

***Amunu* or anicuts (dams) in the dry zone of ancient Sri Lanka and water management techniques**

Chandana Rohana Withanachchi
Department of Archaeology & Heritage Management
Rajarata University of Sri Lanka
Mihinthale
chandana.withanachchi@ymail.com

ABSTRACT

The knowledge of *amunu* or anicuts (Dams) and the water management techniques that associated with them in ancient Sri Lanka form an integral part of the island's national heritage. The concept of 'achieving the targets of needs' has been well responded by the inhabitants of the dry zone by generating a considerable knowledge experimented over the ages and proved successful. The techniques that they applied in water management were practical in all aspects. The anicuts constructed in ancient Sri Lanka provide us an ample ground for research into their location, construction plan, friendliness to the environment and varied utilization.

The excess water of a river that flowed down stream diverted to an area where water is much needed. The diverted water was used not only for the agriculture but also for other human needs as well. Accordingly the objectives of the ancient anicuts were multifaceted.

The dry zone planes in the island are enriched with a considerable number of rivers and the excess water of many of them has been managed successfully by way of anicuts. At least one or several anicuts survive with these rivers for us to study. Before construction of large tanks the anicuts played an important role in local water management system. The durability, easy maintenance, security of land and people has been the factors that promoted construction of anicuts.

My recent research conducted on the anicuts revealed much hither to unknown facts that could even be useful for the modern society. The on-site excavations of this research was supported by evidence recorded in the chronicles and inscriptions concluded with a great success. The facts uncovered included the selection of sites, distribution pattern, methods of construction, material used and above all planning and creativity involved are worth sharing at a forum of archaeologists and those interested.

Key words: local irrigation, water management system, irrigation methodology, irrigation technology