CHAPTER – VI
CONCLUSION

This research brings out the cultural wealth of entire Palani area, for the first time, through the reports of intensive archaeological excavations and explorations. The intimidating evidences on Megalithic culture, provide a new dimension to the Palani area. The cultural links with adjoining regions and the cultural dynamics expose a picturesque on the ancient Palani. This research turns the attention of archaeologists to go for such region specific archaeological research to unravel the diverse cultural heritage of the Indian subcontinent.

Palani occupies a position of greater importance in serving as a connecting link between the West Coast and Kongu region. This geographical location has favoured the growth of a distinct cultural landscape in Palani. This is one of the regions where one could observe the continuous archaeological records since the Megalithic period. In Palani, Megalithic monuments and the early historic sites are spread over the parts of the taluk. But still there is hardly any excavation to prove inter and intra cultural relationship both stratigraphically and chronologically. The excavations provided a good picture on the potentiality of the region.

The studies of Palani rock art gives us an idea of the meaning and cultural function of rock art. However, the investigation of Kozhiuthu is problematic due to the narrow-mindedness of the researchers and for the censorship of these documents that always occurred.

The paintings of Kozhiuthu is very special and not well understood and it is our only peek into the socio-religious aspects of these ancient cultures. There are many numbers of theories purporting to explain rock-art. Some theories suggest the rock-art
images are simply daily life drawings and mean little more. Other theories suggest the drawings and designs are complex depictions and explanations. The trance experience convey the message about the altered state of consciousness and the shamantic journey and understanding of ancient tribal life. We must be careful not to assume that the paintings produced in a specific tribal social and religious context bear any resemblance to the belief system of modern society of today. Finally, the researcher would be remiss not to mention that at least one source provides with a not so convincing argument that aliens from outer space drew the rock art.

The rock art conveys a message either simple or quite complex of the early people life, culture and tradition. The rock art is the oldest known art form or drawing style, communication other than oral or body language. The rock art is the oldest recorded history of human thought patterns, behaviour and provides with a peek into a long gone ancient culture. Valuable insights into the socio-religious aspects of this ancient culture, including their myth and the belief system is gained. The cave paintings are precious remnants of an ancient way of life. These paintings are some of the oldest clues of cultures long forgotten.

The current dominant trends in rock art theory in Tamil Nadu suggest continuing development and refinement of a multi-strand evidentiary approach. The rock art is a realist rationalist underlying philosophy of science. It is dubious of extreme post-modernist relativism or the literary metaphor of reading rock art simply as a text. On a theoretical level, this approach respects and incorporates both the universal neurological and biological elements that humans share as the last of the hominid species. The cultural specific perceptions of these elements are mediated by the individuals in specific historical and political circumstances. This theoretical approach is not pessimistic about recovering broad meanings in rock art, and is optimistic about being able to discriminate against interpretations. They are outside the restraining influence of the evidentiary strands that produce the testable predictions.

The site is probably a country folk of the earlier period. The rock of Kozhiuthu is an endangered species of Tamil Nadu. It is also a national treasure, the countries around the world are realizing they have a national riches at their door step disguised
as rock art. But due to naturally occurring deterioration by natural climatic conditions and abuse by humans, the rock art is disappearing.

A study of the rock art, throws enormous light on their thinking process, their everyday concerns and their fight for survival in a difficult era. It also displays the artistic talent inborn in early man. Their study is at once fascinating and illuminating. Hence the urgency for a speedy and proper documentation is necessary before the original things are destroyed.

Some deteriorated rock art zones in Tamil Nadu especially in Kozhiuthu, could receive the advice of advisors that would permit them to be saved or atleast lower the chances of total destruction. It is urgent that the international community be informed and that cultural organizations are requested,

1. To push for a rock art department in universities organized by scientific academic authorities, with international assistance.
2. To record and seriously study rock art.
3. To undertake serious evaluations of the state of conservation of zones in danger.
4. To organize the territory in sections and try to find ways to organize different ways and to administer the rock art sites using the local community.
5. To work with universities to study the archaeology of the sites and therefore be able to complete studies along with dates to directly date the pictograph pigments.

The archaeological sites are spread over the Palani taluk mostly on, dolmens and dotted with cairn circles. The discovery of the cairn circles indicate the religious life of the early people. Most of the archaeological sites in Palani are disturbed and promoted to cultivated lands. The destruction of these megalithic burial sites are going on at a very fast rate. Hundreds of megalithic burial sites have been destroyed. The advent of huge earth-moving machines, used for laying cultivation, highways and digging big pits, hastened the destruction of the Iron Age burial sites.

Iron Age to early pre-historic culture was well flourished in the Sangam Age. These burial sites have hidden secrets of the social life of the Sangam age. The poets of the Sangam, talk about such burial sites, which are equally or more important than
the Tamil-Brahmi sites. There were several references in the poems of the Sangam literature to the megalithic burials. One of the poems, spoke about that is, elevated stone circles ‘paral uyar padhukkai,’
(paral means stones and uyar referring to elevated and padhukkai means circles).
This region experienced prosperity in terms of economic, social and cultural growth during the Sangam period (450 BCE to 300 AD). The region has possessed many pre-historic sites and also the historic sites. The preliminary investigations conducted in this area show some remarkable evidence on the linkage between the pre and the historic sites. In Palani, most of the sites are found near at the habitations. Therefore, an attempt is made to situate a site in a given cultural context. The excavation of an early historic site at Porunthal, located on the mouth of Porunthalaru river yielded data on cultural linkages between Palani and other parts of the country. The trade goods and that were exchanged at this place were brought in from several places. Likewise Roman coins were also unearthed in large quantity. However, the archaeological context of the coins is yet to be satisfactorily discerned. It is necessary to locate archaeological sites, trade centres and trade routes in Palani based on coin hoards, inscriptions and mineral resources.

The area of study primarily falls between the archaeological sites of Palani such as, pre-historic and historic period. The pre-historic period does not have any written records but they are in hidden monuments. This deficiency is tackled by making an intensive detailed survey. The historic period holds three types of data namely archaeological, epigraphical and monumental that are integrated to understand the cultural process that took place during early historic time. In the pre-historic evidences are the habitation mounds like as, graves and dolmen sites. They yielding archaeological artefacts of Palani. Each primary source are not seen in isolation rather an attempt is made to diagnose the cultural context of the landscape. The detailed survey was very useful to determined cultural landscape of the Palani such as the geo-coordination, geological wealth, flora, fauna, cultural items, etc. Recent excavations at archaeological sites in the Palani region have brought to light interesting results on the climatic conditions of the Palani in plain and the upper area.
The archaeological and historical sites discovered at Palani, prove the archaeological mammon of Palani. The excavations at Porunthal, Kuthiraiyaru, Thasaripatti and Thannasiappankaradu, etc., yielded a comprehensive view on the archaeological wealth of Palani. Therefore, Porunthal a potential archaeological site was identified and this site was excavated for two seasons in the years 2009 and 2010. The results of the excavations are integrated with the existing data to draw a comprehensive picture of this river valley. The site Porunthal having an Iron Age, early historic habitation and graves. In total, three trenches were laid on the Porunthal habitation mound. The southern and western parts of the mound yielded brick structures and glass beads. The central part of the mound is having strong evidence of glass polishing furnace and several associated important cultural material like glass and paste beads, glass bangles, a gold pendent, a copper bell, terracotta ear lobes, hopscotches, terracotta figurines, gamesmen, stoppers, spouts, glass slag, bones, brick structure, ivory dice, etc., The occurrence of more than 2000 beads from 50 sq. m area speaks of its importance. The burial site was excavated further 2 kilometre west of the habitation mound. Four graves were opened within the burial complex. The excavation yielded several important grave goods. More than 16,000 beads made of steatite, carnelian, agate, quartz and paste were collected in association with legged jars and pots of red polished ware, bowl of black-and-red ware and plates of black slipped ware and iron objects like swords, arrow heads and stirrups. In this site also found Tamil-Brahmi inscribed ring stand and paddy grains kept in a four-legged jar.

The intensive field survey and well-planned excavations at Palani provided good scope to understand the settlement pattern that existed during Iron Age and early historic times and its cultural transformation. It also helped to test the existing hypothesis and provided better data to understand the nature of settlement. In this research, an attempt is made to study the material culture of the Iron Age and early historic period with the following objectives.

1. The cultural conditions of the Megalithic, early historic and medieval period.
2. Trade centres and trade routes determine the economic wealth of the Palani region.
3. The settlement pattern and their distribution.
4. The cultural transformation process that had taken place from the earlier to historic.

5. The existing theories pertaining to Megalithic to historic times.

The graveyards were mostly located in the area where the raw material was easily available, within the distance of one or two kilometres. They always preferred elevated area for their cemeteries. The reason for this selection is either to avoid the graves being washed away by the rain water or to utilize unproductive area for better purpose. If the selected elevated field had been exhausted they choose the next elevated field, even if it is little farther away, rather than selecting the nearby plain land. Cairn circles are generally found on slopes of the hills or on elevated field overlooking water resources. Dolmens and dolmenoid cists are located on the top of the high rocky grounds or hills overlooking a tank or perennial ponds.

The urn burials are mostly concentrated in deltaic regions. When a site contained more than one type of burial, each type occupied a separate portion within the burial complex. The above type of culture was found at the Ravimangalam, Thamarailulam, Kolumamkondan, Porunthal, Kothaimangalam, etc., In these places such distribution is reported earlier at Kalayamputhur and iron ore in Ravimangalam where the cist burial and urn burial complex occupied a separate area. Similarly at Ayakudi near Sithankaradu the sarcophagus and urn burial complex occupied different areas. This pattern is suggestive of showing two different groups living in a particular village having their own graveyard. The location of the graveyard is preferred on the eastern side of the habitation. This practice is quite dominant in the Western Ghats of Palani low lands.

In the burials, they used round boulders for the construction of circles and slabs for cists and capstones. Both dressed and undressed slabs were used to prepare a cist whereas undressed slabs were generally used for capstones. Some of the capstones weigh more than 10 tons. Some graves have been still heavier. The quarrying, lifting, transporting and erecting these huge stone slabs and boulders certainly indicate that they had the knowledge of petrology and appropriate technology. The occurrence of chisel marks on the edge of the slabs, ohostats and capstones indicates that they used chisels to quarry the raw material besides using techniques.
The burial sites are situated in a higher non-productive elevated area. The habitation lies close to the water bodies and in cultivable land. Most of the burial sites are located on western side of the habitation mound they are however noticed or other directions too. Topographically speaking, burial complex are normally found in non-cultivable lands or in elevated part of the site. The integration of various data obtained from intensive explorations and controlled excavations helps to understand the general settlement pattern that emerged in Palani. The use of various geo spatial maps like geological, ecology, soil, climatic, river and others helps to understand the emergence, existence and survival of various settlements in congenial and inhospitable areas. The present study provides a base data for future studies. Further studies are required to understand the terrain in more meaningful way.

The dolmens of Palani hills, is unique to this region and generally reported in the slopes of the Western Ghats. Generally it comprises of a group of dolmens placed within a rectangular wall. Isolated chambers are rare. These megalithic burials are locally called Pandiyar veedu. The salient features of the dolmens observed in the course of explorations are discussed for better understanding. They are,

1. Dolmens were built on rocky surface.
2. Dolmens were usually rectangular in shape.
3. Dolmens were made of four or five slabs. One placed as a floor slab and the remaining as orthostats.
4. Dolmens were found in groups and were constructed in circular pattern or in rows.
5. Dolmens facing all directions and the slope of the terrain determines their direction.
6. Dolmens did not have any porthole.
7. Dolmen grave goods were placed inside the chamber.
8. Dolmens were enclosed with a rectangular, trapezium or circular wall.
9. Dolmens were two or more chambers built within an enclosure.
10. Dolmens enclosure walls were built up to the level of capstone.
11. Dolmens were placed in a circular pattern then the entrance of each dolmen points towards centre of the circle.

12. Dolmens were covered by single capstone.

In Palani, the group of dolmens contain no fixed numbers, which may vary from two to eight. For example, in Kuthiraiyaru, there are eight dolmens found in a particular place. The most common number is two to four. All these dolmens stand on rocky surface. All of them were, without exception, surrounded with a wall. The dolmens were constructed in two or three rows within an enclosure wall. Sometimes, there was a row consisting of two or more dolmens. Such type was reported at Idunjakuli near Thandikudi. In this complex, there were two dolmens in a row. Sometimes, nearly five dolmens were placed in a row as one found at Thandikudi. Generally, three dolmens occupy a row. Sometimes these dolmens were placed in a circular form. In this case the entrance of all the dolmens is pointed towards the centre.

From the explorations and excavations potteries were collected from the habitations and graves. There are so many types of potteries were identified in this region. However, there was the problem of comparing the pottery of the megaliths with those of the habitation. The close examination of each and every potsherd collected from Palani also helped to recognizing many interesting graffiti marks. The principal categories such as,

2. Red polished ware.
4. Red ware
5. Black polished ware.

A comprehensive study of the traditional culture of the Palani is attempted to understand the situation by the burials of the early period. The burial system is not uniform. It does not express the consistent cultural territories due to varied environmental settings. The restricted nature of the excavation also augmented the problem. This is due to the concentration of excavations on burials rather than the
habitation mound. Further, the features of sepulchral monuments in Palani based on the Megalithic architectural techniques.

A detailed analysis is made on the settlement pattern, size of the settlement and distribution of habitation sites yielded an overall view of the Palani hills. The settlement pattern of Iron Age and early historic sites depends up on various factors. The availability of water resources for optimum agricultural production, potential pastoral land, wealth of natural resources, forest products, accessibility to the industrial raw material, inter and intra-regional connectivity through established trade routes and others alike played a dominant role in the formation of settlements. The data available with regard to the habitation mound prevented us drawing a definite conclusion. However, the close study of monuments in Palani provided some clue to understand this phenomenon.

The Megalithic monuments in a particular chronological frame is a difficult task in Palani. The researchers hardly used any absolute dates except the recent AMS date of 490 BC obtained from Porunthal. Without any chronological control, apparently it is very difficult to analyse the Megalithic monuments based on typology. Further, the recent excavations conducted at various places in Palani, suggest that there is much variation in the surface indicators and subterranean material. While dating the Iron Age burial monuments, majority of the scholars tried to date the megaliths based on typology and very little attempt was made to determine the scientific dates. Irrespective of this lacuna, an attempt is made to see the distributional pattern of Iron Age monuments of this region. This analysis may help to know the general distributional pattern of these monuments.

In the study area, the monuments like inscriptions, coins, rings, potsherds, terracotta objects and the weapons reveal the social, cultural, economic and political dimensions of the society. The cultural transformation from Iron Age to early historic is very complex and difficult to comprehend the issues to our satisfaction. Still an attempt is made to understand the early historic period of Palani area. The emergence of early historic period is not uniform throughout Tamil Nadu. The beginning of early historic is still a matter of debate. The historians, linguistics, epigraphists, numismatics, sociologists and archaeologists are making an effort to understand this
scenario based on the historical data retrieved from their own source of study. These
diverse and complex primary sources are still restricting the scholars to come to a
definite date. The availability of the deciphered written document is considered as the
beginning of history.

The findings of the excavations at Palani clearly suggest that the hidden
treasure is more important than the surface findings. A close study of grave goods,
pottery, graffiti marks, rock paintings and associated burials can alone give a better
understanding of the society for which problem oriented region wise explorations and
excavations are necessary. The details of an important archaeological discovery at
Porunthal near Palani looks to be on the writing found on the pot which is said to be
the oldest found so far. It is characterized as Tamil Brahmi and this finding puts this
writing pre-Ashokan. Based on the literary inputs connected with this region, the
findings are giving strength to the theory of Dravidian origin of Tamils in the Indus
valley.

The comprehensive study of the archaeological findings in Palani region gives
a clear picture to understand the earlier position of the people and especially in their
material culture. Nowadays the traditional society is poised, still a little uneasily,
between old and new and the traditional world of the past and the modern of the
Palani. Today the old system of traditional practices is mostly now on history. A sense
of commitment and personal involvement can bring about changes in the life of
people, which will bring them into the main stream of modernity of their life style.

From the earlier, Palani and the people are traditional one. The Brahmi script
found in Palani is a lighthouse for the Tamil and the Tamil country. Hence the
urgency for a speedy and proper documentation is necessary, before the original
things are destroyed.