CHAPTER – III
ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS IN PALANI

The archaeological findings in Palani are discussed in this chapter.

Archaeology is one of the ancient study, it analyses the story of the man’s past through his material remains. Archaeology is essentially a method of reconstructing the past from the surviving traces of former societies. Both archaeology and history are concerned with the study of human past. Archaeology is one of the methods to approach history, a learning of human cultures through the material remains.

The custom of erecting huge tombs to pay homage to the departed elders prevailed among the different communities in different times almost throughout the world. This custom was starting from the Neolithic period to till the early part of the Christian era.¹ It is still found in some areas as a living tradition among the tribes. In India, innumerable megaliths are found throughout the length and breadth of the country with much concentration in the peninsular part. The megaliths are sepulchral and commemorative monuments, which are built of large rude or dressed stones. They associated with a somewhat homogeneous group of black and red ware and iron tools and weapons. They are either individual or collective secondary burials entombing post-excoriated bones.²

The Indian megaliths were dated back to the Iron Age. It is as yet not certain when and how iron technology developed and become an integral part of the
megalithic culture. The inflow of this culture came in to India by two groups such as, the sea-route from the Gulf of Oman to the west coast of India and the other following the land route from Iran.¹


There are so many material and chronological differences between the megalithic culture of northern India and southern India. The limited explorations and excavations conducted era were faithfully concentrated in some geographical zones does not provide tangible conclusion about their origin and diffusion. The explorations in the pre-Independence era were faithfully conducted and properly recorded.² The initial ground survey and subsequent excavations of graves yielded rich date for understanding the nature of this culture. These explorations and excavations were mainly concentrated on the graves rather than on habitations. So, there was a problem of understanding their domestic life.

In Tamil Nadu, the painstaking work of Krishnaswami in Chingleput district and that of Srinivasan in Pudukkottai district throw much light on the typological pattern of the megaliths of the concerned areas. The excavations at Sanur, Kunnattur, Amirthamangalam and Paiyampalli placed this culture in a definite stratigraphical position. Though the dedicated work by various scholars in the past few decades has clarified the different facets of this culture, there remain still some areas which are not properly studied. For instance, there exist two divergent theories as regards the megalithic in South India.³

The problem of chronology of this culture has also evaded a clear solution. Only a few radiocarbon dates are so far available from megalithic habitations. The habitation site at Hallur gave a $^{14}$C date of 1000 BC for the earliest phase of the megalithic culture. Nagaraja Rao correlated this phase with the graves at
Tadakanahalli, four kilometers away from this site. Deo gives two radiocarbon dates for the site at Naikund and Takalghat and Placed the Vidarbha megaliths in circa BC.


In Tamil Nadu, Paiyampalli recorded a14C date of circa 4th century BC. Sundara, on the basis of his exploration and excavations, pushed the date of the megaliths of North Karnataka region to as early as 1200 BC. There are many vital areas like Tamil Nadu to be identified and studied for obtaining a complete picture of the megalithic problem. Tamil Nadu has a large number of megalithic graves spread all over the state. Most regions of Tamil Nadu have not been subjected to intensive explorations. Except Chinglepet and Pudukottai districts, sporadic only were conducted in other areas.

Kongunadu was first taken note of by the archaeologists in the latter part of the 18th century. In the initial stage sporadic exploration and excavations were undertaken mainly to collect antiquities at random rather than to study the cultural importance of the region. Though they were not scientific, yet they yielded good data to understand its cultural wealth. Kongu region is reported to be of Neolithic age but so far no site has yielded either hand-made pottery or burnished grey ware. So the existence of Neolithic culture in this region is yet established.

In the later part of the 19th century and in the early part of the 20th century A.D., Harding, Sandford, Rea, Longhurst, C.Horace Back and Khan made an attempt to bring out the cultural wealth of this region by excavating so many megalithic burials. The purpose of these excavations was made material culture of the people.

The above researchers observation on the disturbed cists, states that potteries, iron sickles and axes were found. These observations opened a new vista to the antiquity of the Kongu region.

The elaborate annotations, the region failed to receive any attention till the middle part of the 19th century. In the 21st Century, archaeologists like Pulavar.Rasu, Y.Subbarayalu and Dr.K.Rajan conducted many excavations and enlighten the history of the Kongu Nadu.10

**Archaeological Findings in Palani**

In the post-Independence period, Srinivasa Desikan explored this region for half a decade and discovered many important megalithic sites in the Palani area. The earlier work by various scholars clearly demonstrated the cultural wealth of this region. They observed some of the new types such as circles, cist with dolmens and the habitation sites.11

To build up on the earlier data, this region has been taken up for an intensive study. The aim is to identify the point of intrusion of megaliths into this region, its evolution, typological variation, the distributional pattern, stratigraphic position, chronology, material culture of the people and the contacts with other regions. The intensive explorations have yielded a wealth of data for understanding the typology and distributional patterns of the megaliths. The excavations at Palani revealed the stratigraphic position, the nature and the construction of the types of megaliths and the material culture of the people.

The abundant occurrence of the megaliths distributed evenly throws much light on the cultural wealth of this region. Numerous graves and habitation sites connect the
Palani with the megalithic to historic. The attempt made by the scholars both in Pre and Post-independence era opened a new phase in the early history of this region.


**Chronology of Palani**

Palani is the historical place and the Palani Hills is a part of the oldest mountain range of the Western Ghats in Tamil Nadu state of South India. It is a land of varied culture, religions and people. In this region, there are so many types of pre historic remains and the cultural deposits are found. In Palani, various remains were identified and it helps us to fix the date for this region and back to 5000 BC to 5th century AD. The study made so far helps us to understand the cultural unity that prevailed throughout this region with minor variations which occurred due to the evolutionary processes. However, in the Western Ghats of the Palani hills, there are so many rock arts and dolmens are found. In the middle and southern parts, some evolved types of burials are encountered. In the north and the north eastern side, hero stones and sarsens are initiated. In the western part Jain centers, inscriptions and megaliths are originated.

**Megalithic Remains of Palani**

The pre-historic remains are found all over the regions of Palani, and the concentration is seen around all over parts. An Iron Age habitation-cum- burial sites are found almost all over the area. The disposition of the urn into a pit and the encirclement with stone boulders, rock paintings, potteries, iron factories, bead factories and inscriptions are found.

**Location of the Megalithics**
The megalithic people followed some procedures and certain norms to pay homage to their ancestors. The graveyards found in the area were constructed by easily available raw material. They built their cemeteries on an elevated area to protect them from being washed away by rain water.


The height of habitation mound is less, it cannot be recognized easily unless one seriously looks for it. The area of the mound ranges between 5 to 50 acres. The location of the various habitation-cum-burial sites indicates that they opted for riverine settlement. The geomorphological nature of the region was so undulated that the megalithic people of the Palani region never found it difficult to select a land to meet their purpose. The raw material was available in plenty in the ranges of mountains, they selected only small hillocks and outcrops. The reason may be to avoid dense forests which were not congenial to habitation or cultivation. They selected site for the graveyard mostly where water was easily available or accessible. In the Palani region 75% percent of the megaliths were located on the banks of rivers like the Shanmuganathi, the Amaravati and the Western Ghats of the Palani region.\textsuperscript{14}In some places perennial ponds were made use in the absence of river waters.

**Raw Materials**

The ancient people utilized the raw materials were locally available and easily transportable, except in a few cases. The raw materials were available within the distance of one or two kilometers. They used round boulders in the construction of the circles and slabs for the construction of cists and capstones. Both dressed and undressed slabs were generally used for capstones. Some of the capstones weigh more than two tons. The stone slabs having the thickness of 10 to 15 cm. These tall slabs
would break easily. The slabs were quarrying, lifting, transporting and erecting boulders certainly indicate, that they had knowledge of petrology and technology. The occurrence of chisel marks on the edge of the slabs, orthostats and capstones indicate besides the natural way of breaking they used chisels to some extent to quarry the raw material for making ohostats.


**Distributional Pattern**

The distributional pattern of the megaliths within a burial-complex is assessed mainly on the basis of a few selective sites. The region yielded a large number of sites covering an area of 10 to 50 acres containing hundreds of burials. The burial-complex comprised a mixture of both small and big circles. But they have not followed any consistent pattern in the layout of the graves. Huge, unusual circle were noticed in any part of the burial-complex. When a site contained more than one type of burial, each type occupied a separate portion within the complex. It seems the earliest megaliths occupied the most elevated part of the site.\(^{15}\)

A study of the density of the burials within a given space revealed the fact that distance between two adjacent burials was normally one to two meters. If the site is a habitation-cum-burial-complex then the distance between the two is nearly one to two kilometers. In some cases they were closer. The burial-complex was normally found on the eastern side of the habitation mound. In a few cases it was found on other sides too. If the site was situated on the bank of a river then normally the burial-complex and the habitation occupied the opposite banks.\(^{16}\) The pattern of distribution that seemed to emerge from the survey was that for each locality of a five km radius there was a somewhat connected cluster of sites.

**Objects of the Megalithic Graves**
The graves were contained potteries, jars, bowls, conical vessels with pointed base, concave neck and beaded rim, globular bodied narrow-mouthed pots, large sized urns, lids and ring-stands, domestic vessels, beads, rings, weapons, implements, tools, skeletal remains, grains and the parts of the tree.


16. Ibid.

Most of the potteries were of the black-and-red variety though the red ware and the black ware. Majority of the pots had polished shining surfaces though coarser specimens. In some dolmens contained a pit dug into hard soil and revealed a few pots. Sometimes the circle of stones only or urn with a capstone or sometimes few pots were surviving. A few kept iron spear-head.

The potteries from the graves were of inferior quality consisting mostly of pots with narrow mouth, tall bowls, and each of them had a ring-stand and lid. The texture of the pottery, black-and-red variety were thin. Some of the potteries have painted wavy lines and few pots bore graffiti markings. A simple copper or bronze bracelet were also found. In some graves loose earth were found at the bottom.

Most of potteries were being kept on ring-stands. Utmost the urns were damaged due to hard packing. The urns were about 1.20 m in height including lid or cover and about 75 cm in diameter at their greatest girth. They were of coarse brown clay, ill-fired and originally covered both on the interior and exterior with a false black glaze. They were evidently wheel-made and were free from ornamentation save for a few lines of simple mouldings around the rim of the lid. The four-legged jars contained grains which crumbled on touch. The urns were filled with the remains of human skulls and bones, corroded iron implements, domestic vessels, a few beads and
a few stone flakes. They have been used as implements or placed in the grave to represent such tools or weapons.¹⁷

**Megalithic Sites at Palani Region**

Palani is one of the historical place in Tamil Nadu, to be ancient and so many antique monuments are found. The monuments initiate in this region are exposes the important of Palani.


**Aivarmalai**

The small individual hillock called Aivarmalai is one of the historical place in Palani. It lies twenty kilometre away from Uduimalaipettai and seven kilometre away from Kolumam. In this site, more than 200 Iron Age graves, mostly of stone circles entombing cist burials, covering an area of 4 ha. of land are found on the eastern slope of the hillock. The stone circles measure an average diameter of 3 to 7 m. Jain sculptures, sixteen Tirthankaras, with *Vatteluthu* inscriptions are found in middle of the hillock. Jain beads might have existed earlier but all these beds were covered with later day pilaster. The small hillock is mentioned as *Ayiraimalai* in Sangam literature.

**Balasamuthiram**

The village Balasamuthiram is located four kilometre west of Palani. The river Porunthal flows western side of the village. The urn burials are found on eastern side of the village. Most of the urns are disturbed due to cultivation. The graveyard locally called as *Pandiyankuli*,¹⁸ covers an area of more than 2 ha.

**Kalayamputhur**

The village Kalayamputhur is located on the Palani-Coimbatore road at a distance of five kilometre west of Palani. The river Porunthal known as *Sanmuganathi* flows southeast of this village. In this place, there are so many cists containing and
urns and covered with capstone are found on southern side of the village. These are locally called as *panndiyankal* and *pandiyarasakal*. Most of the urns are disturbed due to cultivation. One disturbed cist contains bowls, plates, bones and black-and-red ware pieces.

18. Field work done by the researcher at Balasamuthiram and the villagers locally called as Pandiyankuli on April 15th 2013.
19. Information given by Dr. S. Vairavel, Prof. & Head, P.G. and research Department of Indian Culture, A.P.A.C. College, Palani on August 21st 2012.

The village lies on the ancient trade route. During de-siltation of a tank a pot containing 63 gold coins of the early Roman Emperors, Augustus and others was found 6 inches below the surface of the ground, near the river Sanmuganadi. Fifty seven coins were found in excellent state of preservation.

**Kanakkanpatti**

The village Kanakkanpatti is located fifteen kilometre east of Palani. The urns with capstone are found around the village. The burial site is known as *pandiyanakuli*. Most of the urns are disturbed due to building construction. The black-and-ware, red ware and iron slag were collected in the vicinity.

**Kavalapatti**

In the earlier, the village Kavalapatti is known as *Narayanimangalam*. It lies fifteen kilometres west of Palani town on the way to Kolumam. In this village two stone circles and two cairn circles entombing cist and urn are found on eastern side of the village. Generally, a huge capstone is placed on the urns. The diameters of the stone circles are range between 180 m and 9.70 m. The burial site, yielding more than 1000 burials covers an area of more than 25 ha. At present, more than 400 burials are found in excellently state of preservation.

**Kiranur**
The village Kiranur is located on the Palani-Dharapuram road at a distance of 20 km from Palani. The river Sanmuganadi flows on the northern side of the village. The Historic habitation mound is found on eastern side of the village. It yielded red ware and black ware. More than 2 m elevated area locally called Nathamedu is covering more than 3 ha. of land. The medieval period Siva temple with inscriptions is found near the habitation mound.  

20. rPj;huhk; FUKh;jjp>jpz;Lf;fy; khtl;l njhy;ypay; ifNaL>2007, pp.163-164.  

Kompaiapatti  

The village Kombaipatti lies seventeen kilometre east of Palani and 3 km from Kanakkampatti. The historic habitation mound Nattakadu is found on the eastern side of the village. It yielded red ware and black ware. An inscription datable to 13th cent. AD refer land grant to the Siva temple.  

Kothaimangalam  

This village Kodaimangalam is located on the Palani – old Dharapuram road at a distance of six kilometre from Palani. The river Porunthalar (Sanmuganadi) flows on northern side of the village. The cairn circles entombing cist with capstone and urns are found on northern side of the village. More than 100 burials, locally called Pandiyan tittu, are found in an elevated area covering more than 3 ha. of land. The medieval trade guild inscriptions are noticed near the village.  

Manur  

The village Manur lies on the Palani - old Dharapuram road at a distance of nine kilometre north of Palani. The river Porunthalar flows on northern side of the village. The urns are found on eastern side of the village. The burials, locally called as
pandiyanukili, cover an area of more than 2 ha. It yielded black-and-red ware and red ware. Early Historic brick structures are found near the river.

Melkaraipatti

The village Melkaraipatti is located fifteen kilometre north of Palani on the way to old Dharapuram. The stone circles entombing urns are found on northern side of the village. Most of the burials are disturbed due to cultivation.

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23. Field work done by the researcher at Kothaimangalam and the data given by S. Arumugam, on September 10th 2013.
24. Ibid.

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Narikkalpatti

This village Narikkalpatti is located on the Palani – old Dharapuram road at a distance of twelve kilometre north of Palani. The river Porunthalar (Sanmuganadi) flows on northern side of the village. Nearly ten stone circles and cairn circles, locally known as pandiyankuli are found on western side of the village. It covers an area of more than 5 ha. of land. Most of the burials are disturbed due to cultivation.

Porunthal

The village Porunthal lies on the left bank of the river Porunthalar at the foothill of the Western Ghats about twelve kilometre southwest of Palani. This historical village lies close to the major trade routes connecting Pandya capital Madurai on the south and Chera capital Vanji on the west. The site was excavated in two seasons for two months between May and June during the years of 2009 and 2010 by the team of Pondicherry University & Tamil University, Thanjavur.

Petappanayakanpatti
This village Petappanayakanpatti is located sixteen kilometre away from Palani to Dindigul road. The stone circle entombing urns, locally called pandiyankuli, with capstone exposed on the surface are found around the village. It yielded black and red ware and red ware.

**Periyaduraikombai**

The village Periyaduraikombai is located seven kilometre south of Palani – Dindigul road and twenty two kilometre from Palani. The urns are found on eastern side of the village covering an area of more than 3 ha. of land. Most of the burials are disturbed due to cultivation. It yielded black-and-red ware and red ware.

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25. *Field work* done by the researcher at Narikkalpatti and the villagers locally called as Pandiyankuli on January 11th 2013.

26. *Information* given by Dr. K.Palanisamy, Assistant Professor, P.G. and research Department of Indian Culture, A.P.A.C.College, Palani on June 2nd 2013.

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**Puliyamarathu Settu**

This village Puliyamarattu Settu is located fifteen kilometre south of Palani on the way to Kodaikkanal. The river Varathamani flows on northern side of the village. The cist burials, locally called pandiyan thittu, are found in and around the village. Most of the burials are found near Anna Nagar. Some burials are totally disturbed due to cultivation.

**Puliyampatti**

The village Puliyampatti is located seventeen kilometre south of Palani. The cairn circles entombing cist and urn are found on eastern side of the village and near the small hillock called kuttikaradu. Around this hillock more than 50 burials are located spreading in an area of 3 ha. It yielded pots of black-and red ware, plates and bowls of black ware and pots of red ware. The burial site is partially disturbed due to cultivation. The stone circle measures 5 to 7 m in diameter.

**Palaya Ayakudi**
The village Palaya Ayakudi is located five kilometre east of Palani on the way to Dindigul. The urn burials are found on southern side of the village. It is locally called as *pandiyan kuzhi*. Most of the burials were disturbed due to building construction.

**Periyakottai**

The village Periyakottai is situated twelve kilometre west of Ottanchathiram. There are two temples found on eastern side of the village. One of the Kathirnarasinga Perumal temple found on the small hillock having inscriptions, datable to 14th cent. AD. Another one temple Somesvara, with inscriptions datable to 15th cent. AD.

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27. *Field visit* by the researcher to Puliyamarathu Settu to study the Megalithic Monuments on August 7th 2014.

28. *One day field* work by the P.G. & Research Department of History, A.P.A. College of women, Palani, under the guidance of Dr. L. Thilagavathi, on May 27th 2012.

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A *Vatteluthu* inscription is also found on the hillock. It is dated to 10th Cent. AD. It is found engraved on a rocky surface close to Kathirnarasinga perumal temple. Three hero stones are located north-western side of the village. On stylistic ground, these hero stones could be assigned to Nayaka period. The area, in which these hero stones are installed, is known as *Palayakoil*.

**Sappalanayakanpatti**

The village Sappalanayakanpatti is located fifteen kilometre northwest of Palani. The historic habitation mound, locally called *Nattamedu*, is found on western side of the village. The mound covers an area of more than 5 ha. It yielded black ware and red ware. An inscribed slab installed on the habitation mound is noticed. The symbols found engraved on exposed area of the slab suggest that this inscribed slab probably carry trade guild inscription.

**Thalaiyuthu**
The village Thalaiyuthu is situated fourteen kilometre west of Palani on the way to Coimbatore. The stone circles are found close to the village. The burials are locally called as *pandiyan kuli*. The average diameter of the stone circle measures to 7 m. The site covering an area of more than 2.5 ha. The circle yielded black-and-red ware and red ware.

**Thamaraikulam**

The village Thamaraikulam is located about 5 km down the stream on the right bank of the river Poruthalar. It is well known for several archaeological findings. The habitation mound, locally called *Tukkottai*, yielded several graffiti marks engraved on black-and-red ware, russet-coated ware and red ware. Besides, iron furnace, TC pipes, tubers, bricks, terracotta figurines, hopscotches, etc., were collected from the disturbed habitation mound covering an area of about 4 ha.


30. *Field work* done by the researcher at Thalaiyuthu and the villagers locally called as Pandiyankuli on January 11th, 2013.

Urns burials with skeletal remains are found exposed earlier. The important medieval trade guild inscriptions issued by the celebrated trade guilds *Ainurruvar/Tisai-ayirattu-ainurruvar* were located about 5 km from Porunthal down the stream at Thamaraikulam and Rajapuram. The Thamaraikulam lies on the right bank and Rajapuram lies on the left bank opposite to Thamaraikulam. It is quite interesting to note that both the sites have trade guild inscriptions.

**Rock Paintings**

Indian painting has a very long tradition and history in Indian art. The earliest Indian paintings were the rock paintings of pre-historic times. The rock paintings were appearing in several forms such as painting, etching, engraving, bruising etc.

Tamil Nadu has a rich heritage and cheered history. Its ancestry dates back to the Palaeolithic age. In the archaeological field, Tamil Nadu has the most interesting
sites, considering the antiquity of monuments, richness of artefacts and the variety of its museums. In epigraphy, the state can proudly boast of having the largest number of inscriptions in the country.

In the late seventies, Prof. K.V. Raman chanced upon rock engravings in Mallapadi in Dharmapuri District, thereby flagging off the race for identifying new sites and the effort has not been in vain.


Till date, more than thirty sites along the Western and Eastern Ghats have been identified many of them by officers of the State and Central Departments of archaeology. This has conclusively proved the existence of cavemen who inhabited the rocky shelters of Tamil Nadu in megalithic period (Iron Age). It has also established the State’s claim to be considered as one of the important regions for studying. There are more than fifty seven rock arts are found in Tamil Nadu and it displays great virtues of balance, appropriate use of colour, love of nature, and a keen understanding of the life and time of the inhabitants.

**Chronology of Rock Paintings in Palani**

The chronology of the rock paintings is based on the subject matter or cultural content, superimpositions, styles and archaeological findings from the painted rock
shelter. The chronological study of Indian rock paintings begins with the work of Paolo Graziosi, who devoted much of his time to the study. The study of the Palani is classified in to three series.

1. The first of the series was compared with those of rock paintings which are discovered in the Western Ghats.
2. The second one was confined to Nilgiri hills.
3. The third was mainly from the area around Palani hills and could be compared with the South Indian rock paintings.

According to the geometric human figure (with rectangular bodies filled in wavy lines and triangular heads) and stick shaped figures are older than crude figures of hunters. In the paintings, horse riders and fighters are grouped. In animals of the series, executed in greenish black. Palani area rock paintings according to their style, into five main series such as,

1. Drawings of animals as the oldest.
2. The animal figures are either outlined or have partially filled in limbs.


3. The natural silhouettes of animal and horse riders are grouped.
4. Drawings comprised crude, outlined figures of hunters.
5. Symbolic and geometric signs characterize paintings.

There are only three periods reflected in the rock paintings such as,
1. Scenes of a society of hunters and food gatherers, which can be called Pre-historic period (Mesolithic).
2. Scenes of domestic animals, which can be termed Proto-historic period (Neo/Chalcolithic).
3. Scenes of fighters, riders and the use of metallic weapons, which undoubtedly, belong to the historic period.

**Rock Paintings of Palani Region**

The rock arts of Palani, displays great virtues of balance, appropriate use of colour, love of nature and a keen understanding of the life and times of the inhabitants. Scenes of battlefield, travel, hunting, festivities and others are depicted with realism and sensitivity. All the images etched on rock surfaces clearly demonstrate their urge to express themselves in forms that are intelligible. There are paintings of elephants, cattle, tiger, deer, wild boar and porcupine, and of human beings dancing or fighting. The prehistoric artists used white kaolin, lime or even ash to paint these figures. The contemporary tribal people have used enamel paint to embellish some of these paintings. They also have made beautiful paintings of elephants, peacocks and so on.\(^\text{34}\)

The vast majority of recognisable representations are indeed of various species of animals and human activities. Among the animals most commonly represented are the bison, the bull and the horse.

\(^\text{34}.\) *Information* given by., Mr.K.T. Gandhirajan, Professor, Department of Fine Arts, College of Fine Arts, Chennai, December 18\(^\text{th}\) 2013.

Most of the representations of humans are crude and clumsy in comparison with the many animal representations. The animals, humans or signs are shown either in isolation or on panels, which also contain several other animals, humans or signs.

Another characteristic of the Palani panels with more than one representation on them is the frequent occurrence of super positioning. It is not at all uncommon to find one animal or sign placed on top of another or sign placed on top of another or
sign either overlapping the previous representation in part only or completely covering it.

Animals are almost invariably shown in profile and the varieties of stances to be found in this art are numerous. Also some images are painted with solid colours in red and white pigment treatments believed to belong to an earlier period.

**Raw Materials**

Most of the drawings are filled with black and white colour some are in red. The figures have sharp facial features and body proportionate. The figures are often found well thick lines with sharpen edges. Four techniques have been used in the creation of Palani rock paintings. They are

1. Wet transparent colour (water colour painting)
2. Wet opaque colour (Oil or tempera)
3. Crayon (dry colour painting) and
4. Stencil (Spray colour painting).

The transparent and opaque colour techniques are more common in rock paintings than the stencil technique, which is generally restricted to the execution of negative handprints. The techniques of paintings are not so complicated.

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35. *Interview* with Dr. Raju Poundurai, Professor & Head, Department of Architecture, Tamil University, Thanjavur, June 11th 2013.
paintings, rock engravings are also found in Palani area. The rock shelters bear a various themes of designs and symbols filled with white, red and black colour.

**Themes and Patterns**

The most common themes in the Palani cave paintings are large wild animals, such as elephant, bison, horses [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurochs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aurochs) and deer. The tracings of the human hands as well as abstract patterns called finger flutings. The species found most often were suitable for hunting by humans, but were not necessarily the actual typical prey found in associated deposits of bones; for example, the painters of Lascaux have mainly left reindeer bones, but this species does not appear at all in the cave paintings, where equine species are the most common. Drawings of humans were rare and are usually schematic as opposed to the more detailed and naturalistic images of animal subjects. One explanation for this may be that realistically painting the human form was forbidden by a powerful religious taboo.

Pigments used in the rock paintings are black, red and white. The ingredients are such as, yellow ochre, hematite, manganese oxide and charcoal. The outlines of the drawings were incised in the rock first, and in some areas are only engraved.

The large animals are also the most common subjects in the shelter. They were carved and engraved bone or ivory (less often stone) pieces dating from the same periods.


The cave paintings can be grouped into three main categories such as,

1. Animals
2. Human Figures
3. Abstract Signs.
4. Animals depicted include familiar herbivores—these predominate cave art and predatory animals.
5. The most spectacular examples of cave paintings are in southern France and northern Spain.
6. Interpretations vary from prehistoric star charts, accounts of past hunts or mystical rituals for future ones, and shamanism.

For more numerous are body segments, such as hand stencils and hand prints, heads, female and male genital organs, or again some rather indistinct outlines, which may or may not be human often called ghosts. Those themes were more or less favoured according to the various cultures. 37

**Subject of the Art**

The subject matter of the rock paintings of Palani has been divided into the following categories.

**Human Forms**

Human beings are painted lesser realistically than the animals. There are men, women, hunter, fighter, rider, attendant, dancer, man with animal hide, women with sickle, ritual performer, leader, man in hut, anthropomorphic, women engaged in domestic chores and fragmented figures.

37. *Information* furnished by Dr. Raju Poundurai, Professor & Head, Department of Architecture, Tamil University, Thanjavur, on June 11th 2013.

**Animal and Bird Forms**

Normally animal forms are found in a part of hunting scene. A good number of the large or medium size animal’s figures have been painted naturalistically. The common most details are their horns, snout and ears. The animal drawings of early
period are very natural and more realistic than those belonging to the later period. In the earliest period the animals were depicted in considerable size, beautifully decorated with abstract and geometric patterns. These species comprise elephant, wild buffalos, oxen, cow, deer, wild boar, dog and horse. Probably birds did not form major part of food but only an object of entertainment and curiosity in their surroundings and thus did not receive much significance in the lives of pre-historic men. The bird like a peacock is found in the shelters.

**Scenes**

Prehistoric artists have drawn all aspects of their life independently and complete in it. The artists depicted various compositions on the rock surface. Such compositions usually comprise scenes of hunting, food gathering, fighting, dancing and music, social and daily chores.

**Mythological Scenes**

The rock art suggestive of mythological origin is that of worship and symbols of mother Goddess. Only a few Indian rock art paintings have a religious significance in the paintings.\(^{38}\) The paintings of Palani area, which are likely to be related to mythology, have been grouped as follows: Sun worship, Moon worship and God Worship and Symbol.

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38. *Sources* given by., Mr.K.T. Gandhirajan, Professor, Department of Fine Arts, College of Fine Arts, Chennai on December 18\(^{th}\) 2013.

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**Rock Painting Sites at Palani Kozhiuthu**

The paintings painted on a rock surface, about 40 foot-long and 15-foot-tall and at a height of 250 ft. from the ground, on a hill, which is an extension of the Western Ghats.
Kozhiuthu

The rock shelter found in Kozhiuthu (Alakallu), which was discovered by the team members of Indian Culture, Arulmigu Palaniandavar College of Arts & Culture, Palani, Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu. The rock Paintings are lies southwest of Western Ghats of Palani region. The rock paintings are found in the pudukkottai village, on the way to Palani to Oddanchatram, near Chattrapatti village. A massive rock surface, curving inwards, confronted us. It looked like an arched dome (Alakallu). The entire natural cavern was painted with rock art.39

A spectacular feature of the site is that the rock surface is an admixture of ancient rock art and contemporary tribal paintings, showing a continuity of tradition. There were modern graffiti, too. The painted surface is about 11 metre long and 4.5 metre wide. The images like man, animals include Sun, Moon, nature and geometric figures. A remarkable feature of the Kozhiuthu rock art is that while the original artist made the painting in black and red ochre, the succeeding artist used white ochre to work on the same painting, trying his skill at ornamentation.

Andipatty Hill

In the Andipatty hill, 3,000 years old, belonging to the Sangam period, a rock painting was discovered. The faded paintings have been found in over ten places in the cave and were painted in white colour using a mixture of limestone, natural gums and herbal extracts. One of the paintings shows a group of women carrying pots of water on their heads, while another shows men, women and children dancing together at a festival, holding hands.

39. Interview and Field Work with K.T Gandhirajan, Professor, Department of Fine Arts, College of Fine Arts, Chennai on 21st January 2013.

The paintings also tell stories one of an elephant captured and trained, on which the king goes for a ride surrounded by guards. Several scattered paintings depict men, women and tigers and hunts undertaken. The caves were in frequent use about 2,000 to 3,000 years ago.
Western Ghats of Palani Hill

Ancient rock paintings that may date back to over 3,000 years have been found in the inner ranges of the Western Ghats near Palani in Dindigul district.\textsuperscript{40} The black and white line figures are etched using lime and herbal colours. This ancient method is so effective that not even a dab of acid can remove the paint from the walls. The paintings, which are said to belong to the Middle Sangam period, depict animals such as elephants, tigers and birds such as cranes. The war scenes depict men mounted on elephants and horses and holding weapons in their hand. A closer look at the paintings reveals the image of a disabled man ambling with a stick and another man being chased by a swarm of bees. Other images show a pregnant woman being assisted by another female figure and a royal procession. An elephant spraying water on itself is drawn intricately. Three symbols which look similar to the Indus Valley symbols, which precede the Tamil Brahmi inscription, are also seen alongside the drawings. The paintings might have been drawn by one person and that he had added his signature to endorse his paintings. Line drawings such as the one discovered here are generally 4,000 to 7,000 years.

Mungil Alai Village

Three rock art sites with a profusion of paintings have been discovered in dense forests in the lower Palani hill ranges. The paintings are in caverns near the tribal hamlets of Mungil-Alai, Veguritta-Alai and Pakki-Alai in the Western Ghats.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{40} Interview with V. Narayanamoorthy, who identified the Rock Art on February 10\textsuperscript{th} 2013.
\textsuperscript{41} K.Rajan, “Rock Paintings”, \textit{The Hindu}, May 28\textsuperscript{th} 2010, p.6.

For instance, two paintings at Mungil-Alai show devotees performing \textit{kavadi}, a ritual performed in Murugan temples, with devotees balancing a bow-shaped decorated object on their shoulders as an offering. Another new subject found at both Mungil-Alai and Veguritta-Alai rock shelters shows bullock-carts. The paintings of
bullocks yoked to carts have been executed in an ingenuous way using the top angle approach. There are also paintings of elephants, bison’s, tigers and even cheetahs. Both red ochre and white kaolin have been used to draw the figures.

The significance of the paintings depicting bullock-carts was that a trade route passed some distance away from the Pandya country to the Chera country through Nilakkottai, Dindigul, Palani, Udumalpet, Pollachi and entered Vanchi, which is present-day Thrissur in Kerala. Bullock-cart caravans often passed through this route, ferrying merchandise. Dr. K. Rajan estimated that the bullock-cart paintings belonged to 3rd or 2nd century B.C. The paintings could span a period from the 3rd century B.C. to the first century A.D.

**Inscriptions**

The ancient practice of inscribing on walls to commemorate conquests, donations, religious ceremonies and other important events are called inscriptions. These inscriptions are historical evidence of the existence and the activities of early kings and empires. The inscriptions showing the political and cultural life of the early kingdoms. It also provide detailed genealogies and documents on donations and donors, religious practices, political organization, and legal codes. Inscriptions represent the earliest written forms of Indian languages. They also provide a fascinating glimpse into the personal lives of the people they commemorate.


Indian inscriptions engraved into stone or other durable materials, or etched into metal, are an important historical source beginning from the third century BC. The vast majority are found in South India, written on plates of copper, the stone walls of temples, or stone monuments. An estimated 1,00,000 inscriptions have now been
found. Many of these inscriptions have been catalogued and translated. They also document the development and use of written languages in India.

Tamil Nadu as the first among the Indian States, the affluence of inscriptions found. The earliest record found in Tamil Nadu was in Adichanallur, twenty four kilometre from Tirunelveli. In this site, the archaeologists unearthed Tamil Brahmi.

Tamil Brahmi script was prevalent in Tamil Nadu from 3rd century BCE onwards and continued with variations upto 4th Century of Common Era. During this time, the practice of writing Sanskrit letters in Tamil Nadu, commonly known as Grantha script was popularised by the Pallavas. This continued for nearly two centuries from 4th to 6th century AD. The Tamil script evolved from the Grantha script around 7th Century AD. Inscriptions in the Tamil script are found from the beginning of the 7th Century AD. Inscriptions in this script are found only in the northern portion of Tamil Nadu upto the beginning of the 11th Century AD. In the extreme south of the Pandya country, Vattezhuthu was in use. But with the occupation of the Pandya country by the Cholas after conquest in the closing years of the 10th Century AD the Tamil script came to be used there also.

44. I., Mahadevan, Early Tamil Epigraphy: From the Earliest Times to the Sixth Century, 2003, pp.29-34.
45. Ibid.
47. I., Mahadevan, op.cit., 2003, p.25.

Thereafter, it has been in use throughout Tamil Nadu. Tamil inscriptions even at Visakhapatnam of the Andhra State and at Puri in the Orissa State. It is also noticed overseas in countries like China, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand.

Tamil has the extant literature amongst the Dravidian languages, but dating the language and the literature precisely is difficult. Literary works in India were
preserved either in palm leaf manuscripts or through oral transmission, making direct dating impossible.

External chronological records and internal linguistic evidence, however, indicate that extant works were probably compiled sometime between the 4th century BCE and the 3rd Century AD. Epigraphic attestation of Tamil begins with rock inscriptions from the 3rd century BCE, written in Tamil Brahmi, an adapted form of the Brahmi script. The earliest extant literary text is the Tolkāppiyam, a work on poetics and grammar which describes the language of the classical period, dated variously between the 5th Century BCE and the 2nd Century AD.\textsuperscript{50}

Tamil copper-plate inscriptions are mostly records of grants of villages or plots of cultivable lands to private individuals or public institutions by the members of the various South Indian royal dynasties.\textsuperscript{51} The grants range in date from the 10th century AD to the mid-19th century AD. A large number of them belong to the Chalukyas, the Cholas and the Vijayanagara kings. These plates are valuable epigraphically as they give us an insight into the social conditions of medieval South India and help fill chronological gaps to connect the history of the ruling dynasties.

\textsuperscript{48} R., Champakalakshmi, R., \textit{Archaeology and Tamil Literary Tradition}, 1975-76, pp.39-55.
\textsuperscript{51} E. Hultsch, \textit{South Indian Inscriptions (Tamil – Sanskrit)}, 1890, pp.251-58.

\textbf{Inscriptions in Palani Region}

There are so many inscriptions discovered in and around Palani were reported by various archaeologists. The inscriptions contains the name of the king influential in that area and his regnal year. It may also contain a long list of achievements of the king called \textit{meykirthi}.\textsuperscript{52} Which is an important source of history. If the inscription is a
copy of a legal document pertaining to the local temple then it has the name of the village and the temple. There are inscriptions which are copies of documents of a purely secular nature even though they may be found inscribed on the walls of the local temple. From inscriptions one may get interesting information on social customs, local disputes and the different kinds of taxes and the prices of different commodities.

In this study the researcher discussed certain Tamil inscriptions of the Palani area belonging to the Early Tamils, Chola, the Pandya and the Vijayanagara dynasties from Sangam age to the 15th Century AD. The inscriptions are of interest from the point of view of local history and give us a clue to the antiquity of villages and towns of the area.


CHAPTER – IV

NATURE AND STRUCTURE OF THE SITES