

ABSTRACT

Sri Lanka have had a unique and traditional system of land tenure from the beginning of the Anuradhapura Period until the fall of the Kandyan Kingdom in 1815. This system underwent certain changes from time to time, and during Kotte and Kandyan Periods there developed a system of land tenure with distinctive characteristics. This study would examine the traditional system of land tenure which existed during those two periods. The objective of the study is to identify the manner in which the system of land tenure functioned, the special features in Kotte and Kandyan Periods and to compare the systems of land tenure of those Periods. Further, when carrying out the study the socio-economic conditions which influenced the formation of such unique characteristics were also looked into. The study is based on the research question: whether the traditional land tenure systems of Kotte and Kandy were an extension of the system which existed in Sri Lanka during the pre-Kotte Period. Historical Methodology was applied for the research. Methods of library surveys, field work, and consultation of archival documents (Colombo and Kandy depositaries of the National Archives) were applied. It can be assumed that the systems of land tenure in Kotte and Kandy had unique characteristics and at the same time shared common features. Also, these systems were based not only on legal conditions but also depicted complex characteristics due to influence of economic and administrative background. Thus, it can be concluded that although they were an extension of the system existed in the pre-Kotte Period, the Kotte and Kandyan systems depicted a uniqueness too.

Key words: Tenure, Land, Traditional, Legal