The present research study is an attempt to bring forth a new set of archaeological data pertaining to the megaliths in Kerala. Newly discovered sites, explored and excavated provide the empirical reality for new possibilities not just on the Iron Age cultures but also the cultures preceding it. The study has been undertaken not because of the lack of such attempts earlier or an absence of explorations and excavations, rather such attempts have been sporadic with the focus mainly on Southern and Central Kerala. The northern tip of Kerala has failed to draw the attention of the prehistorian or archaeologist for reasons hard to comprehend. Moreover studies on Kerala’s megalithic past still remain empirically and theoretically straggling behind in comparison to studies of the same culture in other parts of the peninsular. This explains why this research study is also an attempt at focusing on a region which has hitherto not formed the basis of any surface surveys or explorations let alone systematic ones despite the reporting of the indiscriminate presence of structures as late as the 1970’s. These sporadic reporting, fragmentary notices and observations have in a way exposed the inadequacy of site surveys, problem oriented explorations and systematic excavations in Malabar.

A thorough study within the geographical limits of Kasaragod district is what the researcher has initiated. Forming the Northern most tip of Kerala, this area has never formed the basis for any kind of investigations for pre and protohistoric relics. Culturally and geographically with Dakshina Kannada the region was expected to be potential for archaeological sites bearing traces of pre and protohistoric continuum. Situated in the Brahmigiri belt the specialty of the monuments and their distribution pattern required Kasaragod an area to be surveyed and documented systematically. Moreover the database for the pre and proto history of Kerala is seemingly small due to inadequate systematic surveys, explorations and documentation making the archaeological record
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far weaker than other parts of Peninsular India. While the Vidarbha region has seen intense research providing perhaps the best instances of documented sites, Kerala presents the least despite being a region rich in megaliths. Within the region of Kerala, surveys and studies haven’t been initiated.

There are many noteworthy studies cataloguing the explored and excavated sites in Kerala. Unfortunately there hardly has been any interpretative study or detailed documenting of various realms of the megalithic sites taking a wider area as a unit of analysis except the reports of individual sites of Mangadu, Machad, Pazhayannur and Porkalam. While at least one or more excavated site serves as a kind of database for discussions in Southern and Central Kerala, Kasaragod is yet to find its place in the archaeological map of Kerala and South India in terms of an excavated site. It is against this background that the present researcher has pursued with her lines of inquiry. The thesis is in the first instance through a literary review an attempt to expose the lacunae in studies on the pre and protohistory of Kerala. A cursory review of the literature on megaliths in Kerala would show the existing knowledge on pre and protohistory as partial and limited. Overall parameters are modelled on scanty evidence with no archaeological evidence for a visible survival of the Neolithic in the megalithic.

**Literature Review**

**Initial Discoveries and Observations**

Observations and interpretations on Kerala’s megalithic past have relied heavily on accidental discoveries, rescue diggings and salvage excavation till recently and thereafter occasional systematic excavations and theoretically determined historical interpretations. Tendentious interpretations have resulted in partial perceptions by antiquarians, British administrators, anthropologists, geologists, archaeologists, scholars and historians. The insecure usage of the very terms to describe the initial discoveries is a typical and traditional recognition of confusion of thought and analysis. The corpus of literature on the megaliths of Kerala was derived primarily from small but significant collections and from circumstantial recovery beginning with Babington’s discoveries and larger assemblages from the excavations after wheeler.

**Babington**

The roving modern European eye on the megaliths of Kerala, rather the whole of South India, fell with Babington’s startling discoveries of kotakkal, topikkal-s and ‘caves of Malabar’ that baffled him. His observations and analysis gives one the impression that his primary objective was to comprehend what seemed incomprehensible to him. It was the basic nature of the monuments which he contemplated taking his initial inquiry into looking at the monument and the category to which it belonged. Whether they could be sepulchral or otherwise prompted him to ascribe Hindu religious affinities to these monuments. These primary investigations and subsequent inferences can be discerned in some of the later writings as it had its bearings on them.

**Ward and Conner** in their passing references observes thus:

“There is no monument deserving particular notice. The pandukuzhies or barrows, those remains of primeval customs so common throughout the Peninsula, are also found here, though they are not numerous. In one opened by me at Chokkanad there was found to be a large earthen jar containing a few rice husks.”

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Logan

In pursuit of Babington’s observations yet apprehensive Logan carries on the discussion related to Megaliths under the banner of religion and most specifically as part of Hindu religious cults and traditions. An advancement he made from Babington is that he associates it with the Hindu religious practice and with specific example. He says,

It as been suggested that this peculiarity in construction is emblematic of the religious ideas connected with the bhu-devi or earth goddess (Tellu), and that burial in this fashion was emblematic of the return of the individual to the womb of the Mother Earth. The protuberance on the bottom of the urn under this supposition would signify that it was representative of the os uteri.  
He also tries to trace the continuity of the ritual practices even in his contemporary age among various castes groups of Malabar.

This custom prevails among Nayars, Tiyars and the artisan castes and it is no doubt that the latest development of the cult which dictated the making of the massive sepulchral urns and the erection of the massive cromlechs, and kistvaens with which the district abounds but of which tradition in any reliable form is wholly wanting.  

As a preliminary for building such an assertion he classifies the megalithic monuments chronologically and designates some as sepulchral and some as not. Interesting however is, even though he claims that he classifies the monuments chronologically, no attempt has been made to ascribe a specific date for any of these monuments. There is an apparent shift in the basic question asked. If it was what is the monument in Babington, it became, who and in relation to what in Logan. Along with Logan’s note, it is imperative to view the nature in which the author of the Manual of South Canara dealt with the monuments under study.

J. Sturrock mentions in passé that,

The archaeology of South Canara has not yet been properly worked out and the known architectural remains are not of any great antiquity. No discovery has been made of any ancient cave or rock-cell sepulchres, similar to those which have been found in Malabar, and the early religious edifices of the Dravidian inhabitants of the country, were probably built in wood, as is done to some extent to this day through out the western coast as well as in Burmah and other places where somewhat similar climatic conditions lead to abundance of wood being available.

In what way Sreedhara menon differs from Sturrock is not known, at least he comments on the megaliths in Kasaragod region in his work Kannur District Gazetteer. Megaliths have been considered as belonging to the Neolithic age.

While many an ancient cave or rock cut sepulchre has been discovered from the Malabar area of the district, no significant discovery of the kind has been reported from the Kasaragod-Hosdurg area which form part of erstwhile South Canara. The reason for this is perhaps that the South Canara region is relatively modern from the point of view of human habitation and also that the people of the area might have used a perishable material like wood rather than stone for building purposes in the ancient past.

The notes and reports that appeared subsequent to that of Logan are, by and large, description of the assemblages and the structure of the megalithic monuments. The perception of these scholars, many of whom were British administrators, is not very different. As admitted by them majority are

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4 Ibid., p.182.
5 Ibid., p.5.
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4 Ibid., p. 182.
5 Ibid., p. 5.
7 Ibid., p. 84.
accidental discoveries. Fawcett's \(^9\) provides the structural and assemblages details of the Cave he encountered at the outskirts of Calicut. The emphasis on the structural difference of the cave he excavated, form the one, which Logan came across earlier, might have helped the latter scholars from looking at similar caves as having a structural uniform pattern.

Foote's \(^10\) is a classic example of circumstantial recovery and subsequent classification as prehistoric typical of confusion ridden in his discoveries. The discoveries that followed picked up the term prehistoric sometimes polarizing the phasing as prehistoric and protohistoric evident in Sewell’s accounts. \(^11\) The general tendency to classify sites as prehistoric/protohistoric together with ill-defined evidences prone to subjective interpretations continued. Interesting however attempts at seeking were reasons for the absence of Palaeolithic and Neolithic traces in Kerala.

These initial discoveries helped trigger an interest in a series of explorations and were a continuation of activities in vogue at that time that of carefree collecting not moving beyond a mere antiquarian interest. Yet noteworthy observations like that of Logan treated the rock cut caves as a variant of the megaliths based on similarities in the artefacts from rock cut caves and other megaliths.

**Research in the Early Twentieth Century**

The antiquarian activities which characterized initial discoveries ridden in confusion paved the way for further research and in initiating varying approaches and methodology in the study of pre and protohistoric relics albeit the confusion lay in bracketing them in the definite categories as can be seen in the works of Foote, Sewell and Rea.\(^12\) Compilation of monuments and cataloguing of finds continued. Yet there were attempts at equating the antiquities even with local traditions.

Robert Bruce Foote a Geologist lamenting on the absence of Palaeolithic and Neolithic traces in Kerala describes the presence of interesting urns, which he classified as ‘fabric marked’ pottery. He was unable to quite fathom their special significance but put them in the category of prehistoric antiquities which included specimens contributed by Logan and Fawcett. Considering them as prehistoric relics began with Foote and can be discerned in subsequent writings. In his search for Palaeolithic and Neolithic traces in Kerala he was unable to find such traces, except a few Celts and beads. The urns he describes distributed throughout the length and breadth of Travancore and the neighbouring states not seen by him in any part of southern and western India appeared interesting but showed no indication of their special significance. Cataloguing of types began subsequently as can be discerned in the work of Sewell.

Robert Sewell\(^13\) refers to megalithic discoveries as prehistoric burial sites and also the cataloguing of monument types (inventory of place and type) received primacy but specific detailing of finds was absent. He enumerates the megalithic types in different taluks referring to his discoveries as prehistoric sites and is more in the nature of cataloguing of monument types. Part of the baggage of colonist traditions and of activities in vogue at that time notes and reports did not move beyond descriptions

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and were seldom explanatory as can be discerned in the report of Rea and Longhurst.14

Rea15 furnishes an excavation note on prehistoric caves at Tellicherry. The excavation report like the earlier ones remained a mere catalogue of antiquities. Longhurst’s 16 was very much in the class of earlier reports where primacy was given to describing merely the structure and interments. Primarily in the nature of summary diggings and carried out before the birth of stratigraphical excavation, a slight shift can be discerned from the routine observation of site and detailing of interments. Information sets were however used in trying to discern locational and distributional patterns, differences and comparisons were elicited with neighbouring regions as was evident in the report of Cammiade.

Cammiade17 has provided a list of sites in addition to a general description of location, types of Urn, potteries, objects and beads. He compares them with those of Tirunelveli. We see a slight shift in the manner of detailing with emphasis on site details and inventories provided. There is an attempt to understand the general distribution of the sites, providing location details, the artefacts and differences in types and their comparison with those from the neighbouring site is attempted. From who and what of these structures emphasis began to shift to the actual construction details and structural components of the caves and in this sense Raghavan’s18 attempts stands different.

It was in the first half of the 20th century that rock cut caves drew the attention of some scholars. The Archaeological Survey of India and The Archaeology Departments of the Cochin State carried out a series of explorations and excavations of a large number of sites. These initial attempts were pioneering attempts in preserving the monuments and reporting findings. Their works still remain basic to the study of South Indian Megaliths, and have no doubt pointed to the ways in which further research based on new approaches and methodological advances have enhanced our understanding of South Indian proto-history. The structural components of the caves became the frame for pursuing questions regarding the origins of the caves and within the traditional framework of race, religion and language and culture as can be discerned in the works of Deberuil, Raghavan, Vasudeva Puduval and Anju Achan.

Jouveau-Debreuil 19 made concerted efforts to establish Vedic affinities and origins for the rock caves of Malabar asserting that just like the Buddhist stupa which is an imitation of the wooden hut of an Aryan chief, the laterite caves of Malabar also were imitations of hollow stupa of Vedic Aryan. He also compares the central pillar of the caves as an imitation of the wooden pole bearing the vault of a hut. He tried to see the top opening of the rock cut chambers as representing a chimney considering the entire cave as agnidriya that is a house of the sacred fire for performing soma and agni sacrifices. The open court outside the caves is considered as the central assembly hall where the funeral rites to the dead were performed. In short Debreuil was trying to establish the association of the rock cut chambers as part of Vedic ritual and cultural origins by focusing only on the structural components of the cave he excavated.

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\textsuperscript{14} A.H. Longhurst, “Rock- cut cave Calicut” in Annual report of Archaeological Survey of India, 1911-12, pp.59-60.
\textsuperscript{17} L.A.Cammiade, “Urn Burials in the Wyanaad, Southern India” in Man.xxx, 1930, Art no.135.
\textsuperscript{18} M.D.Raghavan, “The Rock cut caves of Malabar” in Dr Krishnaswami Aiyyangar Commemoration Volume, 1936, pp.384-89.

\textsuperscript{19} Dubreuil Jouveau, “Vedic Antiquities” Pondicherry, 1922 (as cited in Sharma1956).
Meanwhile, re-excavating the same site, A. Aiyappan wanted to disprove the claim of Vedic affinity of Megaliths. He argues that,

Ethnologically, his [Debrueil] plea that the Namputiris are racially and culturally direct descendents of the Vedic Aryan is not held out. Next he considers the top opening of tombs to be the chimney of the agnidriya. The available description of the agnidriya does not suggest any idea of a chimney. The directions prescribed for the doorways of an agnidriya are not the same as those of the rock-cut tombs of which we have exact knowledge. The top opening may be explained on grounds of expediency. The object of the whole sepulchre being the careful preservation of the ashes to ensure undisturbed rest to the spirit of the departed, the constructors of the tomb, in all probability, considered it best to narrow down the wide opening of the kutakkallu or cairn type of burials to smaller dimensions and to plug it securely.

In addition to that he enumerates another six-seven reasons to delineate the un-Aryan nature of the megalithic burials. The whole explanation of the assemblages in the excavated caves and the structure of the cave are directed to prove it. Since the interest of Aiyappan too is to understand the agency that constructed the monuments, in form of argument his is not much different from Debrueil, but in essence it is different. What he did was that, instead of ascribing the authorship to ‘Aryans of Vedic origin’ he ascribed the same to non-Aryan people. Since the whole structural as well as material evidences are deployed to disprove his predecessor’s arguments, he fails to ask other meaningful questions that could have thrown light on various aspects of the life and subsistence nature of the megalithic builders.

M. D. Raghavan stands different as there is yet another change in looking at the caves where apart from the usual description of the artefacts, the paper becomes different due to its attempt to provide a detailed discussion on the method of construction of these caves. “The author has also described at length the method of construction of these caves. The pillar in the centre was for the stability of the structure. He has agreed with Logan in that a people before the intrusive Vedic Brahminic culture constructed these caves. He has also recounted a local legend regarding these being used for residential purposes.” The works of Vasudeva Poduval, Anujan Achan were ‘more in the nature of “summery digging” primarily intended to collect the finds. Moreover, most of these excavations were done before the birth of stratigraphical excavation in the country.’

The pre-independent phase of research saw origins, authorship [apparent in the works of Krishna Aiyyar, and K.K.Sen Gupta] taking precedence in pursuing lines of inquiry largely influenced by the diffusion theory in vogue at the time of penning their works. Excavations did come about but bracketing them within a chronological framework was not to be seen. Nonetheless whatever might have been their concerns in framing questions in pursuit of the past, their works provided the foundations for subsequent studies? In the absence of reliable dating, their exact chronology could not be fixed.

L. A. Krishna Iyer’s research on Kerala megaliths was not much different in perception as well as in subject matter. These were largely

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21 Ibid., p.312.
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L.A. Krishna Iyer’s research on Kerala megaliths was not much different in perception as well as in subject matter. These were largely

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21 Ibid., p.312.
ridden in confusion because his perception of megaliths was derived from studies on European Prehistoric monuments and their methodology as he himself admitted. He looked at these monuments as part of Neolithic but not as marking a distinctive culture. His attempt to define, classify, and trace their origin resulted in his failure to comprehend the exact nature of these monuments excepting describing them as “having a burial character in which people of late Neolithic time buried their people of importance.”

It again was largely a descriptive exercise where emphasis was on the place of occurrence; size, shape and racial links apart from assemblages being described as trait list of artefacts, some times its absence too. Based on the discoveries made from these monuments he made a three-fold classification of megalithic monuments. Uniformity in the structure and based on palaeontological evidences prompted him to argue for a common origin for the megalithic builders and refuting the three arguments then existing on the origin of Indian megalithic culture, viz., 1. It derived from the west across the land through the Punjab and “Sind, 2. Derived from Eastern Asia and 3. Independent origin, he argues that the dolmen builders went from east to west. Being an anthropologist his interest was more to identify the earliest settlers of Kerala. Hence while analyzing the megalithic monuments he repeatedly says that what the Parasurama story tells is not right rather, “Pre historic monuments are found scattered in the upland tracts on the laterite plains and on the alluvial sea-board of Kerala. The people who found their sepulchres in them must probably have been the earliest settlers of Kerala.” Instead of linking megalithism with the community to which Logan ascribed this tradition, he ascribes it to pre-Dravidian people and traces its living tradition in some of the tribes who are living in the upland like Uralis, Kadar.

In Kerala, stones are planted at the head and foot among the muthuvans, the mannans, the Uralis and the Malapulayas. The Malayaryans erect miniature dolmens in honour of those dying an unnatural death. The Kurumbas of Malabar erect dolmens to bury their dead. It is important to remember the survivals of megalithism are found among the pre Dravidian tribes on the hills, among some of whom matriarchy lingers. Megalithism and Mother rite co-exist among the Kanikkars, the Muthuvans, Uralis and the ulatans.

K.K.Sen Gupta is in a sense addressing Logan’s classification on the one hand and Krishna Iyer’s interpretation of Megalithic culture and its builders in Kerala on the other. An important advancement Sen Gupta made was that he attempted to trace the link between topographical specificity and its association with the presence of megalithic type. Further advancement in that direction and the concept of perceiving it in terms of landscape rather than site was not to be seen in this work, since one of the questions that prevailed in the discussions on the megaliths during his period was the reasons for the presence of such a culture in India and the carriers of the same. Hence the geographical differences and the differences in association of megalithic monuments have been viewed only to establish that, the megalithic builders were migrants in habit and their migration proceeded from the south to the north. He also moves forward to argue that Kadar cannot be considered as the ancient practitioners of the megalithic culture.

Well after independence “this antiquated and overtly racist approach to the past persists” and such notions often turn out to be major obstacles in providing alternative frames for posing different set of questions to the archaeological record. Being highly reductionist or not moving beyond sterile descriptions of the archaeological record has impeded looking for

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28 Ibid., pp.18-19.
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other possibilities in the record. As Dilip Chakrabarty observes that unboundedly progress has come about in the realm of Indian archaeology but two fundamental issues continue to plague the subject obstructing further progress namely that of the inevitability of the traditional indological framework and the inevitability of Aryan Dravidian.

POST- INDEPENDENCE PHASE OF RESEARCH

A marked change in the nature of archaeological inquiries came about in the 1940’s often labelled as scientific. A sudden spurt in surveys, explorations and excavations in South India saw more light being thrown on distribution, typology, and chronology. Attempts were directed at providing a nomenclature.

Reports (Scientific)

It is generally believed it was with the introduction of scientific method of archaeological excavation and reporting developed independently by Mortimer Wheeler from the technique earlier developed by Pitt Rivers and Petri, that the scientific practice of excavation, reporting and conservation of monuments began in India in general and Kerala in particular. Archaeologists themselves began to claim that what they were providing is scientific knowledge on the past and in this process relegating existing literatures as unscientific, racially motivated. But, they were not able to understand the colonial perception involved in such 'scientific' practice. Thereafter, they started constructing a 'proper' nomenclature and standardization of the megaliths, calling it scientific practice. For example, V. D. Krishnaswami starts with a statement that, “The initial requisite for any systematic exploration is a precise and self-explanatory nomenclature. In this respect the current terminology of Indian megalithic literature is of no help…” Stating this at the outset in his article and considering the morphological and other intrinsic features they actually present provides ‘exact’ terminology for identifying megalithic types. Perhaps, that became the accepted terminology for the department and is considered suitable for adoption by all students of archaeology and allied sciences that succeeded him. He says,

[The] terms such as cromlech, dolmen, and cairn are used by various writers in entirely different senses. Thus Taylor (1848) uses the term cromlech for both a dolmen and closed cist, while Rea in 1912 (and recently others also) uses it for a stone circle round a burial urn or sarcophagus. The word ‘dolmen’ again is used in Pudukkotai indiscriminately for under ground cist and single urn burial with a capstone. The word cairn is used in Hyderabad for a cist grave; Breeks working in the Nilgiris uses it to mean stone-circles of any kind, while elsewhere it means nothing except a promiscuous heap of rubble hiding any kind of grave. Again, working in Hyderabad as late as 1923, Hunt merely follows the past local usages in calling a cist-burial a cairn.

He also gives a sketchy description on the technology of constructing a rock cut cave and believed several megalithic waves must have reached India both from the West and the East. B.K. Thapar’s is in the form of a report based on an excavation carried out in the year 1948 presented as he claimed “in a systematic and correct way.” To make a comparative analysis of the megaliths of Kerala and Tamil Nadu he takes a monument common both to Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The advantage, which he finds in them, is that, “the evidence revealed at one place could be usefully employed for the other and

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32 Ibid., P.35.
33 Ibid., p.36.
35 Ibid., p.4.
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\textsuperscript{31} V.D.Krishnaswami, “Megalithic Types of South India,” Ancient India 5, 1949, pp.35-45.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid. P.35.

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\textsuperscript{34} B K Thapar, ‘Porkalam 1948: Excavation of a Megalithic Urn Burial,” Ancient India 8, 1952, pp.3-16.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p.4.
correlation made possible."

Hence he anchors on Urn-burial instead of other megalithic types available from the same site and those peculiar to Kerala. Even though he has the greatness to accept that any date that can be arrived at dissecting the monuments at this stage “will necessarily be provisional” and yet arrives at a conclusion on the date of the Porkalam megaliths as “belonging to a period ranging from circa third century B.C. to first century A.D.” which hardly differs from the date Wheeler suggested for Brahmagiri. For him megalithic sequential position is 2nd century B.C. to 1st century A.D. Even though they claim that they are trying to provide correct and clear picture of the megalithic types, at least here to arrive at a date like this he utilizes not any kind of a scientific technique but was engaged in a comparative analysis of the similar finds that are found in the nearby regions.

Y. D. Sharma’s is a detailed description of the caves of each site pointing out the morphological differences. That led him to make a classification of caves, viz., i) Caves with a central pillar, ii) Caves without a central pillar, iii) Caves with a top opening and IV) Multi-chambered caves. The conclusion he arrives at by classifying in this fashion is that, “multi-chambered cave is not an evolution of the cave with top-opening. It represents a development from the single cave, with or without central pillar.” He has based his discussions on the megaliths of Kerala with an assumption that all the earlier attempts were inaccurate, incomplete and unreliable as far as data is concerned. He refutes both the arguments of its Vedic and Buddhist origin. His assumption is that

To give much emphasis to this argument he sometimes carries out a comparative analysis of the assemblages these rock cut caves yielded with the one available from such cultural complexes in neighbouring states. To quote:

In the preceding paragraphs frequent parallel have been drawn between the pottery from the rock cut caves and the pottery from the Coimbatore and Tinnevelly sites. The pottery from the Coimbatore and Tinnevelly and the pottery from the Cochin megaliths and rock cut caves fall within the same culture-complex. A strong undercurrent running beneath the surface-index of the Malabar, Cochin and Coimbatore cultures, affirms their close affinity with each other, in spite of local variations.

There is also a discussion on the origin of the domed vault. Rejecting the reason earlier provided that it too has a Vedic Aryan connection, he finds its reason in the peculiar geographical and climatic condition. He says, “Even if the umbrella-motif in Kerala architecture originated in its symbolic sovereignty, temporal or spiritual, its evolution must have received an impetus from the local climatic conditions. The Kerala country and the Himalaya region are the two territories were the umbrella motif is strikingly prominent in temple architecture and both these regions are subject to heavy and continuous rain.” He concludes by saying that

These tombs are, therefore, examples of what has been called secondary burial and fall within the megalithic culture

\[ \text{Ibid., p.4.} \]
\[ \text{Ibid., p.5.} \]
\[ \text{Ibid., p.8.} \]
\[ \text{Y.D.Sharma, “Rock cut Caves in Kerala,” Ancient India 12, 1956, p.93-115.} \]
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The kinship of the Kerala rock cut caves with the megalithic monuments in structure, orientation and contents leaves no doubt to their sepulchral nature, although in subsequent times some of them might have given shelter to Buddhist or other monks or even ordinary people.

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36 Ibid., P.4.
37 Ibid., p.5.
38 Ibid., p.8.
40 Ibid., P.107.
complex. But whether the burials in question are exclusively post-exposure or post-cremation cannot at present be ascertained, until fresh caves come to light and a thorough investigation of them is undertaken and completed by the competent workers in the field.\textsuperscript{44}

Even though he argues ‘scientifically’ he looked from the old traditional framework, of what, from where and its association with similar culture in the neighbouring states.

Some of the articles of K.J. John on megaliths also required reviewing here.\textsuperscript{45} He starts with the definition that “Megalithism can be explained as an aspect of religion of ancient man.” \textsuperscript{46} He tires to trace a historical continuity in the past and some of the practices of the present. The basic question of whether there is similarity in form or in content itself is not asked. Hence his writings exhibit logical fallacy of pushing the present to the past. One of the reasons for the similarities in his explanations to that of Logan is perhaps due to this. Like Logan, by using the term “little community” John asserts: “The cultural as well as the ritualistic significance of these ancient burials can be inferred only by pushing the customs of the little communities back in time.” \textsuperscript{47} By this what he really was trying to do is a projection of the importance of the living religious traditions in understanding the megalithism that already became history. Hence he says, “That the rock-cut cave-tomb builders were essentially ancestor-worshippers”.\textsuperscript{48} He also moves to state its purpose for the community who practices the megalithism.

the religion of these people, which is centred on the cult of the dead has worked as a means of enabling the people of its society to survive and progress in their agricultural activities. Since in almost all societies, originally religion was concerned with the need for water, the religion of the megalithic folk that flourished in the laterite plains of Malabar might have thrived vitally through the need for water. The empty jars found in the cave tombs were originally meant for preserving water and that water was revered or at least appreciated as an essential source for agriculture. The deceased who are ‘living’ in the cave must have, for them, been responsible for the water supply in agricultural activities, as megalithism was associated with fertility cult in Assam as shown by Haimendorf. In this region even now the first harvest is followed by a feast and sacrificial rites for the ancestors. About three miles west of Citari there is a natural cave with a labyrinth of compartments and with scooped out holes from above for water or for natural light. The annual sacrificial rites for ancestors on a new moon day in October were performed by the local Hindu inside this cave known as Theerthattu mala, meaning abode of sacred water. This shows a continuing popular religious concern with water and ancestor worship in this region.\textsuperscript{49}

The attempt to locate the normally chosen habitat of the megalithic builders on the one hand and the advancement he made in representing megalithic subsistence culture can perhaps be considered as the contribution of John, even though both the arguments are neither theoretically nor empirically conclusively proved. See the argument he made below.

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Ibid.}, p.115.
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Megalithic builders are considered to be the earliest iron using people in this country. They used spears, daggers, bows and arrows, sickles and many other implements made of iron and a peculiar pottery type known as the black and red ware. The nature of their agrarian economy can be deduced from these implements, they cleared forests, faced wild animals and mastered the land and defeated the stone using peoples of the region with their superior weapons. In fact the megalithic builders were responsible for the introduction of the advanced methods of agriculture on a large scale based on irrigation. The presence of large irrigational tanks was probably constructed by the megalithic builders.\(^{50}\)

The absence of intensive surveys in the 50’s 60’s and even the 70’s at the micro regional level prevented the building up of an adequate database for answering a large number of queries pertaining to settlement and subsistence. Leshnik’s\(^{51}\) work however stands different. Leshnik’s\(^{52}\) intention was to further probe into the question of the original land of the megalithic builders and their subsistence pattern. The two basic hypotheses on which he proceeds with his discussion are they are nomadic people who came overland and lived on cattle and not settled agriculture. He argues that the megalithic monuments are baffling in apparent nature but has an underlying unity. He asserts that it was on the strength of Brahmagiri excavation of the megalithic ‘habitation’ people that they are considered agriculturists. By pointing to the archaeological evidences like the absence of artefacts relating to any of the crafts in the grave goods and geographical specificity of the burials that do not necessarily conform to the land-use patterns inherent to agriculture, on the one hand and relying heavily on literary and other non-archaeological evidences, on the other, tries to substantiate that the people of Pandukal complex lived as nomads and not as settled agriculturists. If there were evidences of any kind of agricultural practice, that should not be taken as a fact that contradict his argument. He says,

This indication of agriculture within an assemblage that otherwise appears to favour the opposed hypothesis is not in fact contradictory. Pastoral nomads wherever they are, maintain contact with cultivators, for they require grain. In some cases, the cultivators may be more or less settled segments of the pastoralist society itself and it seems that an explanation of this sort is applicable here.\(^{53}\)

On the question of overland origin, he starts with an assertion that,

Prior to the advent of the Pandukal complex in the Neolithic-chalcolithic period, the universal mortuary custom of the South was complete inhumation. Such burials were made within the limits of the actual settlement, and sometimes within the houses themselves. In the Pandukal burials disposal of the dead involves secondary burials in cemeteries and this is sharply in contrast to the older tradition. It is suggestive of wholly different eschatological beliefs, and points to a different religion and indeed represents a major cultural change.\(^{54}\)

Then he moves to argue that

At a time when complete inhumation was the rule in central and western Persia, the inhabitants of Soghdiana, Bactria and Gedrosia exposed their dead and then buried selected bones in ossuaries. Eventually the eastern practice, for which a pre-eminently nomadic association has been suggested, comes to be accepted in the whole of Persia under the influence of the Zoroastrian religion.\(^{55}\)


\(^{52}\) L.S.Leshnik Pastoralists and Nomads in South Asia, Otto Harrassowitz Wiesbaden, 1975.

\(^{53}\) Ibid, P.57.

\(^{54}\) Ibid, P.59.

\(^{55}\) Ibid, P.60.
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55 Ibid. P.60.
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the ancestry of the Pandukal practices seems, then, to lie in Persia and is linked to Caucasian influences. But given the uncertain knowledge of the immediate post-Achaemenian period, it is not possible to localize them more precisely. In this connection, typological comparisons of grave goods have proven to be little use. With the very rare exception, already noted, the Pandukal assemblage appeared to be an indigenous one, even though the mortuary practices are foreign.\footnote{Ibid, P.61.}

Leshnik’s work should be considered as a serious attempt to understand the nature of subsistence of the Pandukal people. Even though there were discussions of the similar kind earlier the way he treated evidences, in his incorporation of non-archaeological evidences makes the work different. In addition to that his treatment of geography also deserves special mention. Of course he is not the first one to speak anything on geography. But here he elicited it as one of the evidence to substantiate his argument of the megalithic people as nomads. But both of them are not sufficient to ask meaningful questions on the everyday life neither of the megalithic builders nor of a cultural continuity.

One of the important questions George and Mehta\footnote{R.N.Mehta and K.M.George, “Megaliths at Machad and Pazhayannur,” Tallapally Taluk, Kerala State (A Report of the Excavations conducted in 1974). Baroda: M.S. University Series 15, 1978.} tries to answer through their excavations carried out at Machad and Pazhayannur was why certain types of megalithic monuments are restricted to certain regions alone. By subjecting to a close examination of the 27 monuments of the cist variety at Pazhayannur and five monuments of cist and urn variety at Machad, the assemblages it bequeathed and identifying the structural similarities, they construe that the practice of constructing cists and the concentration of these types of monuments in Palaghat and Trichur district was due to the cultural contact of these people with the neighbouring state of Tamilnadu. To quote:

the presence of a large number of megalithic monuments in Palaghat and Trichur districts is significant because these districts lay at the opening of the Palaghat gap. The Palaghat gap might have been one of the migration routes of the megalithic people of Kerala from adjacent regions of Tamilnadu and their subsequent settlements in these districts.\footnote{Ibid, P.29.}

One of the intentions of examining the different varieties of beads too is the same. Hence they state that, “the stones of these beads are not usually found in Kerala. These stones might have been imported to Kerala from the neighbouring states of Karnataka and Tamilnadu through early traders.”\footnote{idem}

It is a fact that George and Mehta excel in providing the details of the excavations in its entirety. Since the question they ask remain the old one they failed to provide new knowledge on megalithic builders except some additional evidence for proving the assumption that they are migrants.

P. Rajendran\footnote{P.Rajendran, The Prehistoric Cultures, and Environment, Classical Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1990.} begins with the living tradition of megalithism in Kerala ascribing it to the ones that exist among Cholanaickas and Kattunaickas of the Nilambur forest of Malappuram district of Kerala, the tribes he identifies. The main argument P. Rajendran and C.S.P. Iyer\footnote{P.Rajendran and C.S.P.Iyer, “A Preliminary Report on the Characterization of Copper and Gold Ornaments of the Arippa Megalithic culture in Kollam District Kerala, South India,” Man and Environment 22(2), 1997, p.61-66.} put forward is that the megalithic builders of Kerala were ‘able to exploit, extract and utilize various types of ores for different purposes’ and by...
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the ancestry of the Panduka practices seems, then, to lie in Persia and is linked to Caucasian influences. But given the uncertain knowledge of the immediate post-Achaemenian period, it is not possible to localize them more precisely. In this connection, typological comparisons of grave goods have proven to be little use. With the very rare exception, already noted, the Panduka assemblage appeared to be an indigenous one, even though the mortuary practices are foreign.56

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56 Ibid, P.61.
58 Ibid, P.29.
59 Ibidem
analyzing the metal ornaments unearthed from the site with the help of X-ray fluorescence analysis he positively suspects that the provenance of these ores, more precisely the copper, may be of indigenous origin. Rajendran’s efforts at analyzing the material unearthed was largely directed at seeking local origin for everything that is associated with megalithic culture, that too often un-addressing the existing gamut of literature that argue otherwise.

B.Narasimaiah’s excavation at a site called Chermangad having different types where one of each was opened and examined was to find the interrelationship between them. Even though he uses the term interrelationship, what is meant by the word interrelationship itself is left unexplained. The text he bequeathed us provides only the structure and assemblages of the various types of monuments he excavated. The interrelationship between the constructors of these monuments is left unexplained. Moreover, the conclusion he arrives at by analyzing these monuments too does not differ significantly from the reports of others who preceded him. He says, “The characteristic topikal and multiple hood stone did not receive any internment and were probably symbolic burials. Stone circle seems to be an important burial within the site because of its collective nature, large number of artefacts including the copper bowls, and the individual architectural features.”

T. Satyamurthy’s report is perhaps the comprehensive official report that tried to address many of the questions that archaeologists and historians of early societies have been raising. But the importance lays in the new interpretation given. As Satyamurthy claims, “In fact, it is a new finding, basing which, the chronology of megaliths of peninsular India are required to be revised.”

Satyamurthy starts with the presumption that the “real megalithic inspiration should have come from the West” and on the basis of that he provides a chronology for the megaliths of Kerala like the stage of struggle, stage of adoption and the stage of nativation. To quote:

The megalithic monuments in India contain fractional bones of post-exposure nature collectively of more than one person. But there are instances were single and double extended burials have been noticed in many sites. Thus within the country itself they would divide into many first arrival zones later resulting in contact zones of hybridization and diffusionary zones of transmutation. This leads us to the principle of hybridization of the megalithic types crossing or fusing with the non-megalithic types of an earlier origin. This incidentally determines the relative chronology of monuments which passed through three distinct stages viz., the state of struggle, and the stage of adoption and the stage of nativation.

The question of the presence of iron and its immigration through the west coast has been settled by analyzing the difference in iron metallurgy that prevailed in North India and the South. To quote:

It is important to note that in North India the knowledge of iron metallurgy was introduced by the Swat Valley grave [...] and if those did not bring this knowledge to South India, then who introduced Iron metallurgy in south India? As they are absent in the earlier period (Neolithic-chalcolithic) postulating any theory of local innovation is difficult. Further there are not many evidences to establish many independent centres of origin of iron metallurgy [...] If the knowledge of metallurgy was not spread from north then what was the route that it spread deep into the peninsular India. Obviously it could have gone into the peninsular India from the coastal tract sites only.

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63 Ibid., pp34-35.
65 Ibid., p.4
66 Ibid., p.4
67 Ibid., p.5
68 Ibid., p.4-5.
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Satyamurthy establishes the date of iron objects he unearthed from Mangadu as belonging to 1000B.C. Based on carbon samples he considers Mangadu lying in the south west corner of peninsular India to be the earliest arrival zone of megalithic graves as the trend of expansion has been northwards from the south or the south west. He concludes that Mangadu site stands as transition phase or stage of introduction of megalithic-grave in the western coast of Kerala.

**RECENT RESEARCH**

Perhaps the most significant development of prehistoric archaeology in the present century has been the development of archaeology into a scientific study where the emphasis is on development of scientific techniques and methods. Every generation of thoughtful archaeologists with a conscious and deliberate technique of discovery, excavation, analysis and interpretation will make a notable advance on a previous generation and will to a certain extent, regard themselves as scientific and their predecessors as unscientific. There are two schools of thought about the development of archaeological technique as something technical where we devise better methods and techniques and so can understand and get more information from excavations. The other is merely that the aims of excavations have changed. The view of archaeology is akin to the general approach to science, which agrees that science is not so much based on observed facts- but the logical frameworks within we place those facts.

If the earlier attempts were more concerned with origins, authorship and chronology they have been essential for comprehending the hitherto known knowledge on the megaliths and perhaps have helped in a way in framing new questions on the existing data and for exploring new possibilities. Research works, which have appeared in the 1980’s and 1990’s, have neither incorporated the new insights of archaeological theory and method nor have they helped in addressing the issue of sparse data.

S. Padmanabhan Tampi’s\(^{69}\) PhD dissertation has a chapter devoted exclusively to megaliths where he looks at the distribution of these structures within the phisiography of Kerala, which to him “played a vital role as regards to the distribution of the megalithic monuments.”\(^{70}\) He provides a typology but what sets his work apart perhaps is his chapter exclusively on Umbrella stones where starting with etymology he tries to look at the technology of constructing these structures.

Rajan Chedambath’s\(^{71}\) is an attempt to construct a typology of Kerala pottery and identify archaeological evidence for the early historic Roman trade. The thesis also contains a brief description on the exploration conducted at Kurumasseri Urn burial.\(^{72}\) In nature and content it does not differ from the earlier reports. The only difference is that it lacks the precision, which one would see in the earlier reports. Due to the failure to ask certain basic questions on the ceramic tradition and technology, the bulk of drawings provided on the pottery fail to give any possible deduction on the availability of Kerala ceramic tradition.

Jenee Peter’s\(^{73}\) is in search of geographical determinants behind the location of the megalithic monuments in Kerala. The raised issue has been studied at three levels; Site level, intra site level, and inter state level and dividing the whole of Kerala into three zones, viz., A comprising of

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70 Ibid., p.21.
Northern Kerala, B comprising of Central and C South Kerala. She concentrates more on the B zone, i.e., Central Kerala. The reason for choosing that as prime focus area was that to her it was a zone of contact. The arguments she puts forward is that,

This Zone has the largest number of iron Age sites within Kerala. The nature of the settlement may have been continuous in this region. Diffusion through Palghat Gap can be accorded as one of the factors for the multiplicity of sites in Zone B. The concentration of Megaliths in this region may point to a possible migration route taken by the Megalith builders’ through the Palghat gap and their subsequent settlement throughout Kerala.

A close analysis of Jenee Peter’s argument will reveal that except the negligible variant reiteration of the arguments of some of the scholars of her elder generation like George and Mehta and B. Narasimhaiah nothing comes out significantly through the thesis. She often fails to conceptualize geography and space differently and hence on the question of geographical determinism tries to state like the following:

Kerala is a narrow strip of land isolated from other parts of peninsular India by geographical features such as the Western Ghats on the east and the Arabian Sea on the west. The physiographic division from the Western Ghats (in the east) to the Arabian Sea coast (on the west) can be termed as the Highlands, the Midlands and the Lowlands based on the relief of the area. These geographical factors provided a degree of isolation, which led to individuality in cultural growth, and the development of unique monument types namely Rock Cut Caves, Hat Stones/Hood Stones and Umbrella Stones.\textsuperscript{74}

Somewhere else she banks on the diffusion theory. If it is so what has geography significantly to do with the presence of culture? When she says ‘zone of contact’ she has an assumption that the means of subsistence of the megalithic people were trade or trade related activities, which has yet to be proved conclusively with archaeological and other evidences.

Shinu A. Abraham addresses the issue of paucity of evidences and is a work, which focuses on the palghat gap based on a survey “as a means of building an original body of material evidence”.\textsuperscript{76} The work marks a departure from earlier research work as megaliths and ceramics have been used by the researcher corroborating historical documents to provide an alternative approach which is anthropological to understand social complexity in early Tamilkakam. An attempt at looking at society in early Tamilakam combining threads of archaeological and other forms of evidence to understand social complexity through an analysis of material remains and their patterning for a historically documented period of the past marks this work different.

Selvakumar and shajan’s\textsuperscript{77} archaeological and geological surveys helped in the identification of Pattanam. A trial excavation has revealed an Iron Age deposit with black and red ware pottery below the early historic Indo-Roman stratum, which is the first evidence for a habitation site in Kerala. Selva’s and Shajan’s work definitely has thrown up new possibilities and marks a departure from the earlier ones in terms of problem oriented survey which all along has been overlooked in Kerala. If information sets provided by archaeologists, anthropologists and geologists tended to outline the problems and difficulties of the evidence it was also

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid, p.132
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apparent that little firm information was subject to speculation. What came from the historian’s desk was no different.

Adoor Ramachandran Nair discusses the megalithic culture of Kerala while dealing with the pre-history-iron age section. An appendix is also given exclusively on megaliths; providing abstracts from previous writings on megaliths. He argues that the megaliths have no cultural linkage with any of the religious tradition now we have, rather it has “a trait of the locally prevailing earlier culture” He further asserts that, “as the distribution of south Indian megaliths was almost coterminous with that of the Dravidian Languages, it is inferred that these people should have introduced the Dravidian languages in the region and on this surmise the origin of earliest Tamil is assigned to about 500 B.C.”

Linking Kerala megalithic with the south Indian, he tries to say that they were not only settled people but also very intelligent agriculturists. The problem with his way of thinking is that, since Kerala is an integral part of peninsular India the archaeological and historical knowledge arrived by examining the megalithic artefacts from other parts has been uncritically ascribed to interpret Kerala society.

Discussion on megaliths of Kerala in K.N. Ganeshan starts with refuting one of the existing arguments that the tribes of the Western Ghats are the successors of the megalithic builders. He says that any attempt to trace the tradition of the former to antiquity would not stretch it back to more than 400 years. He also states that the ancestors of the tribes referred to were migrants to these places. He also makes certain assumptions on the possible presence of megalithic settlements.

It is natural that the settlement should occur in the vicinity of the megalithic structures themselves. The places where clusters of isolated monuments occur can also provide clues for human settlement. [Sic] Undue emphasis given to the monumental structures instead of dwelling houses by the megalithic builders explains the absence of the evidence of domestic sites.

Then on the basis of the distribution of megalithic monuments he presupposes human settlements of that period into three geographical divisions.

1. High ranges- land lying between Devikulam and Ranni Reserve Forest and to further south up to the region of Thenmali.
2. The Banks of River Bharathapuzha- the places like Porkalm, Eyyal, Ariyannur, and Cheramanangad.
3. Wyanad- Edakkal caves and the surrounding regions and the places adjoining to it like Kurumbranal and Kottayam. He also says that the evidence for the existence of megalithic settlement is available from the slopes and the valleys of the Western Ghats. Again he fails to provide any evidence to show the settlement, except certain iron implants and artefacts that are found at burial monuments. Any attempt to interpret the evidence provided by the archaeologists could be seen in the works of M.R. Raghava Varier and Rajan Gurukkal.

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79 Ibid., p.6.
80 Ibid., P.8-9.
82 Ibid., p.36.
83 Ibid., P.37.
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\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Ibid}, P.8-9.
\textsuperscript{81} K.N. Ganesh, \textit{Keralattinte Innakekal, Trivanduram: Department of Cultural Publications, 1990.}

\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Ibid}, p.36.
\textsuperscript{83} \textit{Ibid}, P.37.
\textsuperscript{84} R.Gurukkal and M.R. Varier \textit{Kerala Charithram Sukapuram: Vallathol Vidya Peetham, 1991.}
Gurukkal and Varier sees the widespread presence of megaliths of various types all over Kerala as indicative of the corresponding expansion of the iron using technology and the culture associated with it, even though the process of the expansion is unknown to us. The typological differences, they say also indicates the presence of different lineage groups, social positional differences, differences in customs and traditions, and also of the presence of different kinds of material culture. They have no doubt in interpreting megaliths as funerary structures, in fact structures of important personages in the society. As they say, “the importance of personages could obviously be of the tribal religio-political authority based on control over people rather than privileges over basic resources.”

Acknowledging the paucity of archaeological evidences they attempt to do certain logical deduction on the settlement pattern of the megalithic builders. Pointing out the differences in the distribution pattern of megalithic monument types in landscape, like concentration of dolmenoid cists in clusters and the ‘slender scatter’ distribution of rock cut caves and umbrella stones that normally are seen sandwiched between hills and paddy fields, they argue that, it signifies centralized and decentralized settlements, respectively. They adopted Renfrew’s interpretation of the European megaliths, but in their later works they gave up this assumption for “dispersed settlement”. Yet another assumption they made is that the difference in mortuary relics unearthed indicates variations in the economic and social status of the megalithic builders. While trying to comment on the subsistence pattern of the megalithic builders they rely more on sources other than archaeological. The theoretical insights they have drawn from structural Marxist anthropology helps them to visualize the material milieu of the megalithic culture phase as a heterogeneous kind that in turn helps them to bypass the redundancy of falling into the binary category of perceiving them as either nomads or settled agriculturists with knowledge of advanced irrigation. They say:

This would mean that megaliths as such do not presuppose any specific economy or religion or culture by themselves. And in fact one might find indicators of various economies and religious practices in the mortuary relics of the Iron Age. However the overall economic milieu must have been of hunting, gathering supplemented by shifting cultivation and animal herding besides a few craft like pottery, metalworking and stone architecture. On the whole the hunting implements dominate the burial goods.

They are also aware of the possibilities of megalithic people having relation with the culture that preceded it, that is the Neolithic. But the hitherto available evidence was not sufficient enough to say anything conclusively on that. Hence their assertion remained as a logical possibility.

There is a detailed discussion on the absence of traces of habitation evidence of megalithic period of Kerala. Among the reasons which they emphasise is the absence of a methodology to resolve problems associated with the understanding of the ‘formation process of archaeological records.’

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the archaeological record utilizing Marxist hermeneutics as an interpretative strategy to generate new knowledge trying to unveil in the light of theory “the interconnectedness of apparently disunited factors.”

The theoretical predeterminancy confined them to look at data that only suited their theoretical paradigm. So whether it’s from the archaeologist’s desk or the historians no attempts were made to document the available evidences in larger geographical units like Kasaragod, and find its relation in distribution, the landscape that separates the megalithic sites, location details in relation to resource availability. The present researcher visualizes that such an attempt is essential and can provide many signifiers to rethink and reconstruct the history of prehistoric Keralam.

THE REGION

Kasaragod forms the northern zone of Kerala and covers an area of 1992 square km, bounded on the east by the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea. Formerly the southernmost taluk of south canara district, it is situated in the western coast of India. The district is watered by the Chandragiri, Payaswini and Nileshawaram rivers, which form the most important ones. Kasaragod has vast dissected tracts of laterite and the oldest rock unit so far dated in Kerala is widespread in the region namely charnockite. The existence of megaliths in the district was reported in the 1970’s, and in the fragments of an exploration supposedly carried out in 1992.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Objectives and Methodology

The present research study is being carried out to document in detail the megaliths in Kasaragod district, through an exhaustive study of the region. Taking Umichipoyil as a case study focuses on what sets Kasaragod apart from the rest of Kerala in terms of sites, types of monuments and artefacts unearthed. A thorough examination has been done of the available literature pertaining to the geography and archaeology of the region in focus and the adjoining areas to understand the nature of the work carried out. A preliminary survey and pilot study was undertaken to ascertain the nature of sites reported. A total of 27 sites have been reported so far of which 14 sites have been discovered by the author in the course of explorations. None of the earlier sites reported have any basic details other than the name of the site and the monument. The present researcher’s methodology involved (a) site surface survey, (b) exploration (c) excavation.

SITE SURVEY

This was undertaken for finding and recording sites. The survey included search for off site and non-site evidence. Field walking was adopted to detect archaeological relics. From scatters of artefacts to finding and recording features the entire landscape and its immediate vicinity were taken into consideration. The village-to-village foot survey with the help of information provided by the villagers helped in the identification of 12 sites. Twenty seven sites were covered which included ones reported earlier and with the purpose of recording whatever was remaining and to collect scatters of artefacts. The site surface survey included proper recording including the exact latitude, longitude to provide a locational designation. This was done with the help of a GPS where sites discovered
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earlier were recorded along with the newly discovered ones. The survey and documenting included study of the entire landscape and reconstructing the human environment and peoples’ exploitation and management of the landscape and natural resources.

Surface survey was followed by intensive explorations from 1999 to 2003. An intensive surface survey and mapping were carried out at Umichipoyil and Varikulam yielding a few clusters of different type of monuments. The finding and recording of sites was followed by an assessment of site details, lay out, type, size, and frequency. Location maps and contour maps have been prepared together with dimensional details of the monuments in the sites. A theodolite was used where the procedure employed was taking a place as the instrument station to locate the instrument, and placing it north taking angular measurements to the point of the cave. Taking the distance from the instrument station to the object namely the cave and measuring the staff reading and calculating the RL. According to the site measurements the map was plotted and the object position was marked. For locating the site position and GL a topo sheet was used.

EXCAVATIONS

A systematic excavation was carried out at one of the intensively explored sites, that of Umichipoyil by the Archaeological Survey of India, Trichur Circle of which the current researcher was a participant for two seasons to provide an in-depth analysis of the site. The material remains have been recorded in detail in order to understand

A. The internal architecture, and to know how they are different from Thrissur rock cut caves.

B. The nature of material assemblage associated with the megaliths of this region

The thesis in the first half tends to be purely descriptive and is more of an empirical exercise in attempting to provide an adequate database for Kasaragod. In the second half insights have been acquired from Post Processual archaeology current in Europe to develop a framework where landscape as a trope of analysis is employed in attempting to understand the interpretative reconstruction of prehistoric life worlds. The standard approach has been site led reports and writings with hardly any emphasis on material record of landscape features, let alone abstract components of the landscape and symbolic space. In the present research work landscape is not merely considered as a geographical space in trying to address the key question of why particular locations are chosen for the erection of monuments where phenomenological approach in philosophy and recent interpretative work in archaeology have been utilized to construe particular sets of meanings and connotations partially interpretable from the archaeological record but which cannot be ignored.

Scheme of Chapters

The thesis runs into six chapters. It begins with the introductory chapter where the research problem is outlined followed by objectives and methodology of the researcher. This chapter contains an exhaustive literature review for the megaliths in Kerala exposing the lacunae in the existing literature, explaining theoretical and empirical ways to overcome it. It also shows how the present work stands differently in approach.

“Megaliths and the Iron Age in Kerala”- A broad Overview forms the content in the second chapter where an attempt is made to look at megaliths in general, in India and in Kerala where the focus is on types and regional variations taking stock of geographical association and distribution.
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Discussions pertaining to making sense of artefacts, age of artefacts, cultural traits, linkages with Iron Age and sangham, means of subsistence, social structure and social order together with megalithism as a legitimizing mechanism are dealt with at length.

The evidences at hand from Kasaragod an unexplored region form the basis for the third chapter. “From Site To Landscape: Megaliths in Kasaragod” begins by looking at the status of Kasaragod in the archaeological map of Kerala, trying to discern the absence and seeking explanations to the hitherto explored sites. A descriptive exercise in the first half looks at the sites, types, peculiarities significance and relevance in understanding and interpreting issues the present study undertakes. Based on the evidences the latter half looks at landscape as a trope of analysis moving from the site to the entity, which falls under the rubric of landscape.

The newly discovered site of Umichipoyil together with the empirical reality provided from an excavation and detailed exploration forms the basis for a case study and the contents of the fourth chapter. “Survival of the Neolithic in the Megalithic- an Excurse on Umichipoyil evidences” is an attempt at explaining the survivals of the Neolithic from the information sets provided at Umichipoyil looking at what sets this site apart from others discovered and excavated in Kerala. The thesis concludes by looking at the results of understanding an unexplored region and taking up a wider area as a unit of analysis positing the possibilities and scope for further research.