

# Mathematics of the Practitioners in Early Modern South India

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The task of the social historian of mathematics is to historically ground styles of mathematical reasoning, which are usually considered context free. Rarely do mathematical texts from the past reveal the social context that enabled the systematization of computational knowledge. One possibility is to identify the layers of orientation of the computational processes in relation to the communities of practitioners and their institutions. The context of work of the practitioner in the social hierarchy of production and distribution provides us with space to explore the communication and systematization of mathematical skills. I will discuss certain features of Tamil mathematical texts, generically called the Kanakkatikaram where rules were classified in relation to the context and objects of computation - Measuring Land, Grain, Wages, Gold, Stone and Time. Such an orientation to practice of particular occupational groups evident in these texts also accompanied a generalized scheme of learning in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Tamil country. I will attempt to show how these Tamil texts inform two spheres of knowledge transmission - that of apprenticeship and school based learning in the Tamil tinnai schools.