• How do they experience and develop their religious identity?
PRELIMINARY (AND TERRIBLY SHORT) EXPLANATIONS

• Transnationalism

• Omani government policies

• Ibadism
FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- More in Oman
- Other GCC countries
- Following (temporarily) returning/returned Migrants (or the whole process?)
- Interreligious Dialogue