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Digital thombos: a new source for Ceylonese family history
Presentation

- Acknowledgements: Albert van den Belt, Carolien Huijgen; Kees Mandemakers, Jan Luiten van Zanden
- Background of the source
- Digitization project
- Contents of the ‘families’ and land thombos
- Sinhalese household&marriage patterns in a colonial setting
Old land registers for taxation purposes adapted by Portuguese and Dutch (1640-1796)

Native power structure kept intact

1760 revision to claim land for VOC

1771 second revision
Digitization
Contents of the head thombos

- Names of landholder/head, wife/wives, children etc
- Relation to the head, e.g. wife of head’s brother’s first son, adopted child, illegitimate child...
- Caste
- Ages and marital status
- Services to VOC
- Location: about 30% of the listed persons did not live on the family property
Content of the ‘head’ thombos: property rights of families & households; the family of Elledoewege kiri appoe, village head of Wallawitte
32% of all household members are head/wife of head/child of head
68% is extended family in one way or another
Age at marriage

- Civil status problematic: only ‘married’ or ‘widowed’ mentioned
- Through first child:
  - Men 29.0; women 22.0
- SMAM
  - Men 25.0; women 22.1

Age difference men and women
Many details on landed property, e.g.:
  Type (garden, etc)
  Share owned by the family
  Number of coconuttrees, sour sop trees etc
  How the parcel was acquired (e.g. dowry)
  Services & taxes tied to the land (in money/kind)
Can we relate dynamics in Ceylonese marriage patterns to colonial/economic developments?
Patrilocal residence for men, virilocal for women, bilateral inheritance, individual property rights (permanent/temporary).

- What happens when VOC curtails land availability:
- Increasing wealth inequality:
Testing hypotheses on economic developments and marriage patterns

- Connect aggregated data on villages with regional population density/pressure of VOC (N.R. Dewasiri, *Peasant in transition. Agrarian society in Western Sri Lanka under Dutch Rule 1740-1800*)
- At the micro-level: connect family complexity and type of marriage to actual landholding
- Across villages: reconstruct marriage alliances countering property fragmentation
Relate (relative) female numeracy by family wealth, type of family, by mother’s position in the household, by age difference with husband?

Thank you!