

**AN HISTORICAL INQUIRY INTO THE POSITIONS OF OFFICIALS
RELATED TO STATE ADMINISTRATION IN ANCIENT SRI LANKA
BASED ON *ATTĀṆI KAṆU***

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Inscriptions are of vital importance in reconstructing the ancient Sri Lankan history. Such inscriptions are four fold: cave inscriptions, rock inscriptions, slab inscriptions and pillar inscriptions. The present research is based on *attāṇi kaṇu*, a kind of pillar inscriptions. Documentations inscribed in pillars stating special donations and rights granted to certain institutions and people by the royal palace are referred to as *attāṇi kaṇu*. These inscriptions are enormously important in constructing a reliable version of the history of ancient Sri Lanka. *Attāṇi kaṇu* both supports to verify the political, economic, social as well as religious information found in literary texts and to reveal certain data which are not mentioned in them. The major objective of the present study is to answer questions such as: who are the officials mentioned in *attāṇi kaṇu*? and what were their major functions and roles? The research also seeks to study the nature of power expansion in terms of establishing *attāṇi kaṇu*. In addition, the study also focuses attention on the status of the donated institutions and personnel and the laws and regulations imposed on lands and delimitations in ancient Sri Lanka. The basic methodology used for this study includes: examining *attāṇi kaṇu*, comparatively studying the observations of the scholars who have researched into this topic, conducting interviews with relevant scholars and critically examining both primary and secondary resources. Some of the noteworthy studies done by Ananda Thissa Kumara, T.G. Kulathunga, Sirimalran wella, Sirisaman Wijethunga and R.K.Monica Triliziya Indrani are important among the studies that have been undertaken so far about *attāṇi Kaṇu*. Also, a lot of researchers have done researches about various sections of epigraphy. Especially, *attāṇi pārāhār* inscriptions imply useful information concerning the political administrative system that existed in the 9th and 10th centuries. Most of these inscriptions include information about respective donators, and the institutions and people to which/to whom such donations were made. It is possible to argue that the political administration in the 8, 9, 10, and 11th centuries was conducted in a well-organized manner to cover fields such as politics, economy and jurisdiction. It also becomes clear by observing the *attāṇi kaṇu* inscriptions that there were groups of officials appointed to certain positions in the state administrative system. Further, *attāṇi kaṇu* elaborates on functions and roles of these officers. These inscriptions are of vital significance in arguing that there was an organized political administrative system in the country and that the political system was a decentralized one based on the king. The relations between the society and law in ancient Sri Lanka and the manner in which such laws were implemented can be clearly understood by observing these inscriptions.