LAND AND EARLY SETTLEMENTS
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Land forms have considerable bearing on the historical development of a region through their influence on the climate and hence on the means of subsistence. Equally important is their role in defining nuclear areas of human settlement in terms of accessibility and fertility or conversely areas of isolation. This relationship is useful in studying the changing need of communities and the corresponding expansion and shifts in settlements.

The Indian subcontinent has been broadly divided into three basic regions: the Deccan Peninsula, the Indo-Gangetic plain and the Himalayan range. The scope of this study is limited to the southern part of Deccan known as Tamil Nadu which is geologically one of the oldest regions of the earth.

Subbarao, an eminent archaeologist, on the basis of the idea of the 'nuclear regions' given by Spate explained the phenomenon as follows:

Accepting this fundamental concept of 'areas of attraction, relative isolation and isolation' the whole pattern of development can be defined as one of horizontal expansion, contraction and isolation of lower cultures in different parts of the country at different periods and at
different cultural levels. The divergence in the country is due to the difference in the country is due α... in the cultural milieu of the first large-scale agricultural communities identified regions.

Remarkable illustration of this phenomenon is seen in the Tinai concept found in the Sankam texts. Each ecological region is said to be particularly suited for a particular love activity and each of these regions are referred to by the most characteristic flower of that region.

Hills-Kurunchi - Sexual union and those that lead to it, Pasture lands- Mullai and open terraces- Wife patiently waiting for the husband who is away and those that lead to it, Riverine-Marutam, Agrarian- Wife sulking over husband visiting harlot and those that lead to it, Littoral-Neytal- Agony of separation and those that lead to it, Uncultivable- Palai (dry Region) - Separation from family because of elopement and anxiety over separation of husband.

Each of these division is also associated with a distinct military activity. Hill-Vetchi - Capture and recapture of cattle, Pasture land-Vanci - Guarding and raiding the settlement, Agrarian-Ulinai-Guarding and attacking the fortifications, Littoral-Tumpai - Fight to finish Dry - Vakai - Victory.

The social significance of this concept has been noticed by
many scholars. According to Srinivas Iyengar "all these five kinds of natural regions are found in the Tamil country though on small scale and as the South Indian spread from region to region was calculated to produce". Dikshithar saw in this concept the stage of evolution of civilization. He commented that the Tamil social organisation which had its distinctive characteristics born of environment, as anthropology holds, is unique in having realised the five different stages of human life in pre-historic times.

Thaninayagam observed that "this five fold division throws light on human origins and the development of human culture as has been observed by those geographers and anthropologists who have recently written at length on this subject". Zvelabil said "it is possible that this division reflects the historical migration of the Pre-Dravidian and Proto-Tamil population from the hills and the jungle to the fertile plains and to the seaboard, or in other words, the development from the neolithic hunter, through the intermediate stage of the keeper of the flocks to the settled tiller of the soil and fisherman".

This explanation on the face of it is both appealing and convincing. But an important fact that has to be borne in mind is that this division was a contemporary physical reality to the poets of the Sankam period as it is to us. PA in lines 143-202 speak of the various places.
Lines 143-163 describes Eyirpattinam which is a littoral region, lines 164-177 refer to Vellore a hilly tract where hunters live, lines 178-195 describe Amur an agrarian region watered by a river and finally from line 196 onwards the hill capital is described.

In PPA line 46-392 describe the road to Kanci and the settlements and towns that lie on the way.

It is important to make it clear that the original concept was a division into four regions. Only mullai and kurinci have taken the shape of palai. With rainfall the 'shape' could be transformed to the original only mullai and kurinci. It would therefore be appropriate to treat palai as a seasonal change ANR quotes AN III as providing reference to mullai transforming into palai and kalit for kurinci transforming into palai. This substantiated tol's atatement that the original division was only four.

The fact that the different regions and the respective social organisations reveal the successive stages of economic and political evolution should not lead us to the conclusion that the evolution itself was unilinear. Field studies in social anthropology have brought to light many societies with sustained growth. Stunted growth occurs when production does not (and can not) go beyond a particular point. Internal self-sufficiency, geographical and social isolation are some of
the many factors that contribute to a situation like that.

The different regions and the inhabitants of those places mentioned in the tinai tradition should be taken as depicting the inevitable uneven development that arises from the geographical background of the social organisation of Tamil Nadu. As Mahalingam said "in prehistoric times people in South India were divided into a number of tribes, the main difference between them being largely due to their geographical environment". This is all the more striking because some of the modern tribes of South India show remarkable similarities to the groups mentioned in the early literature.

The 'Tinai' concept should therefore be taken as the fossilisation in poetic convention of the sexual mores and the social and economic organisation of the unevenly developed Tamil communities.

Within 'South India' itself the most important element relating to historical agrarian relations is the Coromandal plain on the eastern littoral, extending from the tip of the Peninsula to the northern edge of the broad delta of the Godavari and Krishna rivers. Never deeper than are hundred miles in the Kaveri basin this lowland is moulded into a complex structure by the rocky extensions of a broken range of low hills that parallel the coast, called the 'Eastern Ghats' and by patches of
lateritic soils and rocky marine deposit. The Coromandel plain is reversed by streams draining these broken hill ranges blocks of the western side of the Peninsula, the Western Ghats' including the Nilgiris in the North and the Annamalai, Palani and Cardaman hills in the South.

Seen from the west the Western Ghats presents the appearance of a gigantic sea-wall often rising in steps from the store-line-hence the name Ghats. They are a shaggy and rugged mass of hills, little more than 2000 feet above sea-level at the northern end rising to more than 4000 about the latitude of Bombay, generally increasing in altitude the South and culminating in the Nilgiris with Dodabetta at a height of 8760 feet where the Eastern Ghats meet the western after making a sweep from the other side of the Peninsula. Immediately south of the Nilgiris the only break in the continuity of the western ghats, the Palghat or Coimbatore gap. Which is about twenty miles from north to south and affords lowland access from the Carnatic to the Malabar coast at a level of about a thousand feet above the sea. This easy road in to the Carnatic from Cochin and other ports on the west has played an important role all through history. South of the gap, the ghats reach an even greater height in Anaimudi peak and strike SSE, terminating at the extremity of the peninsula in Cape Comorin. The crest line of the ghats is generally at a distance of from fifty to one hundred miles from the Arabian Sea.
although in places it approaches so close to the shore as to restrict the
width of the coastal plain to no more than five miles, and it is not uncom-
mon for spurs and ridges to end as cliffs along the coast.

In South India the Anaimalai hills form the most striking range
: the higher range consists of a series of plateaux 7000 feet in elevation
running up to peaks of over 8000. They are covered with rolling doans
and dark evergreen forests cut off from one another by deep valleys
characterized by magnificent scenery. The lower range which ties to the
wet has an average elevation of 4000 feet and thousands of acres of this
area are now under coffee. It contains the teak belt and also produces
most of the timber usual in deciduous forests belts of the same elevation
much valuable game, including elephant which gives its name to the range,
are also found there. It is inhabited by hill tribes like the Kadan, Muduvan
and Pulaiyan.

The Kaveri known as the Southern Ganges has a course of
475 miles and is equally famous for its sanctity, its picturesque scenery
and its usefulness for irrigation. Tamil literature cherishes many traditions of its origin and is replete with expressions of pious and fervent
admiration for the life giving properties of its water. It rises in
Brahmagiri, near Talakaveri in Coorg, and flows generally south-east-
wards across the plateau making great falls as it descends the Eastern
Ghats and traverses the Carnatic low land past Trichinopoly and Tanjore to the Bay which it enters by a number of distributaries in the district of Tanjore. The river twice fork into two forming islands—Seringapatnam and Sivasamudram—fifty miles apart, the celebrated falls of Sivasamudram have been harnessed to supply electrical power to the Kolar Gold Fields over a hundred miles distant. Kaveri receives number of tributary the most important being the Kabhani, the Hemavati and the Arkavati. After the conflunce of the Bhavani, it changes its south-eastern direction and then takes an east-south-easterly course before forking a third time to form the island of Srirangam. Immediately below Srirangam, the river divides into two the coleroon and thus remifying over the entire surface of the Tanjore delta.

Tambraparni, arising amongst the wooded hills of the southern ghats and benefiting from both the monsoon, forms a life-line for agriculture in the Tirnelvelly district. At its mouth in the Gulf of Mannar are the famous pearl fisheries often described by travellers from other countries.

The Kaveri has comprised a long-recognised internal boundary between southern Salam and Coimbatore. The Palar and Ponniyar too have also divided portions of the uplands, Kaveri with the southern Tamil plain, Penniyar with the northern Tamil Plain. Modern Coimbatore
occupies a strategic place on the trans Peninsular axis of the Kaveri and Ponnani through the Palghat gap thus constituting links between the two coastal plains of the Peninsula. The Karnataka heartland has been connected with the Coimbatore and Southern Salem uplands and through these with the Corromandel plain by way of the Kaveri in the South and the Palar in the East.

In the Coromandel area the ghats, as noted already turn away from the coast to converge with the Western Ghats in the Niligiris. There are offshoots like Javadi, Shevaroy, Pachaimalai and so on which retain something of the plateau aspect but the Carnatic or the Tamil plain increases in width steadily southwards until in the Kaveri basin it stretches for about 170 miles. This plain presents a great contrast to the other parts of the coastal plains and to the Deccan plateau in topography in climate and in history. This is the real old India of the South, the land where all the great historical kingdoms of South India fixed their capitals, the land of unnumbered temples of indigenous arts and of almost prehistoric industries. Here artificial irrigation was practiced from remote antiquity and the irrigation system of the fertile river belt between Karur and Tanjore must be almost as old as agriculture itself.

In Tamil Nadu neolithic celt and tools have been located but settlement had not been excavated. It is responsible to locate such
a settlement since they are purely nomads. All the neolithic tools were found near mountains and river beds. There are no other evidences to study about their occupation, culture and pattern of life. The main occupation was hunting and cattle breeding wherever they stay they collected the cowdung at a particular place. Before leaving that place, for searching of pastures, they fixed the cowdung resulted in ash mound. This reflects the main occupation of the people and this nomadic life.

This nomadic life slowly changed into transhuman life. That is they started to lead their life by cattle breeding and shifting cultivation. The low rainfall areas of the western Tamilnadu thus formed a corridor linking the North and the South and this provided a major means of culture between the two regions. From it subsidiary corridors ran eastwards into the forests of corramandal region in the east.

Southwards in Mysore iron ores are fairly extensive and geologically belong mainly to the sedimentary group associated with banded heamatite quartzites of the Dharwarian age and party to the deposits of magnetic origin which are titaniferous ores. Apart from these the lateritic spread of South Konkam should be considered a potential source. The early iron workings of Mysore have been made justly famous by the reports of Buchanan and Heyne.
In the North of Kerala iron ores are abundant and comprise mostly magnetite and laterite. Magnetite occurs in the form of bands in the metamorphic rocks and of black sands derived from the bands.

In Tamil Nadu the ores occur as far as South as Tinnevelly where they are chiefly magnetite and laterite. The ore used in the local pre-industrial furnances was magnetite in the form of magnetic iron sand. The deposits in part of Salem and Trichinopoly are geologically significant enough to have drawn a separate monograph in this area by Krishnan.

In Coimbatore where the smelting furnances were mentioned by Buchanan, magnetite of good quality is said to occur. The ores mainly haematite and specular occur also in the Niligiris where the most important mass in near Kotagiri. The other areas of occurrence in Madras are Chingelput, Pudukottai and North and South Arcot each of which has had a tradition of preindustrial smelting. Magnetite is the principle ore-type of these areas.

The spread of the iron ores is no less extensive in the modern state of Andhra. The regions which are important are Cuddapah, Kurnool, Guntur, Bellary, Nellore the districts of west Godavari and Krishna, Vizagapatnam and Hyderabad.

To the East in Orissa there are enough lateritic cappings
outside the Mahandi - Baitarani delta and for the early smelters of Orissa these deposits alone could have been ample source of iron.

In the south Indian protohistoric sequence iron objects first appear in the period of overlap between the neolithic and the megalithic periods. The general category of iron objects are as follows\textsuperscript{22}. Flat cross banded and single banded axes and hoes, The flanged spade or hoe, The flanged hoe or spud, The sickle and bill-hook, The glanged pick axe, Stone - cutters wedges, Bar wedge, Pointed bars and Crow-bars, Chisels and adzes, Knives, Iron tripode, Sword, Daggers and drikis, Spearheads, Arrowheads, Coremonial scalloped axes.

The Trisula proper has usually a rivat to hold the side prongs. In one case at Bowenpalli a small iron model of a buffalo was attached to the shaft. The specimen from Malabar has the remains of an iron ring in a similar position whilst one specimen from Adichanallur has a 'Cross bar' at the base of the triple prongs which appears to have been a similar body to the Bowenpalli specimen.

Adichanallur is one of the 38 urn burial sites, reported by Alexandar Rae in the gravelly mounds adjoining the bank by the Tamraparni river in the Tirnelvelly districts\textsuperscript{23}. These sites are invariably located on waste or rocky highlands unsuitable for cultivation and there
is 'almost invariable' the site of an ancient habitation in the neighbourhood of these barial mounds.

In Madurai district at Kollapatrai, near Kodangipatti were discovered two small finely-polished stone celts trapezoidal in shape and roughly along in transverse section and a broken hammer-stone. A similar celt was found at Karuppannawami Koilmedu in Karuvelampatti, Kollapatrai and Thathanodaimedu, near Bodinayakanur yielded microlithic implements comprising blades, flacks and cores. Urn burials were also found at Nagamalai Pudukkottai, Sengulam, Vedar, Puliangulam, Melakuyilkudi, Palaganatham, Paravai, Samayanallur, Vilangudi, Tenur and Podunbu Sikandar Chavadi, while more Russet-coated pained were from Karuppannasswami Koilmedu and Avanipuram. At Nagamalai Pidukkottai and Alampatti were located respectively cairn-circles and dolmens. Mounds with remains of ancient habitation were notices at Kochchadai, Tenur and Playanattam, on the banks of the river Vaigai and at Samattivatam, Vadapalani and Avanipuram. Microliths, including rectangular scrapers, cores with ripple-flaking and waste flakes and cores were found at Tangalacheri, Sivarakkottai, Tirumanikkam, Alampatti and T. Kalluppati all in Tirumangalam Taluk. At all these places also occurred painted black
on red and red and black wares. Pottery with white paintings and dots on black surface and with painted Criss-cross pattern was also found at T. Kallupatti.  

Cairn-circles were found at Periyar and Gopalapuram. Dolmens were notices at Mallapuram and urnburials at Sangappadai. Tangalacheri Medippanur, Sivarakkottai, Kottaimedu, Annattipath Periakattalai, Vandari, Parpatti, Tirumanikkan, T. Kallaupatti and Vadambur. Etched Carnelian beads were found in a disturbed urn at Sangappadai.  

There is no evidence of a radical alteration of the neolithic-chalcolithic subsistence pattern during the early proto-historic period even after the introduction of a new technology i.e iron and a new crop i.e. paddy. The coincidence between areas housing the neolithic-chalcolithic sites and the early Iron Age sites in the southern Deccan is very apparent. The pastoral cum subsistence agricultural economy spread beyond the confines of the Iron Age, Megalithic - Black and Red ware culture, Which initially covered the mountain regions of South India. Archaeological data in association with literary data clearly indicates that Tamilnadu had a strong pastoral, subsistence farming and hunting-gathering tradition during the Early Iron Age.
The following are the megalithic sites:

Tagadur, Kannur, Kodai, Alumbil, Velur, Virai, Uraiyur, Aurdur, Kodumhalur, Paramhunadu, Puhar, Kundandai, Vallam, Tenur, Ayirai, Korkai all these are having urns and habitations. Podiyil, Oymanadu, Tirukkoyilur these sites are known for dolmens. Venadu, Senganma these are cairn circles.

Lineage:

Megalittic revolution bring the social changes in Tamil country. Most of the early settlements were created by the people who had adopted megalithic culture. More than fifty graffiti marks have been discovered on pot sherds from megalithic burials and habitation sites. These graffiti marks might have been used for clan names. Each clan must have used a particular graffiti. We have seen some cluster graffiti marks have been brought to our notice which might been used for amalgamation of clans. Even during sangam period amalgamation of clans were referred too. The phrases like 'aimplumvelir', 'paltinoruvelir'; 'patinenguvelir' must have indicated the clans amalgamation in Early historical period.

The pastoralism of megalithic society made live stock breeding and specially, cattle herding in major activity. Accumulation of cattle comes through breeding as well as capturing other herds. Cattle raids
are therefore a form of acquiring fresh stock. Pre-historic paintings from Alampadi (Viluppuram Dt) Vellala samudhram (Dharmapuri Dt) have preserved the art of cattle raids during pre-historic period.

Megalithic society was essentially pastoral. This did not preclude agriculture although agrarian activities are more frequently attested by artifacts and cereals. The pastoralists may well have controlled the agricultural riches without being economically dependent on them. The society in river basins of Tamilnadu had reflected in sangam texts, more dependent on agriculture although cattle rearing remained a significant activity. Aelamfary settlements become characteristic of the increasing emphasis on agriculture which was characterised slow process. Megalithic cultures must have been indigenous ones, since neolithic celts and megalithic burials were discovered side by side. Payyampalli and Adiccsanallur excavations remind us of end of neolithic period and beginning of megalithic period. Black and Red ware pottery culture might have been adopted by people in Tamilnadu when they met that people in northern fringes of Tamilnadu. Red slipped wares must have been used by pre-megalithic Tamil people. Vellarikombai (Nilgiris Dt) are the best example which show the cattle raids in prehistoric times. Cattle guards were referred to in Chengam hero stones which belonged to tribal oriented society up to medieval period. These cattle raids were primary factors for the emergence of leaders. Leadership in this situa-
tion requires the ability to protect not only the herds since cattle are the chief from of wealth but also ones clan, and to defend the claim to ownership of cattle and controlled over the grazing ground or kanam⁴⁰.

Chiefs in cattle raids were accepted as chiefs in peace times. During megalithic period chiefs had predominated in political area. Many lineages had engaged in raiding and annexing alien territory. These raids and annexation were intermingled with their day today life. During megalithic period graffiti marks were used to indicate chiefs and chief ships⁴¹. In Kodumamal excavations many potsherds the following graffiti and in same potsherds these graffiti were engraved with brahmi character like 'kon' and 'vel'⁴². These cluster of Brahmi characters and graffiti marks and eating the transition from graffiti to Brahmi character which was introduced recently. In due course (first century AD.) the graffiti marks were dropped. Only Brahmi characters were employed for indicating chiefship. Also menhirs were erected for the chiefs.

In Kongu region neolithic celts and tools have been located. But settlements of that period had not been excavated. It is impossible to locate such a settlement in Kongu region, since they were purely nomads. All the neolithic tools were found near mountains and river beds. Therefore no other evidences to study about their occupation, culture and pattern of life. But neolithic practices were lingering even in the phase
of megalithic culture. Neolithic cave paintings were located. In these paintings, hunttings, fighting and dancing scenes are depicted. Horse riding was also painted. This shows that they had and had knowledge about horses. These paintings have been discovered in the caves at Vellarugampalayam, Maraiyur, and the Nilgiris—all these were around Kongu region.

At Vellarungampalayam the paintings are worshipped even now by villagers and offered sacrifice. The God is called as Vettakarasami. These cave paintings are situated above 4000 feet. only men are allowed to go and worship. There is a temple at foot hills which is a replica of cave paintings. Here also only men are allowed to worship. Women folk are never been allowed to worship either in this temple or cave paintings. There is a reason for the taboo of women folk in the worship. These paintings might have originated in hunting society. In that society men were dominating. Hence in ritual activities also they were dominating. This trait shows the stunted growth of society in Kongu.

We cannot give the precise date of the beginning of this worship. But we can surmise that this worship might have been began with the cave dwellers. In western Deccan many pre-historic worships have survived till date. According to D.D. Kosambi this type of worship might have come down without any alteration.
There is an ash mound, a kilometre to west of Perur. This must have been left by the ancient cattle breeders. In course of time it came to be called as 'Thirniru Medu'. This was also called as 'Budhi medu' and 'Budhi kadu'. The main occupation of the author of these mound was cattle breeding. Wherever they stay, they collected the cowdung at a particular place. Before leaving that place, for searching of postures, they fired the cowdung which resulted in ash mound. Thus ash mound later become 'Budhi medu' and 'Thirniru medu'. We can see these ash mounds throughout Kongu. This reflects the main occupation of the people and their nomadic life.

Neolithic period was closely succeeded by the Iron age. Very few habitation sites of this period have been excavated so far. It is in this period that a very significant pattern of culture, emerged in the funeral practices which is called as 'Megaliths'. The identification of the Megalithic culture is associated with the custom of disposing the dead prevailed among the people of that period. Megalithic culture witnesses iron technology. The introduction of iron technology in to Tamil country made an impact on Tamil society. In northern India the introduction of iron was considered as the root cause for the growth of population. The iron age pre-condition to urbanisation is evident from the number of settlements, iron centres that developed into towns.


3. Ibid.


5. Dikshithar, Studies in Tamil Literature and History. p. 178

6. X.S. Thaninayagam Lanscape and poetry. p. 39


8. K. Sivathamby, op. cit p. 151

9. Ibid p. 152

10. Cilapathigaram. p. 302. (Foot Note) Ibid.

11. Ibid

12. T.V. Mahalingam 'South Indian Polity' p. 11.


14. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, A History of South India from pre-historic times to the fall of Vijayanagar. p. 43.

15. Ibid. p. 44.
16. Ibid. p.47


18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.


22. Ibid. p.80

23. Ibid. p.82


25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.


31. Sudharshan Seneviratne. p.6

32. Ibid.
33. Ibid. p. 16

34. K. Rajan, "Megalithic culture in Kongu"

35. Agam, 36, 135, 246

36. Romila Thapar, From lineage of statx p. 24

37. The Hindu

38. Indian Archaeology A Review,

39. The Hindu, Thinamani


41 R. Rajan op. cit

42 Ibid

43. Thinamani, Daily, April 15, 1990

44. Ibid

45. Discussion with R. Poongundran, Epigraphist, Coimbatore.

46. D. D. Kosambi, "Myth and Reality capter, 'At cross Road' - must be mentioned in this connection.

48. Romila Thapar 'Ancient Indian Social History', p.60 (F.N-1)