

# **ORGANIZATION OF WORK AND INDIGENOUS HRM PRACTICES: AN EXPLORATION THROUGH ANCIENT PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SYSTEMS IN SRI LANKA**

**C.M.Y.S.S. Bandara and Kumudinie Dissanayake**

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## **Abstract**

With a heritage of a great civilization and evidence of rich principles and practices of management, Sri Lanka seems to own better indigenous practices for managing her local organizations. In addition to the lack of deep investigations into human resource (HR) practices prevailed in the ancient Sri Lankan public administrative system, we identify a void in the existing knowledge of the grounds on which indigenous human resource management (HRM) practices have been derived. Thus, the aim of this study is to identify the HR practices that have been institutionalized through diverse elements in the public work organization in ancient Sri Lanka. We adapt a qualitative inquiry with the use of a document analysis and a comprehensive review as the methods of study. As drawn from the themes emerged, and validated by the existing literature, the results suggest that work, authority, and resource allocation are the basic elements for exploring into institutionalization of HR in ancient Sri Lanka. The indigenous human resource management (HRM) practices have been derived from such institutions and based on job design, supervisory practices and reward allocation practices. Our findings offer grounds for exploring further into indigenous HRM practices and strengthening the contemporary HRM philosophies and policies in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: human resource management (HRM), indigenous human resource (HR) practices, institutionalization, public administration, Sri Lanka

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## **Introduction**

The effectiveness of management practices has to be understood within the existing cultural, socio-political and economic framework of the context (Sethi, Namiki & Swanson, 1984). Thus, the best practices in management are unique, contextual and country-specific. Certain ways of organizing are culturally appropriate and effective than others, and there can be multiple ways rather than one way of organizing (Trompenaars & Turner, 1997). In this backdrop, the contemporary world of work questions the successful applicability of Western or Eastern management practices in other contexts. This query implores the contemplation of indigenous management practices at homelands. With a heritage of a great civilization and evidence of rich principles and practices of management, Sri Lanka seems to own better indigenous practices for managing

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her local organizations, as narrated in chronicles such as Mahavansa and Chulavansa, where human resource has been identified as one of the important aspect of the country's indigenous knowledge (Dharmasena, 2010). Among other Asian nations, Sri Lanka stands as a nation with low cost labor (on economic grounds), a humane society (on socio-cultural grounds), and a flexible work community (on political grounds), thus human resource (HR) being the focal element around which most of the indigenous management practices have been structured. However, in a context where much of the country's indigenous knowledge systems remain to be learned (Senanayake, 2006), such indigenous HR practices which derive from ancient Sri Lankan work culture are also yet to be investigated in full length. One important disabler of these investigations is the absence of a framework for studying the HR practices that have been institutionalized through diverse elements in the work organization in the ancient Sri Lanka. On this background, the aim of this paper is to develop a conceptual framework for studying institutionalization of human resources in the ancient Sri Lanka. This study attempts to identify the main institutions which formed the ancient Sri Lankan public administrative organizations which overlapped the entire social organization. In this paper, we argue that the institutionalization of human resource in the ancient Sri Lankan public administrative organization can be explained through three main institutional measures; arrangement of work, execution of authority and allocation of resources where it can be used as a ground to identify the HRM philosophy, policies and the practices relating to job design, supervisory practices and reward management.

We use documentary analysis and review as the method of study. Drawing from the existing evidence and literature on ancient local government arrangements for work, the present study identifies that arrangement of work, authority and resource deployment have been the foundation of 'organizing' functions in the ancient Sri Lankan public administration. It further reveals that the job design, supervisory practices and reward allocation have been resultant in HR practices in this system.

The paper is structured as follows. The section that follows presents a review of literature on national culture and institutionalization of HRM as the point of departure of the study. Briefly describing the method adapted in the study, we detail our findings in two sections; ancient local government arrangements for work, and the institutionalization of HR in ancient Sri Lanka. Presenting the proposed framework, we elaborate existing literature for validating the framework with the use of global historical evidence on organization for work and HRM practices for enacting work organization. The paper concludes with implications and directions for future research.

**Review of literature: National culture and institutionalization of HRM**

As Aycan et al. (2000) view, managing human resources in organizations requires understanding of the influence of both the internal and external environments of organizations. It is recognized that the internal environment is represented by its internal work culture, whereas the external environment is represented by the enterprise or institution culture (i.e., market characteristics, nature of industry, ownership status and resource availability) as well as the socio-cultural environment (e.g., paternalism, power distance, etc.). And, it is argued that both these environmental forces are, in turn, influenced by the physical and the socio-political context (e.g., ecological, legal, social, political and historical forces) (Aycan et al., 2000).

The level of industrial development of a country, its cultural values, and the level and nature of cultural interactions may all play a part in people management systems and their appropriateness to the economic and cultural context within which they operate (Jackson, 2002). Jackson further explains that the potential conflicts between work and home/community life maybe a function of cultural values as much as the level of industrial development of a country. This may also be a function of the way individual multinational organizations and their managers and HR departments operate in transitional and emerging countries. Since HRM practices are implemented for the people and with the people, their socio-cultural environment should be

taken into consideration in designing unique HRM practices for a group of employees. Jackson (2002) proposes that across cultures people are valued differently as human beings within work organizations. Culture is a significant determinant in shaping a person's attitudes and behavior. Therefore, in designing and implementing HRM policies and practices, attention should be paid on correctly identifying such aspects of a society to which the employees of the organization belong. Marriappanadar (2005) views the learned behaviour of work as a product of cultural factors. Culture also affects performance and learning motivational orientations (Gelfand et al., 2007). Kurman (2001) found that in collectivistic and high-power-distance cultures, choosing achievable moderate goals was highly motivating than choosing difficult goals. Feedback giving and feedback seeking are theorized to vary across cultures (De Luque & Sommer, 2000).

Cultural values shape the preferences for organizational rewards and their implementation across cultures (Erez and Early, 1993). At a macro level, cultures differ in their dominant reward systems (Gelfand et al., 2007). Values on their own are not enough; they need to be rooted in the social and economic structure of a given society (Rowley and Benson, 2000). Whitehill

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(1991) argues that culture includes not only the values held by individuals and relations between people at work and their families, but also the structure of the firm and society. Studying the structures and functions that exist in a particular culture is accepted as an appropriate method for identifying the social organization incorporated with that culture (Parsons, 1951). Within a social system, Parsons (1951) considered the needs of the system as important, and individuals fulfilled certain system functions by taking on various roles as a means of carrying out their statuses. From a sociological point of view, Pieris (1956) posits that the concrete reality of social life consists of a multitude of actions by, and relations between persons and groups of persons. Further, he notes that repeated and persisting behaviors and relations which become relatively fixed, petrified and established modes of conduct are known as institutions, where a study of these multifarious social relations reveals a pattern of interrelated actions which may be described as 'social organization' or social structure.

### **Method**

This is an exploratory study with a qualitative inquiry where secondary sources are extensively used for data collection, centered on a selected site for investigation. Validity and reliability of these data have been confirmed through community members at the site. Due to lack of a theory a priori, we follow grounded theory approach in the study.

The research site that we selected was Nuwarakalaviya, located in the ancient Kingdom of Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka. Indigenous practices used to administer the people in Nuwarakalaviya had not been explored from a Human Resource Management point of view so far. Yet, a vast array of information on functions and structures of the ancient society is evident in the available literature in historical research-based publications including books and journal articles. Thus, secondary sources including books and journal articles which are extensively quoted and well recognized in the field of history play a key role in the present study as a main source of data. As an analysis of social organization is possible with information on its structures and functions (Parsons, 1951), here we explored the social organization and identified its practices of managing people in light of such information. With a view to verify the data obtained from the secondary sources for their validity in the present research context and to ensure that any important piece of data is not missed, data were cross-checked and confirmed by 12 persons who were well aware about the area and its historical aspects. Thus, data verification and confirmation was obtained from a sample of respondents representing different professions such as farmers, teachers, public servants, doctors, banking officers, Buddhist monks and Hindu priests. No guided questionnaire was used in obtaining their responses; however, we probed into "how

the ancient public administrative system was organized” as an open inquiry.

Since all the data gathered were qualitative, they were analyzed using analytical tools including coding, memoing and categorizing. Document analysis was used for analyzing secondary data in the study. Initially, data on structures and functions of ancient social organizations were coded and categorized to identify practices of managing people. Three basic types of practices had emerged through the large number of primary codes as work related practices, authority related practices and resource handling practices. Each category was further analyzed for HRM practices where 21 basic practices were identified, which could then be categorized into three categories as job design, supervisory practices and reward allocation.

## **Findings**

### **Socio-political background of the site**

The ancient stretch of time denotes the medieval era of the Sri Lankan history which is demarcated by the two landmark events; the invasion of Magha of Kalinga in 1235 (13th century) and the British conquest in 1815 (19th century) (Mendis, 1957). During this period of time the country was not politically stable and the only region which was independent under the local rulers was the Kandyan Kingdom. Therefore, with a special emphasis on the period of the Kandyan Kingdom, the medieval period is considered for identifying the ancient local government. Kandyan Kingdom, the chief governing structure that existed during the 17th and 18th centuries, is considered as the successor to old civilizations and kingdoms in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa (Dewaraja 1985; 1995) and is considered as an integral part of the traditional Sinhalese monarchical system in Sri Lanka (Dewaraja, 1995). According to Dewaraja (1995), the whole political system was based upon, and the social system too revolved around, the monarchy in the Kandyan Kingdom.

### **Ancient local government arrangements for work in Sri Lanka**

The present study finds that the local government arrangements for work in ancient Sri Lanka have mainly been based on the institutions revolved around work role, authority and resource allocation. Table 2 below presents the codes and themes derived in this part of analysis

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<b>Table 2. Basic elements of work organization, indicators, and local government arrangements in ancient Sri Lanka</b>		
<b>Local Government Arrangements</b>	<b>Code (Indicator)</b>	<b>Theme (Element)</b>
Functional and Territorial departments, Rajakariya system: Compulsory public service, Caste based occupational niches and Caste bound duties	Departmentalized organizational structure Division of labor Work specialization	<b>Work</b>
Formal administrative structure; King, officers and procedures, despotic power at the top; but a strong mechanism for mediating and controlling, Community based governance and mechanisms; Moral rules, conventions and traditions, delegation of power and authority, Natural leaders, Participatory decision making	Formulation and enforcement of law Decision making Chain of command Leadership	<b>Authority</b>
Royal grants attached to performance of services Conventional methods	Physical resources Natural resources	<b>Resource allocation</b>
Source: Survey data		

### **Work role**

Arrangement of work in the ancient local governments can be considered as an institutionalized administrative system which was supported by several other sub institutions like caste system and Rajakari system. Every member of the social organization had a unique role to play in this system and each role formed an important part within the whole. Coomaraswamy (1908) comments that “the different parts of the social organism were fitted and dovetailed together; there was a place for every man, and no man could be spared.”

### **Administrative System:**

Dewaraja (1995) points out two other principle features of the Kandyan administrative system as bureaucratic nobility, whose appointments were derived from the King, and the rigid grading system of the administrative class controlled by the unwritten yet inexorable laws of caste. The administrative structure of the ancient Sri Lanka was identified as a territorial one with a functional division at the bottom of the administrative ladder (Dewaraja, 1995). In the territorial division, there were twelve ‘Disawani’s and nine ‘Rata’s each headed by a ‘Disawe’ and ‘Rate Mahatmaya’ respectively (D’Oyly, 1929). Under these officials there were several other officials who controlled smaller sub-divisions.

**Rajakariya:**

According to Silva (2005), the Kandyan administrative system was closely bound up with land tenure, caste and rajakariya. Rajakariya system can be identified as the mechanism through which the citizens' contribution was taken for public service. As observed by Silva (1994), "rajakariya"; the mechanism which combined the land tenure and caste services were of three kinds. First; the compulsory labour for forty days or less for the public utility and military service during a war. Second; the caste services to the state, temples or individuals. Third; the annual land tax, 'decum' or 'kadarajakariya' paid to the treasury as a part of the assured agreement with the ruler.

According to Mendis (1995), Rajakariya system in Ceylon involved the performance of two classes of duties: unpaid services rendered by people for the repair and maintenance of the paths and bridges in their districts; and services performed in respect of lands held and varying according to the caste of persons who performed them. The first form of this service consists of the compulsory requirement of engaging in public services of the government by the citizens during a prescribed period of time. In its maturity in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the key feature of the Rajakariya system was the performance of gratuitous services on public works such as construction of roads, bridges and tanks (Silva, 1981).

**Caste system:**

Apart from the compulsory services towards the public service, performances of the functional structure were ensured mainly through the Caste system. Caste system played a vital role in the administration of Kandyan Kingdom through its functional division. Co-existence of the 'badda' or caste system virtually cut across the territorial system dividing the population into functional groups. The mass of the people in up-country remained a static, stratified society dominated by the divisive forces of feudal origin (Pakeman, 1970). According to Rogers (2004), caste groups found in Kandyan Kingdom at the end of the 18th century represented the most visible and pervasive form of social differentiation on the island.

The society was structured in a systematic way using the caste system. People were divided into diverse groups and these groups were assigned with different types of professions. To assure the proper functioning of the entire society, the contribution of all the groups were needed. People respect and value their traditional professions and accept the caste bound duties they had to

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perform within the setting of the society.

As viewed by Dewaraja (1995) the caste system in the Kandyan Kingdom was not only a self-contained autonomous social order of the people, but also an official order of the society, protected, controlled and stabilized by the government. Caste system has been identified as the foundation of whole social and economic organizational mechanism in the Kandyan Kingdom (Dewaraja, 1995). Almost all the citizens became direct members of the administrative organization through this functional structure.

The Kandyan caste structure was essentially a system of labour specialization providing the various services needed for the state and society where each caste was economically privileged in the sense that it alone had the right to supply a particular kind of labour (Dewaraja, 1995). Caste consisted of a complete system of life and work, in which every man knew his place, had regular work and rarely exchanged it for another (Mendis, 1995). The caste system produces occupational niches specialized in different occupations which produced different services required for the functioning of the social organization.

One of the most important features regarding the social system of that era is the prominence given to the public sector. Many of the performances of the society were in communal nature where each person or categories of people were obliged to perform the services assigned to them by the traditional system. Peris (1956) interprets the caste system as a mechanism by which the labour resources of the Kingdom could be mobilized for public services.

The relationship existed among the heads and the subordinate people were not entirely based on material returns. It was a sort of leader-member relationship with closer emotional and psychological ties. Headmen were considered as patriarchal heads of the society and its members (Karunananda, 2006). Discussing the conflicting context existed in Kandyan government, Dewaraja (1985) comments that emotional and psychological ties cut across political barriers stabilizing the position of the King.

People have their own sources of income, accumulations of personal wealth and assets, and only minor importance was given to the personal enterprises. All the caste based communities or the occupational niches were considered as sub systems of the main system where the tight relationships link them with the social order inseparably. An unwritten code of behaviour governed all social relationships between castes (Dewaraja, 1995). To ensure the proper performance of the entire social organization, the performance of different occupational niches was of utmost importance. Dewaraja (1995) views this institutional arrangement as a dynamic force

driving the cog wheels of the administrative machinery.

In light of these facets it can be asserted that during this pre-colonial era, the public sector occupied the place of most prominent organization of the country, including all the strata of the society and through that, all the people of the society. Social structure was the organizational structure through which different functional requirements were fulfilled. Therefore, the entire society or the social organization can be considered as the administrative organization of the public sector during this era.

### **Authority**

In the ancient Sri Lanka, the systems used for the management of human resources were two-fold. Especially in areas remote to the central kingdom, both formal and informal administration mechanisms were operated within the province with nearly equal powers. The formal control of the central government headed by the King was accepted by the people. On the other hand, the regulating arrangements of informal native authorities were recognized by the official governing organization, permitting a higher autonomy of administration and decision making for the local level. Gam Sabha and Variga Sabha are two very important examples of such territorial entities.

Gam Sabha or village council is an assembly of villagers headed by the natural leaders. It can be identified as an institution which operated voluntarily for managing the people and their affairs at village level in both administrative and judicial spheres. Gam Sabha had both civil and criminal jurisdiction in questions of boundaries, petty debts and petty offences (Hayley, 1932). Hayley (1932) identifies Gam Sabha as one of the earliest entities of this nature. Gam Sabha in ancient Sri Lanka has been identified as Village Republics which maintained the control mechanism. This entity was identified as the basic decision making entity of a village. All the inhabitants of the village participated in these 'village councils' to discuss matters of social and economic importance, including agriculture and irrigation. The decision-making mode of Gam Sabha was based on arbitration (Marshall, 1839).

'Variga Sabha' can be considered as a caste court, which was used to settle caste related issues within the boundaries of clans. The mechanism followed here was settling the matter by a tribunal consisting of respectable persons of that particular caste. As Ryan (1953) notes, as a formalized caste body which performed judicial functions relevant to caste customs, this institution was a preserver of caste integrity, and also served to purify the atmosphere.

This body had no official authority or legal base since it was not directly established by the formal authority of the government. But it was recognized by the formal authority as a customary decision making entity. As Ryan (1953) notes, a fiction of its legitimacy is maintained

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through its connection with an official whose office is both traditional and, until recent years, legitimately governmental.

The existence and performance of Variga Sabha were incontestable in the ancient society. The traditional conventions and value systems had created a strong foundation for the recognition of 'Variga Sabha' as an acceptable decision-making institution among the inhabitants. Therefore, the decisions made at this caste court and the verdicts issued were accepted by the members of the respective castes or villages.

Proper performance of the social organization was ensured by the authority execution mechanism through maintaining social order. Behaviour and conduct of the organizational human resource was shaped by the formal rules as well as the informal regulations formulated by traditions and conventions. These institutions had the power of imposing punishments to the subjects under its jurisdiction where the execution was strictly carried out. People were committed to following the regulating guidance of these informal but recognized decision making authorities. Further, they voluntarily accept the functioning of them.

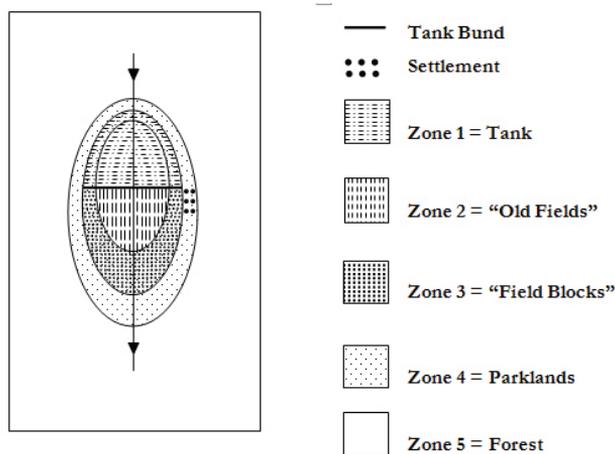
### **Resource allocation**

Two major natural resources, land and water, were considered as the most important resources in the ancient social organization. Being an agrarian society, land and water were essential in maintaining the livelihoods of the people. Allocation of resources was totally based on the regulations imposed by the traditional conventions and norms. Land usage in ancient Sri Lanka could be identified with regard to two major purposes, i.e., living and farming. On the other hand, the resource allocation was largely important in arranging business and service relationships between different community groups and preserving the power structure.

Two major bases could be identified on which the ownership of lands was distinguished. The formal method of acquiring the ownership was getting the permission of King. According to the laws prevailed in the Kandyan Kingdom, all the lands belonged to the King. The King had authorized certain persons to use the lands by granting permission through Sannas (a royal charter). Wealthy and powerful persons of superior castes offer various gifts to the King, expecting such land donations. These lands were called Nindagam (fiefdoms). The area of Nindagam was divided into small villages and occupied by the people belonging to different castes, forming a small republic kind of self-sufficient communities. The other way of establishing the ownership of land; possessing without any formal grant was considered as informal, but the validity of such ownership was unquestionably accepted unless there was no controversy.

According to Dissanayake (1992), the structure of the Tank village and its functioning illustrate not only the economical use of land and water but also the ethical values of the ancient Sinhalese community. Tennakoon (1974) identifies five broad zones in a typical traditional tank village system (Figure 1). Zone I is the tank which could be considered as the "nerve centre" of the village economy. Zone 2 is the 'Purana wela' (old field) which is located much closer to both settlement and the tank. In traditional systems, the land in this zone, which can be irrigated

even if the water level is fairly low, has been divided between all the villagers. On the contrary, the land in Zone 3, which are owned by few individuals, is usually irrigated by a higher-level sluice. Irrigation is nearly impossible in Zone 4 mainly because of the distance and in general, is covered with short grasses, isolated trees and bushes. Zone 5 covers the largest extent of “village land”. This zone is usually called the village forest (Tennakoon, 1974).



**Figure 1: Schematic Diagram of a Typical Dry Zone Village**

Source: Shakthivadivel et al., Natural Resources Management Study of North Central Province, Sri Lanka, Main Report, May 1996, International Irrigation Management Institute, Pelawatta, Battaramulla, Sri Lanka

The “Pangu” method is the traditional system of distributing paddy farming lands among the village members. According to Karunananda (2005), the mode of dividing the ‘pangus’ among the ‘pangukarayo’ appears to have been an impartial one. The term “Pangu” denotes a plot of land but it is hard to find a clear definition with regard to the extent of such land. The general view was that a “pangu” was defined as the smallest piece of land within the village paddy farming land which was used as a measurement to determine the size of other lands.

Further, this method was used to share the work of cleaning and maintenance of the irrigation infrastructure, which was totally based on the extent of land allocated to villagers. All the share-holders were responsible for performing the communal work and the work load is divided among them proportionately to the shares or “pangu”s. If a person had performed responsibilities of such communal work entrusted proportionately to his share of land without any lapse,

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although he did not cultivate the land, his ownership rights were not questioned. In that, a person could have owned some plots of lands in other outside villages also.

In dividing the entire paddy land into a number of plots, which were shared among the village members, a certain set of conventions was followed. The ability of irrigating the land and the seniority of the villagers in terms of occupancy in the village were the basic determinants of assigning the plots of lands. In certain cases, the earliest settlers were the superior caste families who derived the ownership of the area through the donations of the King. When the village was occupied by a group of people to whom the right of possession was given by such owners, there the first occupants were considered as the most senior citizens in the village. The division of lands was done through a technical approach.

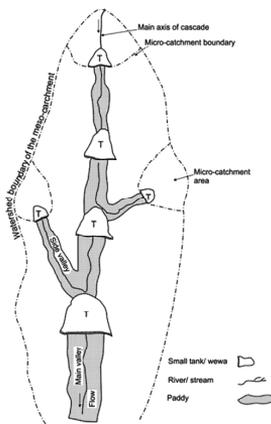
For Chena cultivation, lands were prepared by clearing the jungle. According to Karunananda (2005), all grounds from which water was drained out to the tank or fields were considered to be the chena lands of that village.

There were two major specific methods to divide the area among villagers for chena cultivation. The first is called 'Mulketa Hena' and frequently used with large lands. According to Pieris (1956), to cultivate a 'hena', the village share-holders would select a suitable piece of land, and taking a large tree as the centre point (Mulkete), tie a creeper of one or two cubits' length to this tree and trace a small circle around it marking the entire area of the 'hena'. The land is divided around the 'mulkete' where after clearing, burning and marking the boundary lines, the whole 'hena' resembles a wheel with the spokes dividing the 'pangu'. The second method of allocating lands for chena cultivation is called 'iravilla'. This is used if the 'hena' was small and the lands were arranged in squares (Pieris, 1956)

Three types of chena lands could be identified on the basis of the usage. The Chena lands prepared for cultivation by clearing virgin lands were called "Navadeli Hena". When the same land is used for the next time in later season, the land is called "Kanathu hena". If the farmer failed to start cultivation at the proper time after clearing the land and when he used the land at a later season, it is called "Varadamana Hena".

The hydraulic civilization had its origins in the dry zone plains of the island – the area referred to as Rajarata, (The Kings' Country) with Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa as its capitals, till about the end of the twelfth century (Dissanayake, 1992). Cascade Based System; "Ellanga" in Sinhala, is an interesting irrigation technique used to irrigate a large area linking several small tanks through channels. This system interlinks the village entities hydrologically as well as socio-economically. The cascade concept is an age old concept which had been the linking

thread of irrigation development and management throughout the irrigation history of this country (Tennakoon, 1994). Maddumabandara (1985) identifies a connected series of tanks that are organized within the micro catchments of the dry zone landscape, for storing, conveying and utilizing water from an ephemeral rivulet as a cascade. A cascade of tanks is made up of 4 to 10 individual small tanks, with each tank having its own micro-catchment, but where all of the tanks are situated within a single meso-catchment basin (Panabokke, 2007). Figure 2 shows a schematic representation of a small tank cascade.



It was noticed that the existence of separate personal business enterprises was rare. All the business and social work were strongly associated with the social structure. The entire society could be considered as one business unit or enterprise, where several sub units and systems performed together to assure the survival of the organization fulfilling the needs of its members. With these circumstances, a number of outcomes could be identified with the management point of view. A well-established organizational culture and structure could be seen in the system on the basis of strong shared values accepted by all the members. Performance of work in the system was accomplished by the occupational niches. People had little chance to work out their preference but on the other hand these traditional occupations brought them an incomparable specialization. They worked in groups and it resulted in group thinking among them. The responsibilities were entrusted on groups and they were collectively accountable in perfectly accomplishing the assigned duties and performing their roles. Since the society was not much competitive, a higher degree of cooperation could be observed among the members who belong to different occupational niches and different strata of the social hierarchy. The decision making was systematically decentralized keeping the limits as required. Thus, in line with the revelations in the study, we identify work arrangement, authority mechanism and resource deployment as the main and three-fold institutions which formed and maintained social relations between individuals and groups with established modes of conduct. The relations, functions and roles of all the individuals in this social organization can be explained vis-à-vis these three institutions which represent the major structures of the social organization.

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### **Institutionalization of HR in ancient Sri Lanka**

Below we identify three major HRM practices that derived from the afore-described social institutions in the ancient Sri Lanka. They are job design, supervisory practices and reward allocation.

**Table 3 : HRM practices derived from the social institutions in ancient Sri Lanka**

<b>Derivatives of organization for work</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Theme</b>
<b>Arrangement of work</b>	Division of labour and specialization; Balanced autonomy; Task identity; Task significance; Low task and skill variety; Less job complexity; Task inter-dependence	Job design
<b>Execution of authority</b>	Delegation of authority; Strong shared values; Voluntary acceptance; Recognition of informal groups and natural leaders; Participatory decision making; Mutual trust; Caring leadership	Supervisory practices
<b>Allocation of Resources</b>	Long term orientation; Sustainability; Mutual trust and benefits; Feeling of ownership and entrepreneurship; Collective ownership, responsibility and accountability; Team based nature; Reuse of resources and reliability of organizational inputs supply	Reward allocation

**Source: Survey data**

### **Job design**

The entire system of human resource management in ancient Sri Lanka was based on the Rajakari system, including caste structure and compulsory public service. The job of a person in the ancient Sri Lankan social organization consisted of three major components, i.e., caste bound occupational work, compulsory public service for communal work and agricultural work; the caste free occupation. Job design was largely determined by traditional caste system where peo-

ple were allocated for definite professions from their birth. According to the caste to which they belong, they had to perform a specific set of tasks, duties and responsibilities in the social organization. This practice created the ground for a specialization with some special features. The circulation of tacit knowledge which flew from generation to generation was restricted within the boundaries of caste. Therefore, the specialization built on that became a unique attribute of a particular caste and further, added a value to that. On the other hand, a person needed only a low variety of skills to perform his role in the social organization, making jobs less complex.

Attached with the ancient practices of designing jobs, it was noticed that a considerable degree of autonomy was allowed for the professionals who belonged to different castes to decide the performance of their job. But at the same time, an arm of controlling was put into force by the superiors of the social and economic organizations.

Since specific groups were designated for different duties, high task identity and high task significance could be noticed. Further, it sets up the ground to develop interdependent relationships between separate strata of the social hierarchy. The people who represented the higher strata of the caste hierarchy were the superiors in the social organization. In a majority of instances they were the dominant chieftains of the voluntary social organizations and officers linked to the formal government.

The society was structured by the caste system where each caste had a specific duty to perform. Irrespective of the position held in the caste hierarchy, every caste was given the opportunity to develop and operate their own controlling system, making independent decisions to solve the problems within the boundary of the caste. Although both formal and informal power mechanisms were dominated by the high caste superiors, power could be seen delegated among all the communities in the society.

In addition, people had to contribute with communal work when summoned. The noticeable factor is both caste bound duties and the compulsory public services make only a part of their full-time employment. Agriculture was a caste-free occupation with people engaged in paddy and Chena cultivation making up the larger share of their work.

Performance of duties assigned by the traditional system was entirely based on strong shared values of the society and the voluntary acceptance on them of the members. Both the superiors and the subordinates strongly believed that performing the duties assigned by the traditional system was a must. They were obligatory to carry out such professional duties properly respecting and continuing with the existed norms and conventions of the social organization.

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## **Supervisory practices**

The supervisory system could be identified as a two-fold mechanism where the application of authority was vested upon both formal and informal governance structures. The formal government existed in the country had operated its controlling arm through designated officers who exercised the granted legal power. But due to many reasons this power mechanism was nominal to a greater extent in some remote areas. The voluntary institutions headed and governed by natural leaders represented the informal stream of supervisory mechanism. These informal groups and assemblies were highly recognized by the members. Further, the formal government also had accepted the existence and functioning of these institutions and the natural leaders. Participatory decision making and arbitration was identified as a noticeable device used in these informal institutions. The decisions related to the supervision of organizational activities have resulted as outputs of a collective effort of the superiors. Natural leaders from the same community or such leaders who represented different community groups have participated in these decision-making panels performing the role of supervisory officers. The relationship between supervisors and subordinates could be identified as a mutually trusted one, where each party was in a strong belief that the other will perform the entrusted duties in accordance with the standards. The strong shared values and the voluntary acceptance of members together created the base for proper people management in the conventional society.

## **Reward allocation**

The reward allocation of the ancient human resource management system of Sri Lanka was mainly based on the distribution of resources. Only a very small segment of the rewarding scheme was operated through money and other materials.

Rewarding through resources was identified as a process oriented towards the long run performances of the organization. Resources like lands were awarded with a long-term right of possession where the true ownership was a nominal one. Once the right was granted, the resources became common properties of the awardee community. Traditional professional services were provided by the tenant occupants in compensation for the right of possession where the reward allocation ensured the proper functioning of the society.

Sustainability of organizational resources was identified as a major concern of the ancient rewarding system. Although some of the resources were allocated on individual basis, depending on the concept of common ownership, all the members were equally accountable in protecting the common resource pool. In addition to these, methods of keeping reserves for further expansion

sions, releasing water from the main water reservoir to paddy fields and changing crops for biological preservation can be identified as general practices of ensuring sustainability.

The entire reward allocation process was based on the trust developed by superiors or the reward makers and the subordinates or reward receivers. The legal ownership of the rewarded resources was vested with these superiors but they have given the right of possession to the subordinates. This trusted relationship could be identified as a mutually beneficial one for both parties. Superiors could get the professional work done by the people who belonged to different castes and the subordinates could ensure the reception of resources to develop their livelihoods.

The mechanism that existed in ancient society of Sri Lanka to reward the human resource made the society self-sufficient. All the materials and services required for the proper functioning of the society were produced within the social organization by its own members. To ensure such performance they were rewarded with the relevant resources.

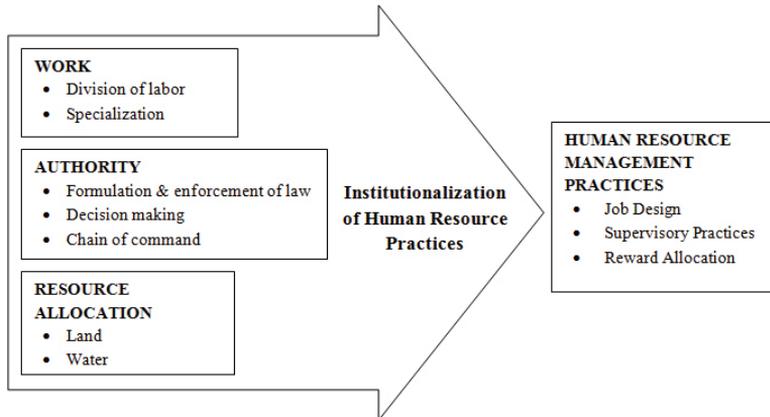
As such it is clear that a discussion on work, authority and resource allocation illustrates the organizing of social organization, with a broad base to understand how the human resource was institutionalized to ensure their contribution towards effective and efficient functioning of the social organization

### **The proposed framework**

The present study understands that the organization for work in the ancient Sri Lanka has been built on the major institutional arrangements on work, authority and resource allocation. Further, the HRM practices such as job design, supervisory practices and reward allocation have been institutionalized through the existing arrangement for work, authority and human resource allocation arrangements at the time. The notion of 'work' represents the division of labor and specialization in the social organization. The enforcement of law, decision making and chain of command make up the 'authority'. Distribution of land and water were the dimensions of resource allocation in the system. What is revealed in the above review is depicted in the Figure 3 below.

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**Organization for Work**



**Figure 3: Conceptual Framework for studying the institutionalization of HR practices in ancient Sri Lanka**

*Source: Researchers' construction*

**Validation of findings**

For validating the above findings, we elaborate below the evidences drawn from the existing literature.

**Organization for work: Evidence from the history**

History reveals that numerous types of economic, social, and political institutions have been organized for work under certain fundamental activities. Such organizations include agricultural estates, armies, churches, governments, and guilds as well as those dedicated to specific projects such as the great building enterprises that produced the pyramids and irrigation systems of the Near and Far East (Wittfogel, 1957; Pheng, 2007). These pre-industrial forms of organization typically included a corps of supervisors, a shared body of administrative practices and in certain cases, a written discourse describing those practices and explaining their rationale (Ruef and Harness, 2009). An inspection of the complete translations of numerous original documents reveals the presence of four dimensions of work organization: (i) physical organization of labour, (ii) monitoring and control of workers' attendance, assigning tasks and determining work targets, (iii) reporting on tasks performed, and (iv) calculating and distributing wages (Ezzamel, 2004). WorkGriffin (2005) notes that the functions of managing work can be traced back to thousands of years where the Egyptians used the functions of planning, organizing and controlling when they constructed the pyramids, and the Mesopotamian civilization emerged during the period 3700-

2900 BC amid the development of technological innovations that increased agricultural efficiency (e.g., plough), speeded up transportation (e.g., sailing boats), and enhanced tooling through improvements in metal working (e.g., copper) (Postgate, 1992; Maisels, 1993). Around 1000 B.C., the Greeks have established strong local governments or city states that they called polis and later introduced a form of constitutional democracy (Burton and Thakur, 1995). Romans introduced the senate to advise the consuls (Burton and Thakur, 1995). Socrates developed a design of management practices and Plato propounded a system of job specialization (Burton and Thakur, 1995).

**Authority**

Burton and Thakur (1995), state that around 5000 B.C. on the lower regions of Euphrates River, the Sumerians utilized written records to administer their governmental and commercial activities. Egyptians may have used a well regularized system to govern the people for which the massive constructions of Pyramids bear evidence. The Babylonians had a set of laws called Hammurabi which are considered as the oldest collection of regulations used to govern people (Burton and Thakur, 1995). The Old Babylonian Empire ruled during 2003-1595 BC where the turbulent period of wars came to a halt under the reign of Hammurabi, who deployed a centralized system of administration of public affairs. This consisted of the enactment of districts headed by governors who replaced the local kings, not least the separation between the temple and the royal palace (Harris, 1961).

**Resource allocation**

The Sumerian civilization lasted from 2900-2335 BC and featured small, rich city-states that engaged in continuous wars to resolve issues of property rights on irrigation water (Carmona and Ezzamel, 2005). By the middle of the millennium, the size of city-states reduced significantly and the small-city state model became dominant, which in turn deepened the process of division of labor within cities as well as provided a basis for the emergence of social classes and the hierarchisation of society around military and religious classes (Snell, 1997). According to Carmona and Ezzamel (2005), the views of Marx and Wittfogel contend that the ancient Egyptian civilization relied in its achievements on corvéelabour and slavery, whereas the alternative view, which while not completely denying the presence of such forms of forced labour, would insist that private labour commanding wages, or rations, and private exchange existed side by side with the domain of the state, and those who worked for the state were not slaves but perhaps forced, but paid for, labour. Taken as a whole, the pre-industrial era evidences to the fact that allocation of work, execution of authority, and allocation of resources had been the fundamental activities accentuated in the organization of work.

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<b>WORK</b>	<b>AUTHORITY</b>	<b>RESOURCE ALLOCATION</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Organization of labor</li> <li>- Managing work</li> <li>- Job specialization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Governance</li> <li>- Rules &amp; regulations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Water management</li> <li>- Land Tenure</li> <li>- Social classes</li> </ul>

**Figure 4: Fundamental activities of organization of work in the history**

These fundamental activities have been reiterated at the work organizations in the post-industrial era too.

**Organization of work in the post-industrial era**

With the massive development and expansion of commercial activities in the industrial revolution era in the 19th century, advancing better management practices were given a higher consideration. Attention was paid on mass production and systems were arranged in a way to obtain the maximum use of all the resources including the human resource. ‘Employee’ was considered as an ‘economic man; merely a factor in the production process whose contribution is given in the form of labor’.

In the scientific management school, the contribution of Charles Babbage, Fredrick W Taylor, Frank and Lillian Gilbreth and Henry Gantt are considered as important. According to Burton and Thakur (1995) the contributions of scientific management school developed the managerial skill of job design through the division and specialization of labor, and formulated the first approach of mass production. Charles Babbage focused attention on the impact of time efficiency and work performance relationship of laborers in setting and achieving standards. Elucidating four principles with regard to management of jobs and laborers, Taylor (1967) proposes that the principal object of management should be to secure maximum prosperity of the employer, coupled with the maximum prosperity of employee. Frank and Lillian Gilbreth are regarded as the pioneers of time and motion study. Henry Gantt developed the Gantt Chart, Fayol (1949) introduced five major functions of administrative or managerial activity, i.e., planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating and controlling with fourteen general principles of management, which included division of labor, authority, unity of command, unity of direction, remuneration etc. Weber (1964) developed the bureaucratic model of organization as a rational way of structuring a complex organization. Weber’s model explicated how division of labor, rules and regulations, authority, hierarchy etc. are giving birth to the best way of organizing work. As highlighted in these universal theories too, the underlying fundamental activities of organizing work have been revolved mainly around work, authority, and resources within the system.

### **Organizing work within the organizational system**

How organizations are being organized for work (or the structural dimensions of work organizations) has been well elaborated in organizing function, and further theorized under organizational structure and design. Organizing, noted as a major function in any economic, social or political organization, reveals the key tasks to be performed by organizations for arranging work in order for securing better performance. Thus, division of work, grouping of jobs (departmentalization), identifying positions, establishing authority, relationships, coordination and integration of work, and allocation of resources become the giant steps in organizing process, finally creating a formal structure for the organization (Daft, 2009). Organizational structure is the formal system of task and reporting relationships that controls, coordinates, and motivates employees so that they cooperate to achieve its goals. Accordingly, structural dimensions of organizations broadly cover work specialization, chain of command, authority and responsibility, span of control, centralization or decentralization (authority of decision making), and formalization (Daft, 2010). Different configurations of organizations (Mintzberg, 1979; 1989) too would be resultant in such arrangements.

### **HRM Practices for Enacting Work Organization**

As per Aycan et al. (2000), the internal work culture leads to three fundamental HRM practices which could be elaborated in terms of task, superiors and the employees. They particularly identify task related practices in an HRM system in terms of autonomy, task variety and task significance, while recognizing empowerment and control as superior related practices and performance and reward as the employee related practices.

Domestic HRM has not developed in isolation, but rather in the context of industrial change and economic development (Kiessling and Harvey, 2005). Domestic HRM is typically defined by Kiessling and Harvey (2005) as a broad typology that covers three areas: (a) work relations (i.e., the way work is organized, the division of labour and the deployment of workers around technologies and production processes), (b) industrial relations (i.e., the representational aspirations of employees and the ‘voice systems’ that may exist, such as work consultation, employee involvement practices, work councils and collective bargaining), and (c) employment relations (i.e., the arrangements governing such aspects of employment as recruitment, training, promotion, job tenure and the reward of employees) (Gospel, 1992).

Employee management activities can be sub-divided into practices, or techniques (Guest et al., 2004) where HRM practices can be measured in three different ways: by its presence (whether

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it is actually in effect), by its coverage (the proportion of the workforce covered by it), or by its intensity (the degree to which an individual employee is exposed to the practice or policy) (Boselie et al., 2008).

In line with the above review, the important areas of HRM practices that become visible in a broader context are the practices around the job or task to be performed by people, the practices around the supervisory involvement, and the practices around the remuneration or rewarding of the employees comprising the whole set of HRM functions in a national culture. Thus, below we closely examine the three basic categories of practices, (a) job design, (b) supervisory practices, and (c) reward allocation.

### **Job Design**

All the functions of an organization cannot be performed by one person. Time, energy, skills and other resources will act as serious constraints in such an effort. Therefore, it is required to assign several individuals to complete different parts of the organization's total work load. Their contributions will be coordinated and the outputs will be combined together finally to achieve the common goal of the organization.

Scholars have traditionally defined jobs as a collection of tasks designed to be performed by one employee, and tasks as the assigned pieces of work that employees complete (Griffin, 1987; Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 1992; Wong & Campion, 1991). According to Opatha (2009), jobs are regarded as basic building blocks of the organization. Further, he identifies an organizational unit of work as a job that is composed of three main components, i.e., tasks, duties and responsibilities. According to Campion (1991), a task represents certain processes in which the worker, through his or her actions, transforms inputs into outputs meaningful to the goals of the job by using tools, equipment, or work aids and the actions of the task may be physical, mental, or interpersonal whilst on the other hand, a job is an aggregation of tasks assigned to a worker. If jobs are not properly designed, it is possible for a decline of the organization by not meeting efficiency, effectiveness and productivity (Opatha, 2009).

The HRM function which involves in dividing the entire work load into parts and forming different work units is simply called Job Design. Job Design was given a substantial identification as an important function of HRM from very early times. According to Glueck (1978), Job Design is the personal or engineering activity of specifying the contents of the job, the tools and techniques to be used, the surrounding of the work, and the relationship of one job to other jobs. Even a cursory examination of the job design literature reveals many different schools of thought: industrial engineering approaches of scientific management and time and

motion study, the psychological approaches of job enrichment and motivating job characteristics, the human factors or ergonomics approaches, and socio-technical approaches to job design (Campion and Thayer, 1985). As observed by Morgeson and Humphrey, (2007) from the early time–motion studies of Taylor (1911) to the intense interest in motivational aspects of work in the 1970s (Hackman & Oldham, 1980), literally thousands of studies have been conducted examining work design issues and there is good reason for such interest, as study after study has shown that work design is important for a range of individual, group, and organizational outcomes (Morgeson & Campion, 2003; Parker & Wall, 1998; Wall & Martin, 1987). One of the main constructs addressed by Aycan et al. (2000) under HRM practices in comparing the cultural impact on HRM practices among 10 countries was Job Design. Following Hackman and Oldham's (1980) conceptualization of enriched jobs they selected three measurements; feedback, autonomy, task significance and skill variety.

Job Design is defined by Opatha (2009) as the function of arranging tasks, duties and responsibilities into an organizational unit of work for the purpose of accomplishing the primary goals and objectives of the organization. Daft (1994) defines Job Design as the application of motivational theories to the structure of work for improving productivity and satisfaction. Job design has also been defined as the process by which managers decide individual job tasks and authority (Gibson, Ivancevich & Donnelly, 1994).

Some modern approaches to job design can be identified as follows. Campion and Thayer, (1985), identify four major approaches for job designing, i.e., motivational, mechanistic, biological and perpetual methods. Among them, the most commonly investigated approach has been the motivational work design (Morgeson and Humphrey, 2007).

Motivational Job Design is the amount of motivational features a job has when it is evaluated as a total entity (Campion, 1991). Mechanistic approach consists of the principles extracted mainly from classic texts on scientific management including F. Taylor, (1911) and motion study of Gilbreth (1911). According to Werther and Davis (1989), the mechanistic approach stresses efficiency in effort, time, labour costs, training and employee learning time and it is especially effective when dealing with poorly educated workers or workers with little industrial experience. The discipline bases for biological approach were the biological sciences, especially work physiology, biomechanics, and anthropometry and the perpetual method was based on experimental psychology. According to Morgeson and Humphrey (2007), task characteristics, knowledge characteristics, social characteristics and contextual characteristics are identified as the main components of motivational job design approach.

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Task characteristics are primarily concerned with how the work itself is accomplished and the range and nature of tasks associated with a particular job where autonomy, task variety, task significance, task identity and feedback from the job are identified as task characteristics (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2007). Furthermore, they suggest knowledge characteristics include job complexity, information processing, problem solving, skill variety and specialization, while identifying social support, interdependence, interaction outside the organization and feedback from others as social characteristics. The contextual job design characteristics consist of ergonomics, physical demand, work conditions and equipment use.

Opatha (2009) summarizes two major categories of job design elements, i.e., efficiency elements, which include division of labor, standardization and specialization, and behavioral elements which include skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback. As noted by Dale and Cooper (1992), the 'Job Characteristics Model' developed by Hackman and Oldham (1980) also identifies skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback as core job characteristics involved in job satisfaction and motivation.

Several techniques are used to design jobs in the modern organizations. A key outcome for employees from job enrichment practices is the experience of job autonomy: the extent to which employees experience a sense of choice and discretion in their work (Griffin et al., 2001). Job enrichment practices, such as increasing job variety, can result in higher job satisfaction because of higher levels of perceived autonomy (Griffin et al., 2001).

### **Supervisory Practices**

Being a manager, a person undertakes the duty of working with and through other people to obtain their contributions to achieve the common goal of the organization. Since all the subordinates have their own personal goals to accomplish, the manager has a great responsibility of leading them towards the accomplishment of organizational goals while supporting them to realize their personal goals. The support and consideration of supervisors is a strong determinant of job satisfaction in a wide variety of job settings (Yukl, 1989).

In this scope, a manager has to cover up several HRM practices in order to lead and direct the subordinate workforce successfully. Supervisors play an important role in structuring the work environment and providing information and feedback to employees (Griffin et al., 2001). According to Durham et al., (1997) supervisor behaviour has an impact on the affective reactions of team members.

Immediate supervisors also provide salient information about the support of the border organization for change and their behaviour is likely to be interpreted as representative of wider organizational processes (Kozlowski and Doherty, 1989). Griffin et al., (2001) conclude that the implicit assumption that supervisory support has less impact on employees when teams are introduced but even though supervisor support was less important in companies where there was greater use of teams, this support was still positively related to satisfaction.

Bhal and Ansari (1996) empirically demonstrated that measuring the quality of interaction in Leader–Member Exchange could be translated into just two dimensions: perceived contribution and affect. Subsequently, Liden and colleagues (Liden & Maslyn 1998; Liden, Sparrowe & Wayne 1997) came out with a four-dimensional LMX model, incorporating contribution (perception of the current level of work-oriented activity each member puts forth toward the mutual goals of the Leader–Member Exchange dyad), loyalty (the expression of public support for the goals and the personal character of the other member of the dyad), affect (the mutual affection leader-member dyads have for each other based primarily on interpersonal attraction), and professional respect (perception of the degree to which each member of the dyad has built a reputation within and/or outside the organization).

As observed by Hung, Ansari and Aafaqi (2004), researches have shown that LMX has significant associations with many important outcomes. For instance, LMX is positively related to organizational commitment, satisfaction with supervision, supervisory ratings of job performance, satisfaction with work, and frequency of promotions (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). On the other hand, it is negatively related to turnover intentions (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). More specifically, Duchon et al. (1986) reported that LMX correlates positively with organizational commitment.

Aycan et al. (2000) suggest empowering supervision as an important aspect of HRM where the cultural impact is high. They measure field by goal setting practices, empowerment practices, opportunity for self-control and supervisory control. Goal setting practices demonstrate the extent to which managers and subordinates jointly set specific goals as well as develop specific plans to achieve the goal (Erez and Early, 1987; Locke and Latham, 1984). Conger and Kanungo (1988) explain empowerment practice of a supervisor shows the extent to which manager encourages and provides support to supervisors.

In addition to that, managing employee discipline is another duty of a supervisor's role. Discipline is defined as the management action to encourage compliance with organizational standards (Werther and Davis, 1989) and it is further identified as the practice of making people

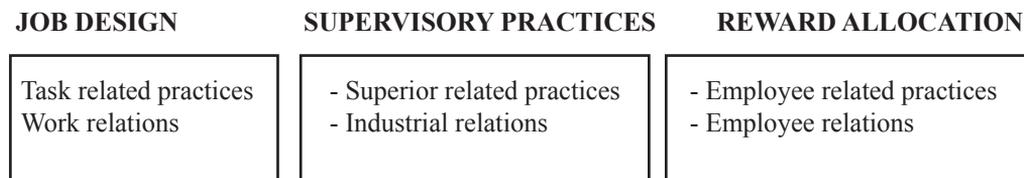
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obey strict rules of behaviour and of punishing them when they do not obey them (Collins Birmingham University English Language Dictionary, 1987). It is clear that the role of a supervisor includes the job of maintaining the discipline in the organization.

**Reward Allocation**

The way of distributing rewards is an important motivational tool in work organizations (Erez & Earley, 1993). Understanding cross-cultural differences in reward allocation is of great importance because of implications for managers around the globe (Erez & Earley, 1993). After reviewing cross-cultural reward allocation studies, James (1993) concluded that individualists follow equity regardless of the group membership of their interaction partner, whereas collectivists are more likely to use equality when interacting with an in-group member but to allocate rewards equitably without group members even more strongly than would individualists. The three most common allocation rules in cross cultural research are equity (Adams, 1965), equality and need (Deutsch, 1975; Leventhal, 1976). Seniority has been added more recently as a fourth allocation principle of importance for cross-cultural research (Chen, 1995; Rusbult, Insko, & Lin, 1995).

The equity theory is concerned with the ‘just distribution of wealth, power, goods, and services in society’ (Adams, 1965). Equality refers to the principle that all organizational members receive the same regardless of their contribution (Deutsch, 1975). The need rule mandates that organizational members receive allocations depending on their personal need (Deutsch, 1975). Finally, seniority refers to a more generous allocation to more senior and older individuals.



**Figure 5: Fundamental HRM practices enacted in the work organization**

## **Conclusion**

The ancient Sri Lankan public administrative system had a unique organization for work, enacted through numerous institutions. This organization was featured with Rajakari system, caste structure, formal and informal decision-making mechanisms and commanding systems, and physical and natural resource-based resource allocation systems in the social organization. Indigenous HRM practices have been derived from such organized institutions. Findings of this study lead us to understand certain relationships which are directives for future researchers. We propose them as below.

### *Propositions drawn from the findings*

Findings of the recent study lead us to the following propositions.

P1: Indigenous HRM practices in the public administrative system in Sri Lanka have been derived from the (traditional) social organization for work

P2: Institutions revolved around work roles, authority and resource allocation in the social organization have synthesized the HRM system of the ancient public administrative system in Sri Lanka

P3: Indigenous HRM system in Sri Lanka have their roots basically on job design, supervisory practices and reward allocation practices

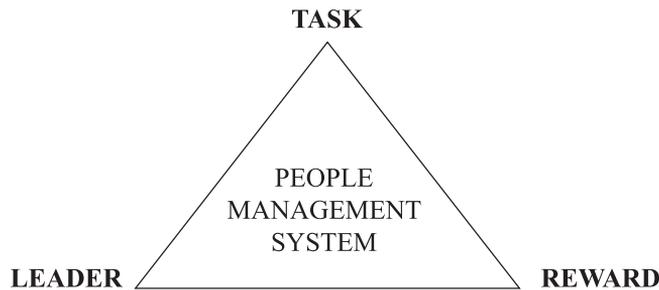
## **Implications**

The present study provides several implications for practitioners and theorists. First, the findings of the study emphasize the embeddedness of social institutions and the indigenous HRM practices in the ancient Sri Lanka. At the same time, one may have to realize the inseparable nature of the social organization and the local public administrative system in the country. This implies that the merits and demerits of the existing local public administrative system have been consequential upon the ancient institutional set up of the country. These findings further indicate the net of institutions and the interdependencies among them. As apparent, the indigenous HRM practices are also dependent on each other. Next, the relations shown between the organization

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of work and the HRM practices imply that HRM practices are shaped by and evolved in line with the evolution of work organization. As the evolution of work organizations are context-driven, any ad hoc importation of new practices or best practices would not yield much benefits for local organizations. Further, this is an indication to the contemporary HR practitioners on the need of timely and contextual revisit and revision of existing HR practices.

Our implication for organizational and HRM theorists is centered on the three-fold functions which appear as the building blocks of indigenous HRM practices. Thus, task (indicated by job design), the leader (indicated by supervisory practices) and the reward have been the keystones on which the foundation for people management system was laid in the work organizations.



**Figure 6: Building blocks of people management system in the ancient Sri Lanka**

This reminds us that human resources are basically influenced by these three highly important aspects of the organizational condition. Thus, further investigations into the triangle of task, leader and reward would reveal more speculations behind the realities of the individual behavior in organizations.

Further research avenues unveiled through this framework includes the possibility of expanding investigations into other territories, comparisons and theoretical developments. It enables studying indigenous people management practices in different localities and comparing them with each other, identifying similarities and differences. As such, the proposed framework offers a rational guideline to explore indigenous practices of managing people in contexts similar to the present research setting. Especially, it would be useful in Asian contexts which have passed phases of similar socio-cultural, economic and political changes and transformations during the past ages such as colonization and independence. Once expanded into similar contexts outside the country, the model can be used to make cross cultural comparisons too.

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