CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION

The numerous mechanisms used to study the past human behaviour, including history is called archaeology. Archaeology is the investigation of historic and prehistoric cultures through the study of material remains. Archaeology provides us with information on how cultures in the past subsisted on a daily basis. For prehistoric times, on the basis of the archaeological record, archaeologists can reconstruct early human behaviours and life styles.

There are three primary objectives of archaeology such as, chronology, life ways and process. The initial objective of an archaeological investigation is to determine the age or chronology of the site. The second objective is to understand the ways of culture and life such as, what types of food, clothing, housing, materials, technology and other objects were used during the period. The final objective is an attempt by archaeologists to explain the causes and consequences of changing human culture.

The archaeological remains can be classified into three distinct categories. They are artefacts or movable objects fashioned by humans, such as ceramics or projectile points (arrow heads), features or non-portable objects, such as hearths or grave sites and eco facts or natural remains not directly impacted or altered by
humans, such as pollen and animal bones. In examining the past, archaeologists work in three stages of interpretation. The first seeks to reveal and describe the form of the physical evidence of the past. This stage involves collection of information from an archaeological site and is followed by an assessment of the remains found. Most of the archaeologists include the collection of data using both intrusive and non-intrusive methods.


Non-intrusive approaches include the analysis of aerial photography for landscape alterations, use of ground-penetrating radar to find buried anomalies, and the systematic, controlled collection of materials from surface contexts. Intrusive techniques include shovel testing, test units or excavation blocks.

Archaeologists analyse these remains to determine their past purpose and function within the overall context of a site as well as the importance of the position of the artefacts within a site. The artefacts can also provide environmental clues about an area's floral and faunal composition (natural history) and temperature, which in turn can provide a temporal reference, or time period, for the specific site. The eco facts such as plant seeds and animal bones can be used to reconstruct past subsistence activities. In the third and final process, the archaeologist attempts to understand cultural processes and behaviours, with the primary goal to interpret how and why the cultures changed through time.

While archaeology is the study of the past largely through material remains, history is the study of the past through written or textual remains such as diaries, legal documents, and maps. Historians examine the written material such as personal records and correspondence, government documents, newspaper articles, and legal
documents to interpret and understand past events and cultures. Since the written records are subject to the original author’s interpretations and personal biases, historians analyze and compare different sources of information about particular events in order to minimize this bias. Once the material has been evaluated by the archaeologist, the historian can reconstruct past events. The combination of the fields of archaeology and history allows us to view past people, events, and cultures through their physical and written remains.  

**Study Area**

The study area covers the entire taluk of the Palani under as fifty nine villages. In these regions, Pre-historic archaeological explorations undertaken in the radius of twenty five kilometres.

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In and around Palani the archaeological sites like, Porunthal, Thamaraikulam and Rajapuram have yielded important archaeological relics. The villages like Thamaraikulam, Rajapuram, Ayakudi are the Iron Age burial sites with graffiti marks. There are so many urn burials with skeletal remains at several places around Palani such as, Thamaraikulam, Kalayamputhur, Kiranur, Ravimangalam, Neikarappatti, Rajapuram, Kolumam, Kothaimangalam, Manur, Palani, Ayakudi, Aivarmalai, Kuthampundianvalasu and Periyakottai.

These sites demonstrate that the people started to occupy this region from the time of Iron Age and continue to live till date. All the archaeological sites of this region were located on both the banks of the river or the lower parts of the Palani Western Ghats. The ideal location of the trade centres would have attracted the attention of people to settle in this region as early as Iron Age. The limited excavations were carried out with an aim to understand cultural wealth, cross-cultural transmission and transformation that happened in these micro regions. The excavations provided a good picture on the potentiality of the region. Future excavations may throw much light on various aspects of the society and may strengthen the existing knowledge.
Background

The Palani Hills is a part of the oldest mountain range of the Western Ghats in Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu state of South India. It is a land of varied culture, religions and people. The people who lived in the Palani hills are believed to be the natives of the Palani. They have their own culture and tradition, which are in true agreement with the Indian civilization and culture.

The mapping of the archaeological sites reported the cultural wealth of the Palani region in the ancient times. The documentation of archaeological prosperity of this region was more incidental rather than any methodical explorations.

The excavations exposed due to the basic characteristic features of Iron Age and Megalithic monuments in this region. The systematic studies carried out in the Post-Independence era provided a superior basis to reconstruct the cultural process in this region. The systematic archaeological remains threw up rich data to understand the cultural process of this region.

Historical Perspective

The history of the natives of Palani is very primitive. Some of them are of the opinion that they came to the hills about five thousand years ago from the Kerala region. They have no legend or literature of their own regarding their origin. But the antiquarian remains found on the summits of the hills in the Palani region reveals their historical importance.

Scope of the Study

During the last five decades there has been a very limited study of the archaeology of South India, especially in Tamil Nadu and particularly in the Palani region. Demographic study of pre-historic people has been carried out by a number of researchers. But, the researchers had dealt with only about the scrupulous place, art history, style, culture, ethnography and art themes. But, there is no detailed and complete study about the human history of Palani.

The aim of this study is predominantly to identify the native culture, tradition and also the life and time of the inhabitants. Since the British administration in 1802 to till date, the antiquity of the Dravidian culture was identified all over the World. In
this connection, a study of the archaeology of the Palani region, throws enormous
light on their thinking process, their everyday concerns and conservation and
development of culture in a difficult era.

It also displays the artistic talent of the intuitive early man. This study is at
once fascinating and illuminating the pre-history of the Palani region. Hence the
urgency for a speedy and proper documentation is felt necessary, before the ancient
burial-cum-habitation sites are destroyed.

**Significance of the Study**

Tradition, custom and culture play a central and vital role in the social, cultural
and economy of the society. Hence the present study on the archaeology of the Palani
region is an outcome of an attempt to identify the uniqueness and material culture
within the different socio-economic conditions of Palani from the pre-historic to
postmodern period.

**Objectives of the Study**

The study of the Archaeological Findings in Palani Region – A Historical
Study is undertaken with the following specific objectives:

1. To identify the archaeological sites in the Palani region.
2. To illustrate the Iron and the Megalithic traditions in the Palani region.
3. To expound the concealed culture in the Palani region.
4. To elucidate the nature of social relationships in this region.
5. To describe the scientific techniques in the ancient times.
6. To analyze the reasons for the vanishing of the cultural practices and
7. To locate the factors responsible for continuity and change in the culture.

**Review of Literature**

The colonial administrators first brought to light the archaeological wealth of
Palani region in the mid part of 19\textsuperscript{th} century as part of their official work. Breeks
reported the first archaeological evidence in this part of region in 1837 and it was
followed by the discovery of a Roman coin from a grave packed with cairns in
Nilgiris (Congreve 1847:92).
Since then several archaeological findings were discovered in pre-Independence era by various explorers like Breeks (1837), William Fraser (1861), Walhouse (1873, 1875), Harding (1889-94), Sandford (1901), Rea(1910-11), Longhurst (1913-14), Khan (1930-35), Rosner (1937) and Aiyappan (1941). At the initial stage, their works were concentrated in and around the hill resorts like Nilgiri, Anaimalai and Palani hills. Subsequently, their areas of observation were extended to plains due to infrastructure developmental activities particularly in the railways. Thus, the documentation of archaeological wealth of this Western Ghats was more incidental rather than any systematic explorations.

After independence, particularly in Tamil Nadu, the painstaking work of Krishnaswami and Srinivasan throws much light on the typological pattern of the megaliths of the concerned areas. In the later 1990s the archaeological excavations revealed the new history of the Palani. In the year 2006, Dr.K.Rajan, Professor and Head, Department of history, Pondicherry University, Pondicherry, excavated some megalithic graves and to highlight the historical importance of the Palani region. Most of the studies have dealt only about the particular place, history, life cycle, culture, ethnography, socio-economic conditions, tradition, cult, arts, spiritual, ethnomedicinal, moral and social status. But there is no detailed and complete account about the archaeology of the Palani region.

**Interdisciplinary Relevance**

This study is concentrated primarily on the archaeology and its background behind their unique anthro-archeological findings. It is not strictly scientific but their roots are built up of many fields such as, pre-history, anthropology, sociology and social science. It also goes through the human history in the way of habitations and the men and the cultural practices.

**Methodology**

The sources collected during fieldwork of burial-cum-habitation sites, filled in questionnaires and the photographs are the primary sources of this research. A large number of documentation on earlier archaeological reports, books, journals, articles, maps, charts and records are the secondary sources.
The collection of field data is a primary one of this research. So, earlier research studies this linkage have been used to explore the previous works. The reports of archaeologists, sociologists, ethnographers and travelers have been studied by offering comparative analysis with field data to bring out a detailed and comprehensive research on the archaeology of the Palani region.

In this study, substantive pattern is used by the researcher. This pattern is classified into two divisions such as, discussion on the different attributes of the physical structure of the habitation sites and the field observations and field enquiries. It also describes the materials, date, tradition, custom and practices.

In this study, the researcher has used descriptive and diagnostic study to describe the various sites and objects of the ancient people. In an exploratory study the research design is flexible, to permit the incorporation of different aspects of the archaeological conditions. The data collection method is based on four types such as, the use of documents, observation, interviews and questionnaires.

**Plan of the Research**

In the present study, an attempt is made to highlight the Archaeological Findings in Palani Region – A Historical Study. The research study contains the following six chapters including Introduction and Conclusion such as,

I. Introduction

II. The History of the Land and the People

III. Archaeological Findings in Palani

IV. Nature and Structure of the sites

V. Cultural Practices in the Ancient Palani

VI. Conclusion
The core point of the present research is to establish the ancient life and cultural practices of the Palani region.

CHAPTER – II
THE HISTORY OF THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

Palani, the *third abode of Lord Muruga*, it has been mentioned in the Tamil Sangam Literature as *Podhini*.¹ It was one of the part of *Andanadu*² or *Aviyur³Vaiyapurinadu*⁴ or *Vaikavurnadu*⁵ in the eastern part of the Kongu Nadu, better known as *Palanimalai*⁶ or *Sivagiri⁷* or *Sivamalai*.⁸ From the earlier to till date it is the most popular Hindu religious place in South India. The Palani hills forming Northern spur of the Western Ghats ranging in height from 1000 to 2700 Meters. It is situated between 10° 26' 56.10768 North and 77° 31' 15.38112 East.⁹ Palaniis a part of the oldest mountain range of the Western Ghats in Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu state of South India (Map.2.1).