

THE SCIENCE OF IRRIGATION METHODS AS GLEANED FROM EPIGRAPHS AND LITERATURE IN THE TAMIL COUNTRY

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ABSTRACT

One of the most important developments of the Modern period, which could be called early modern, was the rise of a new philosophy, the new experimental science. This used to be understood as a history of European achievement from the Renaissance forward, a universe changing paradigm shift that defined the modern world. There is no doubt that the growth of modern science forms one of the most significant phenomena of the modern age, affirmed today in the massive public and private funding for research into natural science and medicine. But the question for the historian is, what does this modern phenomenon have to do with the early modern period? The last generation has been an exciting time to come of age in the history of science: the field has definitively emerged from its beginnings in the history of philosophy, intellectual history, and the discrete histories of sciences written by and for their practitioners, to offer answers to this question that are more complex, less modern, less triumphal, and less Eurocentric.

Our knowledge of the art or practice of farming, especially growing of staple crops, in South India during the early Iron Age is necessarily based on the finds at Adichchanallur on the banks of the Tamaraparani river in Tamil Nadu. Material evidence from the place shows that the inhabitants of Adichchanallur, cultivated rice. For the cultivation of rice they used iron implements such as the thrust hoes, draw hoes and above all the plough shares. In the Sangam literary works⁵ the use of such implements for agricultural operations is well depicted. It is, therefore, a fair assumption that the Iron Age people at different locations in South India perfected rice cultivation using the iron implements and utilising the available limited irrigation facilities.

Key Word: Modern Age, Modern Science Forms, Temple Architecture, Sangam Period