CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The southern part of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu had distinct cultural sequences. The cultural sequences witnessed in archaeological sites like Ramapuram, Hallur, Utttur, Maski, Brahmagiri, Kupgal, Banahalli, Paiyampalli, Appukkal, Mayiladumparai, Kappalavadi, Tograpalli, etc., provided three patterns of cultural sequence. The northern part of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh provided cultural sequence of Chalcolithic, Neolithic, Iron Age and Early Historic. The southern part of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and northern part of Tamil Nadu provided cultural sequence of Neolithic, Iron Age and Early Historic. The absence of exclusive Chalcolithic phase in this part is probably due to non-availability of commercially exploitable copper ore. In case of southern Tamil Nadu, particularly south of Vaigai river valley, the microlithic, Iron Age and Early Historic phases could be witnessed in sequential order. Such cultural scenario could be seen in the excavations at Mangudi, Teriruveli, Thandikudi and T.Kalluppatti. The non-availability of exclusive Neolithic phase in southern Tamil Nadu is yet to be understood with further intensive explorations and controlled excavations. However, there is an underlying cultural uniformity around 1300-1000 BC in the whole of peninsular India with the advent of Iron Age (sometimes popularly called as megalithic culture). The occurrence of iron, black-and-red ware and variety of sepulchral monuments form the basis for this cultural homogeneity. The three important cultural components namely iron, black-and-red ware and sepulchral monuments did not appear at a single stroke, rather they were incorporated with the existing cultures at different chronological levels. For instance, the black-and-red ware first appeared in Harappan context particularly in Gujarat and southern Rajasthan and percolated in other parts of India, particularly to south India. Likewise, iron was introduced in India around 1800 BC and this technology reached different parts of India within six hundred years i.e., around 1200 BC. The scientific dating recovered from the samples of Gufkral, Nal-Ka-tila, Malhar, Hallur, Tadahahalli and Kumaranaahalli supports this view (Tripathi 2008). With regard to the introduction of different types of graves, like pit burial, stone circle, cairn circle, cit, dolmen, menhir and others had its own chronological appearance. Irrespective of these complex
issues, the black and red ware, iron and Iron Age megalithic monuments are widespread and this assemblage had a cultural link with central Chalcolithic culture which in turn had received some impetus from Harappan culture. The cultural continuity from Harappan times down to Iron Age through Chalcolithic period is evident from many sources. Though, the ancient communities lived in different ecological zones and with varied subsistence pattern, there is a cultural homogeneity that slowly emerged in the course of cultural process.

As far as Tamil Nadu is concerned, the advent of iron made tremendous impact in the cultural transformation. This cultural phase is labeled as variously black and red ware culture, Iron Age culture and Megalithic culture, which created certain confusion in understanding the real transformation from Iron Age to Early Historic. The most important factor that hindered in placing the Early Historic period in a proper chronological frame is that of the megalithic monuments. The long survival of these monuments for about thousand years in Tamil Nadu between the 1000 BC and 100 BC prevented the scholars to place this culture in a specific cultural context. Bringing the monuments which were non-megalithic in nature like um burials found without any lithic appendage into the megalithic fold further aggravated the problem. The um burials found south of Vaigai river valley particularly in the coastal plains as at Adichchanallur are mostly devoid of megalithic influence but still these were unscrupulously placed in the megalithic horizon as they were burials. Therefore it is time to see the data in its geographical and chronological background. These monuments were passed through the megalithic to early historic times. Secondly these were erected in the capital cities, trade centres, port towns, etc., in the advanced stage both in content and quality. For instance at Kodumanal and Porunthal, Tamil-Brahmi inscribed potsherds were recovered from the megalithic cist along with the antiquities of other regions (Rajan 1996:72-86; Rajan 2009). Recently three such Tamil-Brahmi inscribed potsherds were recovered from um burials at Marungur. The Sulur grave yielded punch marked coin struck at Eran (Beck 1930:166-182). Another discovery is of a bilingual silver coin written with Greek on the obverse and Kharoshthi (Prakrit language) on the reverse collected first time in Tamil Nadu from a megalithic grave near Kambaiyanallur in Dhammapuri district. This coin is a rare issue of the Scythian ruler Aspavaram, son of Indravarma, who ruled in the Taxila region about 30-40AD (Sukavana Murugan 2000). It is noteworthy to recall the bronze seal with two line
script collected from a burial at Anaikottai in Jaffna Peninsula (Raghupathy 1987:200-202). These all denote continuity of the custom of erecting megalithic monuments in early historical period. At the same moment some contemporary monuments with same superficial identity in isolated regions were rudimentary in nature. Majority of the reports just identifies the burial complex only on the surface observation. These led scholars to mix up, though unintentional, the data of the earlier with the later one. It is very difficult to give any concrete chronological frame to the monuments on the basis of superficial observations. The intrusion area and the terminal area had wide chronological implications though they look alike on the surface. There is an enormous difference in the surface observation of a burial and the excavated one. The classification of the burial based on surface observation has its own limitations. The lack of first hand information on the geographical position of the burial hinders enormously to draw a clear picture about the megaliths.

It seems initially around 1000 BC Iron Age people were basically cattle raisers and probably with a limited agriculture, a spillover of Neolithic. They migrated quite often in search of pasture land. The limited availability of the habitation-cum-burial sites can be understood in this background. Even the available settlements are small in nature when compared with their burials. During this time, it seems, they did not have any categorical territorial affiliation. In the second stage (c.500 BC) they moved on to the full-fledged agriculture which forced them to have permanent settlements. In this stage, they became settled people, clan based society emerged, exploitation of minerals and ores culminated, industrial activities intensified, specialized craftsmanship developed, script developed or the earlier one got modified, giving birth to literature trade routes were formed in the potential agricultural and mineral zones, various took shape. The capital cities, ports and trade centres like Madurai, Uraiyur, Karur, Tagadur, Koyilur, Kodumanal, Vellalur and Tangal associated with the celebrated rulers like Chera (Kongu region), Adiyaman (Dharmapuri region), Nannan (Chengam area), Malaiyaman (Tirukkoilur area) emerged.

Likewise the urn burial also needs some attention. Urn burials are concentrated in the delta regions and in coastal plains respectively called as marutam and neital in Sangam literature. The people occupying these regions were ethnically, linguistically and culturally similar to the people practicing megalithic burial. They
used the same language and script. At no point of time the literature differentiates them. The urn burials are indigenous and probably earlier to Iron Age megalithic monuments as the latter intruded into Tamil Nadu from north. The recent Mangadu excavation of an urn burial site in the Kollam District of the Kerala State yielded the radio carbon date (2890±70 and 2859 ± 90 BP) of first millennium BC (Satyamurthy 1992:9-10). The radio carbon date of 785 BC got from the excavation at Korkai, a Pandya port on the mouth of Tambraparani, need a close look now as this lies in urn burial zone lying closely in the same latitude (Majeed 1987:73-77). This site lies east of Adichchanallur, a famous urn burial site. Of the seven OSL dates received for Adichchinallur, six dates fall in the range between 1500-500 BC. Therefore placing the urn burial in the same time bracket is unwarranted. It is quite possible to consider these urn burials were earlier to Iron Age megalithic. Lack of intensive explorations and selective excavations in the urn bearing zones restricted our understanding. It is unfortunate that no other urn burial site is excavated except Adichchanallur (Satyamurthy 2007:55-66). So, as stated earlier, the late phase of Iron Age megalithic culture had distinctive historical moorings. This transformation could be seen in their social parameters like language, script, trade, technology, etc. The above analyses clearly suggest that fixing the early historic archaeology of Tamil Nadu is not due to the non-availability of the data but rather understanding the data in right perspective. One must see the development of political units in the Sangam period under these circumstances.

In all, the inter and intra cultural interaction between the regions from Harappan times to Early Historic times continued through Chalcolithic, Neolithic and Iron Age cultures. The cultural interaction is reflected in the form of ceramics like black and red ware, metal objects like copper and gold, beads of carnelian, agate and lapis lazuli. Besides, there is tangible evidence of writing material found in the form of pre-firing and post firing graffiti marks. These graffiti marks served as a basis for understanding the emergence of script in India. These graffiti marks are found in the above said cultural context with striking similarities. The study of these graffiti marks may help us to understand the evolution of script in India, though it is very complex at the present state of knowledge.
The archaeological explorations and excavations carried out in Porunthal, Karur and Nedungur in Amaravathi region yielded considerable data to understand various cultural aspects of this region. However, there is only a limited data available to draw a complete picture on the cultural transformation that had taken place in this region, say from Iron Age times down to Historical period. It is hardly suitable for any pastoral or agro-pastoral type of economy. The cattle rearing may be possible in this region and agriculture could have been developed stage.

Thus, the limited explorations and selective excavations conducted in the region provided a broad picture on the emergence of various cultural traits and their transformation through the years. Any future intensive study by keeping the present data as a base would provide a comprehensive picture on subsistence pattern of this region.