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# Tamil Society and Culture

## PRE-HISTORIC TAMILAGAM

we need to know about the prehistoric cultures of Tamil Nadu. Hence, let us see how and when humans first emerged here, before knowing about the genesis of Tamil culture.

Timeline : The Course of Cultures in Ancient Tamillagam		
Culture	Time Period	Cultural Traits
Palaeolithic Period	Circa. 20,00,000 years to circa. 8,000 BCE	Hand axes, cleavers Hunting and gathering
Mesolithic Period	Circa. 8,000 years to circa. 1,300 BCE	Microlithic tools No knowledge of metal Hunting of animals and birds Gathering of plant food
Neolithic Period	Circa. 2,000 BCE to 1,000 BCE	Polished Stone Axes Microliths Domestication of animals Cultivation of crops Multiplicity of groups Co-existence of hunter-gatherers and pastoral groups

Iron Age	Circa. 1,300 BCE to 500 BCE	<p>Megalithic burial custom</p> <p>Co-existence of hunter-gatherers and pastoral groups</p> <p>Development of chiefdom</p> <p>Knowledge of iron, black and red ware, black ware ceramics</p> <p>Craft specialisation, specialised groups: potters, blacksmiths</p>
Early Historic and Sangam Age	300 BCE to 300 CE	<p>Cultural traits of Iron age</p> <p>Monarchies of Chera, Chola and Pandya</p> <p>Development of hero worship</p> <p>Poetic traditions and literature</p> <p>Trade and exchange by sea</p>

### Lower Palaeolithic Culture in Tamil Nadu

One of the oldest Stone Age tools in the world made by human ancestors, called hominins, had been produced in Tamil Nadu. These stone tools are found near the Chennai region at several sites, especially at Athirampakkam. The archaeological excavations at this site and cosmic-ray exposure dating of the artefacts suggest that people lived here about 1.5 to 2 million years ago.

The Kosasthalaiyar river is one of the major cradles of human ancestors in the world. The people who lived here belonged to the species of *Homo erectus*. Archaeological excavation Refers to digging undertaken to recover archaeological evidence such as stone tools, pottery, animal bones and pollens, in order to understand the past lifestyle of humans. Cosmic-ray exposure dating – A method in which exposure to cosmogenic rays is done for dating the samples.

In 1863, Sir Robert Bruce Foote, a geologist from England, first discovered Palaeolithic tools at Pallavaram near Chennai. They are the earliest finds of such tools in India. Hence, the hand axe assemblages were considered the Madras Stone Tool Industry. The tools that he discovered are now housed in the Chennai Museum.

The Palaeolithic people hunted wild animals and gathered the naturally available fruits, roots, nuts and leaves. They did not have knowledge of iron and pottery making, which developed much later in history.

Hand axes and cleavers are the important tool types of the Lower Palaeolithic period.

These tools fitted with a wooden and bone handle were used for cutting, piercing and digging. The people of this time also used hammer stones and spheroids.

The quartzite pebbles and cobbles were chosen as raw materials. The tools are found in the soil deposits and also in the exposed river side. They occur at Pallavaram, Gudiyam cave, Athirampakkam, Vadamadurai, Erumaivettipalayam and Parikulam.

The Lower Palaeolithic tools are also found in the North Arcot and Dharmapuri districts. The people belonging to this period used basalt rocks for manufacturing artefacts.

However, the southern part of Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka do not have evidence of Lower Palaeolithic Culture.

Basalt rocks are igneous rocks: Igneous rocks are those formed from the molten lava from the earth.

The Lower Palaeolithic Culture is datable to about 2 - 1.5 million years at Athirampakkam. This cultural phase continued in other parts of India up to 300,000 years ago.

### **Middle Palaeolithic Culture in Tamil Nadu**

In the course of time, the Middle Palaeolithic Culture emerged during 3,85,000 - 1,72,000 years ago. The tool types of this period underwent a change and smaller artefacts were used. Cores, flakes, scrapers, knives, borers, Levalloisian flakes, hand axes and cleavers are the artefact types of this period. Compared to the previous phase, these tool types became smaller in size.

Evidence for the Middle Palaeolithic Culture can be observed in some parts of Tamil Nadu. In the southern part of Tamil Nadu, at T. Pudupatti and Sivarakkottai, artefacts of the Middle Palaeolithic tools have been collected. Also near Thanjavur and Ariyalur, similar artefacts have been found.

### **Mesolithic Culture in Tamil Nadu**

In many parts of the world, and in some parts of India, the Upper Palaeolithic Culture succeeded the Middle Palaeolithic Culture. There is no evidence for the Upper Palaeolithic Culture in Tamil Nadu. But the people who used microliths or small-stone artefacts lived in many parts of Tamil Nadu. Since this cultural period Culture, it is known as Mesolithic Culture or Middle Stone Age.

Evidence for the existence of Mesolithic hunter-gatherers is found at Chennai, North Arcot, Dharmapuri, Salem, Coimbatore, Ariyalur, Tiruchirappalli, Pudukkottai, Madurai, Sivagangai, Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari.

The teri sites near Thoothukudi have evidence of microlithic artefacts. These sites have red sand dunes called teris. Mesolithic people might have engaged in fishing activities. The microlithic artefacts of southern Tamil Nadu are also found in the coastal regions of Sri

Lanka.

Geologists argue that the Tamil Nadu region and Sri Lanka remained connected before 5000 BCE when the sea level was low. The people of this period used small artefacts made of chert and quartz. The tool types are scrapers, lunates and triangles. These people hunted wild animals and gathered fruits, nuts and roots for their subsistence. Scrapers are tools used for scraping the surfaces. Scrapers are similar to the tools used in the kitchen for removing skin of vegetables. Triangles are tools in the shape of triangles. Lunates are tools in the shape of a crescent.

### **Neolithic Culture in Tamil Nadu**

The culture that domesticated animals and cultivated crops is called Neolithic. It is known as the New Stone Age. The Neolithic people used polished stone axes called celts. Cattle rearing was their main occupation. They lived in small villages with houses made of thatched roof and walls plastered with clay. Evidence of Neolithic village is found at Payyampalli in Vellore district and a few sites in the Dharmapuri region.

Payyampalli is a village in Vellore district of Tamil Nadu. The earliest evidence for the domestication of animals and cultivation of plants is found at this site, which was excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India. Evidence for pottery making and cultivation of horse gram and green gram has been found in this village.

These Neolithic sites were part of the Southern Neolithic Culture of India. They are mainly concentrated in the Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka regions. The Neolithic people used stone axes fitted on a wooden handle. These polished stone axes are worshipped in many village temples of Tamil Nadu even today.

### **Iron Age/Megalithic period**

The cultural period that succeeded the Neolithic is called the Iron Age. As the name suggests, people used iron technology. It preceded the Sangam Age. The Iron Age was a formative period and the foundation for the Sangam Age was laid in this time.

During the Iron Age, many parts of Tamil Nadu were occupied by people. An exchange relationship developed among the people. The people of this age had knowledge of metallurgy and pottery making. They used iron and bronze objects and gold ornaments. They used shell ornaments and beads made of carnelian and quartz.

The evidence for Iron Age is found at many sites including Adhichanallur in Tirunelveli district, Sanur near Madhuranthakam and Sithannavasal near Pudukkottai. Megalithic burial sites are found in the whole of Tamil Nadu.

## **Megalithic Burial Types**

The Iron Age is also known as megalithic, since people created burials with large stones for the dead people. Within these burials, the skeletons or a few bones of the dead persons were placed along with grave goods including iron objects, carnelian beads and bronze objects.

Some of the burials do not have human bones and they have only the grave goods. They may be called memorial burials.



A Menhir



An urn covered with lids in Adhichanallur.



A stone circle with Menhir and the capstone.



Sarcophagus



Dolmen



Cist, Kodumanal.



Kodakkal, Kerala.



Toppikkal, Kerala.



Paththikal, Kerala.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES IN TAMILNADU**

### **KORKAI**

Korkai is a small village in Srivaikuntam Taluk of Tuticorin district. It is situated at a distance of 3 km to the north of the river Tamaraparani. The sea originally had receded about 6 km to the east. The river Tamaraparani skirted this town in ancient days. The site is referred to in Tamil Sangam literature, and has attracted the notices of the classical geographers as an important port of pearl fishery.



In the excavation a structure with nine courses of bricks in six rows was unearthed at the depth of 75 cm from surface level. Below the structure three large sized rings placed one over the other (probably soakage jars) were found.

Inscribed potsherds bearing Tamil Brahmi letters assignable, to 300 BCE to 200 CE were also found. Charcoal samples were collected which were assigned to 785 BCE, by the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai

### **PANCHALANKURICHI**

Panchalankurichi was the capital of the Nayaka chief, Vira Pandya Kattabomman at the close of the 18th century. It is situated in Ottappidaram taluk of Tuticorin District. The Panchalankurichi fort area measuring 35 acres remained as a mound. The aim of the excavation was to find out the remnants of the palace of Kattabomman.

The excavation revealed the main palace with its east facing entrance in the southern end. Three rooms on each side flanked the entrance. There was a square pit about one and a half meters lined with lime plaster probably intended for storing grains. A passage with a slope to the north led to the audience hall, which is the most impressive part of the structure. It had a raised platform at the western end, built of brick.

### **VASAVASAMUDRAM**

Vasavasamudram is a coastal village in Kanchipuram district and lies eleven miles south of Mamallapuram, and north of Vayalur, another historic site. The exploration revealed conical jars and neck of an amphorae and proves the fact that this site had trade contacts with Rome during 1st and 2nd century CE.

In the excavation two ring wells were exposed. Both the ring wells were found close to each other. These two ring wells were also very close to a brick lined tank, which was probably used for dyeing or washing. The important potteries found at Vasavasamudram were rouletted ware, amphorae, red ware, red slipped ware, black slipped ware and brown ware etc.

### **ANAIMALAI**

Anaimalai is situated in Coimbatore district. The Department undertook a trial excavation of a dolmen at Manamboli, a village in the Anaimalai Hills in the year 1969-1970. The dolmen was found on a road under formation on the way to Parambikulam- Aliyar Project.

A small piece of iron point, probably of a pointed knife, was found during the excavation. A few pieces of black and red ware pottery with different burial type potteries were also found.



This excavation has thrown more light on burial type and the burial antiquities. These objects are datable to megalithic period. (1000 BCE to 300 CE).

### **PALLAVAMEDU**

Pallavamedu is a mound situated at the outskirts of Kanchipuram; it is traditionally believed to contain relics of the Pallavas. The present excavation revealed three periods of occupation. The findings are related to the Pallava rule of this region from 6th to 9th century CE.

### **KARUR**

Karur is situated about 70 km from Tiruchirappalli town and is a District headquarters. The excavation results have thrown valuable light on the identification of this place as an important trade centre.

The important findings are several potsherds with Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions assignable to the beginning of the Common era. The inscribed potsherds were found along with Roman Amphorae and rouletted ware of Mediterranean origin.

### **PANAYAKULAM**

Panayakulam is a small village situated in Dharmapuri district. It lies in between Papparapatti and Palakkodu. During excavation at the mound situated about 4 km from Papparapatti on the way to Panayakulam revealed archaeologically important antiquities like potsherds, terracotta figurines, bones, and bricks. Terracotta figurines are assignable to 8th century CE. The excavation proves the continuous occupation of the site from 3rd century CE to 13th century CE.

### **BOLUVAMPATTI**

Boluvampatti is situated in Coimbatore taluk. The excavation was conducted at Kottaikadu, 3 km from Boluvampatti. The village is situated on the west bank of river Kanchi popularly known as river Noyyal, a tributary of the river Cauvery.

Excavations yielded 50 semi-precious stone beads of various sizes and also large number of terracotta ear lobes. Other findings are iron objects, shell bangles, an important terracotta seal obtained from the bottom portion of a pit filled with terracotta lids and cups. Most probably this pit might have been used as kiln. One significant find is the terracotta seal with the royal emblem of a bow and a seated tiger, along with an inscription of 7th century CE characters.

### **KOBANPOLATTU**

The place is situated in the small village of Madurai in Madakkuzha. This area is known as the Kobanpolattu by the name of Kovalan, the hero of Tamil Epic Silapathikaram. The

area was excavated in the region in the year 1980 to find the oldest of the region. Three of the largest adults found in a pit were found. The mouth was opened and found to be man's skull (skull) bone pieces and pot tiles. Also, a square copper coin is 45 cm. Found at a depth. It is noteworthy that the fish on the side of the coconut is engraved.

## **THONDI**

Thondi is a small village situated about 25 km from Tiruvadanai in Ramanathapuram District. It was a port town during the Sangam period.

Trial excavation was conducted at a mound near Thondi Amman Temple. Potteries and bricks belonging to late period like coarse red ware were collected

## **GANGAIKONDACHOLAPURAM**

Gangaikondacholapuram is situated in Jayangondam Taluk of Perambalur District. It was a secondary capital of the Cholas for about 250 years. The city seems to have had two fortifications, one inner and the other outer.

Excavation conducted at two locations at Maligaimedu revealed the remains of royal palace, built with burnt bricks. The ceilings were covered with flat tiles. The pillars were probably made of polished wood, supported on granite bases. Excavations revealed brick walls about 1.10cm in thickness. On the foundation wall, granite stone pillar bases were embedded at an equal distance of 2 meters. Bone objects with animal figures, ivory carvings, quartz beads, shell bangle pieces and stone objects were found during the excavation.

The excavation also yielded celadon ware and porcelain sherds. Both of them are of Chinese origin. This shows the contact of the Chola kingdom with China during 11th to 12th centuries CE.

## **KANNANUR**

Kannanur was the capital of the Hoysala kings during 13th century CE. It is now called Samayapuram and it is situated in Tiruchirappalli District

The excavation was conducted to trace the old passage of the channel supplying water to Kannanur. The excavation yielded a large number of coarse red ware besides a few sherds of Chinese celadon ware, medieval roof tiles of various types, few terracotta beads, glass bangles, studs and a large number of iron nails.

Tentatively the date for the brick structures and the water channel is assignable to 13th-14th centuries CE

## **KURUMBANMEDU**

Kurumbanmedu is situated 3 km on the western side of the big temple at Thanjavur.

The imperial Cholas had Thanjavur as their capital. The palace site of the Imperial Cholas might have been situated in this area. During excavation, medieval period antiquities like tiles, big bricks and terracotta lamps and spouts were collected.

## **PALAYARAI**

Palayarai was the secondary capital city of the medieval Cholas. It is situated about 7 kms away from Kumbakonam. Megalithic urn burials were already reported from Nandanmedu near Palayarai. The excavation at a mound covering an area of 20 acres of land yielded early potsherds like black and red ware belonging to the megalithic period. Medieval potsherds such as coarse red ware, black ware, porcelain potsherds, glass and shell bangle pieces, terracotta spouts, knobs, terracotta and stone beads and terracotta ear lobes were also found. Heaps of terracotta lamps belonging to the medieval period were also unearthed.

## **ALAGANKULAM**

Alagankulam is a village situated on the east coast in Ramanathapuram Taluk and district. The village is situated on the banks of the river Vaigai and is about three kilometers away from the seashore.

The most significant findings of the excavation are hundreds of potsherds of the Mediterranean region. They include Rouletted ware and Amphorae jar pieces. Pieces of Red ware with Tamil Brahmi letters have been found. They are assignable to the first century BCE. Other antiquities include beads, perforated tiles, and bricks in various levels.

Three Roman coins were unearthed. They contain the figure of the head of the Roman Emperor on one side and the figure of goddess of victory, holding a globe on the other side. The legend on them shows that the Roman Emperor Valentine II who ruled around 375 CE issued the coins. Undersea exploration work was also conducted at Poompuhar in the year 1996-1997 in collaboration with National Institute of Oceanography, Goa. Lead ingots were obtained in the search

## **TIRUKKOVILUR**

Tirukkovilur is situated on the southern bank of the river Pennar in Tirukkovilur taluk of Villupuram district. It was the capital of Malayaman chieftains of the Sangam age. The excavation conducted here yielded amphorae pieces, red slipped ware, red ware, pottery pieces with graffiti marks and potteries of later period datable from 100 BCE to 1300 CE.

An interesting finding is the occurrence of a pipeline measuring 9.5 metres laid with fifty terracotta pipes. This pipeline must have been used for bringing drinking water from the

river or channel nearby. Another important finding from this trench was a red ware potsherd having been embedded with a female figure datable to 4th century CE.

## **KODUMANAL**

The Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology in collaboration with the Tamil University, Thanjavur conducted excavations at Kodumanal situated in Perundurai taluk in Erode District

**The excavation had brought to light two cultural periods viz:**

Megalithic period

The early historic period

Black and red ware, black slipped ware, russet coated ware and red slipped ware were found in the excavation. Apart from these, beads made of quartz and clay, inscribed potsherds and graffiti potsherds were unearthed.

A megalithic cairn circle at this site was also excavated. The grave goods such as lids, bowls, dishes, four legged jars and ring stands were found placed outside the primary cist. At the southeastern side of this primary cist an urn was found which surprisingly yielded 782 beads made of carnelian. An iron sword measuring 169 cm length was also found at the eastern side of the main cist. Besides, four iron swords, a copper toddy filter with lotus and peacock designs, double edged axe, small daggers, stirrup like object, potsherds bearing graffiti were also gathered.

## **SENDAMANGALAM**

Sendamangalam is situated in the Ulundurpet taluk of Villupuram District. In the 12th- 13th centuries CE this village was in a flourishing stage and it served as the headquarters of the Kadava chiefs. A brass seal, containing the royal emblem of the Pandyas i.e. two fishes and the royal whip, belonging to the 13th century CE was collected from this place during surface exploration conducted by the staff of the Department. So a systematic excavation was conducted at Maligaiveli and Kottaimedu near Kuyavanodai here.

Rouletted ware, black and red ware pieces and a ring well belonging to 1st-2nd century CE were discovered. A number of terracotta figurines were obtained.

## **PADAVEDU**

Padavedu is situated in Polur taluk of Tiruvannamalai District; it was once known as Marudarasar Padaiveedu. It was the capital of the Sambuvaraya kings. The Department of Archaeology conducted excavations in the year 1992-93 at two sites namely Vetagiripalayam and Kottaikaraimedu.

The overall cultural sequences of this site could be characterized as period 1 and period 2. Period 1 datable to 13th and 14th century CE is governed by the occurrence of brick structure with the channels used for bringing drinking water and draining out sewage water and ring wells. While Period 2 assignable to 14th and 16th centuries CE is marked by the presence of smoking pipes, Sultan coins and a number of decorated red ware sherds and bangle pieces

## **POOMPUHAR**

Poompuhar, situated at the confluence of river Cauvery with the sea, was a flourishing port city and the second capital of the Cholas in the Sangam period. It is situated in the Sirkazhi taluk of Nagappatinam District. The Department of Archaeology conducted excavation at Kizharveli and Dharmakulam areas.

The Kizharveli excavation revealed two brick walls, running Northeast-Southwest at a depth of 20 cm. Soft clay had been used as a binding material. These two brick walls were placed wide apart and provided with platforms, the intention being that there should be free movement of water. Four wooden poles were found, two made of the Palmyra tree trunk and the other two made of Iluppai tree trunk (*Bassia Longifolia*). This structure seems to have served as a wharf in the 4th century CE.

## **MALIGAIMEDU**

The excavations were conducted during the year 1999-2000 at Maligaimeedu in Panruti Taluk of Cuddalore district. Three cultural sequences have been revealed from the excavations.

The excavation yielded Black & Red ware, red ware, black ware, rouletted, coarse red ware, inscribed potteries and a copper coin with the Ujjain symbol. The habitation of this site may be fixed between 300 BCE and 1300 CE.

## **TERIRUVELI**

The village Teriruvelli is situated at 20 km east of Mudukulathur and 33 km west of Ramanathapuram town in Mudukulathur taluk of Ramanathapuram district.

In the excavation, coarse-red ware potteries, black ware, black and red ware, grey ware, Roman rouletted ware, russet coated ware and sherds with graffiti marks were unearthed in considerable quantity.

Fifty graffiti sherds were unearthed, among them two sherds were found with fish symbols. The noteworthy finding is a Northern Black Polished ware. Besides this, six inscribed sherds with Brahmi script were also unearthed from the trenches.

The inscribed sherds with Tamil Brahmi script bearing personal names such as Kotrran, Sattan are noteworthy. Antiquities like Hip-hops, terracotta spout, terracotta ring stand,



iron pieces, terracotta lamps, shell bangles, sawed conches, frying pan and carnelian beads belonging to the Sangam period were also unearthed.

## **MANGUDI**

Mangudi is situated in Sankarankoil Taluk of Tirunelveli District. The author of Maduraikanchi i.e. Mangudi Marudanar was supposed to have hailed from this place. Roman pottery pieces were already collected in surface explorations conducted in this village. So with a view to bringing out the history of this place, excavation was conducted in the year 2001-2002 by the Department of Archaeology. 10 trenches were laid bare at the site called Naicker-Punchai.

### **This excavation has brought to light two cultural periods**

1. Microlithic Period
2. Early historic Period

The significant find from this site is a black and red ware piece containing Tamil Brahmi inscription. The inscription has been deciphered as “ Kurummangala Athan yi Yanai Po”. This belongs to the Sangam period (2nd century BCE).

## **PERUR**

Perur, once known as Kanchivaiperur is situated in a strategical location near Coimbatore. From July-October 2002, the Department of Archaeology conducted excavations in this site at two locations namely Kallimedu inside the Santhalinga Ramasamy Adigalar College Campus and Thiruneetrumedu.

An important find from this site is a circular terracotta seal having the figures of bow surrounded by two lamps and a crescent above engraved on it. This is supposed to be the Chera emblem. So far such terracotta objects were considered as hip hop or weighing stones. It is believed to be now that such objects served as seals also. Another significant find is a broken portion of the terracotta figurine assignable to 5th and 6th centuries CE. It resembles the figures found in excavations conducted at Mathura in Uttarpradesh. Various objects like shell bangle pieces and beads made of semi-precious stones were also found in this excavation.

## **ANDIPATTI**

Andipatti is located at 15 Km from Chengam town in Chengam taluk of Tiruvannamalai District. Systematic excavation was carried out by the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology in the year 2004-2005.

Excavation at two sites namely Nattamedu and Sambalkadu, yielded pottery of Megalithic and Historic period. Pottery collection include Black and Red ware sherds and coarse red



ware sherds. On the basis of unearthed antiquities such as terracotta objects and figurines of 6th to 12th Century CE and megalithic appendages, it is understood that this site had been continuously inhabited since 1st Century BCE till 12th Century CE.

The remarkable findings include inscribed postsherds, graffiti postsherds and terracotta figurines of mother goddess. Two cultural periods were demarcated from the unearthed antiquities.

### **MODUR**

Modur is situated at 15 Km from Dharmapuri town, Palacode taluk, Dharmapuri District. Subsequent to exploration at three habitational mounds, which yielded Neolithic and Megalithic antiquities, excavation was carried out in the year 2004-2005.

The excavation at Modur yielded good number of Neolithic Celts, Rubbing stones, Hammer stones, Grinding stones and Megalithic appendages. Besides this, terracotta objects such as figurines of Ram (Goat) and Mother Goddess were also collected. Three cultural habitations are identified and are characterized with the occurrences of relevant antiquities.

### **MARAKKANAM**

Exploration near Boomeshvar temple yielded terracotta pipes and coarse red ware potsherds. On account of this, trenches were laid in and around Boomeshvar temple and antiquities pertaining to medieval period were collected. The unearthed antiquities include copper coins, gold coin, terracotta spouts, smoking pipes, terracotta utensils, iron objects, porcelain sherds and copper rings.

Present excavation at Marakkanam has revealed two cultural periods namely Medieval and Modern periods, which has been arrived from the findings.

### **PARIKULAM**

Parikulam is located at 4 Km from Poondi reservoir, Tiruvallur Taluk in Tiruvallur District. The exploration in and around this village yielded good number of Palaeolithic tools and wood fossil from Mettupalayam, a nearby village. Based on this, a systematic excavation was conducted here in the year 2005-2006.

Excavation at Parikulam has revealed four stratigraphical layers and yielded various types of tools, which exposed all three Palaeolithic periods such as Lower, Middle and Upper Palaeolithic cultures. The unearthed tools include Hand Axes, Hammers, Cleavers, Scrappers, Discoids, Lunates, Blades and Borers. On account of rich yield of variety of tools from a single site, it can be ascertained that Parikulam might have been a factor.

## **NEDUNKUR**

Nedunkur is situated at 25 Km from Karur town, Aravakurichi Taluk, Karur District. It is considered to be an important historical town, as it is located on the ancient Rajakesari Highways, which connects both west and east coast of South India. Excavation at Nedunkur was carried out in the year 2006-2007.

Excavation conducted in the habitation sites as well as in burial site yielded Black and Red ware sherds, coarse red ware sherds, Black ware sherds and iron objects viz knife, arrow-heads, and spear. More than fifty potshers with varied form of graffiti marks were collected during excavation. Nedunkur excavation has revealed the presence of Iron Age Culture (300 BCE to 300 CE) in this region.

## **MANGULAM**

Mangulam, located at 25 Km from Madurai town, is a well known site for the presence of early Jain Caves and Rock beds in the hillock called Ovamalai. Systematic excavation was conducted at the potential sites of this village during the year 2006-2007.

Potteries of Black and Red ware sherds, coarse red ware sherds, pieces of quartz stones, small sling stones and a copper coin (datable to 13-14th Century CE) were collected from the trench laid near Meenakshipuram. Excavation on the terrace of Jain caves exposed the flooring of a rectangular chamber and brick wall, made of 11 courses of bricks. The size of the bricks is 35 x 18 x 6 cm and clay mortar has been used as binding material.

Excavation has also exposed a small structure in pedestal form which may be assigned to Sangam period. Present excavation has exposed the presence of two cultural periods viz Early and Medieval historic period.

## **SEMBIANKANDIYUR**

Sembiankandiyur, situated on the river bank of Vikrama nadi (Tributary of River Cauvery) is at 15 Km from Mayavaram in Myiladuthurai Taluk, Nagappatinam District. Excavation at this hamlet was conducted in the year 2007-2008.

Excavation yielded Megalithic (Iron Age) appendages like Black and Red ware sherds, Black ware sherds and Red slipped ware sherds. Thirteen graffiti marks were observed in the pottery collection from excavation trenches laid at Sembiankandiyur. Pots (small to big) lids and plates were the common shapes encountered in this excavation. Terracotta hip-hops and stone hip-hops were also recovered from the trenches. Besides this, the occurrences of eight Urns laid in a row were also exposed during excavation.

On the basis of rich yield of Megalithic antiquities, it is ascertained that Sembiankandiyur was inhabited during 1st Century BCE (Megalithic-Iron Age).

## **TARANGAMPADI**

Tarangampadi, the historical port, lies on the East Coast in Poraiyar Taluk of Nagapattinam district. The river Poraiyur locally called Uppanaru, has a confluence with the Bay of Bengal on the Southern side of the fort.

Tarangampadi fort was first constructed in 1620 CE by the Danish. The King of Denmark sent two ships to India under the leadership of Ove Gedde with the help of Roeland Crape of Holland; a treaty was signed between Thanjavur Nayak ruler, Ragunatha Nayak and Ove Gedde on 19 November 1620. This agreement was written in golden leaf. According to the agreement the port Tarangampadi was given to the Danish traders and provision was made for collecting the tax and Danish traders and provision was made for collecting the tax and construction of the fort.

A joint excavation will be conducted by the Danish Government in collaboration with ASI and TNSDA. The excavation was carried out in the northern side of the fort for 20 days in March 2008. Five trenches were laid before the fort and all the trenches were excavated up to the moat level. In this excavation a drop bridge constructed by the Danish period was identified in the entrance of the main gate. This drop bridge may be made up of with the wooden pillars and floor of the entrance was high and brick paved platform. The bridge contains three platforms and all the three are constructed with the help of bricks and mortar. Total breadth of the moat was 24 mts. In this excavation Chinese potteries and smoking pipes made in Denmark in Danish clay were recovered.

## **RAJAKKAL MANGALAM**

This village is situated about 12 km from Valliyur in Tirunelveli District. In the year 2009-10 the department had conducted excavation at Rajakkal Mangalam. The excavated area is located on the northern bank of the river "Nambiyaru" which runs 3 km away from the village.

The excavation revealed the structured temple of the Early Pandyas. The Architectural elements like Adhistana in stone medium and brick structures with lime mortar were unearthed from the excavation. Stone sculpture and stucco images also found along with architectural remains. The sculptures are exhibited in Tirumalai Nayak Mahal, Madurai.

## **TALAICHANKADU**

Talaichankadu village is situated in Nagapattinam District. It was one of the part of Poompuhar region in ancient days. The Department of Archaeology conducted excavation in 2010 at this place to know the ancient culture of that area.

The excavated trenches were carried out in the premises of Government Middle School of the village.

It revealed three cultural phases right from iron age to medieval period. Hopscotches, terracotta lamps, bricks, spouted vessel, roofing tiles, decorated potshards and ring well are the important findings of the excavation.

Apart from the above findings, a vestiges of ruined temple of Parantaka (907-955) is considered as notable finding of this excavation. A number of stucco figurines and stone inscriptions were unearthed in the temple area.

### **ALAMBARAI**

Alambarai, the sea shore village of Kanchipuram District is situated about 120 k.m south of Chennai on the East Coast Road. In ancient days, the village was in the limits of Idaikazhinadu. Ancient port Sopatnam (Marakanam) is very close to Alambarai.

The excavation at the Fort complex was conducted with the aim of studying the socio-cultural conditions during 17th-18th century CE and to expose the flourished trade activity of this area.

During excavation three trenches were laid out. The antiquities obtained include terracotta objects and objects of copper, iron, glass and lead etc. Among the findings, Granite cannon balls, porcelain wares, spindle whorl, terracotta lamps, smoking pipes and terracotta coin mould were important.

These unearthed objects revealed the socio-cultural condition and trade activity existed at Alambarai during the period of 17th-18th CE.

### **SRIRANGAM**

Srirangam, on bank of river Cauvery located at 12 km from Trichy. The excavations in the year 2013-14 and 2014-15 were conducted in the premises of Srirangam Temple.

This temple is considered the most important among the 108 Vaishnavite pilgrim centres. The temple is found to be built in stages at various periods by the ancient rulers of Chola, Pandiya, Vijayanagara and Nayakar. The aim of the excavation is to expose the adhistana portion and the unique sculpture of the Thousand pillared Mandapam.

The excavation yielded sculptural panel of the adhistana where human statue with ankusa like weapon is in standing position at the back of an elephant. This panel depicts the act of controlling the elephant. The Kanta part is depicted with dancing sculptures and royal patrons.

In the second season 2014-15 the work was carried out in the Namperumal Tirumamani Mandapa which is in the shape of chariot with the pulling horses. The chariot design and the horses are attached with the adhistana portion. The lower part of the well moulded

adhistana was covered with the modern cement flooring. Due to the upraised platform the original workmanship of adhistana was covered upto the Mahapadma. After removing the modern cement flooring, a beautiful wheel of chariot with horse sculptures was exposed.

### **PATTARAIPEUMBUDUR**

It is situated on the eastern bank of the river Kosathalaiyar and lies on the western side of Tiruvallur, the district head quarter which is about 60 km from Chennai. This place is surrounded by a number of prehistoric sites like Gudiyam, Attirampakkam, Vadamadurai, Neyveli, Parikulam etc.

The archaeological mound found at three places in the village namely anaimedu, nathamedu and irulanthoppu. In order to examine the potentiality of the archaeological vestiges the excavation was conducted at the place in April 2016. During the course of excavation it has been found that area was accumulating the rich archaeological vestiges right from prehistoric period to early historical period.

The deposit contain stone tools, different type of potteries, bricks, iron objects, roofing tiles, carnelian beads, shell bangles, terracotta objects, glass beads, copper objects, inscribed sherds (Tamil Bhrami), sherds with graffiti marks, painting potsherds, ivory object, terracotta ring well and other house holding objects in different levels of the excavated trenches. A pragmatic study of the cultural vestiges and the in-situ study of findings gleaned from that the cultural deposit at pattaraipembudur can be divided into Stone age period, Iron age period and Early historical period.

### **KEELADI**

The site Keeladi with the cultural deposit mound extending over a vast area of more than 110 acres, amidst the coconut grooves is located at Thirupuvanam Taluk in Sivagangai District. Previously excavation was conducted by Excavation Branch at Bangalore, Archaeological Survey of India at the site during 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017. In continuation of exposing the hidden treasures and antique of this site, the State Department of Archaeology has been conducting excavation at this site after getting approval from the CABA. The excavation for the season 2017-18 was carried out during April – September, 2018 at a cost of Rs. 55 lakh

#### **Key Findings – Keeladi Excavation**

Excavation work, during this season had yielded 5820 antiquities with enough cultural traits in the form of structural activity (brick structures, terracotta ring wells, fallen roofing tiles with double holes and deeply finger pressed grooves to draw rain water).

Antiquities like few pieces of golden ornaments, broken portions, copper objects, iron implements, terracotta gamesmen (chessman), hop scotches, ear ornaments, spindle whorls,



figurines and portions besides beads of terracotta, glass, semi-precious stones (agate, carnelian, crystal, etc.).

Popular ceramic types like finer variety of Black and Red ware, Black ware, Black Polished ware, Red ware, Rouletted ware, few pieces of Arretines were also found. There are also enough numbers of graffiti sherds of both pre and post firing nature. A good number of Tamil Brahmi sherds also have been unearthed.

All these finds clearly indicate the cultural richness of the ancient civilization of the Tamils of this region having its close proximity to the temple city Madurai. Hence it becomes essential to continue to probe such cultural hidden treasures of Keeladi site in future and reveal the cultural wealth of the ancient Tamil society.

