



SRI LANKA LECTURE SERIES

Village versus plantation: post-colonial ideologies and practices

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The talk will focus on the rise in colonial Sri Lanka and the triumph in post-colonial Sri Lanka of a village-centred (tank - paddy field - temple) nationalist ideology, combined with an anti-plantation populist discourse, epitomized in the « Five Lessons » delivered by J.V.P. militants in the early 1970s, in some cases mixed with a Gandhian ecological approach. These trends had their counterpart in the academic sphere, with strong controversies opposing upholders and critics of the theory of the disruptive impact of the plantation system on village ecology, economy and society. Socio-economic policies pursued by successive governments were deeply informed by those issues: an option (the U.N.P. policy) was to divert the crisis by developing peasant colonies in the dry zone, especially the north-east, while keeping the plantation system intact; another (the S.L.F.P. policy) was to take over the plantations either for land redistribution among the landless villagers or for employment in their sole favour. Both options were detrimental to the Tamil minorities and contributed to deepen the ethnic crisis; both actually benefitted groups of new rich mudalalis.

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SAI, Room 509

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