

Department of Employment and Training

TNPSC GROUP II MAINS - UNIT II

Course : TNPSC Group II Mains Material

Subject : Tamil Society

Topic : Archeological excavation evidence – Arikamedu, Adichanallur, Keezhadi

Table of Content

Archaeological Excavations in Tamil Nadu.....	2
Excavations in Tamil Nadu.....	2
Adichanallur.....	3
Arikamedu: The Ancient Poduke Emporium.....	4
Keeladi Excavations: Evidence of Second Urbanization.....	5
Porunai (Tamiraparani) River Civilization.....	5
Other Important Excavation Sites:.....	7
New Sites Identified for Excavations During 2024.....	8



© Copyright

The Department of Employment and Training has prepared the Competitive Exams study material in the form of e-content for the benefit of Competitive Exam aspirants and it is being uploaded in this Virtual Learning Portal. This e-content study material is the sole property of the Department of Employment and Training. No one (either an individual or an institution) is allowed to copy or reproduce the matter in any form. The trespassers will be prosecuted under the Indian Copyright Act. It is a cost-free service provided to the job seekers who are preparing for the Competitive Exams.

**Director,
Department of Employment and Training.**

Archaeological Excavations in Tamil Nadu

Archaeological excavations are a pivotal scientific method for reconstructing a nation's cultural history, offering insights that go beyond the elite-centric narratives of ancient literature and epigraphy. They shed light on the lives of common people, the palaeo-environment, subsistence patterns, and technological advancements.

Significance of Archaeology

Excavations across India have uncovered settlements from the Palaeolithic to Historic periods. Tamil Nadu's cultural history, initially traced through accidental findings of stone tools, gained depth through systematic excavations led by multiple agencies. These studies have unearthed artefacts revealing trade links, ancient capitals, and connections between Tamil Nadu and the Roman Empire.

Key Contributors

The field of archaeology has flourished under the efforts of pioneers such as:

- **Alexander Cunningham** (Father of Archaeology)
- **Robert Bruce Foote** (Father of Indian Prehistory)
- Indian scholars like **B.B. Lal, S.R. Rao, K. Rajan**, and others.

At the national level, the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** regulates activities, while state archaeology departments, universities, and private organizations contribute regionally.

Excavations in Tamil Nadu

Several institutions, including the ASI, State Department of Archaeology, University of Madras, Tamil University, and private entities, have conducted excavations, uncovering artefacts from over 40 sites.

Important Excavation Sites

1. **Keeladi**: Early Tamil Sangam-era urban settlement with evidence of literacy and advanced town planning.
2. **Kodumanal**: Ancient industrial site, highlighting iron metallurgy and bead-making.
3. **Adichanallur**: Burial mound yielding artefacts dated to over 3,000 years, including skeletal remains and iron tools.
4. **Korkai**: Ancient port city, showcasing Tamil Nadu's maritime trade with the Roman Empire.
5. **Alagankulam**: Trade hub with Roman amphorae and Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions.
6. **Poompuhar**: Famed Chola port, mentioned in Tamil epics and unearthed as an ancient trade center.



Adichanallur

The **Adichanallur Parambu Complex** marks a landmark in Indian archaeology:

- Early excavations by **Dr. Fedor Jagor** (Berlin) in the 19th century initiated archaeological interest in the site.

- Followed by **Louis Lapicque** (France) and **Alexander Rea**, who extensively studied burial mounds and retrieved artefacts now housed in the Government Museum, Chennai.
- These finds include pottery, tools, ornaments, and skeletal remains, underscoring the region's antiquity and sophistication.

Adichanallur: Unearthing Ancient Tamil Civilization

- **Location:** Adichanallur, 22 km from Tirunelveli, is in the Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu, India.
- **Early Excavations:**
 - **Andrew Jagor (1876):** A German ethnologist conducted the first excavation and unearthed earthenware, iron implements, bones, and skulls, now housed in the Berlin Museum.
 - **A.J. Stuart and Bishop Robert Caldwell:** Found Adichanallur to be a quartz site and initiated archaeological exploration.
- **Major Discoveries by Alexander Rea (1903-04):**
 - A wide variety of **urns and pottery**.
 - **Iron implements**, including weapons like swords, spears, and daggers.
 - **Bronze objects** depicting domestic and wild animals.
 - Evidence of **stone beads, gold ornaments**, traces of cloth, and wood.
 - **Rice and millet husks**, indicating early agricultural practices.
 - Sacrificial tools suggested the absence of Vedic religious practices.
- **Key Observations:**
 - Adichanallur's inhabitants were skilled in pottery, metalwork, weaving, and carving.
 - The presence of sacrificial items indicates unique cultural practices.
 - The mound is regarded as one of the **oldest archaeological sites** in India.
- **Artefact Preservation:**
 - Items excavated by Alexander Rea are displayed at the **Government Museum, Egmore, Chennai**.

Arikamedu: The Ancient Poduke Emporium

Arikamedu, identified with the ancient city of **Poduke Emporium** mentioned in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, holds a significant place in archaeological and historical studies for its trade connections with the Mediterranean world.

Excavations at Arikamedu

- **1941:** French archaeologist **G. Jouveau Dubreuil** conducted the first excavation.
- **1945:** Sir **Mortimer Wheeler** unearthed city structures, including warehouses, ring wells, and tanks, through scientific methods.
- **1949:** French archaeologist **Jean Marie Casal** expanded excavations to nearby sites like Suttukeny and Kottaimedu, revealing that trade continued beyond 200 AD.
- **1994-95:** Prof. **Vimala Bagley** led extensive excavations to uncover additional evidence of trade activities.
- **Notable Discoveries:**
 - **Arretine ware** and **red tableware**, indicating Roman influence.

- **Mediterranean pottery sherds**, such as amphora fragments.
- **Beads and metallic objects**, highlighting local craftsmanship and trade exchanges.

Key Findings

The excavations unearthed artefacts that underscore Arikamedu's role as a vibrant trade center:

- **Arretine ware**: Fine red Roman pottery.
- **Red tableware**: Locally produced items showcasing cultural exchange.
- **Mediterranean pottery sherds**: Including amphora fragments, used for transporting wine and olive oil.
- **Beads and metallic objects**: Reflecting both trade and local craftsmanship.

Significance of Arikamedu

Arikamedu serves as a testament to the early trade networks between South India and the Roman Empire. The artefacts confirm its identity as Poduke, an important node in the ancient trade routes. These findings illuminate Tamil Nadu's historical engagement with global trade and its role in fostering cultural and economic exchanges in the ancient world.

Keeladi Excavations: Evidence of Second Urbanization

- Previously considered to span **300 BCE to 300 CE**.
- New carbon dating results suggest it spans **600 BCE to 100 CE**.
- Artefacts from Keeladi date back to the **3rd century BCE**, earlier than previously believed.

Second Urbanization:

- The "second urbanization" in the Vaigai plains occurred around the **6th century BCE**, akin to the Gangetic plains.
- Indicates the presence of advanced urban habitation from **600 BCE**.

Literacy:

- Findings suggest that the **Tamils of the Sangam period** were literate as early as **6th century BCE**.

Second Urbanization	The Keeladi excavations affirm the existence of a second urbanization phase in Tamil Nadu around the 6th century BCE, aligning with similar developments in the Gangetic Valley.
Construction Technology	Bricks from the Sangam Age with a 1:4:6 ratio indicate mastery in construction. Evidence of robust brick walls points to advanced architectural skills.

Literacy	Potsherds with Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions dated to 580 BCE reveal high literacy levels. An example inscription, <i>Kuviran-āta[n]</i> , is interpreted as "property of Kuviran."
Weaving Industry	Artifacts including 180 spindle whorls, loom weights, bone needles, and copper tools highlight a thriving textile industry. Evidence suggests expertise in spinning, warping, weaving, and dyeing.
Agriculture and Cattle Rearing	Animal remains studied by Deccan College, Pune, included <i>Bos indicus</i> (zebu), buffalo, sheep, goat, nilgai, blackbuck, wild boar, and peacock. These findings reflect a well-developed agro-pastoral economy.
Commerce	Over 4,000 beads made of agate, carnelian, glass, and terracotta indicate trade links with Northwest India and Rome. Red earthenware similar to Roman Arretine ware points to international trade connections.
Games and Pastimes	Artifacts such as terracotta figurines (human and animal), dice, hopscotches, and gamesmen highlight the recreational and cultural richness of the society.



Porunai (Tamilaparanai) River Civilization

- **Carbon-Dated Paddy Samples:** Samples from an urn burial at Sivagalai near Adichanallur were carbon-dated to 1155 BCE, confirming the existence of the Porunai river civilization approximately 3,200 years ago.
- **Trade and Cultural Exchange:** Artefacts such as ceramics, coins, and shell bangles indicate overseas trade and an interconnected cultural network.
- **Water and Sewage Management:** Advanced systems, including raised brick structures and terracotta pipes, signify the technical ingenuity of the civilization.
- **Burial Practices:** Burial urns containing bones, utensils, and ornaments provide insights into social and ritual practices.
- **Metalwork and Ornaments:** Discoveries include high-tin bronze utensils, gold diadems, and ornaments of gold, ivory, and shell, reflecting both technological expertise and economic prosperity.
- **Museum Initiative:** Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced the establishment of the Porunai Museum in Tirunelveli, with a budget of ₹15 crore.

Archaeological Sites and Findings

- **Sivakalai:** The site of the burial urn discovery, signifying ancient habitation.
- **Adichanallur:**

- Excavations established habitation dating back to **980 BCE**.
- Notable for yielding silver coins and other artifacts suggesting an urban civilization pre-dating the Mauryan period.
- **Korkai**: Functioned as an ancient port, vital for maritime trade.
- **Keeladi (Vaigai Civilization)**:
 - Indicated urbanization along the Vaigai River, contemporary to the Gangetic plains civilization.
 - Demonstrated advanced urban planning and trade in southern India.

Historical Significance

- The discoveries challenge earlier beliefs that city civilizations were absent in southern India.
- The Porunai civilization narrows the chronological gap between southern Indian civilizations and the **Indus Valley Civilization (IVC)**.
- Establishes southern India's prominence in India's early urbanization narratives.

Global Research Initiatives

The Tamil Nadu government plans to expand its archaeological research to trace Tamil roots globally:

- **India**:
 - **Pattanam (Kerala)**: Linked to the ancient port of Musiri.
 - **Vengi (Andhra Pradesh), Thalaikadu (Karnataka), and Palur (Odisha)**.
- **International**:
 - **Egypt**: Quseir al-Qadim and Pernica Anekke, to study trade relations during the Roman era.
 - **Oman**: Khor Rori, known for ancient trade links.
 - **South-East Asia**: Research in Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and Vietnam to explore Tamil-Chola trade and cultural influence under Rajendra Chola.

Other Important Excavation Sites:

Porunthal – Dindigul District

- Grave goods, glass beads in various colors (red, white, yellow, blue, and green).
- Iron swords and tools like sickles, pikes, and plough tips, highlighting advanced agricultural practices.
- Pottery with Tamil Brahmi scripts and pots filled with rice, showing rice as a staple food.
- Semi-precious metals like quartz and carnelian.
- Bangles made of glass and shell.
- **Significance**:

The findings from Porunthal emphasize a highly developed society with knowledge of agriculture, particularly rice cultivation, and craftsmanship. The presence of Tamil Brahmi inscriptions highlights early Tamil literacy and cultural expressions.

Paiyampalli – Vellore District

- Iron artifacts and Megalithic Black and Red Ware Pottery.
- Evidence of iron smelting technology.
- Dating: Radiocarbon analysis dates this culture to 1000 BCE.
- **Significance**:
Paiyampalli provides evidence of early advancements in metallurgy and iron technology in Tamil Nadu, marking it as a significant site for understanding the technological progress of the region during the Megalithic period.

Kodumanal – Erode District

- Kodumanal is situated on the northern bank of the Noyyal River, a tributary of the Cauvery, about 40 km from Erode.
- **Historical Significance:**
 - Identified with **Kodumanam** mentioned in the **Sangam literature** (Pathitruvalu).
 - The region is praised for its **gemstones**, particularly carnelian, which were likely exported to the Roman world.

Archaeological Finds:

- **Pottery Inscriptions:**
 - Over 300 pottery inscriptions in Tamil-Brahmi, offering insights into early Tamil script and literacy.
- **Textile Production:**
 - Spindles and whorls for making thread, as well as remnants of cloth, indicating advanced textile production.
- **Ornaments and Tools:**
 - Beads (notably carnelian), weapons, tools, and Roman coins, which reflect trade and cultural exchanges.
- **Burial Practices:**
 - Megalithic burials, including pit burials, urn burials, and chamber tombs, suggest habitation by multi-ethnic groups.
- **Industrial Evidence:**
 - Kiln floors with ash soot and remnants of furnaces indicate large-scale production activities.
- **Menhir:**
 - A large stone structure from the Megalithic period, serving as a burial marker.

Cultural and Trade Connections:

- **Roman Trade:**
 - Hoards of Roman coins highlight extensive Indo-Roman trade.
 - The export of gemstones, particularly carnelian (likely imported from other regions), brought substantial gold inflows into Kodumanal.
- **Craftsmanship:**
 - Conches, bangles, and graffiti on potsherds reflect the artistic and cultural practices of the inhabitants.

New Sites Identified for Excavations During 2024**1. Tirumalapuram – Tenkasi District**

- **Location:** Sivagiri Taluk, Tenkasi District, ~6 km west of Ullar village.
- Megalithic burial ground spread over ~25 acres.
- Bones, urns, bronze bowls, iron implements (spears, swords, arrowheads), offering pots.
- Pottery Types: Black-and-red ware, red slipped ware, black ware, white-painted black-and-red ware.
- Offers evidence of Megalithic burials and Iron Age settlements in the region.

2. Chennanoor – Krishnagiri District

- **Location:** 50 km southeast of Krishnagiri, 14 km north of Uttangarai Taluk.
- Habitation mound covering over 50 acres.
- Fine and coarse black-and-red ware, terracotta hopscotches, spindle whorls, votive lamps.
- Three rock shelters with white ochre paintings.
- Potential to reveal Microlithic and Neolithic cultural characteristics.

3. Kongalnagaram – Tiruppur District

- **Location:** 25 km east of Pollachi, on Pollachi-Dharapuram road.
- Habitation site (~20 acres) and cairn circles for cist burials.
- Tamili (Tamil-Brahmi) inscribed potsherds, graffiti, russet-coated ware, black-and-red ware.
- Ancient trade route (Konga Peruvazhi) passes through the site.
- Study origin of scripts and cultural sequence.

4. Marungur – Cuddalore District

- **Location:** 12 km from Panruti Taluk, 32 km west of Cuddalore.
- Cultural mound (~4 acres) near Marungur tank.
- Light grey rouletted wares, Tamili inscribed potsherds with inscriptions, black-and-red potsherds.
- Brick structure (bricks: 7x21x42 cm) near a pond, dated to 2-3rd century BCE.
- Evidence of Iron Age and Early Historic period.
- Objective: Study settlement patterns and cultural materials.

Practice Questions:

1. What is the historical significance of the archaeological sites Sivagalai, Adichanallur, and Korkai in understanding the Porunai River Civilization?
2. How do the archaeological findings at Arikamedu demonstrate its significance as a major trade hub between South India and the Roman Empire?
3. What does the evidence from the Keeladi excavations reveal about the socio-economic and cultural developments in Tamil Nadu?

