reveal its author’s narcissism and acknowledgement of Eastern Judaism’s superior intellectual apparatus is extremely compelling.

Ultimately, despite any shortcomings, Haskalah: The Romantic Movement in Judaism contributes significantly to our understanding of this intellectual movement, and will make readers think twice before employing the term “Jewish Enlightenment” in the future.

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**Buddhist Poetry and Colonialism: Alagiyavanna and the Portuguese in Sri Lanka.**  
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Alagiyavanna Mukaveṭi (1552–ca.1625) is a household name in Sri Lanka, and his poetry is today a standard component of Sinhala secondary education curriculum throughout the country. Given his enduring renown as a literary icon for over four centuries, it is almost surprising that Stephen Berkwitz’s *Buddhist Poetry and Colonialism* is the first ever monograph-length study of Alagiyavanna’s life and works. The basic contention of the book is that Alagiyavanna, early on a magistrate and esteemed poet at the court of King Rājasimha I, reflected in his works the tumultuous state of Sri Lankan society at the turn of the 16th century—at first as a patronless landowner amid crumbling Buddhist feudatories, and subsequently as a servant of the Portuguese crown in the early 1600s.

Buddhist Poetry and Colonialism adds to a growing body of scholarship over the past two decades concerning Asian Buddhist responses to European colonial intervention in the region. Historians of Sri Lanka have happily contributed a fair percentage to this trend, as attested in the recent works of Alan Strathern, Elizabeth Harris and Anne Blackburn. *Buddhist Poetry and Colonialism* situates itself in dialogue with these scholars, working to disrupt the default notion that European interlopers were the dominant source of early modern cultural determination in South Asia.

The book traces three phases in Alagiyavanna’s writing—religious pluralism, moralism, and Christian-Buddhist hybridism—devoting one chapter to each of the poet’s five works. Chapter Two studies Alagiyavanna’s first composition, the Sāvul Sandēṣaya, written some time in the early 1580s. The Sinhala poem derives its format from classical Sanskrit dhūta-kāvyā (messenger poetry), relating the aerial journey of a cock across the realm of Sītāvaka (south-western inland Sri Lanka) to deliver a message to the deity Saman. Berkwitz highlights the heavy use of classical South Asian literary convention throughout the poem, including encomia (praśasti) of Alagiyavanna’s sponsor (King Rājasimha I), hyperbolic descriptions of the beauty and prosperity of the kingdom, and sophisticated use of pun, simile, and alliteration. The Sāvul Sandēṣaya is nonchalant in its alternating descriptions of Buddhist and Hindu sites of worship, with the sāvul bird stopping to pay homage to Śiva and Umā, and to admire painted scenes depicting episodes from the Rāmāyana and Mahā-bhārata.

Chapters Three and Four consider two works composed a decade or so later, during the twilight of the kingdom of Sītāvaka. The Dahamsoṇḍa Kava recounts the story of King Dharmasonḍa, who thirsts so badly for merely a word of the Buddha’s Dharma that he agrees to jump off of cliff into the mouth of a demon (in fact the god Śakra in disguise), the latter of whom promises to preach to the king as he falls. The subject matter of the poem—a king endeavouring after righteous
wisdom at the cost of all else—Berkwitz interprets as a reflection of Alagiyavanna’s personal despair over the integrity of the kingdom, which was suffering greatly due to Portuguese military incursion and internecine strife. The *Kusa Jātaka Kāvya* reprises this theme, excising the courtly excesses of the previous and most famous rendering of the story (the 13th century *Kavsilūmina*) to explain the protagonist’s successes as the result of virtuous deeds performed in past lives, and his ugliness as a consequence of prior wickedness.

While the *Dahamsoṇḍa Kava* and *Kusa Jātaka Kāvya* turn noticeably away from the splendor of the court towards an emphasis on personal morality, the *Subhāṣitaya* (the subject of Chapter Five) addresses a forsaken world full of faults—one in which no good kings are to be found at all. This composition names no patrons, indicating that it was composed at a time when Alagiyavanna did not belong to any royal court. The *Subhāṣitaya* contains injunctions on proper moral living, translated into Sinhala from “the wise sayings of old teachers who wrote in Sanskrit, Tamil and Pāli[...] for the sake of ordinary, unlearned beings.” While these wise sayings have a broad, pan-Indic provenance, the *Subhāṣitaya* reveals a clearly Buddhist prerogative, one which Alagiyavanna defends to the exclusion of other modes of religiousity. Śīva, treated reverentially in the *Sāvul Sandēṣaya*, is here derided, and the worship of gods other than the Buddha is attributed to those holding “false views.”

Given the consummation of Alagiyavanna’s Buddhist identity over the course of his works, it is striking that the poet’s fifth and final composition reveals him to have been an eventual convert to Catholicism. The *Kustantīnu Haṭana* (The War of Constatino) was composed around 1619 to commemorate the victory of the Portuguese commander Constantino de Sā de Noronha over a Sinhala resistance army. Portuguese sources indicate that Alagiyavanna had achieved proficiency in Latin and served a record keeper for the colonial government. He probably converted to Christianity around 1612, at the age of 60. By this time the Portuguese had assumed direct administrative control over lowland Sri Lanka, accompanied by an intensive, crown-sponsored missionary mandate.

The *Kustantīnu Haṭana* stands as a striking piece of cultural hybridization, making use of traditional South Asian poetic tropes describe a victorious colonial army, as well as Buddhist imagery to convey the grandeur of Christ. Sā de Noronha is likened in strength and courage to Skanda and Viṣṇu, and his safe travel to Sri Lanka is attributed in part to his karmic merit (*piṅ, Sanskrit: purṇa*). Jesus is described as possessing “lotus-like feet” and exhibiting “loving-kindness” (*mettā, one of the four benevolent states of mind of the Buddha*).

The narrative of *Buddhist Poetry and Colonialism* presents Alagiyavanna as at first a spirited participant in a traditional South Asian court culture which valued connoisseurship of sensual and martial literary imagery over religious ethics. He subsequently became disenchanted with the lavish aesthetics of courtly poetry and turned to moral didacticism, only finally to return to the traditional poetic forms of kāvya (ironically however in celebration of an occupying colonial power). Much of the book’s approach is underwritten by the recent work of Sheldon Pollock on poets and grammarians as commodities coveted among medieval South Asian courts for their ability to give expression to royal power and prestige. Berkwitz explains that Alagiyavanna operated at various distances from the traditional South Asian “culture-power formation,” helping to give expression to new such formations through his writings.

*Buddhist Poetry and Colonialism* repeatedly invokes the classical Indian notion that fortunately composed poetry has the power to
transform the world – to conform reality to its own, often spectacular content. Ultimately, Berkwitz concludes, the true power of Alagiyavanna’s poetry was reflected in his ability to maintain a social profile throughout a period of unprecedented regional transformation. Here one must consider the possibility that poetry was epiphenomenal in relation to other talents of Alagiyavanna’s accounting for his success. His reputation as a man of great erudition in the languages of Sri Lanka aside, the fact that Alagiyavanna was able to acquire proficient Latin and Portuguese late in life is an indication of extraordinary linguistic aptitude. Alagiyavanna composed two or three poems at the Sītāvaka court, though his main occupation seems have been as a royal magistrate (mukaveṭi). That he was later able to secure the titles of “mutiar of the king’s treasury” and “motiar of the tomb of the lands and villages of the island of Ceilão” under the Portuguese is testament to an uncanny political intuition, and an ability to navigate bureaucratic institutions quite literally “worlds apart.”

Berkwitz identifies the Alagiyavanna’s fourth poem, the Subhāṣitaya, as perhaps the earliest known Sri Lankan work to posit Buddhism as a religious system, “rather than just relying on technical terms such as Dharma (“teaching”) or Sāsana (“dispensation”) from within the tradition itself” (153). He locates in the work a “nascent conception of Buddhism” which “could be a response to Portuguese missionaries who encouraged an exclusivist attitude toward religion and drew sharp distinctions between the “truth” of the holy Christian faith and the falsity of idolatrous, ‘heathen superstition’” (154). Although the Subhāṣitaya doesn’t mention Christianity explicitly, Berkwitz speculates that the “other gods” to whom Alagiyavanna refers might specify the Christian Trinity (perhaps in addition to Hindu gods). Further evidence to suggest that Alagiyavanna incorporated Christian notions of religious identity and belonging is found in the application of the word samaya to refer to the conventions of the Buddha. This usage reflects a rendering of “the divine religion (dēvasamaya) of Jesus Christ” in another 16th century Sinhala text, as well as the meaning samaya in modern Sinhala.

It is generally assumed that the epistēmē of “Buddhist religion”—with its attendant liturgical and doctrinal connotations—was a late colonial innovation. Berkwitz’s location of a self-aware, deistically exclusivist, doctrinally circumscribed form of religious identity in the Subhāṣitaya precedes by two centuries the supposed advent of “modern Buddhism” in Sri Lanka. As explained, his argument turns on the Subhāṣitaya’s refutation of rival religious groups and on the precise implication of the word samaya. It deserves notice in this connection that the tone of some of the earliest Pāli Buddhist literature is not exactly one of religious inclusivism. The designations titthakara (conventionally translated as “heretic” following Christian idiom but in reality meaning something more approximate to ‘one professing rival or heterodox doctrinal views’) and aññatitthiya (“one whose [doctrinal] edifice is otherwise”) appear in various places throughout the Pāli canon.

The sociology of early Buddhism was, granted, quite different from that of Alagiyavanna’s day. Berkwitz postulates an emerging lay Buddhist sense of religious identity and exclusivism at the turn of the 16th century. The Subhāṣitaya could be a crucial index for religious feeling of the time and there is every reason to believe that Buddhists facing Portuguese incursion felt embattled in a way that they never had before. The question of the origins of Buddhist religious self-identification (in the “modern” sense or otherwise) remains though, I think, diffuse and unanswered. Twelfth-fourteenth century Sri Lankan Buddhist preaching texts (bāna
pot) intended for lay audiences promote Buddhist devotional practice as a means of achieving felicities in future births (including sometimes even nirvāṇa), advocating the “true Dharma” (saddharma) of the Buddha. Berkwitz himself points to other moments in Sinhala literature inimical to Hinduism prior to the 16th century.

None of these potential criticisms diminish Buddhist Poetry and Colonialism as a work of commendable scholarship: lucid, thoroughly researched, and theoretically apposite. It is a book that was waiting to be written and, now that it has been, is one that will remain on the shelves of historians and religionists of Sri Lanka and South Asia for years to come.

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Elizabeth A. Pritchard’s recent public-cation Religion in Public: Locke’s Political Theology provides a timely reconsideration of Locke’s legacy in contributing to modern secularization narratives. In her monograph, Pritchard sets out to critically reassess Locke’s observations on religion in the public sphere. She particularly challenges the idea that Locke effectively embraced a wholesale sideling of religious sentiment to the personal, private sphere. On such a reading, Locke is seen as having encouraged a separation of the religious from the political. Against the sense that Locke promoted a civil religion, Pritchard argues that his project rather constitutes a political theology, and that it entailed the “promotion of the worldliness of religion.” (1)

The first five chapters of the book center on close readings of Locke and Locke scholarship, while the final chapter brings together Pritchard’s renewed attention to Locke with contemporary discourse assessing the purported tension between religion and secularism. From the outset, Pritchard’s main contentions are that current understandings of this tense relationship a) anachronistically rely on concepts of public and private in conceiving Locke’s contribution to a narrative of secularization, and b) overemphasize a simplified understanding of a private-public dichotomy as a primary source of secular-religious conflict. Pritchard draws our attention to the fact that “public” and “private” spheres were only emerging as theoretical frameworks at Locke’s time. Moreover, even if one were to concede such an anachronistic reading of these emerging concepts, her reading highlights that Locke was very much concerned with envisioning a more worldly, public dynamic of religion. On the one hand, such a view indeed entails a movement away from religion as it had hitherto been understood as embodied in church, king, and scripture. On the other hand, such an understanding promotes a virtual embodiment of the sacred or divine in the exchange of ideas (both religious and non-religious) in a public sphere.

Pritchard puts great emphasis on this movement from embodiment of the sacred or religious to its embodiment in the exchange of ideas. She goes on to highlight the prominence that Locke accords to consent, i.e. the consent to truth claims in a newly arising political, public sphere. Towards this end, Pritchard shows how both Locke and Mendelssohn assess the power of words as signs. Seeing that one of the primary tasks of modern liberalism is to arrive at a temporarily binding political consensus (36), both thinkers investigate ways in which language creates a