CHAPTER - II

PHYSIOGRAPHY

Tamil Nadu lying in the southern most part of the peninsular India was traditionally divided into some major geo-political zones namely Chera-nadu, Chola-nadu, Pandiya-nadu, Thondai-nadu and Kongu-nadu. It is bounded on the north by Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and on the west by Arabian Sea. A long coastline borders the Bay of Bengal on the east and Indian Ocean on the south. This landmass with varied physiographic characters and geographical zones isolated this region from the Deccan plateau with natural barriers like the Eastern and Western Ghats. The southern part of the Deccan Plateau, also known as Mysore Plateau, extends well into the northwestern part of Tamil Nadu, comprising the present Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri districts. Geographically, Tamil Nadu can be divided into two broad parts namely the Western Tamil Nadu uplands and Eastern Coastal plains. The Western Tamil Nadu uplands covers an area of 74,254 sq.km incorporating full or western part of Vellore, Krishnagiri, Dharmapuri, Salem, Erode, Coimbatore, Nilgiri, Tiruppur, Dindigal, Teni Virudhunagar and Tirunelveli districts. It is bordered on the north by Mysore plateau and on the west the Western Ghat running north-south with a prominent gap near Palghat. The continuous chain of hill ranges is broken by the well defined low level landform of the Palghat Gap, between the steeply rising Nilgiri hills in the north and the Anaimalai in the south. This 27 km gap played a dominant role in cultural interactions with the study area. The River valleys are generally “V” shaped and widened at later stages when they reach foothills. The Amaravathi river valley forms one of the significant cultural zones of Kongu region. On the whole this region occupies a position of great importance in acting as a connecting link between the Malabar Coast on the West and the Coramandel Coast on the east across the Palghat pass. Major trade routes passed through this pass. The occurrence of several archaeological sites in these trade routes seems to indicate that it had become a very commercially visible route. The importance of these trade routes is further attested by the discovery of Roman coins and ceramics of early historic period in Coimbatore-Karur-Palani areas. Many trade guild inscriptions of medieval period found in this zone further support our view. However, its geographical isolation, mainly due to the girdle of mountains, has favoured the growth of distinct cultural landscape.
The major part of the present study area falls in the Tamil Nadu upland. The Amaravathi river valley falls in the Palani hills (10°5’–10°25’N and 77° 15’–77°50’E) of the Western Ghats and plains of Dindigul, Tiruppur and Karur districts. Palani hills falls into two geographically distinct zones, the Upper and the Lower Palani hills, along a ravine running from Palani in the north to Periyakulam in the south along Parappar-Thevankarai valley. It is an offshoot of Western Ghats and is 64 km in length and 40 km in breadth, falling between 900 and 1500 m MSL. The land mass that falls above 1500 m is known as Upper Palani hills and the one that falls below 1500 m is known as Lower Palani hills. The division takes place along the Neutral Saddle. The origin of river Amaravathi and its tributaries owes much to the watershed of Anjanad valley falling between Palani hills on the east and Anaimalai hills on the west.

**Palani Hills**

The Lower Palani hills comprise an area of 1683 sq. km towards eastern block with a more rugged landscape. It consists of several steep peaks with wooded valleys gradually sloping towards the north. The Pumparai valley constitutes one of the main water sources for the major tributaries of Amaravathi river like Palar, Kodavanar and Porunthalar.

The Upper Palani hills, with an area extent of 385 sq. km, forms the western block. It is an undulating plateau, interspersed with occasional peaks and valleys. Most of the plateau consists of rolling downs originally covered with coarse grass and with some streams supporting isolated woods locally called Sholai. This plateau is divided into three blocks: (1) Parappar-Thevankarai valley with Perumalalamalai peak rising to 2,234 m; (2) Gundar valley with observatory hill rising to 2,341 m, (3) Upper Amaravathi valley with Varavu peak rising to 2,531 m, on the border with Kerala state. The town of Kodaikkanal stands between the Parappar and Gundar valleys on the southern edge of the plateau. Thus, the major water resources for the Amaravathi river and its tributaries are the Lower and Upper Palani hills (Matthew 1999: xiii-xiv; Francis 2000: 3-10).
Amaravathi river valley in the plain is dotted with detached hillocks with varying heights ranging between 350 m and 800 m. Among them, Uraiyurmalai (389m northwest of the Dharapuram), Ponnimalai (610m southeast of Palani), Vettilamalai (609m southeast of Palani, Rangaswanimalai (586m East of Oddanchatram), Chaklichimalai (724m east of Amaravathi-dam), Peandaikaradu (627m south of Kolumam) and Aivamalai (589m West of Palani) are the prominent ones. The last mentioned site Aivamalai is known for its historicity (Vaidyanathan 1983:24-28).

Rivers

The river Amaravathi, known as An-Porunai in ancient times, is one of the major rivers of Tamil Nadu and also one of the major tributaries of river Kaveri joining at Karur. The Amaravathi river flows in the present districts of Idukki in Kerala State, Tiruppur (Udumalaipettai, Palladam, Dharapuram and Kangayam taluks), Dindigal (Dindigal, Vedasandur and Ottanchathiram taluks) and Karur (Aravakkurichi and Karur taluks) in Tamil Nadu.

Amaravathi rises 2200 m above MSL in the Anjanad Valley in Idukki District of Kerala State between the Aanaimalai hills and Palani hills (part of the Western Ghats) in Manjappati Kovilkadavu, Maraiur and Gundumalai range (2200 MSL). It flows in thick forest range and it receives nearly thirty streams like Kumbar and Manalali-ar and Varavani-odai before debouches into plains near Amaravathi-dam and Kallapuram. From there, it flows in a northeasterly direction through Sambakkalam, Kolumam and Kumaraingam (Karaivazhi-nadu), where the jungle stream of Kuthiraiyar joins with Amaravathi and then for a while taking a northern course running past Madattukulam, Kaniyur and Katattur, it receives a rivulet at Periyapallam, then confluence with river Sanmuganadi near Alangiyam and Ayyampalayam. The river runs in northeasterly direction through Dharapuram. After crossing Dharapuram, it receives stream Nallathangal-odai on right bank, then a rivulet called Upper merge in left bank near Nattakottai. From there the river travels through Peramiyam and a rivulet Varattukarai-ar merges at Adukkukkal. Then the river flows along east and south-eastern side through Olapalayam and Puduppai. After more than 20 km traveling, before the Mailrangam, it receives a rivulet called Varattamalaikarai-ar. It also receives a rivulet Andakarai-ar in left bank near
Chinnadharapuram, and a small rivulet Sanmuga-chittar near Mamarattupatti. Fed by the south-west monsoon, it flows with regularity from June to August; then almost goes dry in September, but rises again with the north-east monsoon till November. Its banks are low. Its water is fully utilized for irrigation along its entire course as the river is not running deep. Amaravathi and its tributaries played a dominant role in shaping the social-cultural aspects of the habitants. Among them, few tributaries are needed to be mentioned here as many of the archaeological sites were located along these tributaries.

**Tributaries of Amaravathi**

**Kuthiraiyar**

The river Kuthiraiyar originates from Thalavakanal-malai of Upper Palani hills and it travels more than 50 km before confluences with river Amaravathi near Kolumam. This river passes through Parikkombai, Kukkal, Kilanavayal and Kukkavayal and reaches plains at Kuthiraiyar-dam. Then, it passes through Lakshmipuram, Nariparai and Attur. It receives a small stream named Gajattu-odai near Naripparai.

**Porunthalar (Sanmuganadi)**

The river Porunthalar having tributaries of Pachchayar, Palar, Thevankaraiyar and Varadhamanadi. The river Porunthalar originates in Atukkam (Kandavarimalai) block of Upper Palani hills and it flows in dense forest, reach plains near Porunthal (Palar-Porunthalar-dam) then travels north towards Thamaraikulam. The rivulet Palar originates from Perumalmalai between the Upper and Lower Palani hills, then it receives streams Gundar and Thevankaraiyar before reaching plain near Palarpudur. Then it travels through Balasamudaram after receiving water of Varattar river on Vadakavunchi near Kuruvitalaimalai in Lower Palani hills. The river Pachchayar originates from Vilpatti range and flows in plain through Iravimangalam, Kavalpatti and Pachchayarpudur, then merges with Porunthalar at Thamaraikulam. Porunthalar and Palar merges before Kalayamputtur, and gets new name Sanmuganadi. It merges with Amaravathi near Alangiyam after travelling through Kottamangalam, Manur, Kiranur and Alangiyam.
Nallathankal-Odai

The rivulet Nallathankal-odai originates from Lower Palani hills, and then flows in northerly direction through Kottayam, Porulur, Anaipalayam and Karaiyur and it merges with river Amaravathi east of Dharapuram.

Nankanji

The river Nankanji originates from Pachchalur zone in Lower Palani hills in Adalur, Siruvattukkadu range, then flows eastwards before reaching plains near Parappalar dam. It travels through Viruppachi, Ottanchathiram, Javvadupatti, Idaiyakottai, and receives Chembuttu-odai near Govindapuram. It merges with river Amaravathi near Kottampalayam after traveling through Kotttapatti, Pallapatti and Aravakurichi. This river is also known as Parappalar.

Kodavanar

The river Kodavanar is one of the major tributaries of the river Amaravathi. It originates from Kadavumalai and Kallar reserve forest in Lower Palani hills, then flows west and southwards, then travels through Perumparai and reaches plain near Kamarajasagar-dam. It flows south and southeast through Attur, Ponniyammandurai and Palarajakkapatti, Punuthu, then receives Santhanavardhani-ar at Thadikombu. It receives Karaiyampatti-odai near Venjamangudalur, then flows northeastern direction and finally merges with river Amaravathi near Mulapatti (Map.1).

Geology

The lithology of the study area is characterized with older Pre-Cambrian basement and younger alluvia. The Pre-Cambrian crystalline rocks cover more than 80 percent of the terrain especially exposed in the central part while, Phanerozoic sedimentary rocks cover the eastern coastal terrains and the river valleys. In the deeply eroded Precambrian terrain, rocks of the khondalite and chamockite groups and migmatites derived from them are extensively traced. The rocks of the Sathyamangalam group representing the geographical and geological continuation of the Sargur group of Karnataka, occur as an E-W belt in the central part of the state. Within this vast array of crystalline rocks, igneous emplacements of anorthosites, granites, syenites, carbonatites, ultramafic bodies and basic sills and dyke are defined.
Phanerozoic rocks are of fluviatile. Further, the isotopic data on granulites in the Indian peninsula has led to the recognition of granulite formation at three ascending levels of 2500 Ma in the northern part of Tamil Nadu, 1000 Ma in the Eastern Ghats and 550 Ma in the southern part of Tamil Nadu. Rocks of the khondalite group including garnet-sillimanite schists and gneisses, calc-granulites with crystalline schists and gneisses, calc-granulites with crystalline limestone pockets and quartzite are well exposed. Inter banding of charnockites and two-pyroxene gneisses are evident. While streaky small ultramafic bodies are seen, banded iron formations are scarce. The anorthosite bodies of Kadavur and Ottanchathiram are of the massive type. Dolerite dyke systems are conspicuously absent.

Upper Amaravathi portion of the river is covered with forests. Ottanchathiram anorthosite complex is located on the northeastern slope of the Palani hills of Dindigul district. An anorthosite body, associated with charnockite, quartzite, garnet-sillimanite gneiss and magnetite quartzite is traced over a distance of 16 km in a northeast-southwest direction. The rock is coarse grained in central part and fine grained towards the margin. The Ottanchathiram complex has been considered to be a part of a belt of anorthosite bodies in the Eastern Ghats hill range (Subramanian and Selvan 2001:17-18).

In Sivanmalai, the Pre-Cambrian rocks are associated with Syenite and Nepheline Syenite. Here it forms crystals of good size up to 3 or 4 inches long and is of greenish grey colour. Mica occurs in the northern part of the Coimbatore. Iron is found in several places. It occurs in a rich bed in the Minkarai at the foot of the Anaimalai hills, Ottanchathiram and Vedasandur taluks and they are every fine quality, being particularly rich in iron ores. Quartz of very fine quality is found in many places, especially in the village of Padiyur near Kangayam, Mulaiyampundi near Dharapuram; its crystals are sometimes deep amethyst and, when cut thick, are of rich purple or violet. Beryl or aquamarine was formally found in the cavities near Padiyur. It has been surmised that this was the place from which beryl was supplied to the ancient world. The reef consists of stained quartz containing pyrite, limonite, hematite, chlorite, jasper, etc., are found in north, south and western side of Coimbatore (Baliga 1966: 6-9; Francis 2000: 2-12).
Soil

The soils of the Amaravathi valley are chiefly red sand and gravel with a moderate area of red loam and black loam or sometimes black clay. Red sand occurs in 67.6 percent of the occupied area. The soil has scattered crystals, in the latter place sometimes, as big as walnuts found at Kangayam, Kandayankoyil, Karattupalayam and Padiyur. Between Karattupalayam and east-south-east to Sivanmalai, and especially up to Tiruppur-Kangayam road, it is found as a constituent of syenitic rock along the northern foot of a series of hillocks. In the vast areas in the uplands and slopes, the soils are stony and gravelly, extremely thin with a sub-soil of raw decomposed rock, except at the bottom of the valleys where the soil is of moderate depth and somewhat rich by the wash from the uplands. In other areas, the red soils are generally of fair composition chemically, owing to the presence of potash, lime and magnesia.

Black cotton soil lies in a tract consisting of portions of the Udumalaipettai, Palladam and Coimbatore taluks. Black loam and black clay are found in the south and west of Udumalaipettai taluk. They are also found in the Palladam taluk. Besides, there is a little black loam and black clay in the extreme east of the Pollachi taluk. There are some rich tracts of red loam in parts of Palladam and many tracts of it in the Pollachi taluk. The soil in the Pollachi taluk mainly sand loam, intermixed occasionally with gravel in the Anaimalai and the red loam chiefly in the north, south and east of the Udumalaipettai taluk and very little of it in the valleys of the Dharapuram taluk. A major portion of the soil of the Karur, Dharapuram, Aravakkurichi, Ottanchathiram and Udumalaipettai taluks is red sand.

The taluk-wise distribution of soil on percentage basis is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taluk</th>
<th>Black Clay</th>
<th>Loam</th>
<th>Sand</th>
<th>Red Loam</th>
<th>Sand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dharapuram</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>85.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udumalaipettai</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>57.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pollachi</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karur</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kodaiakanal</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dindigal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palani</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Balliga 1966: 9-10; Francis 2000: 12-13).
Forest

The major parts of the basin area are covered with forest, which lie chiefly in two geographical zones. The first one is situated on the south-western part of Pollachi and Udumalaipettai taluks, i.e., Anaimalai. Second one is around the Kodaikkanal taluk; south-west of Palani and Dindigal taluks, i.e., Palani hills. The Palani hills range contains more than 100 habitations. The high altitude range of the Anaimalai is virtually uninhabited. It contains much valuable timber; but this could not be exploited easily. Amaravathi river arises from the evergreen forest of Palani hills (Baliga 1966: 10-11; Francis 2000: 7).

Flora (Annexure-1)

Rich and diversified vegetation are distributed in the basin area of Amaravathi river. Dry and wetland plant species are grown in the mid and lower river valley. The Palani hills on the upper part of the river contain complex vegetation types: Grassland and Savanna lie at top of the hills above 2000 m (MSL) mean sea level. Chrysopogon orientalis (Bothaipull), C.Zeylanicus, Themeda cymbaria, Phoenix Ioureirii (Malai-echam), Cymbopogon species. Anogeissus latifolia (Vellay naga), and Diospyros ebenum (Karumkali) are associated with the grasses, besides Syzygium alternifolium (Karru naval), Ilex dendiculata, Rhododendron specious, Symplocos cochin chinensis, Strobilanthes pulneyensis (Kurunji) in the Sholas. Aglaia eleagloidea, Artocarpus hetophyllus, A.Hirsutus, Calophyllum Apetalum, Canarium strictum, Persia Macrantha, Elaeocarpus serratus, Garcinia spicata, Milotaus philippensis.

Apart from the main flora found in this region, bamboo is practically non-represented in the plains. Though there are several of rivers, channels and tank beds, where it can be grown with advantage, avenue trees are chiefly tamarind, neem, Odiyamaram, (odina wodier) and kalathi (ficus tsiela) and are usually poor in character. Among shrubs, Cassia auriculata (avaram) found almost everywhere in profusion; Tephrosia purpurea (kavali) almost equally abundant; Balsamodendron berryi (mullu-kiluvai) used as a hedge especially in the taluk of Dharapuram; several species of euphorbia also used for hedge purposes; and Zizyphus jujube (elandai).
The chief fibers found in the region are Colotropis gigantean (yerukku), Sansevieria zelanica (mural), Abelmoschus esculentus (bendikey), Agave americana (American aloe or anaikkalai), Cocos nucifera (coconut), Gossypium arborium (cotton) Hardwikia binata (acha), Hibiscus cannabinus (pulluchi) and Musa paradisiacal (plantain). Less important and less abundant fibres are Acacia Arabica (karuvelam), Acacia leucophloea (velvelam), Bambusa bambos (bamboo), Bauhinia diphylla (akkikodi), Grewia tiliosfolia (thadachi), Azadirachta Indica (neem or veppam), Guilandina bonduc (kalachi), Helicteres isora (valambiri), Isora corylifolia, Pandanus adorratismus (thazhai, screwpina), Sterculia villosa (vakkainar), etc.

The chief resins and gum trees of the region are Ailanthus malabarica (mattipal), Canarium strictum (Kurunkugliam or black dammar), Boswellia glabra (kungliam or white dammar), Shorea talura (lac or kungliam) Aloe vulgaris (barbadoes aloes), Isonadra acuminata (Indian gutta), Acacia Arabica, (babul or karuvelam) and Odina wodier (odiyamaram). The chief dyes and colours of the region are palai indigo obtained from palai (wrightia tinctoria), turmeric (curcuma longa) and myrobolans (Terminalia chebulaet bellerica) and safflower (Carthamus anactordium). Among fruits, pomegranates (punica granatum) are largely grown at several places and citrus fruits, especially limes, are grown in some places. (Matthew 1999: 2-65; Baliga 1966: 11-13).

Fauna

The fauna of this river valley is rich and varied. The hills have with South Indian species of wild animals. The elephant is found on the Anaimalai and Palani hills, especially in the dense forest. The tiger is an inhabitant in northern hills of Anaimalai. The panther lives in scrub jungles and among the rocky hills in many places. The cheetah is sparsely distributed in Palani hills. The wolf is occasionally seen in the Palladam taluk. The Jackal is met with, both on the hills and on the plains. The fox is common everywhere. The spotted deer is plentiful alike in the woods and plains but not usually on elevations beyond 2,500 feet. The muntjac deer or the rib-facled deer or barking deer or jungle sheep, as it is variously called, is found in jungles. The ibex is found on the Anaimalai. The monkeys are fairly represented in the region. Of the domestic animals the Kangayam cattle are well known for their excellent qualities whether for labour or milk. The sheep here are of two kinds,
sem mari-adu and kurumbadu; the latter are usually reared by the kurumbars and yield excellent wool (Baliga 1966: 12-13; Lewis Moore 2000: 1-9).

Climate

The climate of basin area is very pleasant. The Palani hills which fall in the high altitude terrain belong to subtropical and temperate zone restricted to an altitude range of 1070-1525m MSL with an average rainfall of 165 cm / year. The geographers describe this forest zone as ‘stunted rain forest’ where most of the rainfall takes place during the month of June to December i.e., during the northwest monsoon. Comparing to the plains, this is almost double the amount of the surrounding rainfall (Sampathkumar 1991: 11).

Plain area is very dry in April to June. Some areas are having rain during the south-west monsoon. It’s fairly good in the Udumalaipettai taluk and tolerably good in the Dharapuram taluk, as this taluk is lying immediately opposite Palaghat Gap. The region is exceptionally dry and its rainfall is scanty, uncertain and ill-distributed. Particulars of the average annual rainfall and average number of raining days in a year in the various taluks are furnished below: -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taluk</th>
<th>Average annual rainfall in inches</th>
<th>Average number of rainy days in a year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dharapuram</td>
<td>23.11</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udumalaipettai</td>
<td>23.99</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palladam</td>
<td>22.28</td>
<td>39.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karur</td>
<td>25.04</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kodaikkanal</td>
<td>64.96</td>
<td>76.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Baliga 1966:13-14; Francis 2000: 10-22).

Thus, the geomorphic features of the study area extensively helped the growth of distinct culture. Though the occurrence of Stone Age tools are yet to be identified in this region, the emergence of Iron Age is very clear and the cultural transformation is continued to take place without much chronological gap.

Eco-zones (Tinai)

The early Tamils classified their land into five ecological zones or tinais, popularly called as Ainthinai as a whole. (Tolkappiyam-Porulathikaram-Akattinai Iyal
The tinais mentioned in early Tamil literature are the Kurinchi (Mountain tracts), Mullai (pastures), Marutham (riverine tracts), Neytal (the coastal/littoral tracts) and Palai (arid waste tracts). Palai was not treated as a separate Tinai, as Palai was a seasonal ecological zone created at times on account of scarcity of rains or hot summer conditions. The Tolkappiyam which codifies the literary conventions mentions that each tinai was marked by three major features namely Muthal, Karu, Uri (Tolkappiyam–Porulatikaram– Akattinai Iyal 3). While muthal denotes space and time. Karu refers to the typical features of landscape like deity, food, flora, fauna, water source, drums and a musical instrument. These five tinais were correlated with the different emotive circumstances or behavioral aspects in love and war (Uripporu). Uriporul of five tinais are tabled below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Tinai</th>
<th>Uri</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kurinchi</td>
<td>Punaruthal (union of lovers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mullai</td>
<td>Truttal (lady’s particularly separation from her husband)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Marutham</td>
<td>Udal (love quarried between husband wife)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Neytal</td>
<td>Irankal (lady’s bemoaning her between lover absence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Palai</td>
<td>Pirithal (separations of a lover from his lady-love)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Kurinchi region as portrayed in the Tamil texts extended over mountains and hilly tracts. Naturally it corresponds to the Anaimalai hills and Palani hills. Most of these hills lay in Chera territory with a few in Pandiya land. The inhabitants of these tracts were the Kuravar/Kanavar and their economic activities were limited to hunting, gathering honey digging up edible tubers and slash and burn cultivation (Akananuru 140:11; Ainkurunuru 284:2; Kuruntokai 82:4). The Kurinchi regions were rich in natural products like pepper, ivory, teak, aromatic woods like sandalwood and akil (Pattinapalai 1.186; Kuruntokai 339:1; Narrinai 64:5; 5:3) and some gems (Kuruntokai 379:2; Ainkurunuru 284-2; Narrinai 64:5; 5:3).

The mullai regions consist of pastures, meadows and scrublands. Those areas which could be classified as mullai would be the forests and meadows on the lower slopes of the hills and plateau. Cattle riding were the dominant activity of this tract. The pastoralists living in this tract were the Itayar, Kovalar and Ayar who domesticated cows, goats and sheep. The main crop grown was Varaku (a kind of
millet). From descriptions in Perumpanarrupadai and Maduraikanchi, we may surmise that these mullai lands were peripheral to the Marutham lands. These tracts were regions of expanding agricultural activities and we find slow transition from a pastoral to an agro-economy.

The river basins constituted the fertile agricultural tracts (Marutham). The main rivers flowing in this region are the Amaravathi, Palar, Porunthalar, Kodavanar and Nankanji. These fertile tracts were the main river producing areas. Several chieftains like Pekan, Kumana, and Paduman emerged in these tracts. Fertility of the land, agricultural operations of these tracts and irrigation facilities form in Marutham are vividly portrayed in the literature. The inhabitants of these Marutham tinais were the Ulavar and Toluvar (Akananuru 30:8, 41:6, 211:5; Narrinai 60:2).

The coastal littoral tract or Neytal was another area of attraction. Both the east and west coasts were studded with ports and centers of trade (Pattinams). In these tracts lived the fisherman (Parathavar) and salt manufactures (Umanar). Traditionally this region was known for its fishing and salt manufacturing activities. (Ainkurunuru 1801-2; 60:1-3; Narrinai 74:1-4; Akananuru 187:22; 3001-2). The Parathavar were described merchants and mariners living in coastal cities, engaged in trading of conches, pearls, tamarind, salt, horses and fish (Perumpanarrupadai 11: 319-23; Maduraikanchi 11: 315-26). In the Tolkappiyam the settlements of the Neytal region were designated as Pakkar and Pattinam (Tolkappiyam-Porulathikaran-Akattinai-Iyal 18).

The Palai tracts denoted the arid regions which included areas which experienced temporary drought due to the absence of rainfall or scanty rainfall. The people of these tracts are Maravar, Malavar, Eyinar.

The Amaravathi river valley falls in Kurinchi, Mullai and, Marutham tracts. The Anaimalai, Palani hills would correspond to the Kurinchi tinai. The foothills and hillocks area like Ottanchathiram, Dindigal and Vedasandur region would correspond to the mullai tinai. The fertile area lay along river banks comprising the areas in and around Palani, Udumalaipettai and Karur.
Inhabitants

Palani hills are mostly occupied by the Paliyan tribes. Majority of the group inhabit in Paraliyar valley and Kodavanar valley in the places like at Thalinji, Mungilpallam, Kuthirayar, Puliampatti, Pallangi, Sowrikadu, Kadaramdram, Kombikadu, Karuvelampatti, Sambarankulam, Boothamalai, Kadasikadu, Thalaituthukadu and Puliyangasam.

Thus, the Amaravathi river valley indented from Palani hills on the southwest and Karur on the northwest comprises different ecological zones which manifested into varied cultural zones. The occurrences of Iron Age and Early Historic cultures are to be seen in this background.