

# Perception of Work and Life in the Tea Plantations

## – From a perception and awareness survey towards plantation work and life of Estate Tamils on the tea plantation estates of the Upcountry Sri Lanka–

KURIHARA Shunsuke

### Introduction

This paper attempts to project and form an image of Estate Tamils living in the tea plantation community with regard to their work and life, through examining and identifying the context behind Estate Tamils' perception and awareness towards their overall life in Nuwara Eliya district of the upcountry Sri Lanka. Following up on the household livelihood survey, a perception survey was carried out for those living in the tea estate community<sup>1</sup>. It revealed that the majority of the population was not satisfied with their work as well as life in the community. In addition, all of the respondents answered that they did not want their children to work for the tea plantations.

Based on the survey results, this paper intends to identify the crucial causes for the tea plantation residents' negative feelings and perceptions toward the plantation work and life.

Sri Lanka's tea plantations were introduced and developed under the British colonial period in the 19th century, as one of the major cash crops, which still remains the same as a venue for maintaining its highly secured system of education, social security and health of the country even after independence of Sri Lanka.

However, Estate Tamils, who are descendants of the labors sent from the southern India as plantation labors in the 19th century, have been out of target for the services provided by the government of Sri Lanka since no citizenship till the late 1980's. Many social indexes for the Estate Tamils in the plantations, such as income, infrastructure and education, are ranked as the lowest in the country (Kurihara 2014).

Social welfare for those Estate Tamils in the plantations have been under the responsibility of the plantation management even to date, since the

plantation premises are designated as the private entity. Before citizenship granted, Estate Tamils only relied on the welfare services by the plantation management, while the services for Sri Lankan citizens were not provided (Kurihara 2014).

In addition, Sri Lanka's long-lasting civil war from 1983 to 2009 occasionally limited Estate Tamils' mobility and travelling. During the war, although the main battlefield took place in the north and east areas of Sri Lanka, Tamil ethnics were suspected at check points on the road nationwide. Stateless Estate Tamils were eventually suspected during the war time, which confined Estate Tamils in their areas. Thus, with many other complexed circumstances, Sri Lanka's tea plantation sector remained more or less same as the original style of the British period, in terms of labor management for the tea producing system.

However, the labor population is decreasing recently, and even a half of the population is non-workers on a large number of plantation estates. Majority of the non-workers of Estate Tamils lives in the plantation community, working as labors at vegetable farms of carrots, cabbages and other high-land vegetables in the surrounding villages. Some other non-workers are in the neighboring towns, working as shop keepers.

Why are a quite number of the Estate Tamils working outside the plantation estates? This paper gathers the collected data on Estate Tamils' perceptions toward their work and life in addition to livelihood situation.

The survey found that none of the estate people wants their children to work as plantation labors. Almost a half of the respondents are not satisfied with their life in the tea plantations either. It is worth it enough to dig into the reasons behind, whether

privatization of the plantations in 1991 or more freedom of travels caused by the end of the civil war in 2009 affected to the respondents' perceptions toward their life. It is crucially inevitable to identify the external factors that make the estate people perceive the plantation work is not for their children.

The paper finally states its conclusion that ownership over the decision of choice of occupation is the key factor to determine satisfaction of life. In addition, it is found that job security is another crucial element for the community's satisfaction. In order to verify and examine, the further studies are also identified to conduct.

## **I. Context: Tea plantation estates and Estate Tamils**

### **1. Estate Tamils in the tea plantations**

People now called Estate Tamils were introduced to Sri Lanka's plantations in the 19th century, when the British ruled the island. The British Ceylon was first developed for coffee plantations, and labors from Tamil Nadu of southern India crossed the Palk trait between India and Sri Lanka, accounted for over 1.4 million of immigrants in the 19th century to the early 20th century<sup>2</sup>. Most of the labors were either peasants or farmers without lands in India, so that the new opportunity to earn more cash was one of the motivations for them to come to Sri Lanka as indenture plantation labors, then Ceylon (Kurihara 2014).

The plantation system was the one that British introduced all over the relevant colonies around the world. The products were varied by colony to colony, depending on the geographical and climate conditions for massive production. Sources of labors were also varied. Local residents worked as labors in some British colonies, while some other brought labors from other British colonies. Sri Lanka was the latter one. However, the plantations introduced and developed to the British colonies are now in the various forms. Cotton plantations in the United States are now completely transformed to large farms without plantation resident labors, for instance. On the other hand, plantations like Sri Lanka maintain almost the

same style as the 19th century, with resident labors who are descendants of the original labors introduced in the beginning to the plantations.

Since the plantation system was introduced to Sri Lanka, then British Ceylon, Sri Lanka's plantation industry has changed its system in a minor sense, though the core of the system has not changed much, such as its producing system and labor management. Plantation labors reside within a plantation estate, working on the same estate, obtaining the basic social welfare service by the plantation management, all in set within a plantation estate. A remarkable change in labors is a change in their social states that Estate Tamils are now Sri Lankan citizen.

Currently, there are more than 470 estates of tea, rubber and coconuts as well as spices<sup>3</sup>. Originally, the British rulers developed the plantations of coffee, tea, rubber, coconuts and spices island wide. The spread of the plantations affected the economic activities of Sri Lanka, then Ceylon, in many ways, but there was no significant influence over interactions between Ceylonese and Estate Tamils. This is due to the enclave system of the plantations in the island, where most of Sinhalese and Sri Lankan Tamils<sup>4</sup> resided away from the plantation areas. A plantation estate was set up for labor force to make a living for their whole life within an estate, including occupation and residence. Thus, plantation labors had no chance to interact with the outside their estate.

During the British colonial period, there was no discrepancy in terms of providing the social welfare, no difference between the local residents and the plantation labor, because both of the residents and the plantation labor were classified as the residents of the British colony, though a slight difference in some mobility and social welfare provision existed.

As the plantation industry became a major earner of economy for Ceylon, the labor force gradually became resident labors in the late 19th century as the plantation labors' children took over their occupations as plantation labor in the same premises of the estates. Even nowadays, this trend is mainstream of the labor management among the plantation estates in Sri

Lanka, though it is changing recently.

In the beginning of the plantation industry of Sri Lanka, the facilities for the resident labors were more sophisticated and modern, compared to the local areas. However, the local residents in Ceylon were not willing to move in or work in the plantation estates. This is because the local residents were mostly farmers with their own land, and not attracted to the labor work. Therefore, majority of the estate residents in the upcountry plantations is still descendants of the Tamils originally from southern India, and labor market of the plantation industry of Sri Lanka still remains as closed.

## 2. Sri Lanka's plantation system

Sri Lanka's tea plantation industry is still one of the top foreign exchange earners (Kurihara 2014). Ceylon tea keeps its image of high grade tea among any other tea around the world. Since 1992, Sri Lanka's plantation sector has been re-privatized due to inefficient management and a tremendous deficit. Currently there are 23 Regional Plantation Companies (RPCs), owing the major number of the estates of tea, rubber, coconuts and spices, while there are still 2 plantation corporations due to unbeneficial location<sup>5</sup>. In addition to RPCs, there are small holders and private companies of plantations, classified and designated by size of estates. Currently there are 392,108 small holders, contributing 73.1% of the national production<sup>6</sup>.

In 1990's, there was a serious issue in the plantation industry on its profitability. After independence from the British rule, Dominion of Ceylon became fully independent as Sri Lanka in 1975. Since then, Sri Lankan government proceeded nationalization of the major industries including the plantations. Sri Lanka's plantations were run by the British companies before independence and became locally-managed companies under the Dominion period. After 1975, the plantation estates came all under the national corporations, which failed to a serious deficit as a result. With supports from the international donor community such as Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC)<sup>7</sup>, most of the plantations were re-privatized in 1992 to 1993. In

order to operationalize the privatization process, ADB and JBIC loaned to the government of Sri Lanka such Plantation Reform Project in the late 1990's. The management system, such as RPCs, has changed, and protocol and regulation of the plantation management and labor management as well as ownership were also restructured, though some issues still remain unsolved such as land ownership<sup>8</sup>. The major characteristics of the plantation resident labors in Nuwara Eliya, managed by Sri Lanka's Regional Plantation Companies (RPCs) are as follows:

1. Resident labor system: labors live within the plantation estate where they work for. However, this is not legitimated but in tradition, especially in the upcountry like Nuwara Eliya
2. Social Security: RPCs are responsible for securing the basic social welfare services, including child-care center and medical care. Education is excluded for the national education system of Sri Lanka
3. Wage system: labors' wage is on a daily work basis, paid to the labors twice a month. Wage hike is guaranteed, by negotiation among the government, RPCs and Trade Unions of plantation labors, every other year. This is due to the fact that the current plantation resident labors are descendant from the indenture labors from India, and the labors are on the current plantation estates and RPCs without their own choice. So that, daily wage of plantation labors is all same regardless RPCs and location of estates

Reviewing the overall situation of the current plantation system of Sri Lanka, it can be said, again, that the basic system of plantation has unchanged since the 19th century.

Under the circumstance, the largest change in the context is Estate Tamils' civil status. They were stateless since independence of Sri Lanka till 1988. All the eligible Estate Tamils became Sri Lankan citizen in 2003, which is a very recent event. They are now officially entitled for all the services provided

by the government as well. In addition, Estate Tamils in Sri Lanka are of course able to get any occupation if they wish. However, this change caused another complex to the plantation industry.

Originally, plantations in general were designed to produce massive mono-crops in an effective way, without considering the rights of labors. In fact, labors those days were not entitled for free choice of work, but brought to plantation estates anywhere in the colonial plantations. This has changed drastically in the recent years, and some contradictions occurred. There is no cheap labor any longer.

In the case of Sri Lanka, labors of Estate Tamils are now Sri Lankan citizens. They are eligible for any job by law, if they wish. They would have to leave the plantation estates if none of the family members chose to work outside estate, in logic. However, Estate Tamils are descendants of labors from India, and they have less connections to off estate community, ending up with the fact that they have no other place to live other than plantation estates. There are some Estate Tamils living and working off estate, but the majority of them is still within the plantation community. In relation to the recent trend that the labor population is decreasing, those who work off estate usually leave some family members as labors, and they manage to stay within the plantation premises. The rest of family members, then, work off estate as labors for vegetable farms or shops in town.

In terms of labor management, this is a compromised way of managing the number of labors for less production seasons, it seems, but it is never a fundamental solution for both of management and labors for protocol and entitlement issues.

In fact, maintaining the labor population is a serious issue for the plantation management, while labor population is decreasing. In 1988, the civil status of Estate Tamils changed drastically, and, since then, gained more freedom just like any other Sri Lankan citizens by law, which led more opportunities for choice of occupation to Estate Tamils in the plantation community. This change was actually not so welcomed by the plantation management since

civil status has brought a variety of eligibility to the plantation labors. However, the fact is that the Indian descent Estate Tamils have a difficulty to access to off estate community and the majority of them still remain in the plantation community though the labor population is decreasing.

### 3. Issues among the plantation residents

Estate Tamils living within the tea plantation estates of Nuwara Eliya district are facing several serious issues regarding their livelihood. Estate Tamils' poverty index is lowest among three sectors of urban, rural and estate of Sri Lanka for most of the indicators. Although tremendous improvements are observed these days for Estate Tamils' livelihood issues including poverty, education and health, there is still a large gap with even the rural sector (Kurihara 2017).

## II. From the perception survey

### 1. Survey outlook

As supplemental to the survey conducted for livelihood of Estate Tamils, the perception survey was followed at the same time, conducted for 100 Estate Tamils on 5 tea estates of Nuwara Eliya District.

In addition to the livelihood survey to obtain the current livelihood situation, the perception survey put a great deal of focus on Estate Tamils' perception and feelings towards their work and life in the plantations. The survey was developed in English and translated into Tamil. The outlook of the respondents are as follows in the chart 1. It should also be noted, as indicated in the previous paper, that the respective names of research estates are undisclosed.

	male	female	total
<b>Worker</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Agriculture</b>	4	0	4
<b>Self-employed</b>	1	2	3
<b>Teacher</b>	0	4	4
<b>Unemployed</b>	0	7	7
<b>On pension</b>	2	1	3
<b>Other</b>	2	3	5
<b>N/A</b>	1	1	2
<b>total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>100</b>

Chart 1: Respondents' outlook (2015), developed by the author

Out of 100 respondents, 72 are workers, while the rest is non-workers, who live on tea estates but

not working for tea estates. Non-workers are Estate Tamils as well, but not committed to plantation labor work. However, their family members are working as plantation labor, since all the labor force is Tamil descent historically, and non-workers are also considered as a part of plantation labor community. For instance, a respondent working as school teacher is a family member of the plantation workers living on a tea estate.

The perception survey contains mainly four areas of questions, namely 1) work on tea estates, 2) life on tea estates, 3) tea that workers are making or plucking and 4) tea sold in Japan. The first two areas were asked to surface the respondents' feeling and perceptions toward their and life in the plantation community. The plantation workers' life is all set within their tea plantation estate, including residence, work, medical service and even social welfare services, which is the original aim of the plantation system, though Estate Tamils in the plantations are currently Sri Lankan citizen. Thus, the first two areas of questions attentively served to reveal the plantation residents' life as a whole with regard to their perception, not the social infrastructure of the residential area.

The second half of the survey attempted to figure out the plantation residents' awareness toward tea they are making or plucking. The section, as a result, surfaced the fact that most of the residents had no clear idea of where their tea was exported and who were enjoying the tea, not to mention of the price of Ceylon tea sold overseas. This fact is part a crucial element to identify their commitment level of work and he reasons why the residents are not satisfied with their life in the tea plantation community.

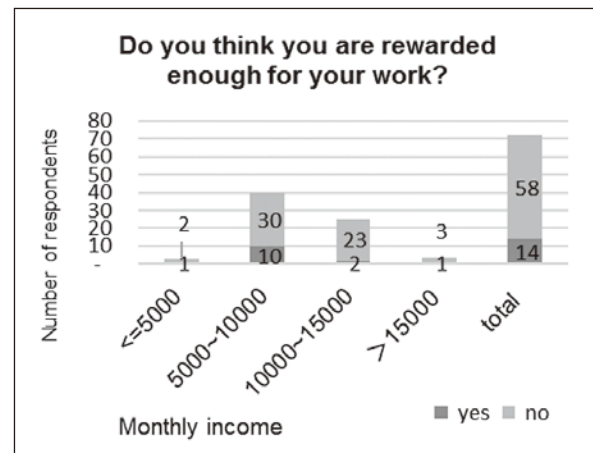
**2. Perception towards life and work in the plantation community**

Looking into the results of the survey, it surfaces the outlook of the Estate Tamils' life on tea estates. In terms of their household situation, they earn below the national average income unless summing ones for both of wife and husband per household. The survey revealed that their monthly average is 18,546 Sri

Lankan rupees, which is above the national average (Kurihara 2017). However, out of their income, they spend a quite large amount on food, because they have to cook every day, with firewood, due to no availability of enough electricity and refrigerators. It shows that the plantation residents' earning is not effectively utilized, because the physical and social infrastructure of the residential area within the tea plantation does not support the modern living.

As a whole, the survey shows that most of the respondents do not have a positive feeling toward their life within the tea plantation community for both of work and life. It is revealed that the majority of respondents is not satisfied with their life in the tea estate community. It is crucial and evidential that the randomly selected respondents from 5 estates have the exactly same result.

Firstly, the survey examined whether the plantation workers out of the respondents thought their work was rewarded enough for their work (Graph 1).

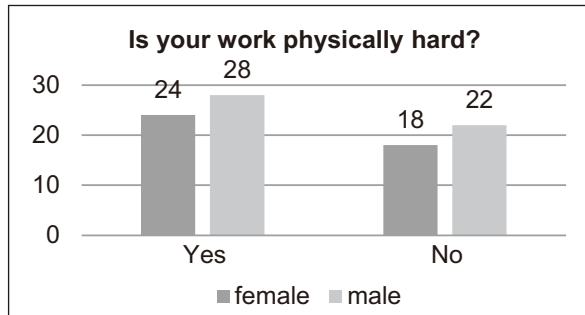


Graph 1: Reward for work, developed by the author

Out of 72 worker respondents, 58 answered that their work on tea estates was not rewarded enough for their work. 72 worker respondents are either tea pluckers or sundry workers, all working under the RPCs as daily wage workers. Overall, majority of the respondents answered they were not satisfied with their wage, regardless their income per household.

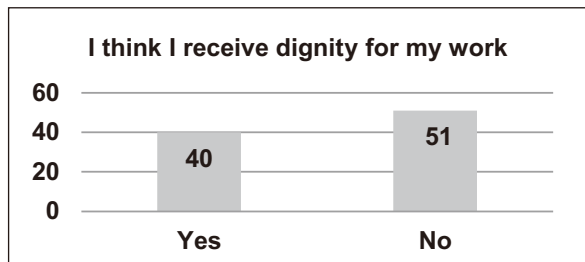
Physical hardness was followed to the respondents whether their work was physically hard. This question was asked both of the plantation workers and non-workers, since non-workers' occupation is also labor-

like off estate. As a result, more than a half of the respondents said their work was physically hard (Graph 2).



Graph 2: Physical hardness of work, developed by the author

A question regarding dignity for their work was asked, and more than a half of the respondents thought they did not receive dignity for their work, regardless their occupation status (Graph 3).

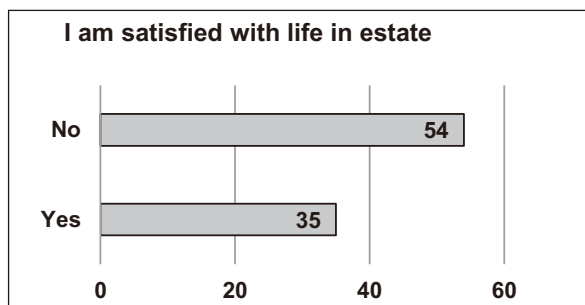


Graph 3: Dignity for work, developed by the author

Dignity is perceptive, and each respondent has their own interpretation of dignity. It is an area for further study to dig into defining and projecting dignity that the plantation community commonly perceive.

However, it is crucial that the majority of the plantation community members has a negative feeling toward their work.

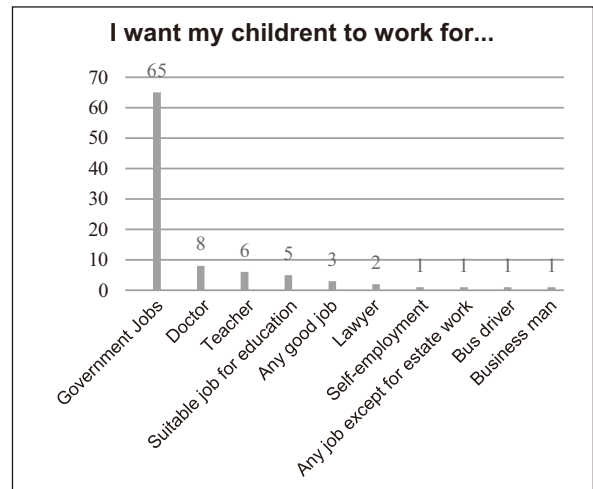
In addition to their work, perception toward their life in the tea plantation community shows the similar tendency, as a result of the survey (Graph 4).



Graph 4: Satisfaction with life, developed by the author

The respondents' answers show that the majority of them is not satisfied with their life in the tea plantation community.

Another question followed as per the respondent community members' perception and feeling toward work or occupation that they would like for their children (Graph 5).



Graph 5: Ideal work for children, developed by the author

Interestingly, none of the respondents want their children to work for the plantation work. The most popular or favorite job for the children is the government sector. These days, there is a small number of the plantation residents who work for the government sector, but it is still a minor job among Estate Tamils living in the tea plantations.

There are some other jobs that the respondents would like for their children such as medical doctor and teacher. In the plantation system, there is a medical assistant called Estate Medical Assistant (EMA) available on each plantation estate, hired by the respective RPCs. EMAs play an assistant role to medical doctors at hospitals in the nearby area, eligible for first aid level treatment. In fact, there are EMAs who are originally from the plantation community, as opposed to medical doctors, who are mostly from off estate community after medical school.

For the answer to this question, there is one person who would like for his/ her children to work for any kind, but not plantation estate work. Although there is only a respondent precisely saying no to the plantation work, this answer represents the respondent's negative



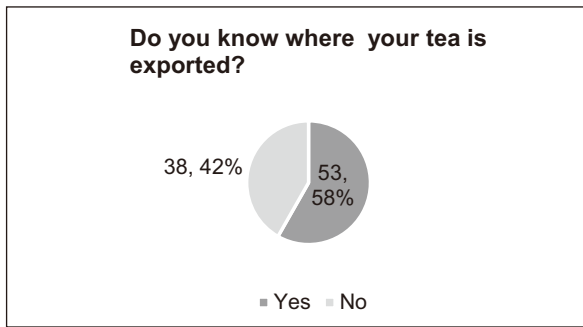
image toward the plantation work. Looking into the answers, it surfaces that there is no variety in favorite occupations.

**3. Awareness of tea industry**

Another set of questions intends to identify and understand awareness level of the products the plantation workers make – Ceylon tea.

Ceylon tea is still one of the largest foreign exchange earners for Sri Lanka. 75% of tea leaves imported to Japan is from Sri Lanka<sup>9</sup>. The survey attempted to identify how much of knowledge about Ceylon tea the plantation community has.

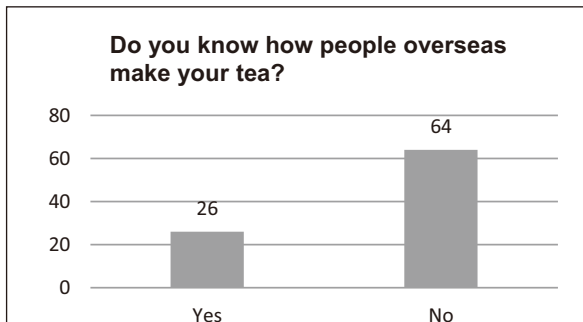
Firstly, the survey asked whether the plantation community is aware of exporting countries of Ceylon tea (Graph 6).



Graph 6: Awareness of exporting areas, developed by the author

53.3% of the community members are aware of where their Ceylon tea is exported. However, a quite inevitable number of the respondents has no idea whether Ceylon tea is exported. It is interesting to learn if the respondents with no idea really do not know or if they have no interest in their product.

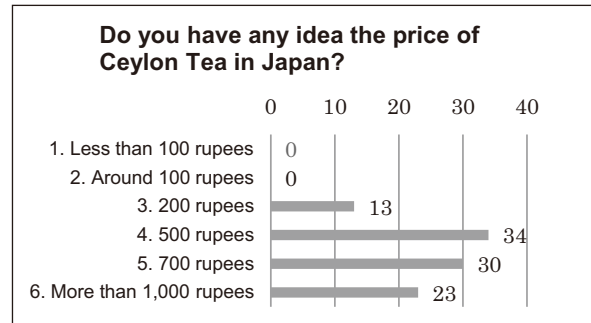
As for the way of drinking Ceylon tea by other countries, most of the respondents have no idea (Graph 7).



Graph 7: Number of respondents who are aware about way of making tea overseas), developed by the author

While 26 of the respondents are aware of the ways of making and drinking tea in other countries that import Ceylon tea from Sri Lanka, 64 respondents have no idea of importing countries, though all are aware that Sri Lanka’s Ceylon tea is mostly for export.

In addition, the respondents were asked about the possible price of 400g of Ceylon leaf tea in Japan (Graph 8).



Graph 8: Selling price of Ceylon tea in Japan, developed by the author

The majority answers for 500 to 700 Rupees (645 and 903 Yen)<sup>10</sup>. This shows that people in the tea plantations have a general image of Japan as cost of living is much higher than Sri Lanka. In Japan, a 400 gram of Ceylon tea is sold for 1,000 to 2,500 Yen<sup>11</sup>. In Sri Lanka, 400 gram of leaf tea package is sold for 394 Rupees (305 Yen)<sup>12</sup>. In this respect, the respondents’ answers are still within the sense of cost of living in Sri Lanka, it can be said.

**III. Analysis**

**1. Work and Life in the tea plantation community**

Gathered from the survey results on perception toward work and life, it is found out that the plantation community does not have a positive perception toward their work and life in the tea plantation community.

More than a half of the respondents feels their plantation work is physically hard and the answer to fairness of their reward for work is low as well. Over a half of the respondents is not satisfied with their life and work in the plantation community. This is a reason why most of the respondents feel they do not receive adequate dignity for their work from the plantation

management. In fact, none of the respondents wants their children to work for the plantation. If the parents were satisfied with their work at least, they would have recommended the plantation work to their children for making a living.

It needs to be thoroughly analyzed why Estate Tamils in the plantation community is not satisfied with their work, reward and even their life.

However, most interestingly, even those who answered positively to the questions showed their dissatisfaction with the plantation work. They do not even want their children to work for the plantations. It can be interpreted that the respondents with positive answers themselves could bear with the current situation of work and life in the plantation community in terms of working and day-to-day life, they also feel they do not want their children to have the better jobs if possible, for the better life.

## 2. Awareness of tea industry

On the other hand, the survey results on the tea plantation community's awareness of the tea industry form an overall image of the community's lacking knowledge and awareness of the industry as a whole.

It is safe to say that the plantation community has no idea of the whole mechanism of the world tea market, in which they are involved. The respondent Estate Tamils have no clear idea of the countries that purchase Ceylon tea. 70% of the respondents are the plantation workers, while the rest is non-workers. Even non-workers are family members of the workers. In this sense, all of the respondents could have even answered the question of the exports, but it was not at the level expected. It can be said that the plantation community work and live in the plantation estate, while they are not so clear or even not so interested in tea leaves themselves.

As for the selling price of Ceylon tea in Japan, no one was so clear about the rice. While it is understandable that most of the respondents guessed the price with their sense of cost with an assumption of higher cost of living in Japan, most of the most answered the selling price of Ceylon tea in Japan

lower than the actual one. It shows that the plantation community has no idea of off-estate community.

## 3. An overall image formed with the community's perception and awareness

Combining both of the perceptions toward both of the community's life, including work, and tea industry, there is an image of the community's unique life.

The majority of the respondents have a negative feeling against their work and life, while they have less awareness of the industry they are involved with.

Regardless their perception towards work and life, none of the respondent Estate Tamils would like for their children to work for the plantation.

In terms of the jobs the plantation community would like for their children, the most favorite one is the government job, followed by EMAs and teachers. It is clear that these three jobs have a crucial condition in common. They are all permanent jobs. Though there are temporary positions in these three jobs popular among the plantation parents, the jobs have a potential for becoming permanent even if a child gets the job as a temp staff. It can be said that the most of parents wish for the children to have a job security.

Estate Tamils' work in the plantation is on a daily wage basis. Their income really depends on the number of days they work, which is not assured. In the dry season, tea leaves are not enough to pluck every day, and the workers' working days are reduced, ordered by the plantation management. Thus, the plantation workers' income is insecure. In addition, the benefit for the plantation workers is not so attractive, compared to the government job. However, there not so many available positions of the government work in reality. Besides, Estate Tamils in the plantation community are not capable or skilled enough for the government jobs unless they work for sundry workers of the government positions.

It can be observed that the parents have no idea of what skills and educational background to obtain for their children under the current living environment. Thus, there is a gap in choice between the realistic and unrealistic ones for their children's career. It is safe to



say that most of the parent want their children to get “unrealistic” jobs.

The plantation community has more access to off-estate and learn about the majority of Sri Lankan society, including occupations.

During the British colonial period, there was no option of occupations for Estate Tamils. The estate community did not have any chance to see and learn off-estate community either. However, the Estate Tamils are now Sri Lankan citizen, who are entitled for choice of occupation, and have access to the outside of their community to learn about the off-estate society.

It can be said that Estate Tamils’ social status has changed, but their range of choice for occupation has unchanged. It is thought that this kind of changing context makes the Estate Tamils more frustrated with the current situation of the tea plantations.

So, it is essential for Estate Tamils to learn about how to be skillful for better occupations. They are not choosing the real one, or they have no idea whether it is realistic or not with their educational background and skills. It is interpreted as Estate Tamils do not think of their real choice, but they just do not want to work as tea estate labor.

On the other hand, there is some population of youth who have found their jobs off-estate, but most of them work as shop keepers, construction workers or field labors, which does not contribute to uplifting the life of Estate Tamils. Interestingly, those who working off-estate are not willing to come back to the plantation community, though their working condition is not considered as good relatively (Muralitharan 2005). The issues among the plantation youth working off estate are mostly related to the unorganized sector in the major cities of Sri Lanka, such as working at restaurants, shop keepers and house-keeping.

Most of the youth from the tea estates are struggling to get the better jobs, which is challenging. The unorganized sector is referred to as enterprises typically operating on a small scale with a low level of organization, low and uncertain wages and no social welfare and security in which worker’s rights and job security are unprotected (Muralitharan

2005). A quite inevitable number of the Estate Tamils working off-estate are under the similar or worse working conditions after all. They are marginalized in employment anyway even in town, so to speak.

Due to the trend that Estate Tamils have more population working off-estate, the number of worker population is decreasing, especially after re-privatization of the plantations in 1992 (Chart 2).

Chart 2: Worker population against the whole population of Estate Tamils

Year	Total Population	Total Workers	% of workers
1992	838,518	343,536	41
1995	849,646	294,532	35
2001	895,446	269,039	30
2003	892,979	253,151	28
2005	917,103	246,325	27
2007	939,283	230,259	25
2009	952,135	212,601	22

Source: Plantation Sector Statistical Pocket Book 2008, Ministry of Plantation Industries, compiled by the author

In 1992, total worker population was amounted for 343,536, while 212,601 in 2009. It is almost 2/3 of the population in comparison with 1992. On the other hand, population of Estate Tamils is increasing, from 838,518 in 1992 to 952,135 in 2009. Over a hundred thousand of population is increased for the resident population, while the workers were decreased by 112,000 for 17 years.

Upon obtaining Sri Lankan citizenship, Estate Tamils have more options to choose for their occupation, but it is still difficult to live in the tea plantation estate and work off-estate even nowadays. Almost a half of Estate Tamils is no longer plantation workers, and it seems like Estate Tamils have more options to choose. However, their options of work off-estate are mostly under unorganized sector.

Estate Tamils are now able to get to know information on off-estate and even they are freely able to travel anywhere, through IT and mass media such as TV. It is, thus, natural to learn that their choice of occupation is still limited in comparison with off-estate community. It is also natural that the Estate Tamils hope and try to find jobs outside the tea estates.

Under such circumstances, it can be said that the extent of society has changed to a larger sense. The plantation community is a part of Sri Lankan society legally as a whole since citizenship issue was solved in 1988. Along with the change in social status, the plantation community's choice has increased but the actual option has not changed much as before.

### Conclusion and further studies

It has been a unique set-up of Estate Tamils' living condition as to a living and working area in one place, since the beginning of the plantation in the 19th century. Its system has also unchanged that their choice of occupation is limited, regardless Estate Tamils' social status. Even though the Estate Tamils are now Sri Lankan citizens, their choice of occupation is limited anyway. This is because their living condition is set up in such a way that all the residents within the plantation premises are supposed to be estate workers.

On the other hand, Estate Tamils in the plantation community did not have access to off-estate community, in terms of getting practical information and services from outside, before legalizing their social status as Sri Lankans. It can be said, therefore, that Estate Tamils were not rather frustrated or did not find any gap in choice of life, because the tea plantation estates are their sole community to live in.

The shape of an overall picture of the plantation community has changed in Estate Tamils' social status, though the producing system of tea has unchanged. Information flow from outside of the plantation is now stable and cannot be blocked. Estate Tamils are getting to understand about where they stand in the society of Sri Lanka as a whole. However, the set-up of social infrastructure for Estate Tamils in the plantation is still imbalanced. There is a gap between eligibility and actual provision in social services. How will it be possible to increase the real/ practical options to choose? This will be one of the further study areas for Estate Tamils' eligibility in practice.

At the same time, there should be a change in the tea plantation industry. It is inevitable for the plantation

management to reform the plantations in system of workers. Currently, the plantation workers are on a daily wage basis, but it is obvious that it is never attractive to the plantation community. It should be noted that this type of change would even lead a drastic change of the plantation system, since one of the core characteristics making up of the plantation system is a resident labor system. However, it cannot be avoided to develop both of the industry and community.

<sup>1</sup> Kurihara, Shunsuke, Just Unchanged or Worse? Household Livelihood of Estate Tamils in the plantations of the Upcountry Sri Lanka, Journal of the Faculty of International Studies, Utsunomiya University, No. 44, September 2017

<sup>2</sup> For 30 years from 1880 to 1910, there were more than 1.4 million immigrant labors from India to Sri Lanka for plantation work (Wesumperuma 1986).

<sup>3</sup> The number of plantation estates is varied by the plantation companies' integration of the estates and is decreasing lately.

<sup>4</sup> There are two groups of Tamil ethnics in Sri Lanka, namely Sri Lanka Tamils and Estate Tamils. Sri Lanka Tamils have been in Sri Lanka as naturally migrated ethnic in history, while Estate Tamils were introduced by the British for the plantation industry since the 19th century.

<sup>5</sup> Annual Performance Report 2015, Ministry of Plantation Industries, Sri Lanka

<sup>6</sup> A half of small holders' extent of tea estate is less than 0.5 hector (Annual Report 2014, Tea Small Holdings Development Authority).

<sup>7</sup> JBIC is currently merged with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) since 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Land ownership has been discussed and negotiated among Sri Lankan government, RPCs and representatives of trade unions, but it is still underway for mutual solution.

<sup>9</sup> Japan Tea association web page

<sup>10</sup> 1 Japanese Yen is equivalent for 1.29 Sri Lankan Rupees (LKR). LKR500 is equal to JPY645, while LKR700 for JPY903. Bank of Ceylon, <https://www.boc.web.lk/ExRates>, accessed on 2017.10.27

<sup>11</sup> <https://search.rakuten.co.jp/> Accessed on 2017.10.27

<sup>12</sup> Cargills Web flyer, <http://www.cargillsceylon.com/bestbuy/ecatalog.html>, access on 2017.10.27

### References

- Central Bank of Sri Lanka (2015) *Economic and Social Statistics of Sri Lanka 2014*, Central Bank of Sri Lanka
- Department of Census and Statistics, (2013) *Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2012/13*, Sri Lanka

- Japan Tea association (2017), [http://www.tea-a.gr.jp/knowledge/tea\\_data/index.html](http://www.tea-a.gr.jp/knowledge/tea_data/index.html), accessed on 2017.10.20
- Kurihara, Shunsuke (2012) “Tea Estate Plantation Community in Nuwara Eliya District of Sri Lanka: Introductory Overview of Social Issues and Poverty among Residents Living under the Conventional Plantation System,” 横浜国際社会科学 研究 第 15 卷第 6 号 (2011 年 2 月)
- Kurihara, Shunsuke. (2014) *From labor to citizen Governance over Estate Tamils in the tea plantation community of the upcountry Sri Lanka Policy and practice for structural poverty*, Upcountry Research and Documentation Center, Sri Lanka
- Kurihara, Shunsuke. (2017) “Just Unchanged or Worse? Household Livelihood of Estate Tamils living in the tea plantation of the Upcountry Sri Lanka,” *Journal of the Faculty of International Studies*, Utsunomiya University, No. 44, September 2017
- Ministry of Plantation Industries. (2009), *Statistical Pocket Book 2008*, Ministry of Plantation Industries, Sri Lanka
- Ministry of Plantation Industries. (2012) *Statistical Information on Plantation Crops*, Ministry of Plantation Industries, Sri Lanka
- Ministry of Plantation Industries. (2016) *Annual Performance Report 2015*, Ministry of Plantation Industries, Sri Lanka
- Muralitharan, S. (2005) *Plantation Youth in the Unorganized Sector*, Institute of Social Development, Sri Lanka
- Tea Small Holdings Development Authority. (2015) *Annual Report 2014*, Tea Small Holdings Development Authority, Sri Lanka
- Wesumperuma, Dharmapriya. (1986) *Indian Immigrant Plantation Workers in Sri Lanka*, University of Peradeniya

**Annex 1.****Perception/ Awareness Survey**

---

**1. Questions on tea industry****1.1. About your work**

1.1.1. Do you think you are rewarded well enough for your work?

Yes    No    Comments

1.1.2. Is your work physically hard? If so, in which way?

Yes    No    Comments

1.1.3. Do you think you are satisfied with dignity received for your work?

Yes    No    Comments

**1.2. About your life in tea estate**

1.2.1. Are you satisfied with your life in tea plantation estate?

Yes    No    Comments

1.2.2. When do you feel happy the most in your life?

1.2.3. What kind of job do you want your children to do infuture?

**1.3. About tea you are making**

1.3.1. Do you know where your tea is exported?

Yes    No    Comments

1.3.2. Do you know how people overseas make your tea? (milk tea or straight tea or tea with something?)

Yes    No    Comments

1.3.3. Would you like to know how people overseas enjoy your tea?

**1.4. About tea sold in Japan**

1.4.1. Did you know Japanese people drink Black Tea as well as green tea/

Yes    No    Comments

1.4.2. Did you know Japan is one the countries that imports Ceylon tea for Black Tea?

Yes    No    Comments

1.4.3. Do you have any idea the price of Ceylon Tea in Japan? Circle one of the following (price per 400g)

1      Less than 100 rupees

2      Around 100 rupees

3      200 rupees

4      500 rupees

5      700 rupees

6      More than 1,000 rupees

7      Other

**1.5. About Japanese consumers**

1.5.1. Do you think Japanese people drink Ceylon tea just like you do here in Sri Lanka in the morning and afternoon?

Yes No Comments

1.5.2. Would you like to know how Japanese people enjoy Ceylon tea?

Yes No Comments

1.5.3. Would you be interested in getting to know more of Japanese people's tea drinking?

Yes No Comments

1.5.4. Would you like to know more of Japanese tea drinkers (consumers) and interact with them?

Yes No Comments

1.5.5. About what Japanese tea drinkers (consumers) would like to know? (multiple choice)

- 1 Their day-to-day life in general
- 2 How they drink and enjoy tea
- 3 Their children and their schooling
- 4 Other ( )

1.5.6. If you could get some assistance from Japanese tea drinkers (consumers), what kind of assistance would like to receive?

**[For non-workers]**

1.5.1. Do you have a relationship with estate manager?

Yes No Comments

1.5.2. Do you know anything about tea produced in your estate, such as tea price?

Yes No Comments (reason)

Thank you so much for your cooperation!

- End of questionnaire -

## 紅茶プランテーションにおける職業と生活への意識

—スリランカ高原地域紅茶プランテーション農園居住者のエステート・タミル人の職業と生活についての意識調査より—

栗原俊輔

### 要約

本論文は、スリランカ中部高原地域の紅茶プランテーション農園に居住する、エステート・タミル人の職業と生活についての調査をもとに、彼らの日常生活と農園労働への意識を探った。スリランカのヌワエリヤ県に所在する紅茶プランテーション農園に住む100名を対象に意識調査を実施。

プランテーション農園労働者はイギリス植民地時代より代々農園内に居住し、2003年にスリランカ市民権が完全に付与されるまでは、様々な選択肢が制限され、農園労働以外の職業に就く機会はほとんどなかった。現在はスリランカ市民であり、以前よりも選択の幅は広がったが、実質上農園労働者がその半分を占めている。しかし、農園外の社会とのつながりもある現在、彼らの中には農園労働以外の職業に就きたいと思う人々も多く、自分たちの子供たちには農園労働以外の職業に就いてほしいと願っていることが今回の調査で判明した。また、農園労働者の紅茶に対する認識は非常に低く、海外に輸出されていることさえ知らない労働者も多かった。これは農園労働者たちの仕事に対するモチベーションが低いことに起因し、それは、賃金の低さへの不満や日払い制、自分たちの労働に対する経営者側の敬意の無さなど、現在の労働条件・環境に満足していないという調査結果からも証明された

(2017年11月1日受理)