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**SOCIAL ORGANISATION AND DECISION-
MAKING IN IRRIGATION**

Sociological
A SOCIAL STUDY OF A PURANA VILLAGE TANK SYSTEM IN THE
NORTH CENTRAL DRY ZONE, SRI LANKA

A thesis submitted
by

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

This study primarily deals with the decision-making process and social organization in irrigation as observed in a dry zone tank village community. It analyses the forces behind decision-making and organisational mechanism within the irrigation community from an anthropological and sociological perspective.

The primary means of survival of people in the study area is irrigation agriculture. Irrigation agriculture motivates people to work as an organised community. Organization of people generates a great deal of relationships or social interactions among their community resulting in a social network based on values, traditions and norms. This social network intertwined with the natural environment gives birth to the complete social structure.

Within this social system, a whole series of activities is being undertaken by the people. These activities are analysed in the context of rituals, caste and *variga* (group), *pangukarayo* (shareholders) and *puranawela* (old field) and several other concepts. The thesis particularly analyses in depth the issue of kinship within the community in relation to decision-making and organization in irrigation.

Tank-based irrigation is a result of collective effort. If the concept of collective spirit is rejected, the whole minor irrigation system within the community will break down. If, on the other hand, a high degree of co-operation is achieved, in which kinship plays a decisive and critical role, the community could sustain the time-tested traditional irrigation management in perpetuity.