

The Birth and Function of 'Bissokotuwa' in Irrigation Technology of Ancient Sri Lanka.

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Abstract

This brief paper deals with analyzing the function of the bissokotuwa a structure found in ancient vewas (water reservoir) in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has one of the most glorious ancient irrigation systems in the world. Ancient Sri Lanka boasts a distinguished hydraulic civilization. The technology used to construct the irrigation system of Sri Lanka is unmatched, also fascinated and acclaimed by present irrigation engineers. The irrigation works in ancient Sri Lanka, in the reign of King Pandukabhaya (about 300 BC) and under continuous development for the next thousand years, were some of the most complex irrigation systems of the ancient world. In addition to constructing underground canals, Ancient Sri Lankans were among the first to build completely artificial reservoirs to store water. The 'vewa' (irrigation tank) and the lives of ancient villagers were and still are inherently, interconnected. If there wasn't a vewa to be seen in a particular area there was neither a paddy field nor a village in the region. The function of the sluice in a vewa too was extraordinary. This research is focused on one of the most important components of water reservoir called 'bissokotuwa'. Unlike typical reservoirs, the sluice in a vewa functioned together with a unique device known as the 'bissokotuwa'. There was made an effort to identify the birth of bissokotuwa component, importance and the role of bissokotuwa in the irrigation process, technical knowledge behind the structural background of bissokotuwa and the environmental knowledge of ancient people of Sri Lanka. This research has mainly done by using secondary sources.

Keywords: Vewa, Sluice Gate, Irrigation Technology, Water Pressure