

## **Recent Amendments in the Land Possession of Temple and Shrines: in Association with Nindagam, Beligala Rajamaha Viharaya**

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### **Abstract**

The past kings had a very close relationship with Buddhism which resulted in sacrificing the villages for the consent of temples. Accordingly, the above lands were allotted to the sacred places and given to monks residing there. Those are considered temples and shrines. The construction of a temple at Beligala and allotted the lands for the monks during the reign of King Vijayabahu III is one of the best examples in history. The handing over of the villages to the general public was ne through a gift deed commonly known as Sannasa. The main objective of the study is to find out whether the ancient temples and shrines that used to operate based on traditional methods would continue to operate on the same conventional methods and if so, whether it could be continued. Under the study methodology, Matiyagane, Kegalle, Kubalgama, Haliyagoda, Talgama, Vadu Kanda, and Bodawala are identified as representations belonging to the Beligala Vihara. After pinpointing the research area, the historical and legal backgrounds of those lands were investigated, and the origin of the lands that belonged to the Beligala temple was determined. Afterward, as mentioned in the sannasa, the geographer created new maps using information technology to identify the area belonging to the Beligala temple. The identified sample beneficiaries converted all data related to land use into maps and diagrams under generations. Finally, all these data were analyzed by numerical and scientific methods and presented through maps, diagrams, and formal notes. King Vijayabahu III built the temple and allotted the lands of seven villages to support the temples in copper armor (taba sannasa). It is bounded on the east by Makulu Gath Oya, on the north by Ma Oya, and on the southeast by Pitakanda. But recently, under this land tenure, only a very small amount of land belonging to the temple could be identified in three perches near the temple. Accordingly, the study shows that there is currently no impact on those lands of the temple. Presently only the Perahera festival carried out by seven villages in the morning and night on the full moon day of Vesak as a token of gratitude for the possession of the land in the past can be witnessed. Ultimately, as the only and foremost study conducted so far on the operation of land acquisition related to Beligala Vihara, the temple and shrine lands acquisition system associated with Beligala Vihara is not in operation, and it remains to be a story of history. The temple remains isolated today and the people of the seven villages that owned the temple utilize their land on the usual land tenure system, where no relationship with the temple can be seen.

**Keywords:** Land Tenure, Land Ownership, Mandatory Duty, Land fragmentation, Ancient Land Tenure Systems in Sri Lanka

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