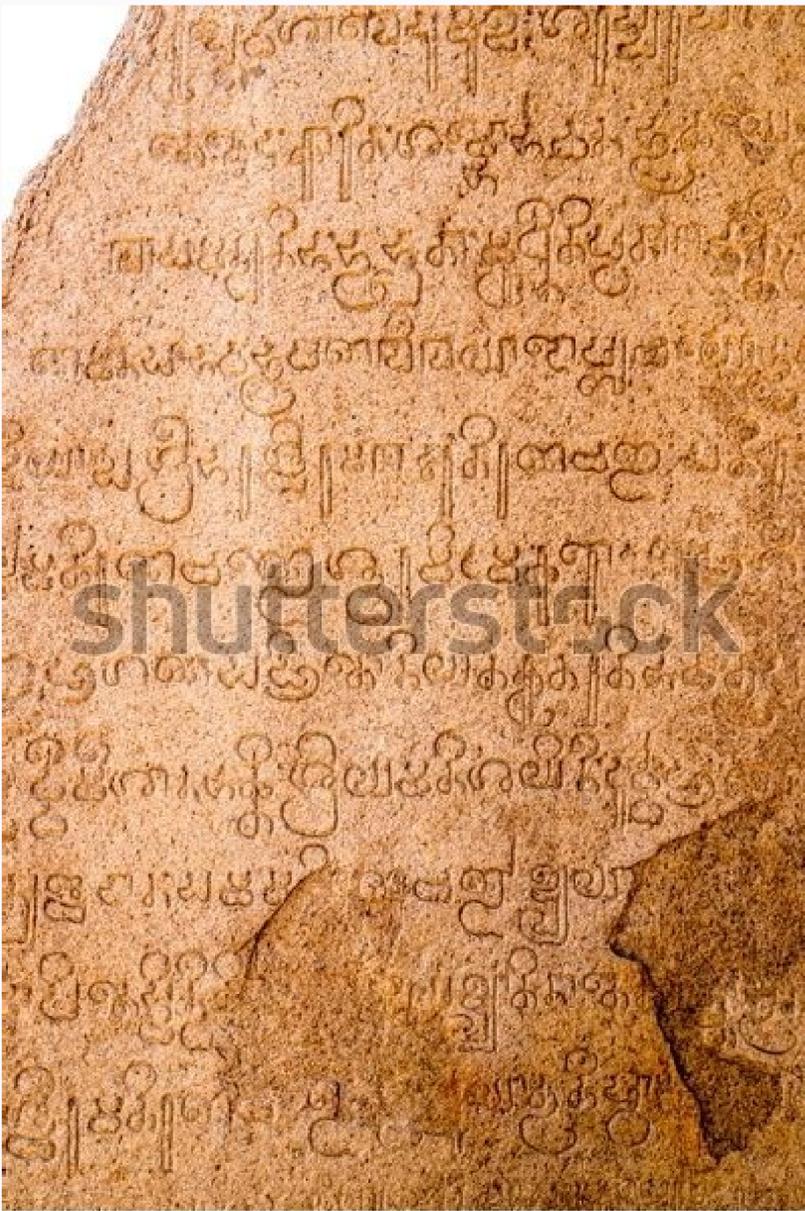


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**A Study on Religious Interaction among the Sinhala-Buddhists and the Muslims in Sri Lanka**  
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**Keywords:** Religious understanding, Sinhala-Buddhists, Muslims, Moneragala, Sri Lanka

**ABSTRACT.** In Sri Lanka, the religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Christianity are practicing, although it is a predominantly Buddhist country. However, since 1980s past years onward, it has been proliferated the various misapprehensions about the religions among the sections by a few nationalist groups in Sri Lanka. This paper's objective is to examine the religious interaction among the Sinhala-Buddhists and the Muslims, and the same situation could be observed even in Moneragala district as well. On the other hand, the main objective of this paper is to examine the religious interaction through measuring the religious understanding between the Sinhala-Buddhists and the Muslims in Moneragala, one of the 25 administrative districts in Sri Lanka. There are followers of two major religions, Buddhism and Islam, forming two religious communities living side by side in a few traditional villages namely Hakkingshera, Gampapura, Kumbhera and Madigama which are located in Moneragala district. This is an inter-religious study of the religious interaction among the Sinhala-Buddhists and the Muslims in said location, and the religious understanding has been selected as an indicator in order to measure the religious interaction among them. This was measured through a questionnaire survey on a total of one hundred respondents drawn from the Sinhala-Buddhists and the Muslims in selected villages. The sample together with the above mentioned indicator proved that the negative religious interaction among the Sinhala-Buddhists and the Muslims in Moneragala district, and also the lack of understanding of other religious teachings was the determinant factor to hinder their positive religious interaction.

**1. INTRODUCTION**  
Moneragala is one of the 25 administrative districts of Sri Lanka. This district was also called as Willemia by its ancient residents. It is located in the Uva Province in the South Eastern region of Sri Lanka. It has a terrain elevation of 500m to 800m. The geographical land cover is 27% as the largest district in Sri Lanka next to Anuradapura. In 2012, the total population was 451,058 in Moneragala. Of these people there are 71.7% total of 27% are male and most of them in the eastern zone are Tamil people (Census of Population and Housing, 2012). Population statistics of Moneragala district has been separately mentioned since 1963. In Moneragala, the Sinhala who profess the religion Buddhism are the predominant ethnic group, consisting 426,762 of the total population. They speak Sinhala as their native language. The Tamil are second major ethnic group in Moneragala, consisting 11,997 of the population including Sri Lankan Tamils and Indian Tamils (former Indian). The Muslims are the second largest minority of the district, consisting 9,809 (Census of Population and Housing, 2012).

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