

Justice consumed. Dutch civil courts in 18th-century Sri Lanka.

Dries Lyna

I offer a bird's eye view of litigants from the rural Landraden in the hinterland of Jaffna and Colombo, over the lower civil courts in Colombo and Galle, to the highest appellate court in Colombo. Falling back on a small dozen sample years, I will analyze the different social groups that use these courts, for what types of civil cases and if they eventually resorted to extrajudicial conflict resolution or carried the civil procedure over the finish line. I hope to offer a first answer towards why different social groups made different use of these courts, and to determine whether or not the Dutch courts actually mattered, and for whom.