

# **A Comparative Study on Ancient and Contemporary Fisheries Management Systems in Inland Reservoirs of Anuradhapura District in Sri Lanka: A Review**

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Archaeological evidences prove that fishery activities were initiated during pre-historic era. According to historical evidences, inland fishery was one of the important economic activities in ancient Sri Lanka and it was regularized after introduction of freshwater fish species during British period. This study was focused on investigation of ancient and contemporary fisheries management systems under four criteria such as, decision making, fishing gears, fish varieties, fish selling and revenue process in Anuradhapura District. 220 fishermen were selected using stratified sampling and data were collected using self-administrated questionnaire, interviews with key persons and group discussions with fishermen. Secondary information was collected from National Aquaculture Development Authority (NAQDA), Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources and library survey. Results of the present study revealed that current fishery practices were managed through community based organizations, NAQDA officers and strong legal framework. As recorded in literature, ancient inland fishery activities were managed by *Welwidane* with the support of set of norms. In ancient time *karaka*, *Kemana*, *Iratiya*, *Athnagu* were used as fishing gears to catch native fishes such as *Heteropneustes* sp, *Anabas* sp, *Channa* sp, *Wallago* sp. At present, pole & line and gill nets were used as legally accepted gears to catch exotic food fishes such as Indian/ Chinese carps and Tilapia. Mainly barter system was applied during the ancient period and *Machhabaga* & *Diyabeduma* taxes were applied for harvest & usage of tank. Currently, organized fish selling system is practicing at landing sites and in well managed fishery systems, toll collection was observed. However, no direct taxes were applied in contemporary systems. Both pros and cons were identified in two systems. Abiding nature of villagers, dissemination of harvest and community services practiced can be taken as positive examples from ancient system.

*Keywords:* Native fish, Fisheries history, Fishery practices, Fisheries management

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