

Exploring Systemic Hindrances to Recognitive and Distributive Justice affecting the Tea Estate based Malaiyaha community in Sri Lanka.



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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores systemic hindrances to recognitive and distributive justice within the estate based Malaiyaha community of the tea producing Sri Lankan highlands. It does so on the hypothesis that the aforementioned hindrances are fundamental to the Malaiyaha community's relationship with the Tea industry; an industry into which they were purposely supplanted from neighbouring South India by British colonialists in the mid-19th century. In order to understand the nature of this relationship, it draws inspiration from Robert Biel's systems theory based notion of entropy, accompanied by Erving Goffman's theory of Total Institution; upon which it develops an analytical framework theorising the Tea industry as a *core* to which the Malaiyaha community is a *periphery*. Upon applying this framework to secondary qualitative and quantitative research on the community – it provides accounts of caste and race based hierarchies, negative stereotyping, under education and sustained debt as administrative techniques of institutional order which bind the labourers to the estate. It theorises distributive and recognitive injustices not only as instances of disorder, but also dissipative channels/mediums through which further disorder is expelled to the periphery by the core in order to perpetuate a state of 'low order' within the periphery; upon which accumulation at the core is facilitated. As such it concludes that while the Malaiyaha community has seen certain progressive changes, the fundamental core-periphery relationship based on recognitive and distributive injuries established during the colonial period is still largely sustained by the Sri Lankan Tea Industry.