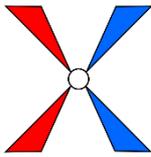


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bncdoc.id	CBA
bncdoc.author	Rogers, John D
bncdoc.year	1987
bncdoc.title	Crime, justice and society in colonial Sri Lanka.
bncdoc.info	Crime, justice and society in colonial Sri Lanka. Sample containing about 40618 words from a book
Text availability	Worldwide rights cleared
Publication date	1985-1993
Text type	Written books and periodicals
David Lee's classification	W_non_ac_humanities_arts

<p><887/e></p>  <p>Key: Footprint ConEn1 Footprint ConEn2 Footprint ConEn3</p>	<p>important crime. With varying degrees of vigour, officials tried to stamp it out. The history of cattle stealing illustrates many aspects of rural life, including the effectiveness of the colonial state in asserting its authority, the impact of changes in land use on village society, and the importance of geographical variations when tracing economic and social trends. The remarks of officials and newspaper correspondents provide detailed information about the crime. A single comment by an official or letter to the newspaper may have reflected the perspective of the writer more accurately than reality, but when hundreds of such comments from different districts and time periods are examined, chronological and geographical patterns may be discerned. The mobility of officials ensured that a variety of view-points are available for all districts. Systematic crime statistics were not compiled during the first half of the nineteenth century, but there is some scattered evidence about the extent and frequency of cattle stealing during the early years of British rule. Judicial statistics were first published in 1867, and appeared regularly after 1877. They measured the number of cases brought to court by persons who alleged that their cattle had been stolen. Early in the twentieth century these figures were replaced by police statistics which, unlike the earlier series, included cases for which there was no specific accused person, but excluded cases which the authorities believed were false. This chapter traces the social and geographical patterns of cattle theft, and relates them to changes in government policy and the rural economy. Administrative attempts to counter cattle stealing were generally ineffective in the nineteenth century, but the crime was not common everywhere. Organized stealing thrived only in certain economic and social conditions. In the 1890s it declined in one of its strongholds, Kurunagala district. Some ten to fifteen years later a similar decline took place in the other area where it was prevalent, the interior of the Low Country. Although improvements in policing contributed marginally to the decline of the stealing networks, structural change in the rural economy was a more decisive cause. By the late 1920s cattle stealing was of little concern to the authorities, but it underwent a revival with the onset of the depression, and received further impetus in 1936 when various regulations designed to control the movement and sale of cattle were lifted. The Economic and Social Position of Cattle According to official statistics there were about 700,000 cattle in Sinhala Sri Lanka in 1870. This figure rose gradually to over 1,000,000 by the turn of the century. Since the human population increased by a similar rate, according to the statistics there was a constant proportion of about three persons for each head of cattle. On the other hand, late nineteenth-century observers believed that</p> <p>the number of cattle</p> <p>was declining, not rising. It is likely that the early figures in particular were underestimates, and that at the mid-century there were only two persons for each head of cattle. In the twentieth century official statistics showed the number of cattle rising at a slower rate than the number of people. There were two types of cattle, buffaloes and black cattle. Buffaloes were generally stronger, but there was no necessary difference in their value, which depended on the size, strength, age and</p>
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health of the individual [animal](#). The standard price of [village cattle](#) ranged from ten to twenty rupees a head, but those in poor condition could be worth as little as five rupees and [bulls](#) from India as much as eighty rupees. By and large there were almost as many [buffaloes](#) as [black cattle](#) throughout Kandyan districts, but in the Low Country [black cattle outnumbered buffaloes](#) by [at least two to one](#) and in some districts by [as much as ten to one](#). There is no evidence of major long-term geographical shifts in the [cattle population](#), but disease or drought could cause sudden local [declines](#). There were recurring epidemics of murrain and hoof and mouth disease, a particularly bad series of which decimated [herds](#) in the central highlands in the 1860s. Murrain was usually fatal, while hoof and mouth disease permanently weakened [animals](#) without causing death. Though a particular district might remain untouched for years at a time, there was always disease somewhere on the island. The epidemics of the mid-century began around 1840, and were probably transmitted by [animals](#) imported from India to transport goods to and from the early coffee plantations. In the more normal years after 1870 annual mortality from disease was about one per cent. Most village [cattle](#) were undernourished and unhealthy, and many contemporaries believed that their condition was getting worse. In the words of one official, they were 'miserable specimens of their class'. Inadequate food and shelter and indiscriminate breeding, as well as disease, were blamed. Because there was a shortage of pasture in many districts, [cattle](#) were allowed to wander freely to search for food, especially during the seasons when they were not wanted for agriculture. Often they were not seen by their owners for weeks. Some officials, especially in the lightly-populated dry zone, thought there were far too many useless [cattle](#). Since males were preferred for agricultural and draught purposes, [cows](#) rather than [bulls](#) were slaughtered for meat. As a result there were [more](#) males than females, unlike Europe where milk was a relatively more important reason for keeping [cattle](#). No attempt was made at systematic breeding, whereby the weaker [bulls](#) were castrated when young. Instead, [bulls](#) were not