CHAPTER - II

EMERGENCE OF THE MEGALITHS

Megaliths in the Indian Subcontinent are believed to be the constructions, sepulchral and otherwise, of iron-using cultures that date between 1500 B.C.E. to 300 C.E. They are an enigmatic class of monuments, Varying in scale, form and typology, but exhibiting similarities over large geographical regions. We have been investigating these monuments in order to understand its original, emergence, diffusion and knowledge systems possessed by their authors. We have studied monuments that fall into major typologies that exist, out of the known megalithic sites that exist in South India.

Megalithism seems to be a 'World phenomenon' - their occurrence from the shores of England to that of Japan testifies to this. Almost throughout the old world, these ancient stone structures have been noticed and various theories have been propounded to account for these. Generally, it is associated with iron but there is also a possibility of its beginning in the Pre-Iron stage. It is well-known that in India, the Deccan or Peninsular India contains a very large number of megalithic 'Pandu coolies' in Kerala found by Babington (1823). In the decades that followed, hundreds of megalithic sites have been discovered in Southern India. Several of them have been excavated, studied and classified.

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The etymology of the word 'megalith' comes from the words 'megathos' - referring to the scale and 'lithoi'- referring to the material. Thus, megalith literally means 'built of large stones'. This terminology arose because the earliest monuments belonging to this category to be noticed were the ones with the most impressive surface markets. The usage of the term 'megalithic' can, however, be justified because of its antiquity and continued popular use. The term denotes in the present context a socio-religious expression of burying the deceased in a grave (which may or may not have a lithic appendage) accompanies by certain specific cultural traits of the period under reference.3

The evolution of this cultural trait (megalithism) among the people in a sequential manner may at certain instances bring about the evolution and emergence of the megalithic people either as the indigenous or migratory in nature. In order to emanate the megalithic cult we need to focus the various factors that culminated to the formation of such a widespread cult. The emergence of megalithic cult was basically a psychological synchronization of a group of people, not only this but there are various other factors which paved the way for the formation of this culture.

The megalithic society being an urban society has the coalescence of internal and external processes associated with particular geo-physical areas and resident communities consequently triggered off the institutional formation and also uneven development of such formations distributed, both in time and space.

According to Seneviratne, there was a synthesis between the external and internal processes which led to the qualitative by novel transformation, more specifically during the Early Historic period.\(^4\) Conventionally, we organize the external process under the subheadings such as,

1. Geological subsystem
2. Climate subsystem
3. Topographical subsystem
4. Anatomical subsystem
5. Fortified and Hegemonical subsystem

Whereas the Internal processes may be classified as

1. Psychological subsystem
2. Techno-cultural subsystem
   (a) Analogous technological groups
   (b) Analogous cultural groups
   (c) Identical technology but different culture
   (d) Identical culture but varied technology
3. Professional subsystem
4. Economical subsystem
5. Linguistic subsystem

The external process can be studied in detail under each subheadings. The environment of a cultural system expresses the

\(^{4}\) Seneviratne, Sudarshan, ‘From Kudi to Nadu: A suggested framework for the study of Pre-State political formations in Early Iron Age South India, Sri Nagabhinandanam,’ Dr.MS.S.Nagaraj Rao Festchrift, Vol.10, 1995, p.99.’
attributes external by to that system and their varying and successive states in time and space.

EXTERNAL PROCESS

(1) Geological subsystem

Geography and topography are mere manifestations of geology in their broadest sense, hence geographical factors may also pave the way for the formation of the subsystem. The geographical factors may have influenced the economy in another way as well. The rugged terrain coupled with uncertain rainfall has made the Kongu region an area of overall low agricultural productivity. Thus dependence on trade may have been necessary to supplement the yield from agriculture. Alternatively, subsistence agriculture had to be supported by 'cash crops'. The geographical process leading to a coalescent economical changes imbibed in the people led to a groupism or the subsystem.

As far as the Megalithic cult is concerned due to lack of evidence, only a few attempts have been made to understand the black and redware, iron and burial practices as separate entity. When these three entities are amalgamated as a single entity, it is not clearly demonstrated in Indian context.\(^5\) This lacuna prevents one to understand this culture in a definite chronological frame. Some attempts have been made on the basis of the introduction of iron and in some cases on the basis of ceramics. Among the three, the iron

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alone has late introduction whereas the rudimentary burial practices are observed even in Neolithic times.\textsuperscript{6}

The Ceramic black and red-ware had a Pre-Harappan Origin. At what stage one should call this as Megalithic culture is a moot point. At Thandikudi, a stone circle enclosing a pit burial is reported. This burial basically had all elements of megalithic burials but yielded black on redware and iron was absent. Based on the ceramics and non-availability of iron, it has been dated to Pre-Iron age.\textsuperscript{7} Besides, the monuments of non-megalithic in nature like urn burials (without any lithic appendage) also brought into the megalithic fold. The urn burials found South of Vaigai river Valley particularly in the coastal plains as one observed at Adichanallur and Amirthamangalam are mostly devoid of megalithic influence but still these were placed in the megalithic horizon as they were burials found in association with black and redware and iron.\textsuperscript{8} Therefore the data is to be studied in its geographical and chronological background. These monuments are found between Pre-Iron to Early historic phase. Secondly, these were practiced in the early historic villages, capital cities, trade centers, and port towns in the advanced stage both in content and quality.

The celebrated chieftains like Adiyaman and Ori infact were buried in a Iron age burial and over which a menhir was planted.\textsuperscript{9} So when one reports a site as Iron age or megalithic site (because of the settlements associated with burial complex or black and redware), it

\textsuperscript{6} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{9} Puram : 232.
doesn't necessarily mean that they were megalithic folks. However, the burial antiquities and other socio-religious parameters in are not totally neglected. Several scholars have attempted to classify them based on the field experience in different geographical zones.

The burial part (Sub-surface feature) and super structure part (surface feature) are as two distinctive part then probably there is an element of clarity in interpreting the culture.\textsuperscript{10} The burial was the prime motive for the people. The decision to go for a pit burial, urn, Sarcophagus, rectangular tub or cist is conditioned by the society's geographical conditions they live in. Thus the sub-surface features express the intention of the society than the surface features.

The non-availability of the stones in deltaic region prevented in making grave monuments of slabs but rather confined themselves to urns. Thus the varied burials notice within a complex suggest that the functional, architectural and belief system played a dominant role in shaping a burial system and above all the availability of the geological conditions.

Next moving on to the appropriate geological conditions and their migratory nature made the people of this cult to stay in a subsistent manner in the same geological environment as such the sites are located in the vicinity of the distinct exposures of the chains of hills of the Peninsular granite - gneises rocks.\textsuperscript{11} The hilly terrains were the best suited places for the megalithic people and this was the

same in the case of the Jains who chose the gneissic hilly terrains as their dwellings.\textsuperscript{12}

Both the megalithic and the Jains went in search of these gneissic hilly terrains to create their dwellings in fact both were of nomadic in nature. The technological complexes in their way of architectural constructions may be discussed in the forthcoming subheadings under the Technological subsystem.

The early Ashok's contribution of the eight rock-cut halls or chambers in the Barabar and Nagarjuni hills and the one near Rajgir were made out of the hard quartzose gneissic rocks out of which these halls were hewn - produced - brightly polished walls.\textsuperscript{13} These chambers, which resembled the wooden buildings of that period, became the prototypes of the later more sophisticated rock-cut chaityas. Such cultural moorings between these two traits has been discussed earlier in Chapter II.

Apart from this the Jaina beds were locally known as the Pancha Pandava caves even today and on contrary the Megalithic burials are also known as the 'Pāndu coolies', or 'Pandavar Kuzhi'.\textsuperscript{14} This needs to be analysed in the anthropological perspective, wherein the word 'Pāndu' denotes the 'bravery, valour, prowess' etc.\textsuperscript{15} and the heroic context varies from period to period, environment to environment, society to society and thus is variously interpreted. The

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{15} Devaneyan, \textit{Tamiliar Varalaaru}, Nagercoil, 1972, p.218.
cattle lifting, which was considered heroic during the early stages of the megalithic culture would have been transferred to the traders, who were accompanied with the bodyguards during their trade in the Pālai terrains due to the prevalence of the thieves. In Kongu Nādu mostly cist burials were found, the geological condition which the people were adapted with made them to find their settlement near the gneissic hilly terrains and the availability of the quartzite slabs made the proliferation of this kind (cist burials) of burials.

2. Climatic Subsystem

This particular system is volatile and hence leads to two kinds of entities. One which leads to the nomadic trajectory and secondly, the transformation of occupation. Thus this subsystem directly and indirectly is interconnected with the economic and Professional subsystems respectively. The mobility made due to the climatic conditions forms a groupism and there are two kinds of groupism in this climatic subsystem.

Firstly, the mobility made to a safer zone due to climatic changes, where they were sufficient enough to meet out their basic requirements and there again the indigenous groups merging with these mobile groups together form a socio-cultural trait with the influences of both the groups Vice-versa. Here both the external and the internal process together act as an adhesive to bring about a socio-cultural group.

Secondly, the mobility being made in search of the same climatic conditions which the people are earlier accustomed to and hence the routes are based through the way leading to their particular
climatic condition. All the other practices and technological subsystems are tuned according to this climatic conditions. Thus cultural ecology forms a useful frame for the study of whole socio cultural systems, the mutual relations between such systems and their environments, and the adaptive changes of these systems. Especially with regard to Tamilagam the climatic subsystem played a very significant role, since the eco-zonal segregation as thinai's and their respective occupation, landscape, food, religion etc. were clearly distinguished. Thus the institutional superstructure ultimately rests on eco-zones, where the latter had qualitative and quantitative developmental stages in time and space. These do not necessarily indicate a unilinear development. The dominant techno-cultural, i.e. the Megalithic Black and Redware culture, had spread over different physical and environmental zones and institutional formation associated with that culture was also unevenly developed in time and space. The climatic subsystem is directly or indirectly influenced in the habitat of the megalithic people in Kongu Nādu. Thus the Multi-resource studded area (Kongu Nādu) destined the occupational patterns of the people, which led to the coalescent growth of the Macro zone with complex societies.

3. Topographical subsystem

As far as the Topographical subsystem is concerned the earliest phase may be identified with the emergence of micro eco-zones during the formative period. These represent the primarily habitat associated with communities thriving on a multi-resource broad

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spectrum subsistence economy, situated within a series of geo-physical and bio-climatic niches.

The study of the antiquity of the dwellings of the Human beings can be taken back to the mountainous regions. The mountaneous or the hilly terrains were the places where the evolution of life took place. It satisfied most of the man's basic requirements such as the food, shelter and they also served as the rain makers and thus provided water for them and finally served as the house of resources, this made these megalithic people to choose the mountaneous regions as their residing places. Later these interconnected networks formed a complex whole in a continuous process within its time and space within its topographical environment.

The Tamils from the earliest time have shown particular interest towards the hills together with the animals and plants which thrived on them, and this is particularly seen in the concept of the Godhead, Murukan, who was believed to reside in hill and its flora and fauna. Here as mentioned in the previous chapter the name 'Visākhi' 17 which is closely associated affinial to the name 'Visākhā' – the God Lord Muruga found in the potsherds procured from the megalithic burials, the very name is also found to be inscribed in Jain beds found in Srilanka.

In the Parallel contradictions relating to this cave dwellings we can also connect the nudity followed by the Jaina monks can be related to the Lord Murugan’s manifestation found in Paḻani. Negating

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17 Rajan.K., *Archaeology of Tamilnadu, (Kongu country)*, Delhi, 1994, p.141.
all the mythical concepts, the nudity of Lord Murukan emanates the synchronization between the Jaina concepts and their megalithic counterparts.

Again just as the famous hill of Tirupparan Kunram has been associated with the sacredness of Murukan in South India, the somewhat equally famous 'Batu caves' ('batu' means 'stone' in Malay) in Kuala Lumpur with its deity Murukan or Lord Subrahmanya, attracts vast crowds of his devotees on the occasion of the Tai Pusam festival. According to some unconfirmed reports, the remains of a pious old man have bee interred in 'Batu caves'.  

4. Anatomical subsystem

The Anatomical subsystem cannot be confined to one particular race, but the morphometric analysis made in the Kodumanal yielding certain mooting references. Most noteworthy element that needs to be emphasized here is all the skeletal remains recovered from the Megalithic tombs are elite in nature and invariably associated with large amount of grave goods, particularly valuable antiquities including hundreds of carnelian beads, iron objects, beads of agate, silver and gold ornaments. Whereas the skeletal remains recovered from the habitation area are generally devoid of any grave goods except the one with triple skeletal remains.

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The scholars attempt to compare their with megalithic populations of TamilNādu, Yelleswaram, Adichchanallur, Tekkalakota, Nagarjunakonda etc with the proto-historic populations of the region. They prefer to confine themselves only to these populations 'because of the fact of the location of these sites in the present Dravidian speaking states,' and further comment that 'comparisons with other skeletal populations coming from the other part of the sub-continent would become far fetched'. On the basis of the metric data generated by them, they conclude that the specimens studied by them broadly compare with their counterparts from other sites and belong to the 'Australoid racial group'.

The analysts categorically prefer not to ascribe any 'racial' label to the population. In their opinion, one better preserved male and one female cannot be taken as 'representatives' of the entire population. In the lateral humorous there is an intentional human activity, along the superior edge of the broken shaft is an interesting evidence of 'cutmark'. The lesion is comparable with the 'pencil sharpened' bones reported from kalpi. The lesion is neatly made and polished, and is post mortem in origin and cannot be related to pathology.

An ethno-archaeological study carried out during the course of excavation to understand the unusual posture (Padmasana posture) offers some other explanation. It is learned that even today the artisan

family of the region bury their dead in the same way.\textsuperscript{22} The tradition would have been continued in this region till date. Therefore, the individual buried here probably comes from artisan family. The optimum life expectancy for these Indian Protohistoric populations was around 30-35 years.\textsuperscript{23}

Thus the anatomical features needs a wide research since these meagre studies will not be able to conclude and come to a decision. Anyway to summarise on the Cranio-morphometric features of the Kodumanal series it could be said that, in general morphological appearance the male specimens are moderately robust, the females being relatively gracile.\textsuperscript{24}

There are some 'anomalies' found, is the triangular 'hole'\textsuperscript{25} in the skull and there are faint 'scratch marks' and this 'act' seems to be done after the person had died.\textsuperscript{26} Anyway they conclude the taphonomic origin of the 'lesion' most likely caused by vegetation grown in the area when the decomposing skeleton was not totally dried up, but the 'cut mark' on the left humerus was incidental this might be the 'initiation stage' followed among the tribal community as of that to be found in the 'Kovalanpottil' excavations.\textsuperscript{27} Anyway these 'Anomalies' needs a vast anthropological reviews.

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid.}, p.30.
\textsuperscript{24} \textit{Ibid.}, p.56.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Ibid.}, p.59.
\textsuperscript{26} \textit{Ibid.}
5. Fortified and Hegemonical subsystem

The megalithic society basically emerged as micro eco-zones during the formative period. They resided within their respective geo-physical and climatic conditions. Each micro geo-physical zone tends to develop and eco-zone having its own distinct character and identity depending upon the nature of community interaction with resource use, technology, subsistence pattern and settlement pattern. It is possible to envisage the emergence of lineage-based chieftaincies, within such as context, as we could see the megaliths extending even to the period of the Sangam chieftains and also invariably to all the heads of the clan including the chieftains so considered. We could find the mention about the menhirs and urns being constructed and made respectively for the Sangam chieftains which shows that they were still changing on to the lineage system.

The next stage of development is the formation of the macro eco-zones. Several interacting micro eco-zones located within a particular geo-physical area apparently went into form a macro-zone. Advances in wet agriculture, specialized economics utilizing localized or imported resources, demographic expansion, other socio-economic relationships may have resulted in a series of interacting micro eco-zones. The development of macro eco-zones tends to coincide with the growth of larger chiefdoms. In a sense these chiefdoms represent a definite stage in the integration of resident communities or resources and territorial incorporation. However, all macro eco-zones do not and cannot advance at the same pace. Geo-physical areas having a

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positive material base internally sustain more developed forms of institutional structures and complex societies, where technology and production techniques advance at a greater pace. As opposed to this, certain others macro eco-zones display a greater degree of backwardness vis-a-vis the former. Here changes are relatively slow and communities largely remain within a non-complex institutional structure. Developed Macro eco-zones may be identified as Areas of Attraction (housing nuclear core areas) while less developed eco-zones are graded as Areas of Relative Isolation and Areas of Isolation.\textsuperscript{30} In these Areas of Attraction a fortified and Hegemonical subsystems and cross cultural social structures are formed with certain constraints. Thus the constraining or funelling role of some social structures as opposed to the axial and 'radiating' role of others is repeatedly emphasized in the trajectories. Thus there are several striking modes of clustering social and economic subsystem components. The constraint imposed by territories with limited and scattered food resources, mainly small game in very small groups, and a pastoral economy based on simple technology. The correlation between the pastoral economies based on large migratory herds of big herbivores is linked with more complex societies organized in composite or bilateral bands.\textsuperscript{31} In no case does the ecology and its resources force a single variety of viable economic subsystem strategy or a simple variety of coupled social subsystem but varying degrees of constraint do restrict the variety of subsystem states to a narrow range.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
The megalithic society towards the middle to the end engulfed the Hegemonical subsystem as the cumulative encrustations of the varying social orders and the constraints imposed by the natural conventions made it mandatory. But the basic cultural traits were stable underlying fact which never changed its shape and this could be evinced through the sepulchral structures where the surface structures vary from the sub-surface structures. This shows that the basic inured cultural conventions perpetuated in them even when the micro zones turned out to be macro-zones with ramifications of social sub systems.

Next, we have the 'internal processes' to be studied in detail in order to bring out the emergence of the megalithic cult.

INTERNAL PROCESS

1. Psychological subsystem

The megalithic construction was basically a burial practice which was widely followed all over the Western and Eastern countries, wherein the wide-spread influence of a single technological tradition is evident. The cemeteries further have in common a group of three pottery wares. The most distinctive is a dual-tone ceramic called Black and Red-ware, and then there are plain black and plain red wares, both polished. Here local differences in form are sometimes observable but there is an over-riding general unity. The peculiar custom of filling in the graves with soil not locally obtained, the regular use of ash as a kind of bedding for the bone deposits, or the presence of a porthole in the slab cists (to cite only a few examples)

are indications of shared beliefs and traditions which pass beyond superficial resemblances.\textsuperscript{35} The dominant unity of these burials, despite some deviations, is undeviable. The unity of the burials are mainly found on the surface structures and the sub-surface structures reflect the cultural ideas lying in the sub-conscious level.\textsuperscript{36} Thus we could find many cairn circles found in the Kongu region, but the burial's sub-surface structures differs as urns, cist burials, sarcophagus etc. depending upon their cultural practices. Since the practice of burial was long back imbibed among the sub-conscious level of the people right from the period of the Neolithic period and hence the surface structure is the same for all the people, but the sub-surface structure is the main aspect to be noted.

Now let us focus the emergence of such positive cult among the people and the animistic attitude that evolved among the people through the form of the hero worship. The origin of positive cults, either of ancestors or their souls, geniuses, divinities or spirits which were believed to have animated them and other beings and which were nevertheless distinguished from those organic beings by the nature of their powers, is traced by scholars like Tylor to the religion of spiritual beings also known as Animism, and by scholars like J.G.Fraser and E.Durkheim to the religion of totem or Totemism.\textsuperscript{37} Since totemism has been discussed already, let us move on to the animistic concept which paved the way for the origin of burials.

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Ibid.}
As already discussed the Animistic belief was based on three concepts.\textsuperscript{38}

1. Idea of the soul

2. Concept that the souls become the object of cult and thus get transformed into spirits.

3. Cult of nature is derived from the cult of spirits

Now before moving on to a detailed discussion about these three aspects let us have a clear distinction of idea that the ancient people had between the soul and the body. The soul was considered to be living with the dead during the sleeping hours and the soul is considered to be awake and living with the body when the person is awake. The body was considered as the mere carrier of the soul and as the vehicle which bears the soul.\textsuperscript{39}

The soul was considered to be malleable and passed out of the body through the apertures of the organism, especially the mouth and the nose. This may be evinced even in the present days practice by valuating the apertures of the nose and mouth of the dead body.\textsuperscript{40} Now by connecting this idea with the apertures found in the cist burials can be studied. We do find certain cists with the port holes and some without the port holes.

A chamber may have on the entrance side of a cist burial has a distinct passage, or a hole in the orthostat known as 'port-hole' with or

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{39} Tylor, \textit{Primitive culture}, Chapter IX., XVIII, p.443.
\textsuperscript{40} Singaravelu, S., \textit{Op.cit.}, p.111.
without a short passage for approach to the port hole.\textsuperscript{41} Sometimes the interior of a chamber may be divided across into two or more sub-compartments by inserting slabs in upright positions, called transepts. In the transept there may again be a port hole. Thus there are many types and sub-types of chamber tombs and many shapes and directions of the Port-holes.

On the contrary, the burials during the Neolithic period, in the case of adults the portion below the ankle was deliberately chopped off because the people probably did not want the dead to go away. This can be explained as the fear of the dead who usually was supposed to turn into a ghost, for the very idea underlying the burial in a pit below the house floor was motivated by the fear of the ghost, soul and those who were living always tried to control the actions of the ghosts of the dead.\textsuperscript{42}

In the next phase, during the megalithic people the burial became a celebrated phenomenon, this change in the due course of the burial system exhibits the psychological changes and beliefs the underwent among the groups. This in another factor also exhibits the socio-economic and political concepts that prevailed among the people.

When the occupation was basically of agriculture (primitive) in nature, and hunting - gathering on its bilateral form the people did not celebrate the human activities and the hero worship didn't exist and

\textsuperscript{41} Sundara.A., ‘\textbf{Typology of Megaliths in South India}', Essays in Indian Proto History, New Delhi, p.333.
\textsuperscript{42} Dhavalikar.M.K., ‘\textbf{Early farming cultures of the Deccan, Essays in Indian Proto History}', New Delhi’, p.260.
the clan system was not followed and the context of the soul of the dead was hence horrific for them.

Whereas when the clan system came into existence, during the early Iron age the pastoral nomadism and the sedentary agricultural economic subsystem came into existence as a parallel development, here the cattle lifting and raids which was fought for the cause of their clan made the clan group to consider him as a hero and the confidence of their welfare was vested on him, hence the soul of the dead hero was worshipped and was considered as the guardian of their clan and hence was constructed in a place for the general conveyance and worship for the people of their clan.\textsuperscript{43} The dead hero was no more considered as an horrific ghost. His soul was considered as the reimbursing the good deeds for his clan, thus Animism took his form during the due course of time & space, and this was absolutely dependent on the constraints of their social, economic, cultural and political life.\textsuperscript{44}

In the psychological subsystems, the Black and redware pottery takes its significant role as far as megalithic period is concerned. The Thandikudi excavations revealed the pit burials belonging to the Chalcolithic period which were confined with the black on redware ceramic which was widely circulated during that period and the megalithic excavated sites in the same sites revealed the Black and Redware pottery.\textsuperscript{45} Here the techniques in bringing out the multi

\textsuperscript{43} Rajan Gurukkal, \textit{Social Formations of Early South India}, Delhi, 2010, pp.188-191.
\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Ibid}.
colour of Black and Red together varied, as the black colour paint over the redware during the Chalcolithic period and by the technique of the 'inverted firing' they brought the Black and Red colour during the megalithic period respectively. Both were incidental and purposely brought the Black and Red colour in the potteries, though their techniques varied the underlying ideology was the same and hence the laid stress on this particular culture (Black and Red ware).

As the concepts of the Black and Redware has been discussed earlier in the Chapter III we can also see this in the extra-Indian context as 'Black-topped' ware in the Ancient Egypt; The Harappan civilisation also possessed the same kind of Black and Red ware potteries, but the techniques varied hence it does not seem to possess any typological personality of its own. We could also notice a blatant sparsity of inter-relationship amongst the different cultures carrying with them the black and redware.\(^46\) Thus does not represent a technological outlook but an ideological context in it. The heart was considered as the seat of soul and material manifestations. The principle of life or the soul was believed to be ever present in the form of blood, hence the sacredness of blood was frequently used in the religious rites. The one symbolic representation was the 'Red' in the Black and Redware.

The port holes present on the different direction like East (mostly) and sometimes North portrays different ideologies. The existence of apertures in the East depicts the resurrection of the life in the Eastern direction where the Sun rises or from the direction of the

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\(^{46}\) Singh.H.N., ‘Black and Redware’ – A cultural study, Essays in Indian Proto History, New Delhi, p.279.
migration (from the direction where the came from). The North as concerned, denoted emphemism, ‘Sitting towards the North’ i.e. by the way of redemption by undergoing a more dreadful means of liberating the soul, i.e. by fasting unto death as a way of redeeming the disgrace and cowardice as the ancient tamil warriors were proud to receive the fatal spear in the chest. Thus the construction of the Sepulchral, placement of the defunct, the associated artefacts, weapons, etc. everything owes a psychological concept. Thus the psychological subsystem has been the integrated system of Supra-personal sub-conscious beliefs induced upon the individuals in a society by their culture, environment and their language essentially the subconscious system of comparative values.

2. Techno-cultural subsystem

The techno cultural subsystem has been broadly divided into four sub-divisions and each of which can be discussed in detail with regard to the formation of the groups known as the megalithic groups. The technology has to a great extent influenced the growth and emergence of the clans and the kinship to a Broader extent emerged in time and space with the socio-economic Interaction.

The Kongu Nādu which is geo-physically a resourced area and a mountaneous region was basically the habitat for the primitives and also the earliest recognizable political institutions capable of taking more advanced forms in their evolution seem to have appeared in the peripheral hills. It is indeed not a coincidence that there is a

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48 Puram; 65 : 9-11.
correlation between eco-zones represented by the Physiography, economy, habitat in the peripheral areas and the epithets or titles and personal names of chieftains mentioned in the Sangam texts. For instance, Kō, kōmān, Malaiyamān, Nedumān, Kōdon (from Kodu), Porai Perunkal are epithets associated with the physiographic region or the habitat indicating the montane regions. Similarly, terms such as Āy, Āvi, Āviyar, Erumayūran, Erai, Kandirakkō, Kōmān indicate a strong pastoral connection of these lineage chieftains. By these epithets we come to know about the economical significance which destined the names of the leaders or the heads of their clan. The economical activities gained its significance due to the socio-economic interaction and the dynamics that occurred due to the demographic expansion, and during this process of dynamics there was pressure on resources and exploitation of the resources, hence the process of segmentation took place as its direct influence. The predatory expansion of lineage groups have been called a social means of intrusion and competition in an already occupied ecological niche. and a means by which the tribe can avoid population pressure on available resource. In fact, habitation and burial sites located along the banks of rivers leading from the peripheral areas to the fertile lower plains were probably a result of a linear movement in the process of segmentation. The Techno-cultural matrix led to the formation of the second criteria is the operation of the subsistence

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50 Ibid.
economy through 'Simple technology'. Pre-State societies of the Proto-historic period developed the ability of the family extended family as the unit of production, to control labour and the means of production including property rights.

In this sub-system the contacts between the analogous technical groups and cultural groups vis-à-vis exchange their knowledge, ideas, culture etc and this brings about the incorporation of different technical and cultural groups in the same eco-zone with the localized resources and they are utilized by the local inhabitants and were traded and this may have been necessary to supplement the yield from agriculture. Alternatively subsistence agriculture had to be supported by 'cash crops'. The Technical and cultural complexes merge together to form a group.

(a) Analogous technological groups

This group basically deals with the same kind of technologies followed by the different cultures and the affinities and the synchronization that brought about for the creation of such kind of technological groups.

In this category we mainly deal with the Black and Redware pottery, cist burials, Iron smelting, gemstone cutting technology, etc. Regarding the Indian context with regard to Black and Redware pottery, the archaeologists have generally believed in what has been described as the 'inverted firing technique' of manufacture. In this

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technique, the pots are placed in an inverted position in the kiln subjecting the exterior of oxidizing conditions and the interior to reducing conditions. Saw dust or some vegetable matter might have been filled in the pot while firing under reducing conditions. As a result, the interior turns black and the exterior dull red or buff in colour. Though there might be certain contradictions in this technique as a single or double firing technique of manufacture, it was unanimously followed by the Indian sub-continental megalithic in relativity with the megaliths all over the world. This technique was basically done with a purpose which may be ideological, cultural or in an aesthetic but was followed by all the megalithic folk.

Next, we have the cist burials, wherein the laborious work was known to the people and the technology of the cutting of the stones, the gem stones and the cist were known to those people. The handling of the stones the cutting of the stones into square slabs was known to the people and the lifting and planting the Menhirs needs a huge number of people to get involved in it and so it would have been the technology being known to most of the people in that particular clan and they move in search of places with such kind of geological conditions and here they get into contact with that particular local inhabitants who would have been of the same technology and thus mingle together to form a same clan. This may be confined with the ‘Stimulus diffusion’ where the like response to like needs precipitated by a common outside stimulus which is not itself copied for adopted.

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(b) Analogous cultural groups

The Analogus cultural groups is clearly evident from the similar form of burying culture, but the surface structure alone varies. The varying surface structure portrays the varying cultural groups, but the underlying fact i.e. the sub-surface architecture was the same all-over the megalithic burials. This shows that the basic groupism was later segmented into branches and separate groups depending upon the economic activities. The patrilineal and the matrilineal cultural groups were also designated by the economic activities of the people as the patrilineal leading to the pastoral nomadic life and the matrilineal leading to the hunting-gathering societies.\(^{56}\) The Todas of the ancient tribes till date being the only pastoral nomads in India with the patrilineal society.\(^{57}\)

Above all the Megalithism was based on the cultural backdrop and though same economic, social or political groups. Though the other fields vary in them the cultural aspects are the same as far as the megaliths are concerned. Though the surface architecture varies, the sub-surface cultural aspects are the same.

The cultural aspect with regard to the belief in life after death, soul, blood as the life giving agent, the apertures in the cists, are heliocentric irrespective of the various geographic, climatic, linguistic, demographic situations, To trace out this cultural aspect the antiquity may be taken back to the belief in the soul which further emanated the concept of burial. The soul was believed to be distinct and


\(^{57}\) Ibid.,
independent of the body, for during this life it could leave it any moment; it did leave it during sleep. It might even remain absent for sometime without entailing death;\(^{58}\) however, during these absences, life was weakened and even stopped if the soul did not return home. But it was especially at death that this distinction and independence manifested themselves with the greatest clarity. While the body no longer existed and no visible traces remained, the soul was believed to continue to live; It was believed to lead an autonomous existence in another world.\(^{59}\) It was also believed to lead a life absolutely analogous to the one it led in this world, it ate and drank.

Thus, they considered that the soul became active when the body was dormant or defunct. This emanated the concept of the active existence of the soul when the body was inactive, hence the burial system came into practise in order to appease the dead and the dead person's soul. They are also considered that if the soul was not satisfied with its needs it pursued its existence until it was done so. Hence the burials and the grave goods came into existence. This can be seen in all the cultural groups, but the practises varied through the concept that was inured in them as the liberation of the soul was considered to take place in different land as per conceived differently by various peoples, sometimes different conceptions have been found existing side by side in the same society. For some it was situated under the earth (pit burials) where each tribe had its part. Among other people, the land of souls was more or less vaguely localized beyond the hills or mountains, (dolmens found in the hilly terrains) or into the


\(^{59}\) *Ibid.*,
sky beyond the clouds (exposure). Such were the beliefs relative to the soul and its destiny, in their primitive form, and reduced to their most essential traits. We must now turn to the second characteristic on which the animistic theory is based, namely, that the souls became the object of a cult and thus transformed into spirits.

The soul was believed to become a spirit by only transforming itself, and it was thought that the fact of death produced this metamorphosis. The soul was thus believed to be transformed from a simple vital principle animating the body of a man into a spirit, a good or evil one or even a deity, according to the importance of the effect with which it was charged. Since it was death which brought about this apotheosis, it was to the dead, to the souls of the departed, that the first cult known to humanity was addressed. Thus the first rites were funeral rites; the first sacrifices were food offerings meant to satisfy the needs of the departed; the first altars were the tombs of the dead. Thus came the existence of the Megaliths. The megalithic or sepulchral architecture dominated the period due to their knowledge in constructing the burials with huge slabs and boulders. Moreover, we could find that they we are very much concerned about the sepulchre construction than their dwelling places. They had a wide knowledge about quarrying and transporting of huge slabs and boulders and this certainly warrant their skills. As the megalithic sites are generally located near the hillock region, it was not that difficult for the builders to find the raw-material for their burials. But there are some sites where the builders had to transport the slabs and boulders to the site for about 4 kms. For instance the boulder circles were built by transporting the round boulders from a hillock, which is 4 kms from
the site kodumanal. The mode of transportation of such stones should have had some transport medium, as to roll all the boulders to site could be hard task.

The slab quarrying was generally done from the exposed rock outcrops wherein already the cracks are formed in fissures due to weathering. It was easy for them to dislodge by inserting a wedge at the weaker plan of the stone slabs and boulders could have been the same as that of the present day quarrying. Nearest stone - quarrying site at Uttukuli about 12km North West of kodumanal is studied and the same methods of stone breaking and slab cutting is observed.

The South Indian Megaliths have also been connected with, or derived from, the stupas. On the other, the stupas, which were built for the relics of the Buddha and revered Buddhist monks, but also of Jaina and Hindu ascetics, have been considered to have grave tumuli or specifically the megaliths as their prototype. The stupa, as the container of the magic power inherent in the relics of the holy men, is also derived from the Pre-Buddhist popular cult of 'chaityas'. These were often small groves of trees, or a single sacred tree, on the outskirts of villages, and might also include tumuli, such as those in which the ashes of chiefs were buried. These chaityas were abodes of Earth-spirits and genii, who, to the simpler folk, were more accessible and less expensive to worship than the great gods of the Aryans.

The Jaina scriptures show that unorthodox holy-men often made their homes in or near the Chaityas and the Buddha is said to have respected these local shrines, and to have encouraged his lay followers to revere them. Apart from the surface construction being almost the same, the cosmic symbolism was a belief that was inured in both the Megalithic and the jaina cult.

In 'Takkayāgapparani', the three ulas namely, Vikkiramasōlan Ula, Kulottungasōlan Ulā, and the Sankara colan  ula, the Tiruvenkattupurānam and Naccinārkiniyar's commentary of the Tol-kāppiyam, only shows that these ancient practices were no more than mere memories or traditions much altered in significance by the efflux of time. Ottakkūttar's association of dead bodies inside the 'tali' and of the persons performing 'useless penance' in the secluded resorts of natural caverns (pali), Naccinarkiniyar's attribution to the Ajīvakasof the practice of entering the tali for penance until death etc., clearly shows the Urn burials being practised by the Ajīvakas.

It will be reasonable to search for local names for the monuments which have existed amidst the people of India for centuries, thought their significance has been gradually forgotten, and the names too might have undergone corrupt modifications. Taking the rock cut temples of Malabar one wonders what they would have been called by the local people. Place names such as Tali-Paramba and Paramban -tāli, where such monuments are found, are suggestive.

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In the inscriptions of the early period ranging from the 7th Century C.E. when the Pallavas and their contemporary Pandyas excavated cave temples and constructed structural shrines, as did the early Colas, the term tāli is often used to denote the shrine or sanctum, either excavated into rock or built up (e.g.,) Karrali-kal-tāli=stone-Shrine). Religous edifices forming divine abodes of earlier times, which must have been brick-built, were not called so, and the natural caverns, which appear to have been the religious resorts extant, were called Pali and not tāli (the language of the jains Pāli is to be noted here).

An early inscription of the 9th C.E. from Pudukottai gives the clue, it refers to the excavation of a rock-cut siva shrine of the Pallava type; and the chief who did it says that 'having excavated the Tiruvalattūr hill in the form of a tāli he installed the god in it.' The expression 'in the form of tāli' is significant. It evidently denotes that a structure or cell was fashioned in the form of a pre-existing type that went by the name of tāli. If it refers to such excavations, the rock-cut tombs of Malabar, which happen to be the only such pre-existing excavations, would answer to this description, and in two such cases the low hills are named after talis or if it refers to cells or spaces enclosed by construction on all sides, even as the chola time shrines are called Karrali, the earlier proto-type of such enclosed tāli will be the dolmen. As if lending support to the idea we have the verse by Perum Kausikanār of Perum Kunnūr in Iraniyamuttam in Malaipadukadām of the Pattupāttu collection. The context is the return of a recipient of gifts and favours from the chief and the hero of the

66 Ibid.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
poem, Nannan son of Nannan Sengan - māl and his directing of another indignant minstrel to the same chief and description of the route and things that lie on the way to the chief’s country in Narrinai. The way is said to be replete with kādu and forked pathways, full of Karrali and stones planted in memory of warrior who died a heroic death (naludai maravar selta nallisaip - peyarōdu natta kallesu kavalai) and these stones planted in the names of the heroes, had divine powers and were to be propitiated.

While we are speaking of Nannan, it is better to mention another traditional name associated with him. This is the local term 'Nannangai' applied to megalithic burials in Malabar. The buried urns (Kudakkals, topikals included as they are found to cover such urns) are supposed to inurn aged people, which alive, when they were reduced by sheer senility to a frog-like shape and hopped about, and the eldest son would put the frog-like father in an urn with sufficient food to sustain the aged parent and bury it with rituals. Here the concept of the senility may be discussed in order to dilute the problems regarding the megalithic burials. According to the primitives the soul was believed to grow with the body and decay with it. When senility set in, and the old man was no longer able to take a useful part in the life of the community, it was thought that weakness of the body was communicated to the soul. No longer having the same powers, the old man lost the right to the privilege and the prestige accorded to him earlier.

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70 Narrinai: 391-116 and 7.  
71 Ibid.,  
Again, the soul was believed to be not gone entirely broken. Therefore a whole series of special rites was thought necessary to induce the soul to depart definitely. The flesh of the dead was thought to contain a sacred principle which was nothing more than the soul. In order to drive it out completely and definitely, the flesh was melted by submitting it to the heat of the artificial fire. The soul was believed to depart with the liquids which resulted. But even then, the dry bones were believed to have retained some part of the soul. Therefore they could be used as sacred objects or instruments of magic or if someone wished to give complete liberty to the soul, he broke these bones and liberated the soul completely. This case may be seen in the megalithic burials, where the bones are found inframents.

Thus a moment did arrive when the final separation was accomplished. And when this moment did arrive, the liberated soul was believed to take flight for the land of souls. This land was conceived differently by various peoples; sometimes different conceptions have been found existing side by side in the same society. For some it was situated under the earth where each tribe had its part. Among other people, the land of souls was more or less vaguely localized beyond the hills or mountains, or into the sky beyond the clouds.

There was the belief that in the land of souls a different treatment was sometimes accorded them based on the way they had conducted themselves upon earth. Those who had excelled, during life on earth, as warriors or as men of righteous deeds towards their fellow beings, were not confounded with the common hordes of others. A special place was granted to them.
Again there was the belief that the souls which, in each generation, quitted the bodies in which they dwelt and went to the land of souls, returned after a certain length of time to reincarnate themselves, and these reincarnations were believed to have been the cause of conception and birth. Such were the beliefs relative to the soul and its density, in their primitive form, and reduced to their most essential traits, according to the characteristic on which the animistic theory is based, namely, that the souls became the object of a cult and thus transformed into spirits.\footnote{Tylor, \textit{Op.cit.}, p.481.}

Another common association is the term Pāndu, explained often as referring to Pāndavas, and even transformed so, in the local names of such monuments in most districts of South India. For instance, the megalithic monuments of the cist type in coorg are called Pāndu Pārē meaning Pāndu house, In Kongu region it is known as the 'Pāndukal Complex' (Pārē, meaning of habitation or house, as in the Malayalam names, ittupārē, or feeding house or ṥola-p-parē or thatchal house, ṣṭtu-p-parē tiled house, machu-p-pāra-terraced house).\footnote{Srinivasan. K.R., \textit{Op.cit.}, p.9.} Elsewhere they are called Pandu-k-kuli. Curiously enough, the megalithic remains or cists are called pandhoesa by the people of east Java.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}} It will be interesting to know what meaning it connotes. The meaning of 'Pandu' has been discussed earlier.

Next moving on to the Black and redware which is considered as an unique feature of cultural deposit as far as the megalithic burial is considered. Excluding its technological make-up the cultural entity
plays a vital role in would apprehend the obscurity. The association of burial with iron and black and redware is considered enough to designate this culture as megalithic culture. Though the black and redware, iron objects and burial system with distinct lithic appendage has not entered in TamilNādu as a bundle package, yet it is placed in the same cultural bracket. Due to lack of evidence, only a few attempts have been made to understand the black and redware, iron and burial practices as separate entity. When these three entities are amalgamated as a single entity, it is not clearly demonstrated in Indian context. This lacuna prevents one to understand this culture in a definite chronological frame. Some attempts have been made on the basis of the typology of the burial and in certain cases is demarcated on the basis of the introduction of iron and in some case on the basis of ceramics. Among the three, the iron alone has late introduction whereas the rudimentary burial practices are observed even in Neolithic times. The ceramic black and redware had a Pre-Harappan origin. A.Sundara and B.Narasimhaiah considered some of the sepulchral monuments to Pre-Iron age level. Such situation was witnessed in the excavations at Thandikudi in Dindugal district, TamilNādu a pit burial is reported. This burial basically had all elements of megalithic burials but yielded black - on - red ware and iron was absent. Based on the ceramics and non-availability of iron, it has been dated to Pre-Iron age. Besides, the monuments of non-megalithic in nature like urn burials (Without any lithic appendage) also brought into the megalithic fold. The urn burials found South of Vaigai river valley particularly in the coastal plains as one observed at

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Ādichchanallūr and Amirthamangalam are mostly devoid of megalithic influence but still these were burials found in association with black and red ware and iron. Therefore the data is to be studied in its geographical and chronological background. These monuments are found between Pre-Iron to early historic Phase. Anyway the occurrence of black and red ware, yet continued even up to the early historic phase and thus they all denote continuity of the custom of erecting Iron age megalithic monuments in early historical period. Its occurrence in megalithic and non-megalithic context indicates that black and red ware is quite independent of megalithic idea.\(^\text{78}\) so as stated earlier the last phase of black and red ware culture or megalithic culture had distinctive historical moorings. This transformation could be seen in their social parameters like language, script, trade and technology but the concept of black and red ware were associated and was a prolonged idea that continued over many centuries and was done with a purpose.

According to Sir. John Malcolm\(^\text{79}\), the Bhils also raised cairns to the memory of their dead chiefs and they poured oil on the top of these monuments and coated them with red lead afterwards. This reminds us to the fact that some of the megaliths are still worshipped in Maharashtra under the name of some local god. These are often coated with oil and vernillion. This shows the significance of the

occurrence of the black and red ware in the burial and the concept of black and red would have pursued up to the early historic period.

C. Identical Technology but different culture and

D. Identical culture and different technology

Sepulchral architecture

The megalithic or sepulchral architecture dominated the period due to their knowledge in constructing the burials with huge slabs and boulders. Moreover, we could find that they were very much concerned about the sepulchre construction than their dwelling places. They had a wide knowledge about quarrying and transporting of huge slabs and boulders and this certainly warrant their skills. As the megalithic sites are generally located near the hillock region, it was not that difficult for the builders to find the raw-material for their burials. But there are some sites where the builders had to transport the slabs and boulders to the site for about 4 kms. For instance the boulder circles were built by transporting the round boulders from a hillock, which is 4 kms from the site kodumanal. The mode of transportation of such stones should have had some transport medium, as to roll all the boulders to site could be hard task.

The slab quarrying was generally done from the exposed rock outcrops wherein already the cracks are formed in fissures due to weathering. It was easy for them to dislodge by inserting a wedge at the weaker plan of the stone slabs and boulders could have been the same as that of the present day quarrying. Nearest stone - quarrying
site at Uttukuli about 12km North West of Kodumanal is studied and the same methods of stone breaking and slab cutting is observed.

The Sepulchral architecture as far as the megalithic culture\textsuperscript{80} is concerned not only denotes the materials used for construction, but also includes the burial part (Sub-surface feature) and super structure part (Surface feature) as two distinctive part, then probably there is an element of clarity in interpreting the culture. The burial was the prime motive for the people. The decision to go for a pit burial urn, sarcophagus, rectangular tub or cist is conditioned by the society where they live. After burying the dead it is entombed with super structures at surface level like finishing up with super structures at surface level like finishing up with menhirs, capstone, cairn circle, boulder circle, slab circle and alike the sub-surface features express the intention of the society than the surface features.

Basically the raw material used for their construction are of different varities like granite, laterite, etc. Their knowledge of stone working, transportation and constructional methods are highly appreciate whereas they failed to show the same enthusiasm in the construction of their domestic structure. The restricted area exposed failed to provide complete house plans, but from the partly exposed floors one can guess that they were rectangular structures. The floor was made up of gravel mixed with red ochre and plastered with lime.\textsuperscript{81} Again the red ochre being the significant component and also served as an auspicious connotation for the megalithic people. The evidence for the existence of a wall is scanty. The occurrence of post - holes at


the superstructure. The urn occurrence of material used for the walls and the roof suggests that they were of perishable materials.

The advancement in their technical and scientific skill also influenced the micro-level changes in the form. For example when people were aware of only a cave dwelling, they simply buried, the dead in a pit along with their possessions and filled the pit with soil. But when dynamic nature of the social setup was on the move, paving way to different clan groups, artisan group, burial practice could have get changed according to their personal status in the society. One should not leave the eco-factor which played dominantly in deciding the form of the burial. The non-availability of the stones in deltaic region prevented in making grave monuments of slabs but rather confined themselves to urns.

The modes of burials such as the pit burial, urn-burials, sarcophagus, simple cist, simple cist with passage, transepted cist, transepted cist with passage, transepted cist, transepted cist with passage, double cist rock-cut chambers, Dolmens, dolmenoid cist comes under the sub surface features, because its significance being owned to into sub - surface features and the cairn circle, stone circle with or without cairn packaging, slab circles with or without. Cairn packaging, hood stone or umbrella stones, menhirs, anthropomorphic figure, Alignments avenues etc. comes under the category of the surface features, hence these architectural feature does not carry any significant cultural trait rather it is raised to met the technological aspects of the system. So the technical and social parameter involved in a particular grave pattern have been considered in analyzing the data.
Port holes

Port holes are one of the noted features in any cist burial. There are four shaped of port holes found from the excavated sepulchre’s in Kongu Nādu and they are 'U' shaped circular, trapezoidal and arrow head shaped 'U' shaped port hole is reported at Mayiladumpārai(T.N), circular port holes are found at Machād, Oliyāni in kerala cist burials, at Kodumanal, Sottukeny, Sittanavasal and in many other sites in TamilNādu. Arrow head shaped port holes are found at the northern subsidiary cist of transepted cist at Kodumanal.

The portholes are mainly functional and according to many scholars mainly kept to perform the funerary rites but the cultural significance varies the port holes were found generally on the Eastern side of a cist. Whereas the port holes found in the subsidiary cists were either faced South or North based their location. The cultural aspect may be the belief of the soul being malleable and passed through the apertures of the organism especially the mouth and the nose. Thus the apertures were also similarly incised on the orthostats, so that there was an easy accessibility and the to and fro movement of the body to the mystic world and from the mystic world to the body respectively. Though the apertures being analogous in context, the direction of the port holes owes its significance. Generally we find the port holes being placed on the Eastern side and on the North and South in the subsidiary cists.

The port holes found on the Eastern side has many probabilities and is a debate to conclude with such as firstly the direction towards

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the rising of the sun, so as to symbolically represent the life being resurrected through the Eastern side port-hole. Secondly to denote the direction from where they have migrated\textsuperscript{83} and this may be adduced by the fact that the people who were godly make their burial-places four -concerned whilst those who are of the asurā nature, (the easterners) and others make them round, for they (the goals) drove them out from the region. There by no doubt that the easterners whom the vedic Aryans here specify as their rivals and enemies that they have driven away from their habitats "Asurās" could be the megaliths being referred to as the house of the "Rākshasas " and also known by the names as "rākshasa gulla"\textsuperscript{84} or "rakāsi gudi" meaning the "house of demons"

The port holes on the Northern side is again, might be probably on account of the concept of "Euphemism". The primitives believed the normal existence of soul in heart which was the clearing house of the sacred blood, coupled with belief that when the ancient tamil warriors were not only proud to receive the fatal spear in the chest, but also they regarded it as a sign of greatest disgrace and cowardice to turn one's back in battle Cēramān Permunjcēralātan who happened to receive the wound at the back from the spear thrown by his adversary, Karikālan, is said to have sought redemption from such disgrace by undergoing a more dreadful means of liberting the soul , ie., by fasting into the euphemism "Sitting towards the North"\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{83} Eggeling, Julius, \textit{The Satapatha Brahmana according to the text of the Madhyadina school}, translated, I-V – Oxford (Sacred books of the East), 1882-1900, pp.13.8.1.5.


\textsuperscript{85} \textit{Puram}, 65 : 9-11.
Apart from the direction, the shape of the port hole also was functional to bear a cultural entity. The arrow head shaped port hole noticed in Kodumanal on the front slab of the subsidiary cist is quite interesting. It measures 15 cm in height with 40 cm hilt portion. The breadth of the hilt 18 cm. The maximum breadth of the arrow is 42 cm. earlier in meg I, II, V and X a flowerpot or latin cross-shaped portholes too must have attempted to scoop like an arrowhead only but due to the break in the fissure it looks like a flowerpot. It may also be intention, so as to indicate the cross. The cross, from time immemorial a symbol of the creative forces of union, was early brought into the symbolism of Christianity, where it was ever grown in importance.

The perfect arrowhead shaped port hole clears their intention. Their intention was further supported with occurrence of large quantity of arrowheads against the port holes found in the excavations. The arrowheads might also indicate the bow and arrow symbol of the Chēras.

Thus the direction of the incision of the port holes and the shapes owes its significance, since the megalithic constructions as a whole was the evolution of a cultural trait incurred with many beliefs rituals and practices and hence many hypothesis is further required to bring about a solution for the megalithic problem.

**Origin of Burials**

The burials mainly originated due to the fear of death among the living things especially the human beings. The occurrence of death

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totally baffled and scared, for the cause was anonymous to him. If it was to a stranger, it puzzled and if its was to his associates it brought about grief, so in order to eradicate the fear, the beliefs came into existence which later took its shape as religion. Religion admits of no fear. First of all the belief of the Primitive man was on the soul of the human beings, this made him to animate the dead. As discussed earlier in the psychological subsystem. The animistic beliefs and practices are said to be based on three main concepts,

1. the idea of the soul

2. the concept that souls become the object of a cult and are thus transformed into spirits

3. the concept that the cult of nature is derived from the cult of spirits.

When analyzing these three concepts, the first one arose involuntarily out of their fear towards death and psychological factors. The bio-chemistry of modern psychiatry has to say a good deal about the chemical reactions of fear, and of the induced psychic conditions of the human nerves. Thus arose cult which binds human hopes together, as sex does the body, and fear does the mind. It hopes for the soul's emancipation, and gain the bliss of transcendence through the sublimation of the instincts of fear.

The second concept of animistic belief make the soul as an object of cult and transforms into spirits. This can be very well

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understood with the concrete evidence from the Megalithic burials as how the body is buried either in the urns or the Earth with soul remaining in it and getting transformed into spirits through the apertures made on the cists.

The third concept that the cult of nature is derived from the cult of spirit. Savages and their cave-man-type practices have not altogether been conditioned to civilization yet. Savage practices, sentiments, instincts, even methods, still persist. From cave man to man, from naked savagery to civilized savagery, evolution has been marching on and on encouraged or disencouraged by geographical, commercial and social factors. Civilisation as a process has not yet been able to establish a completely human society free from fear and coercion, hunger and disease. In these instincts the fear, disease and beliefs dominated the megalithic burials. How is the cult of nature derived from the cult of spirit. The idea of the soul was first suggested to men by the badly understood spectacle of the double life they ordinarily appeared to lead, on the one hand, when awake, on the other, when asleep. In fact for the earliest men, the mental representatives which they had while awake and those of their dreams, are said to have been of the same value.

This double, known as soul, is at the same time believed to have been distinguished from the perceptible being which served it as external covering, by its energetic and active nature, as well as its malleable. The soul is also said to have been conceived in the image of the body. There would seem to have been not only a close union of soul and body, but also a partial confusion of the two. The soul was

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88 Ibid., p.7.
believed to leave the body at any moment and if its fails to return the body was considered defunct. Thus the departed soul was believed to lead a life similar to that it led in this world, hence its belongings and food and drink were offered during the time of the funeral ceremony.

Thus the factors such as fear and instincts brought about the concept of Animism, which later emulated the concept of burials. Later burials were made for various contexts.

3. Professional Subsystem

The people of the same profession form a groupism as such was formed the ‘guild’ an association for the traders and artisan. The names inscribed in the potsherds excavated from the Kodumanal beared the names like Kuviran, Varuni, Asadan, Valasapāsana and Nikamā which are clearly indicative of non-Tamil words. These names show their contact with other parts of India. Moreover the word ‘Nikamā’ indicates the formation of the guilds.

Right through the recent times wandering occupational tribes in India have been a complement to settled agriculturists. This nomadism is unlike the nomadism of pastoral people to the extent that the dependence is not so much on animals and their movements are guided by the needs of trade rather than by the needs of food for the animal reared. Hence their movements were basically towards the trading centres or towards the resource studded areas. This is evident from the Kodumanal habitation site, where the dating extends only from 400 B.C.E. to 400 C.E.

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The craft production at Kodumanal was diverse at multiple levels, according to Kelly,\textsuperscript{91}

1. It is diverse in the number and variety of crafts that were produced.
2. It is diverse in the ways in which those crafts were organised.
3. It is diverse in the style and technology of the crafts that were produced.

Thus diversity in all of these aspects is important because it indicates diversity in economic and social organization. Compared with other inland sites, Kodumanal is somewhat exceptional as in terms of the diversity of crafts that were produced there. These include semiprecious stone beads, shell bangles, ceramics, metals, including, copper/bronze and textiles. Costin\textsuperscript{92} has argued that craft production modes or types should not be conceived of in terms of an evolutionary sequence, instead the process is additive, and we should expect to see increasing diversity and complexity overtime. Therefore the diversity in the ways in which craft production was organised at Kodumanal suggests increasing social and political complexity and there was also substantial diversity in the styles of technology. This proves the professional subsystem being well organised in the Kongu region.

Thus the professional subsystem which had both indigenous and hired labours for their craft production as the rate increased on a gross


scale, the influences of both the labours transferred their cultural practices and social setup, which further led to the formation of a professional subsystem.

4. The Economical Subsystem

During the Megalithic period the economy played a vital role not only in the Peninsular India but India as a whole. According to Kautilya Varta includes agriculture, cattle – breeding and trade. Varta is mentioned as a useful science as it brings in grains, cattle, gold, forest produce and free labour. A king, having a fair knowledge of Varta can have an effective hold over the treasury and the army.93

Similarly in Kongu Nādu the Vēlirs dominated the resources, army and people, during the megalithic period.94 The Velirs were so powerful enough, hence the Chēras had cordial relations with them and the Chēras also entered into matrimonial relations95 with them in order to hold a marginal control over the resource studded area.

The Kongu region was mainly occupied by the Occupational groups and there prevailed the psychology of occupational brotherhood among the members belonging to the same occupation group and further led to more and more close ties between the members of the similar occupation. Their day-to-day needs, behaviour and the living patterns had to undergo in similar circumstances, naturally affecting the family and economic standards. The system of

95 Ramamurthy.V., History of Kongu (Part I), Prehistoric period to 1300 A.D., Madras, 1986, p.78.
guilds, in this way came into Vogue and possibly resulted in the social groups.\textsuperscript{96}

Since the megalithic people were migratory in nature we must seek the explanatory problems as, what adaptive circumstances, evolutionary process, induced the migration and this leads to the establishment of ‘contact’ between areas previously isolated etc.\textsuperscript{97} The human beings right from their primitive times were largely dependent upon the environment and the biological processes, and is conceived generically, to its total environment both physically and socially.\textsuperscript{98} This process of migration to their adaptive and accustomed environment of similar economic groups culminated together and formed the Economic subsystem during the megalithic period.

With regard to the Economic subsystem the adaptive efficiency must also be viewed in terms of ‘economy’ that is, energy expenditure versus energy conservation.\textsuperscript{99} For one tool, utensil or any material production to be adaptively more efficient than another there must be either a lowering of energy expenditure per unit of energy of conservation in task performance, or an increase in energy conservation per unit of performance over a constant energy expenditure in the metal and craft production. This search of resources leads to the establishment of logistics networks based on kin ties extending over large areas, was a prerequisite for the procurement of

\textsuperscript{96} Shyamsunder Nigam, \textit{Economic Organisation in Ancient India}, New Delhi, 1975, p.35.


\textsuperscript{98} Lewis R., Binford, ‘\textit{Archaeology as Anthropology}’, American Antiquity, Vol.28, No.2, oct 1962, p.218.

\textsuperscript{99} White, Leslie A., \textit{A Evolution of culture}, New Delhi, 1959, p.54.
the raw material. These kin ties were formed due to the Economic subsystem leading to the formation of a large scale economic, social, cultural and political groupism.

5. Linguistic Subsystem

The megalithic burials in South India by and large belongs to the Iron age and in many cases appear as development of the indigenous Neolithic Chalcolithic burial customs of the Deccan.

As the megaliths represent the only ‘Cultural conquest’ after the introduction of the Neolithic way of life, Furer Haimendorf’s second conclusion seems also likely to be true: ‘there are only two possibilities; either the earlier stone-axe people, shifting cultivators of very primitive material equipment, were the original Dravidian speakers, or the intruding megalith – builders with their developed Iron-Industry brought the Dravidian languages and imposed them ultimately on the whole of Southern India.

The presence of the ‘Brahmi’ language in Baluchistan can thus hardly be adduced as evidence for a Dravidian introduction of the megalithic culture from the near East in the middle of the first millennium. B.C.E.

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According to Emeneau, Absorption, not displacement, is the chief mechanism in radical languages of the kind we are considering.\textsuperscript{104} According to N.R. Banerjee who would attribute the introduction of ‘megalithism and its attendant cultural milieu, which they had reasonable chance of picking up on their Sotuhward journery\textsuperscript{105} to Dravidians who, after having inhabited earlier North India, ‘Yielded ground to the oncoming and expanding Aryans and were being pushed down Southwards. On their onward journey it was natural that some stuck to their lands and were left behind…. such were. … the Brahmi… and the Oraons and Malers …. Gond tribes’\textsuperscript{106}

Thus the language might be Dravidian by origin or otherwise, the linguistic affinity gathers the people as a groupism to a particulars abode of dwelling and thus the linguistic subsystem to a great extent paved the way for the formation of the megalithic groupism.

Two of the major means of diffusion linking such as cultural entity seemed to be the common social reticulation and a common language or group of dialects as a maximal means of inter communication. It may be suggested that a deliberately organised culture with a common language formed the basis of the ‘state’ as an entity. On these general lives we can arrive at a rough equivalence and connection between the separate sets – culture, language and group.

Thus we could see in this chapter the various subsystems paving the way for the formation or evolution of the Megalithic culture in the

\textsuperscript{104} Emeneau, M.B., ‘India as a linguistic Area,’ Language, 32, p.6.
\textsuperscript{105} Banerjee. N.R., “Megalithic Builders of South India were Dravidadn speakers – A review”, The Archaeological society of South India, Transactions for the period 1960-62, Silver Juibilee, Vol.1962, p.189.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid, p.185.
Peninsular India, especially in Kongu Nādu a chief trading centre. Yet there are various other mooting points to studied.

**Rock art in Kongu Nādu**

The Rock art represents the affective response of people to the objective conditions of their existence and hence signifies their material milieu of subsistence. It is a non verbal language with unconscious meanings, but a medium that communicates with people of all ages. The precious treasure of prehistoric are therefore, gives an insight into prehistoric life.

Rock art throughout the world has an amazing universal similarity in its contexts, basic style, and spacing irrespective of their geographical differences. Everywhere its themes included wild fauna on which the people's life depended for survival. Apart from the animal depictions, prehistoric peoples had depicted abstract sings with meanings that are unclear to us, inspite of the varied theories put forward by scholars to explain them as psycho-grams, magical symbols and so on. Human figures became common in prehistoric depictions only at a later date, probably from the iron Age onwards.

Dating of prehistoric rock art is a hard task, for it could be an assortment of representations belonging to disparate periods ranging from prehistoric to historic, hence the methods of dating rely on the stratified context of the excavated objects and their scientific dating.

The rock-paintings of Marayur are predominantly in red ochre and the entire surface is covered by paintings depicting
antelope, bull, elephants, with and without mahouts, human figures with arms stretched apart, impressions of palm, certain other auspicious symbols and ritual dancers. The earliest layer visible in the whole complex is the depiction of cattle, which is partly superimposed by human figures. A, horse, perhaps the most exquisitely depicted piece, whose whole body, except the tail is superimposed by a huge human figure with wavy lines all over, is also suggestive of the iron age interpolation. An elephant with an armed rider in the periphery of the concavity is obviously an Iron Age addition.

The representations collectively signify a scene of ritual subsisting on hunting and shifting cultivation. It could probably be the Archaeo-anthropological context of the co-existence and interaction of the Neolithic and Iron-smelting societies that is reflected in the structure of relations in the totality of representations. These are characterized by the presence of a simple style at the core and a relatively evolved one at the periphery. The representations at the core seem to be Neolithic and those in the Periphery, Megalithic, providing a tentative dating of the gallery to the first millennium B.C. However, the representation despite their different points of Origin, are organically woven into a single entity due to the unifying force of continuity embedded in the changing culture.

Apart from this various other paintings from the Anaimalai, Kodaikanal, Palani and Velliangiri ranges from the Vellarikōmbai caves. Almost all these paintings in its primitive period lays significance to the animals and later to the human beings and further intruding the intricacy of the human figures, from the females (hunting and gathering societies) to the males (pastoral society). Thus the pre-historic paintings belonging to the Iron age (Pastoral cum agriculture) involved in cattle lifting and retrieving, in which the Matrys are defied and to commemorate their heroic deeds the pre-historic people had painted the hero’s figures and worshipped. The paintings later took the form of burials and later as the Hero stones.