

**THE WOMEN'S OWNERSHIP OF LAND AND PROPERTY IN  
THE PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD IN SRI LANKA  
(from 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. to 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D.)**

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Many scholars who have analyzed the tenurial system in ancient Sri Lanka have postulated that males were the owners of land and property. Among them H.W. Codrington, Wilhelm Geiger and M.B. Ariyapala are prominent. But in analyzing the inscriptions and other historical evidence of the pre-colonial era, it is revealed that not only males but females also owned land and property in the past.

The objective of this study is to identify women's ownership of land and property in the pre-colonial period. There are several valuable studies about women in ancient Ceylon, but, they mainly examine the social status of women. They have not paid attention to the economic status and ownership of land and property directly. Therefore this study is of very great importance in understanding ancient society and its economy.

Details of women's ownership of land and property can be analyzed under the following headings.

1. Ownership of caves
2. Ownership of monastic establishments
3. Ownership of fields, irrigation tanks, villages etc.

In examining details of women's ownerships of land and property, my research has taken into account women's social status. Most of the available evidence illustrates that donations for meritorious or public purposes have been made by women of higher social status, such as, queens, princesses, and mothers, daughters or wives of men of standing. In addition these categories of women also participated in various other economic activities.

However, my research will attempt on the basis of the available evidence, to examine land and property rights of women of both upper and lower social status. Apart from donations and grants my research will also attempt to examine the concept of ownership, sale and other forms of alienation of property by women during this period.

