

A study on the records of meritorious deeds (*Punya Lekhana*) of the Kandyan era

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Records of Meritorious Deeds (*Punya Lekhana*) were composed to declare all the religious activities carried out by the members of the families of the higher strata of the Kandyan society. However, there were instances where these documents were prepared by people from lower levels of the social strata too. Although *Punya Lekhana* tradition emerged during the Kandyan era, there is much evidence to indicate that the background to the tradition of keeping records for religious purposes has a long history. This was done based on the different believes of the people on *Karma*. The aim of this paper is to discuss the uniqueness of the tradition of Records of Meritorious Deeds (*Punya Lekhana*) of the Kandyan era by examining the written sources. It is highlighted that all the people including the king used to keep written records on their religious activities. *Punya Lekhana* were kept in temples as palm leaf books and they can be categorized according to different purposes of writing them. This written tradition can be recognized as a historical source on religion, politics, economy and society of the Kandyan era which was not given due recognition by historians up to now.

Keywords: Records of meritorious deeds (*Punya Lekhana*), Kandyan era, Palm leaf manuscripts