CHAPTER - III

THE SOCIAL FORMATIONS, PERCOLATIONS AND RELATIONS

The society in its archaic form was a racio-ideological utilitarian groupism with its subsistence economy in a particular area. The racio-ideological groups later entered into the concepts of relative affinities based on linguistic, cultural, ecological, economical, racial, aspects to form the kinship. Do these kinships form only due to the relative affinities? They are also formed due to the symbiotic relations which necessitated both to be beneficiary, this later paved the way for the lineages, castes and sub-castes. This kind of utilitarianism and groupism confined within an area are affinial and are engulfed among themselves. This is clear from the matrimonial alliances that took place right from the early historical periods to the pursuing years, in order to extend their empire or to bring about a solution to the menace in the peripheral areas of their state. For instance, it is learnt from the introduction verse of the second decade of the Padirrappatu that Udiyan-Chērālāthan had married 'Nallini' the daughter of one Vēliyan and Neduchērālēthan was the son through this queen. This vēliyan being a Vēlir Chieftain, who performed mercenary services in a part of the ancient Kongu. Udiyan-Chērālētan could have married a daughter of this Vēlir Chief in order to maintain cordial relations with Kongu for preventing any aggression from the other two sovereigns - the Cholas and Pandyas. Though it belongs to the early historical

1 Ramamurthy, V., History of Kongu (Part I) Pre-historic period to 1300 A.D., Madras, 1986, p.78.
period a post-period of our study, it stands as an instance of human ideology.

When the human society based on the hunting-gathering occupation, man hunted and gathered for his existence and survival. The occupation enters into the economical pantheon only when surplus is exchanged, hence they termed the prehistoric economy (especially the Iron age economy) as the 'Subsistence economy', which was only for their consumption. Even for such economical consumption, man depended on another to face the natural endangerments in the course of his occupation of hunting and gathering and hence formed groups known as 'Band Groupism', this being the early form of social order. Later in the next phase the ideologies varied and hence the occupations varied in varied eco-zones and thus the aligned occupations formed affinal clans which further proliferated and formed the societies. Thus we could see the Vēlirs and Malavars were groups of mercenaries who existed in various eco-zones, but performed the same occupation and hence fall under the same clan known as the 'Vēlir' clan or the 'Malavar' clan.

In the next phase of growth in the trade and economy. We see the social formation as the structured and interconnected aggregate of a peoples relations, socio-political institutions, customs, rituals and

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2 Udarva Moorti, S., ‘Evidence of social differentiation and socio-political organization during the Megalithic period in South India’ Puratattra No.20, 1989-90, p.12-13.
other cultural practices engendered by a given level of technology and economy of subsistence and survival in time.³

Thus according to Marx's preface in 'The critique of Political Economy,' 'An aggregate of human beings constitutes a society when, and only when, the people are in some way related. The essential relation is not kinship, but much wider, namely, that developed through production and mutual exchange of commodities. The particular society is characterized by what it regards as necessary, who gathers or produces the things, by what implements, who lives of the production of others, and by what right, divine or legal-cults and laws are social by products, who owns the tools, the land, sometimes, the body and soul of the producer, who control the disposal of the surplus and regulates quantity and form of supply. Society is held together by bond of production. Thus we find the social development is parallel development due to the influence of the Economic development.

Social divisions in TamilNādu

The early Tamil land was basically divided into the five Tinais (the five eco-zones) as Kurinji (hilly region), Mullai (the pastoral zone), Marutam (fertile plain), and Neithal (littoral), the fifth zone, Palai (desert) was only a transitory phase, a state of aridity, scrub vegetation and hot climate. This could be an extension of the mullai or Kurinji lands, thus Palai is not a separate eco-zone as testified in the Silappadikaram.⁴ It is stated that Mullai and Kurinji have taken the shape of Palai because of excessive heat. So, with rainfall, Palai would

be restored to the original shape of either 'Mullai' or 'Kurinji'. On the basis of literary evidences, it is considered originally there were only four divisions, the fifth (Palai) being a later addition.⁵

These five eco-zones were comprised of occupational groups such as Vētar, Kuravar (Kurinji), Āyar, Itaiyar (Mullai) Ulavar, Toluvar (Marutam), Umanar, Paratavar (Neital) and Maravar (Pālai). Apart from this various kutis were also mentioned in the Sangam literatures, however, in the poem the term kuti means a settlement. Thus, it has been understood that in the areas where tinais merged, the social groups as well as the forms of subsistence made a mixed appearance.

The Sangam anthologies gives the description of the mode of human adaptation in each tinai and the various social groups there, the Kānavar, Kuravar and Vētar were the inhabitants of the Kurinji-tinai and hunting and gathering their form of subsistence. Similarly, in the Pālai-tinai, the inhabitants were Kalavar, Eyinar and Maravar living by plunder and cattle lifting. In the Mullai-tinai they were Āyar and Itaiyar subsisting on the shifting agriculture and animal husbandry.⁶

People in the areas of Mullai-Marutam are found to have adopted a variety of crafts as their means of subsistence. Leaving aside the primitive forms of subsistence such as fishing and plundering, it has become clear that there were four forms of material production namely, animal husbandry, shifting cultivation, petty

⁶ Puranaanuru, 159, 168, 231, Narrinai, 266, 289.
commodity production and plough agriculture. Whereas in Kongu we find the hoe culture in the Megalithic sites.

With regard to Kongu Nādu, besides the Kurinji and Mullai eco-situations, we have also to look for the transitory state of Palai during hot summer days. Hence, we have three eco-situations, though geographically only Kurinji and Mullai are found in Kongu.

**Society in Kongu-Nādu focussed through Sangam Literature**

The basic constituent in the social structure of Kongu Nādu was 'Kudi' or family. The heroic poems unveil before us an active scenario of co-existence and interaction of unevenly evolved chiefdom of three types, that is ūr, Malai and Nādu headed by chiefs, that is the Kilar, Vēlir and Vēntar respectively. Most of the Vēlir and Kilār were Chieftains of the forest. One of the Ventars namely the Cheras were chieftains of the forest too. Several poems indicate that it was in the pastoral tract (mullai) and hills (Kurinji) in the forest that the Velir Chieftains (Malaiyaman) headed the descent groups called 'Vētar', 'itaiyar' and 'Kuravar'. Since the Iron age society proliferated in the montane regions which were ruled by the hill chiefs the structure of the political level of the hill chiefs was essentially a simple one based on Kinship. A chief is mentioned as Ko-makan, porai etc. denoting the mountaneous head. The hill chiefs had plundered each other to accumulate resources for redistribution.

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8. *Puranaanuru*, 132:8, 390:1
10. *Puram* 52:378
Velirs

In the early Tamil sources, we come across types of rulers, viz. The three crowned kings and the velirs. The term Vēlir means "bright or glorious" and refers to the chief of a tribe or lineage.\textsuperscript{11} The ‘Vēlir’ were much anterior to the crowned kings is clearly known from the early Tamil poems, which refer them as ton mutuVēlir\textsuperscript{12} and Vēlmutumakkal\textsuperscript{13} i.e. the ancient Vēlir. It is of interest to note that Kapilar in a puram verse\textsuperscript{14} praises Irunkōvēl as "great among the velir who had ruled for forty nine generations"\textsuperscript{15}. Hence, we cannot be far wrong in surmising the the lineage system preceded the emergence of state or king and as per kosambi's surmise the three crowned kings of TamilNādu were also in that stage during the time of Ashoka. Though various factors have been attributed to the emergence of state, agricultural surplus is considered as a prerequisite. In an egalitarian lineage society, the chief was only the first among equals. But the availability of surplus in any form coupled with unequal distribution of wealth makes the chief wealthy and powerful which in due course leads to the emergence of kingship and state. Added to this was the impulse, contributed by maritime trade, as suggested by Champakalakshmi\textsuperscript{16}. However the three Tamil kingdoms are not considered as full-fledged states; rather they are explained as potential states i.e, states in the making. Besides the three crowned Kings, there

\textsuperscript{12} Puram, 24 and 21.
\textsuperscript{13} Aham, 372-374.
\textsuperscript{14} Puram, 201.
\textsuperscript{16} Champakalaskhmi, R., \textit{Trade Ideology and urbanization in South India, 300 B.C. – A.D. 1300}, Delhi, p.139.
also existed Vēlir chiefs who were found mostly in non-Marutam tracts. In other words, during the early historical period, there existed three potential states and several lineage societies in TamilNādu.

The lineage societies were egalitarian in character, though there could have existed division of labour and professional specialisation. But the state societies were certainly class conscious, a few ruling elite living on the labour of many. According to Thapar\textsuperscript{17} stratification has been viewed as a precondition to the emergency of the state, since stratified group became involved in internal conflicts, require contracts for agreements and results in the evolution of a powerful elite. Due to the process of acculturation, the tribal chief got legitimised his claim to kingship by performing Vedic rites and tracing his lineage to a puranic hero.

A hill chief called Irunkō-Vēl, one of the traditional five Vēls, is mentioned in a poem as Vētarkōman, the Chief of Vētar to have belonged to a long live of 49 generations of Chiefs.\textsuperscript{18} The poems celebrate the Āy family as Kuravarperumakan, the chief of Kuravar in the hill called Potiyilmalai, rich in honey, Jackfruit, elephants and monkeys.\textsuperscript{19} The Āy chief is addressed as Mavēl, the big vēl and mentioned as belonging to the Āykuti. The association of the term 'Āy' with itaiyar (pastoralists) show that they were pastoral chiefs. The celebrated benefactors, Pāri, the chief of Parampumalai, Ōri the Chief of Kollimalai, Kāri who killed Ōri and became the chief of his hill, Elini, The chief of Kutiramalai and Pēkan the chief of Vānmalai,

\textsuperscript{17} Thapar Romila, \textit{From Lineage to state}, New Delhi, 1984, p.5.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Puram}, 202, 201.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Puram}, 17-36.
Kumanan and the chief of Mutiramalai are the most celebrated hunter chiefs of 'Vētar' or 'Kuravar'. Sometimes the hill chiefs are called Vettuvar. This would suggest that the term 'Vēl' derives from 'Vēt' meaning hunter.

All these chiefs, unequal among themselves in their possession of resources, had to resort to plunder raids. Most of them seem to have maintained a predatory control over the agrarian zones in their proximity. The hill chiefs had plundered each other to accumulate resources for redistribution. Through the exchange of forest goods, some of the hill chiefs could have procured new resources like prestige goods. Irunkō-vel's hill is praised in a poem as a gold-yielding one obviously indicating the exchange of its resources like Ivory, monkey, animal skin, sandalwood and the like for gold coins from Rome. But how exactly the chiefs exchanged the forest goods and realized the returns is not clear. The resource potential varied from chief to chief and obviously some of them were comparatively more resourceful. Horses were not common as possessions of chiefs and references to their gift-giving of horses and chariots seem to be a mere conventional mode of praise. Possession of rare goods always enriched the status and ranking of chiefs.

The Vēlirs mention through Archaeological evidences

The 'Vēlirs' were one of the important social components of the Kongu Nādu during the Iron age, the references for which may not only be quoted from the literary evidences, but also through the

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20 Puram, 158.
21 Puram, 110,168.
22 Puram, 202.
archaeo - epigraphical evidences. The words namely 'Vēlicamban,' 'Vetathan,' 'Sāttan,' 'Sāttuvel' etc obtained from the inscriptions, pot sherds etc. During the Sangam age the names like 'Kīlar', 'Kavithi', 'Kudimbi' etc were used to specify the head of a family, but anyway the name 'Kīlar' was widely used all over the tamil country. 'Umbarkādu', 'Vellilūr', 'Avinashi', North Bōdinatham were the places were the 'Kilars' held their full fledged influence in the Kongu Nādu.

The cattle-raid (Ākol-pusai) was the main occupation which paved the way for the formation of raiding chiefs and they were none others than the 'Velirs'. They served as the war commanders during the warring periods and later served as the head of the society during peace. Apart from the cattle wealth they also depended on agriculture and laid control over the places were the precious stones were richly embedded in nature. They also flourished through the toll products collected from the tolls known as 'Vēlir ulgu'.

**Vēlirs and the trade routes**

The places which laid on the main trading routes were controlled by the Vēlirs. 'Podhini' is a place which connects the trade routes between the Palghat pass and Madurai and the places like Ānaimalai, North Bōdinatham, C.Kalaiyāmuthur etc. yielded many Roman coins and these places were under the sway of the Vēlirs. The Vēlirs subjugated and brought under their control not only one

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24 Ibid., p.21.
25 Ibid., p.21.
particular clan but many clans together were controlled by a Vēlir Chief.26

Kīlars

Like the Vēlir chiefs, the Kīlar chiefs were also hunter chiefts either of 'Vētar' or 'Kuravar' tribes. The poems mention them as the ūrkīlan or ūr-mannar who were generally chiefs of small settlement, mostly in vanpulam, the forest land.27 A poem mentions about a kilan with marginal resources, depending primarily on plunder raids, as the enemy of hunger who would summon his blacksmith on seeing a hungry bard and order a new lance to go for a raid to appease the bard's hunger.28 Certain kīlan are also mentioned as chiefs who held sway over agrarian tracts and were relatively more resourceful.29 However they also had to maintain predatory control over other settlements to meet the re-distributive needs.

Kōsars

The Kosars were the tribes who inhabited the Coimbatore region and we also get references from Silappadikaram as 'Kongan-ilanKōsar' on the basis of which some scholars have taken the Kōsar as a ruling dynasty of Kongu. There is also another version that only from a Kōsar chief named as 'Kōvan' the name 'Kōvanputtūr' which later turned out to be 'Coimbatore'.30 There are many controversial theories about the origin of the Kosars. Rangaswamy thinks that the

26 Ibid.
27 Puram, 177, 180, 181.
28 Puram, 180.
29 Puram, 176,376,381,388.
term is derived from 'Kosam' a Sanskrit word, which may be explained as armour.\textsuperscript{31} There are many controversies lying regarding their original homeland.

The literary references, though giving varied information, point to the one inference that they were fierce warriors and offered their services as mercenaries. Because of their Valour, loyalty and trust worthiness, their help was sought by almost all the Tamil rulers.

**The Kongars**

We find a number of references to the people of Kongu, the Kongar, but not a single one to the king of the land, and every foreign king that subdued the country came to be known as 'KongarKō'.\textsuperscript{32} If the references to 'Kongar' are considered in the broader context, it can be inferred that the term refers to the Kongar lineage or tribe. In other words, the reference to Kongar found in the early Tamil literature and in the epigraphical sources of the subsequent period are indicative of the lineage system that prevailed in Kongu Nādu.

**Kuravar**

The name 'kuravar' itself indicates the habitat of them 'Kunravar'\textsuperscript{33} - the people who reside on the hilly terrain. The kuravars were also engaged in hunting, but the literary references indicate that the kuravar were also engaged in shifting cultivation, by adopting slash and burn method. The reference to Eripunam is of utmost significance, as it testifies to the custom of 'Slash and burn'

\textsuperscript{31} TL: 1171.
\textsuperscript{32} E.I., 30:97.
cultivation. The kuravar of the Palani hills practised the rain-making ritual. Thus the entire family seems to have been involved in the farming work and the maidens were incharge of protecting the ripened crops from the birds in the tinaipunam.

Eyinar

The people living in the 'pālai' are known as 'Eyinar' The Eyinars lead a predatory life and were engaged in cattle-lifting and highway robbery. The reference to them as 'Koduvelyinarn', the eye deadly bows portrays their life style in the sangam poems. Since pālai was a seasonal phase which is to be found both in 'Mullai' and 'Kurinji' zones, the eyinar, the people of this eco-situation, could have been living in both Kurinji and Mullai zones. Their villages are known as 'Kurumbi'. There is reference to the 'Kurumbars' as a pastoral people speaking kannada, and identifies them as early inhabitants of Kongu Nādu. Here comparison can be made with the leshnik’s interpretation with the Kurumbās.

The Society during the Megalithic period in Kongu Nādu

The study of the society through the mortuary practices has been in the forefront of Archaeology for the last two decades. The studies concerning the application of funerary analysis to the problem of social reconstruction fall into two groups

1. Those concerned with evidences of social differentiation at a single site.

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34 Puram, 231.
35 Puram, 148.
36 Aham, 319.
2. Those that assess social systems using group of sites.

The Megalithic culture is a replica of the socio-religious activity of the different ethnic groups who have independent mortuary practices. Status differences can also be observed from the pattern small and large types. According to Binford there are certain,

(1) Ideo-technic artefacts
(2) Technomic artefacts
(3) Socio-technic artefacts

(1) **Ideo-technic artefacts**

Items of this class have their primary functional context in the ideological component of the social system. These are the items which signify and symbolize ideological rationalizations for a social system and further provide the symbolic milieu in which individuals are encultured, as necessity if they are to take their place as functional participants in the social system.  

**Ideo-technic artefacts in Kongu Nādu**

**Rock Art**

The Megalithic society of Kongu Nādu may be traced from the rock art which also may be confined to the Iron age period since, though the may be prehistoric they belong to different cultures from the Neolithic to the megalithic. The rock paintings of Marayūr which lays in the Udumalai-Munar highways are said to be multi-layered and

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belong to disparate phases down to the Iron age. There is a super imposed human figure with wavy lines, graffiti very frequently met within the Iron age pottery at many places in South India. There are several dolmens in the surroundings of this rock art. The painting is in red-ochre, where in 15 ft female figure is depicted with a loose hair in wavy lines. This figure denotes the 'Kottravai' the mother goddess, she is surrounded by hundreds of antelopes. This painting dates back to 7000 BCE\(^{38}\) and depicts the pre-historic vettuvars worship of mother goddess, the reference can be seen in Silappadikaram.

Apart from this the Vellarikkōmbai rock paintings situated in the North of Coimbatore district in the Nilgiris depicts a bull. Alluding to this we also get a cattle fossil in Kammanāyakkanpālayam which belongs to 20,000 BCE.\(^{39}\) These rock paintings fall under the Early phase of Megalithic culture may be considered as Ideo-technic artefact.

The Bronze sculpture of a bull procured from Boluvanpatti in Kongu Nādu brings out the conclusion that the people of Kongu Nādu were oriented with the pastoral economy in the early phase of the Megalithic culture. The cattle raids were to be their main occupation especially when the transitory phase of Pālai was in existence. This may also be confirmed by 90% of the Iron implements procured being war weapons compared to the agricultural implements.


\(^{39}\) *Ibid*, p.4.
Black and Red ware

The Black and Red ware which is confined with the Megalithic period is mostly wheel thrown, made of well-levigated clay, with a highly polished and burnished surface and generally treated with a bright slip. The ware is mostly plain with occasional grooves on the exterior and rarely shows ripple marks on thin shapes like bowls and dishes. This is found throughout the occupational deposit with minor varieties.\(^{40}\)

In the Indian context, archaeologists have generally believed in what has been described as the 'Inverted firing technique' of manufacture. In this technique, the pots are placed in an inverted position in the Kiln subjecting the exterior to oxidising conditions and the interior to reducing conditions. Sawdust 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 to buff in colour.\(^{41}\) Hence the technology of the Black and red ware reveals that this was done with a purpose. This may be a symbolic representation.

In the Black and Red ware the black colour symbolises the darkness that is present in the mother’s womb and the red is to symbolise mainly as the colour of primeval emotion and a sign of blood symbolic of puberty and hence, fertility rites, the life-giving

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\(^{40}\) Rajan.K., *Archaeology of Tamilnadu (Kongu Country)*, Delhi, 1994, p.77.

nature.\textsuperscript{42} The association of this Black and Red ware is to bring about the rebirth of the dead from the Black - the Womb, with the Red - the blood, the life-giving nature.

This conception can be further added by colonel Forbes Leslie in his Early races of Scotland. He has mentioned about the dolmens which were white washed, and each of them had a large spot of red paint, with black in the middle, probably representing a spot of blood,\textsuperscript{43} but the black in its centre was not given any mention by him. This seems to represent the darkness in the womb and the red symbolises the blood that surrounds the womb.

This is also evident from the significance paid to Black and Red by the AngamiNāgas while erecting a Megalith. Among the AngamiNāgas every male was decked with breast-pieces and saches embroidered with red and black triangles and wear necklaces of Carnelian.\textsuperscript{44} From this 'living archaeology' we could trace the pre-historic ideologies, that the Carnelian beads are worn at the time of an erection of a Megalith shows that, either the Carnelian was reddish is colour to cognate their fertility ideologies or as ‘Primitive Valuables’ is not of sure. These Carnelian beads are also found in plenty in the burials of Kongu Nādu. Hence in 'Kongu Nādu' Carnelian beads were considered as the 'Primitive valuables' as in the case of Indus valley civilization we find the 'Lapis lazuli' as their 'Primitive valuables'\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{42} Lawlor,R., \textit{Sacred Geometry, Philosophy and practice}, London 1990;
\textsuperscript{43} Colonel Forbes Lerlie, \textit{Early Races of Scotland}, Vol.II, P.464, Plate LX.
\textsuperscript{44} Stephen Dewar, ‘\textit{The ceremony of erecting a megalith among the Angami Nagas}’, Folklore, Vol.77, No.4, 1966, p.266.
Graffiti

The postsherds of this culture yield post-firing graffiti marks, since they are done with a purpose after firing, they fall under the group of the Ideo-technic artefacts. In the excavations conducted in Perūr-Kalappatti, Veerapandipudür-Vellalür, Kaniyämpündi-Ānaimalai especially in Kodumanal yielded the urns with graffiti marks on the mouth of the urn. These scratching are variously interpreted as potters mark, owners marks, tribal marks, or the initial stages of the Brahmi script etc., but the pot sherds with Brahmi script have also been found simultaneously in the same layer, it may be represented as a symbolic representation or a symbol to represent their clan, potter's mark or the owner's mark etc. The more common graffiti marks are the sun, swastika, star, ladder, nandipada, fish, bow & arrow, wheel, cart etc. If the graffiti's are to be considered as a clan mark then a retrospective analysis has to be made between the graffiti's found in the habitation sites and the burial sites.

Totemic symbols

The totemism is the name or symbol from an animal (or a plant) which are considered as composed associates. The clansmen regard themselves as a Kin to their totem-species and descended from it. Thus the people belonging to the dog-clan, for example, would consider themselves to be dogs and as descended from the dog. There are also taboos or categorical prohibitions associated with totemism.

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Thus the people of the dog-clan would be forbidden to eat dogs, that is their own totem species. Neither would they be allowed to marry any member belonging to the same totem-group.

The existence of totemism proves the primitive communism. The totemic symbols like, wheel, swastika and Ladder have been obtained. Inspite of these, the peacock totem discovered form the porunthal excavations, a Sangam poem corroborates this through a song eulogizing the benefactor Pegan for covering a blanket over a peacock, misunderstanding its dance seeing the rain filled clouds as that of its shivering. This proves that the pre-class lineage system extend in the Kongu Nādu during the Megalithic period.

In the kongu region which comprised of the mullai and kurinji held the same position of the women as same as the pre-class societies. For instance, the 'Āyar' women were very much involved in the preparation and sale of milk products. Life here was more harmonious, hence 'karpu' was considered a fit them for explaining it.

Apart from this the Megalithic society which was basically an agricultural society owes its significance to the women and even prior

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50 Pillay, K.K., *Social History of the Tamils*, University of Madras, 1975, p.182-183.
to this in the primitive division of labour the gathering and the cultivation of vegetable food are the special occupation of women as that of the men. The women not only invented agriculture but also the systematic tilling of the soil and also put this into practice, which can by no means have been an easy task, as conservatism was so strong in primitive society. The general geographical and also the archaeological situation favours the theory that the world-cultures of mother right originally emanated from India. But the position of the women gradually decreased in India, exclusively was retained in some parts where the ancient nature was preserved and conserved and one such region is the Kongu region due to the strong preservation of tribalism among the people of this region is still in Vogue. The Kongunādu thus during the megalithic period gave significance to the women this is evident from the potsherd bearing the Brahmi script names such as 'visaki' which might be a female consort of 'visaka' the god worshipped in the North and due to the well flourished trade contacts the impact would have brought in this name of the Goddess.\(^{51}\)

Apart from this a female head was recovered form the Porunthal excavations. The head of the female was with curling hairs with prominent elongated ear.\(^{52}\) These evidences proves the reputed life of women during the Megalithic period in konguNādu. The female burials found in kodumanal also proves this fact.


Here the poet describes the position of the girl who suffers out of love towards her lover and the social order inhibits her to have a close association with her lover before marriage. This emphasizes the attitude of 'Karpu' (Virginity) being adorned by the people of KonguNādu.

(2) **Technomic artefacts**

Technomic signifies those artefacts having their primary functional context in coping directly with the physical environment.

**Technomic artefacts in Kongu Nādu**

**Pollen grains**

The Koyilpalayam and Kodumanal excavations yielded the pollen grains of the corn and Rāgi. In 2002 the Perūr excavations yielded the pollen grains of the millets portrays the cultivation of millets in the Kongu Nādu, which is also considered as their staple food. Apart from this, the excavation conducted at Mangalam (Avināshitaluk) in a Megalithic burial yielded the pollen grains of Betelnut. From the archaeological evidence we could perceive that the Horsegram, millets would also have been the staple food of the

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53 KT:252  
Kongu people apart from this we also get this Betelnut, which is alien to this region and this Betelnut, which was not widely practised in this region and this shows either the practise of introducing new crop varieties or the influence of the traders. In the Porunthal excavation we get a pot filled with paddy, though paddy is not their staple food the way of honouring the dead with these kind of prestigious goods and the status entitled to them are clearly portrayed through these possessions. In the Environment Archaeology- Dorain Q Fuller and Emma L. Harvey has jointly reported about the the pollen grains obtained from the Perūr and the Kodunalay excavation, such as that, they have also reported about certain pulses such as the "Lablab Purpureus" - Hyacinth bean, bonavist bean, Macrotylomauniflorum- Horsegram, 'VignaMungo' -Urd, black gram, vignaradiata- Mung green gram and VignaUnguiculata-coupea etc. has been reported. Further he adds to this that the two most important Ceratotropis crop species, V.radiata (greegram, mung) and v.mungo (black gram, Urd or Urid), share a large number of characters in common and the size and general shape of their seeds overlap. He has also botanical evidence relating to the wild progenitors and their distribution, especially of the Indian natives. These data raises the question of what change in the environmental conditions, most likely in terms of agricultural practices, selected for seed enlargement in these pulses. Contrary to conventional botanical assumptions, must be sought. Perhaps conscious selection is brought to bear by farmers or

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56 Ibid.
58 Ibid., p.236.
perhaps changes in agricultural techniques such as deeper tillage created a selective advantage for larger seeded genotypes. In this regard the Iron age in South India, and perhaps the later chalcolithic were the periods when and tillage began on the peninsula.\textsuperscript{59} Further he also gives a general model for pulse crop-processing during the sequential years by which we are able to have a retrospective crop processing methods.

**Spindle whorls**

The occurrence of quite a number of intact terracotta spindle whorls pierced at the centre by means of an iron rod is clearly suggestive of cotton spinning and to strengthen this, a remarkably well preserved piece of woven cotton was recovered from the Kodumanal site.\textsuperscript{60} In Porunthal excavations Spindle whorls have been discovered, hence this shows that there would have existed a weaving Industry and apart from this the availability of cotton shows that the cotton plantation would also have been prevailed during this period.\textsuperscript{61} The various kinds of plantation also proves that they were aware of the art of crop rotation process of cultivation. The vast knowledge and practise of agriculture among the Megalithic people is evident, but still the war weapons dominate the agricultural implements hence it was basically a pastoral society but resorted to agriculture during the rainy seasons and practised the pasturing, gem stone cutting and trading and cattle raids during the summer. This gives us an ambiguity regarding their occupation orientation. Any way there was a shifting

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{60} Frontline, \textit{Op.cit.}, p.73.
occupation that prevailed among these people in which weaving might have been one among them.

**The Iron furnace**

Many Iron furnaces were found in the Kodumanal excavation, some of them were in the used condition and some were found to be in unused condition. Inside the furnace pit were found burnt clay pieces with rectangular holes. The pieces were obviously part of the furnace wall. The holes allowed the air to pass through evenly into the furnace. The complete absence of the tuyeres in the crucible furnace suggests that these holes were arranged for a natural draught onto the furnace.\(^{62}\)

There are small circular furnaces surrounding this big furnace, almost at rectangular intervals, had 30m diameter at the mouth with a small hole or depression in the centre, these might have been used to heat longer crucibles removed from bigger ones. A important find here is a vitrified crucible, partially broken, found in the small furnace in an instu position was a small bowl-shaped crucible.\(^{63}\) Besides this, many fragmentary pieces of vitrified crucibles were also found. Another interesting find is an unused crucible furnace and a crucible made of well levitated clay. The Iron and steel industry was not only obtained from Kodumanal, but also from many other sites Kongu Nādu, but Kodumanal excavation have yields very important evidence about the manufacture of the steel through crucible process. The importance in crucible process is that some scholars report that the

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\(^{62}\) Ibid., p.96.

\(^{63}\) Ibid.
Indians innovated the technology of crucible process of making steel and it is also considered that the famous Damascus blades were made of Indian wootz steel.\textsuperscript{64} This proves the technological skill that prevailed among the megalithic builders and the Iron content was richly and widely present in Kongu Nādu. Even now the iron is said to occur in a rich bed in the Doddan-cōmbai forest in the Gobichettipalayam taluk near Hallagōmalai and Chennimalai and in a torrent near Minkarai at the foot of the Ānaimalais.\textsuperscript{65} Iron stone and Iron sand of rich quality are collected from several localities in Salem district.

(3) Socio-technic artefacts

'These artefacts were the material elements having their primary functional context in the social sub-systems of the total cultural' (i.e. those artefacts which signify the social status of an individual.

Iron weapons

The Megalithic burials are also known as Iron age graves for the availability of a plethora of Iron artefacts in these monuments. Though it is yet not certain integral part of the megalithic culture. In Kongu Nādu objects found in these tombs show a divergent variety comprising weapons of offence and defence, household objects, artisan, tools, horse furnishing, trident etc. The objects like the furnishings are found in all conceivable places in all the types of Megalithic burials. Typologically these fall into a variety of arrow

\textsuperscript{64} Kuppuram.G., \textit{Ancient Indian Mining, Metallurgy and Metal Industries}, Delhi, 1989, p.326.
\textsuperscript{65} Ramachandran, K.S., \textit{Archaeology of South India}, Tamilnadu, Delhi, 1980, p.64.
heads, spearheads and spears, Javelin heads and Javelines, lances, axes with and without ring fasteners, daggers, knives, swords, chisels, hoes, horse-bits, hooks, multi-pronged hangers resembling a cadelberra, ladles, handled saucer lamps, sickles, bill hooks etc. Apart from this two copper bowls, one tiger figurine and two flower stands (supposed to be), strainer, spoon etc are found in the burials. Bone objects like arrow-heads, stylus points etc were found. These artefacts stands as the status symbols of the Megalithic holders.

**Antennae swords**

The Antennae swords which belongs to 2000 B.C.E. were obtained near the permalmalai near Ānaimalai. These kind of swords were found in Uttar Pradesh, Andhra and in Tamilnādu Ramanathapuram, Chingleput, Vellore etc and the Antennae swords from Perummalai belongs to this category. These were originally made in Iran and were brought to India two thousand year before. The sword is known by this name since the sword resembles the Antennae of the insects. The Antennae swords apart from the valour depicts the high status or rank of the dead. The various Iron weapons also portrays the usage of these to exhibit their Valour during this period which ultimately gave the recognition for these heads who had the honourable disposal.

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67 Ibid.
Punch-Marked coins

Various kinds of punch marked coins with various symbols were found. These were also associated in the burials either to symbolise the rank of the dead or to symbolise the occupation he was held with. Apart from the status distinction it reveals the trade contacts with various places both internally and externally. The Satavahana coins were discovered at Karūr establishes its close link with Andhra Country. The names like 'Visāki', 'Kuravan', 'Varuni', 'asadam' and terms like 'Nikamā' (trade guild), were inscribed on these coins. Here the name 'Visāki' needs a special analysis. The name 'Visaki' though it is the influence of the North Indian traders, but in one of the rock cut cave in Ceylon we find the Tamil Brahmi inscriptions reading as a tamil merchant named 'visākan' has donated the cave to a Buddhist monk and this clearly bringout the name of a merchant and the contacts that they also had with Srilanka. Further the 'swastik' symbol on the punch marked coins reveals the close affinity they had with the Jains who also held their sway in the trade, though the 'swastik' symbol is spread all over the world, in all religions and with varied concepts.

The 'swastika' symbols in early Christian tombs was done to ensure the safety of the departed soul or to fend off demonic spirits.

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In China, the ‘Swastika’ found a place among written characters, where it contains the notion of abundance, prosperity and long life.\textsuperscript{73}

The ‘Swastika’ was regarded as an auspicious sign even in the Harappan period, is proved by the discovery of a significant seal. A row of five Swastikas as auspicious symbols of signifying security and good luck.\textsuperscript{74}

The symbol of ‘Swastika’ is probably the most ancient image of god that the earliest men evolved to worship the creator. A scene of its worship is found in the rock paintings of Paria Bāri.\textsuperscript{75}

In the Leader Idol of Artemis Nana of Chaldea, the figure of ‘Swastika’ is found on the middle of the ‘Vulva’. In the petroglyphs from Owens valley, California they are said to resemble a ‘Swastika’ and thus the interpretation of various authors about swastika is still in a prolonged process.\textsuperscript{76}

**Carnelian beads**

The Carnelian beads are drawn to this Category of socio-technic artefacts because, the Carnelian beads are considered as the 'Primitive valuables' as far as the Megalithic builders are concerned. These items i.e. the 'primitive valuables' are not the items that satisfies the hunger or any other wish, but those who hold these 'primitive valuables' are

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., p.VII.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
considered to be prestigious and this is found in all the civilizations.\textsuperscript{77}

When the chief of a clan or a king is dead he was usually honoured and paid homage by associating his body, with such kind of 'Primitive valuables' If these valuables were not possessed by these chiefs and on their death his progenitors associate with them either through wars or by purchasing it from some other chiefs or kings. Thus we find thousands of Carnelian beads being associated with the dead in the Kodumanal and Porunthal excavations. These Carnelian beads are one of the chief varieties of agate. Agate and Carnelian are common occurrence in the beds of the river Krishna, Godavari (eg. near Rajamundry) which drain the Deccan plateau and in the Rajmahal traps. Anyway chief source of supply was from the Ratanpura mines of the state of Rajpipla in the Narmada Valley which has existed for over 2000 years.\textsuperscript{78} Hence would have been imported from Gujarat the Chief manufacturers of the Carnelian beads.

**Ornaments**

Ornaments are also been found to be associated with the dead in the Megalithic graves in order to portray the status of the dead and thus we do get many ornaments made out of Gold, Silver, Copper have been obtained from the excavations which reveals the high position which would have been held by the dead is understood. At Kodumanal beds, rings, spiral rings made of gold were recovered from the burials. One ring made of copper wire wrapped in a Gold foil was recovered from the grave and in one such case Gold beads were


placed below the skull portion. Apart from the literary evidences the archaeological evidences brings out the popularity and craftsmanship in gold ornaments.

At Kodumanal silver spiral bangles and spiral rings (lead) placed alternatively with Carnelian beads to form a necklace were recovered from an offering pit dug behind the main transepted cist. One more spiral bangle identical to the one above mentioned was also obtained. Like copper and Gold, Silver might have been important from other parts of India or from the Roman World. The Sangam literatures mention the Vēlirs habitation as the gold yielding places and 'Karur' is mentioned as 'PonnudaiMānagarKaruvur', these literary evidences along with the archaeological evidences proves that the Kongu Nādu was a prosperous place and the rulers were also were wealthy enough, the source for which might be mainly due to the trade and the craftsmanship of the goldsmiths is also evident. The goldsmiths were one of the affluent people in this region during this pre-historic period, this evidence can be further strengthened by the rock cut Jaina caves which were mainly donated by most of the gold merchants. The availability of these riches was also one of the reason for the three Vendars namely the Cheras, Cholas and the Pandyas to bring this region under their sway.

Jainism in Kongu Nādu

The influence of Jainism in Kongu Nādu can be seen in Kongu Nādu through the various settlements they made in Kongu Nādu.

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80 Puram : 5.
There were two kinds of monks among the Jains, the wandering monks and the settled monks. The general attitude of the Jains favoured a lonely mode of life, free from contact with the society around. The Uttaradhyāyanā states that the monks should stay in a deserted house, burial ground or under a tree in order to avoid all those faults which violate the spirit of monkhood. By living alone the monk is able to practise concentration and avoid quarrels, passions and anger, and is able to acquire a high standard of self-control. The canōnical teachings seem to have been observed till the second century of the Christian era. Among the two kinds of monks, the settled monks adopted the practices of the locality where they lived and were not worried by the inhibitions appearing in the old canonical literature.

With regard to the periodic cultural exchange between the Jains and the Megalithic people we could see the synchronisation with regard to their cultural practises. Starting from the stupas, the stupa was a kind of tumulus or sepulchre built to enshrine relics. Not only the Buddhists yet their rivals, the Jainas also built and worshipped stupas, and as testimony of their similarity we have the well known story of how king kanishka once found himself worshipping a Jain stupa in the mistaken belief that it was a Buddhist one. The stupa was a kind of sepulchre which had developed from what was called the 'primitive tumulus'. The plausibility of this hypothesis is

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81 Ramendranath Nandi, *Religious Institutions and cults in Deccan*, Delhi, 1973, p.65
reinforced by a detail of information given in the early archaeological reports. When Carlleyle excavated a mound at Lauriya-Nandangarh they penetrated the 'hollow chambers' or 'wells in the centres of ancient stupa mounds (which we now know to have once been occupied by wooden pillar - shafts), they came across fragments of corroded iron.\textsuperscript{84} Digging downwards from the top of the mound were found a few particles of Iron totally dissolved with corrosion.\textsuperscript{85} This supplements the view that both the burials and stupas were built with the same concept and with the influence of the pre-historic or the Megalithic burials the stupas were raised.

Identically many other aspects were taken in account for (eg) 1) the trade - where we could find the trade routes being the proliferation of many Megalithic burials and the Jaina rock cut cave or temples.\textsuperscript{86}

2) The stupa was a kind of sepulchre which had developed from what was called the 'primitive tumulus'.\textsuperscript{87}

3) The way the relics being placed in the pot and urn mostly as far as stupa and the Megalithic burial is concerned.

4) Nārd (Nārdus), yet another item of export which figures along with Malabathrum, seems to be a grass or leaf (lemon grass?) found in the chēra region. It was used to extract an oil, a fragrant one, for cosmetic purposes (cymbopogan Nārdus), and the Selucids are

\textsuperscript{84} Carlleyle. A.C.L., \textit{Report of operations during the season 1877-78,} Archaeological Survey reports, 22, 1885, p.40.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{87} Irwin. J. \textit{Op.cit.,}
believed to have attempted to naturalize it in their country.\textsuperscript{88} It was known to Pliny and the Periplus as the sweet-smelling oil of the Nard - the word probably derived from Narantam in Tamil. Here the point to be noted is the lemon grass which is widely spread in and around most of the Jain rock cut caves\textsuperscript{89} and especially in Kongu Nādu which is a mountaneous regions. The probabilities of Jaina abode in the hilly Kongu region was, in order to get these kind of rare products for export, or resorted to this particular trade and accidentally when it happened to grow around their residing areas, they started to export knowing its demand, One more notable thing is that the jains had a wide depth of knowledge in the field of medicine and hence to get the accessibility they selected the mountaneous regions, and the passes which served as their trade routes.

5) The next point of synchornisation between the Jains and the Megalithic builders were the symbols used by them, the swastika and the crescent with threedots (symbolising the triratnas - good sight, good knowledge and good disciplines) below and a single dot above the crescent (symbolising the Nirvana).\textsuperscript{90} We find these two symbols being commonly present among the Jains and the Megalithic builders.

6) The skeleton in Padmasana posture found in the Kodumanal excavations and the authentic way of yoga practised by the Jains are also found to be identical.\textsuperscript{91}

\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Ibid.},
7) The erection of Nisidis or post mortem memorial structures in honour of dead preceptors and the ritual worship of these structures are a kind of identical practise even followed by the Megalithic people. Among the Jainas the stupas or the caves are constructed to honour the dead who practised the 'Nisidi' and in Megalithic they erect the burials structure for the defied or the head. This brings out a baffled state of interpretation of whose influence got attracted by whom. Anyway the close affinity between the two religious traits are yet to be studied.

8) The Tamil Brahmi letters which is widely used in the Jaina beds are also found in the Pot sherds procured from the Megalithic burials.


10) The Southern influx of the Monk Visaka and the occurrence of the name ‘Visaka’ in the Jaina bed in Srilanka and the pot Sherd bearing the name ‘Visaka’ was found in the burials.

11) The Nature of the adaptability and the accustomisation of both the Jains and the Megalithic builders.

12) The Trade being their chief occupation among the Jains and the Megalithic builders.

According to the epigraphical and the literary evidences we come to know that king Chandragupta along with the Jaina monk Badrabahu came down to the South to Sravanabelagola to spread Jainism and from there the monk Visaka further drew himself to the
down South to spread Jainism to the entire Southern India.\textsuperscript{92} Thus Visaka came to the Kongu Nādu and other parts along with a group of monks who belonged the Maurya dynasty in Megadha, this may also be adduced by the 'Moriyar gudda' found in Hirebenkal Karnataka which mentions about the war between the Moriyars and the Kosar of Kongu.\textsuperscript{93} This brings out a feeble evidence about the link between the Jains and the Megalithic people of Kongu, which basically are of Oral traditions in nature. Anyway the interpretations goes on and on unless, until we get an authentic evidence to add upon to the above mention synchronisations between the Jains and the Megalithic builders.

**The customs and Practices**

The 'Kuthu' is the form of ritual practise followed by the primitive people, for which we get the reference both through the rock paintings and also through the literary evidences. According to Rajan Gurukkal the rock paintings belong to different cultures from the Mesolithic to the early Iron age\textsuperscript{94} and as per his statement we also could find the rock painting found in Kongu Nādu. In these paintings we find the way they conduct the group dances in the midst of fire, hence fire was supposed to bring fecundity and health according to these primitive people. This group dances at times may also be associated with the animals, this makes us to understand in either ways such as to depict the animal which was placed for the sacrifice or to symbolise the close associates of them. According to the Sangam literatures we find the 'Kuravaikuttu', the ritual dance of the primitive

people, which was performed after a bull-fight in which both men and women participated. The line 'kuravaitaliya Marapuli pātu' is explained as 'embracing in Kuravai and singing traditional songs'. In these songs the maidens, mentioned the custom of choosing the courageous as their husband, men who confronted and killed the bulls in bull fight. The dance was performed in the manram which was strewn with manure, the manram possibly refers to cattle-pen in this context, also gives details about the 'āychiyar kuravai' performed in a place, strewn with manure. Here we need to make a mention about the importance given to the manure, Acc. to Allchin's with regard to ashmounds at certain seasons of the year, the cattle were herded at the settlements, most probably during and after monsoon, when the grassland was plentiful. Then as the winter advanced and grazing became scarce the great majority of the cattle would be driven away to a forest grazing station. In such forest areas, cattle would be herded into the pens from dawn to dusk in which a portion was used by the herders also. The cattle would leave their droppings in the forest, which were allowed to accumulated and have accumulated dung was burnt during the end of the seasonal campings, giving rise to some cattle rites also. Since fire is supposed to bring fecundity and health, both men and cattle passed through the fire. This shows the survivals of the cattle rites of Neolithism. This shows the continuous inhabitation of the people in Kongu Nādu right from the Neolithism.

96 Silappadikaram, 17:28.
We also get reference about an interesting instance in the Sangam Literature about an impoverished Chieftain of Vanpulam (mostly found in Kongu Nādu) calling his blacksmith and asking him for help. We have clear references to the poverty of the Chieftains and landowners of the non-agrarian regions. Instances of giving away even the small quantity of millet reserved for sowing, a stock expression of poets for extolling the munificence of chieftains, interestingly occur only in poems praising the chieftains of Vanpulam.\textsuperscript{98} According to this source we get reference about the shifting of occupation by the people according to the seasonal changes and hence it can be ascertained that the people of the ‘pālai’ (a transitional, seasonal land division in Kongu Nādu) were not basically Kallars, but when the season destinates their non-agrarian activities, they take up the job of Kallars (thieves), the plunder - raids being done by the Chieftains and the plunder of the treasures held by the merchants on the way was done by these local inhabitants who were not basically Kallars. Hence as how the region 'pālai' was transitional the social group of 'Kallars' were also transitional and the customs and practices also varied according to the different ecozones.

The plunder - raids being fundamental to the maintenance of contemporary economy, all ideas and institutions in the broad superstructure helped the plunder-based redistribution function effectively. The beliefs such as 'cattle raid begets the Chieftain, martyrs join damsels in heaven, plunder as a traditional inspiration of the Kongu people, martial bravery of the sons as a passionate aspirations of mothers, cowardice as ignominious, and the like glorify

\textsuperscript{98} \textit{Puram}, 127, 327, 328, 329, 300 and 331-3.
riads and involvement in plunders. Their totems, musical instruments, ritual dances and songs were all magical and symbolic, capable of stimulating active involvement in cattle raids. Their ethics justified raids and plunders. How institutionalized the battle was is clear from the descriptions of Vetci (cattle raid), Karantai (cattle recovering battle), Vanji (chieftains attack of a territory), Kānji (defending battle) and tumpai (getting ready for battle) in Purananuru. Martial rejoicing was the chief amusement as we find in customs like Vākai (the enthusiastic killing of enemies with clamour) Untattu (social dining and drinking before and after wars) peruncorruvilavu (the grand feast) and cirucorruvilavu (small rice feast). In short the ethos of war dominated and moulded contemporary socio-political ideals and institutions of the early Iron age in Kongu Nādu.

Similarly Iron implements found in the graves are suited as instruments of aggression rather than defence, the so called ploughshare being identified as pick-axe. Besides a nomadic pastoralist society does not rule out an agricultural component within it. While accepting Leshnik's argument for the presence of pastoral nomadism in the Megalithic culture, it is also felt agriculturists formed equally important element, the two groups being tied together in a symbiotic relation.

The general similarity of Iron implements found at Megalithic sites in Kongu Nādu suggest a single technological tradition which

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99 George.L., Hart III has referred to the Magical element in their musical instruments, which were infected with the sacred called anaku; see his article in stein (ed), ‘Ancient Tamil Literature’: its scholarly past and Future, p.44.

was perhaps carried on by itinerant groups of blacksmiths. A similar case can be made out for groups specializing in Gold working, bead making and pottery making. The last perhaps falls in a different category as a certain amount of pottery is likely to have been locally made.

Right through to recent times wandering occupational tribes in India have been a compliment to settled agriculturists. This nomadism is unlike the dependence is not so much on animals and their movements are guided by the needs of trade rather than by the needs of for the animals reared. Thus a position of interdependence may be postulated for the Megalithic period and this would help to explain the concentration of sites in areas of varied mineral resources like the Kongu Nādu.

The Initiation ceremony

The initiation ceremony is a practice followed by the tribes through which they admit their male inside the community after a specific age. This may also be known through the literary and archaeological evidences. First seeking through the literary evidence 'Puntodai Vilavu'\textsuperscript{101} a scar being made on the thigh of a man so that after getting a scar he is said to have been admitted into his community. A similar context can be seen through the archaeological evidence, where in we get a male skeleton from the place known as 'Kovalan pottil' in a Megalithic grave where the male is said to have undergone this initiation ceremony.\textsuperscript{102} Though this place doesn't come

\textsuperscript{101} Aham, 187.
under the Kongu region, this shows the tribal practise which would have been in a common usage among the tribes in all the parts of our country. Thus Kongu Nādu which was a tribal area would have practised this initiation ceremony during the Megalithic period.

The Mathematical and Astronomical knowledge of the Megalithic Builders

Recently few Indian scholars have attempted to interpret Indian Megalithic in astronomical angle and various kinds of burials have been dealt with various mathematical and astronomical aspects, for (eg) in the circular form of stone arrangements, the concentric circles are divided into four equal sectors and the stone slabs are placed at 90° angles. The concentric row encircling a square is significant, as it resembles rough mode of simple 'Sri-Chakra'. It is evident that the Indian Megalithic builders had some specific plan for their construction, the ground plan has been as simple as circle, In Celestial view, the movement of Sun, Moon and other visible planets, certain asterism are noted and recorded and apart from all these their mathematical knowledge is evident, as without counting, the arrangement could not have been possible. The arrangement of Megaliths in a geometric pattern as noted has been intentionally produced by the Megalithic men and they must have used Megaliths as Sun-dials also.\(^\text{103}\) The signs, symbols or graffiti on the pottery profusely certain many geometrical figures of all sizes, shapes and

combinations. As they were done manually in specific cases, it is evident that they had marked such geometrical figures purposely in mathematical aspect and not for any other purpose, because of the attempts made by them are recorded on the pottery. Periodical rites, rituals and ceremonies mark summer and winter solstices. The usage of flowers, fruits, herbs, leaves of different trees, plants, grains, seeds etc. in such rites, rituals and ceremonies have been seasonal marking yearly divisions. Even day and night time-reckoning has been associated with day activities systematized and conditioned with Samaskaras. In short, everything has been in consistent with nature and thus amply reflected in the Indian literature.

Religion

As far as religion is concerned the Megalithic excavations reveal the Mother goddess worship and the Sun worship as the predominant features of cult. We could see the worship of Sun throughout India, but during the Megalithic period we find the petrographs in Kizhvalai where a man is found to be praying to the Sun depicted with Seventeen strokes, the period for which belongs to 1500 BCE to 500 BCE. Besides this we also find the symbols of sun being discovered from the Kodumanal excavations in the punched marked coins. These evidences reveal that the Megalithic people used this symbols in their day to day transactions and augmenting to this we find the literary evidences of the sun worship in TamilNādu like,

'Munneer Naapan Niyayiru Polavurm'\textsuperscript{107}

and,

'Mānizhar Pata Marampayi lirubin
Niyayiru Therā A Maga Nanainthalaith'\textsuperscript{108}

Thus the sun worship has been mentioned in these Sangam Works apart from this there are references in Ahananuru, Silappadikaram etc.

\textbf{Education}

The earliest satisfactorily deciphered script in India is the Brahmi script. Though it was first recognised in coins, the decipherment of Asokhan edicts made it popular and on account of this it came to be known as Asokan Brahmi. A new variant of Brahmi script was discovered in the South at Bhattiprolu in Andhra Pradesh and was known as Southern Brahmi.\textsuperscript{109} Again a new variant of Brahmi script came down after the discovery of rock shelter inscriptions at Mangulam near Melur in Madurai district of TamilNādu by Robert Sewell in 1882. The successful decipherment of these inscriptions in

\textsuperscript{107} \textit{Madurai Kanji}, 768.
\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Malaipadukadaam}, 271-72.
1924 by K.V.Subrahmanya Aiyer provided a new insight on the variant of Brahmi script.\textsuperscript{110}

The ancient Jaina and Buddhist texts like Pannavanna sutta and Laliltavistara listed sixty four and eighteen scripts respectively that were in practice at the time of the composition of these literary works, Damili was one among them. Scholars like R. Nagasamy, M.D.Sampath and Natana Kasinathan insist that Tamil - Brahmi should be called as Damili. The three earliest Tamil-Brahmi inscribed memorial stones were recovered in Pulimankombai.\textsuperscript{111} However, the recent evidences observed at Kodumanal, Porunthal, Pulimānkōmbai and Thathappatti in TamilNādu and at Anurādhapura in Sri Lanka shed some light on the Chronology of the script. The three radiometric dates of Porunthal and Kodumanal have further accelerated the debate on the origin and spread of this script.

Porunthal a tiny village, is situated on the left bank of the river Porunthilaru at the foot hill on the western ghat about 12 km southwest Palani. The excavation in this site on 2010 yielded an interesting piece of evidence, the red polished ware ring stand engraved with Tamil Brahmi script reading 'Va-y-ra'. This script is found in association with a graffiti mark. Next in Kodumanal the more common graffiti marks are sun, swastika, star, ladder, nandipada, fish, bow and arrow, wheel, cart etc. Nearly 204 Tamil- Brahmi inscribed

\textsuperscript{110} Subrahmanya Aiyer. K.V., ‘The Earliest Monuments of the Pandya country and their Inscriptions’, In proceedings and Transactions of the Third All- India Oriental Conference, 1924.

potsherds in six seasons of excavations have been recovered.\footnote{Subbarayalu. Y., ‘Pottery Inscriptions of Tamilnadu’, A report submitted to the Central institute of Indian Languages, centre of excellence of classical Tamil, Chennai, 2008.} The recent excavations conducted in May 2012 yielded about 130 inscribed potsherds. Thus in less than 1% area, they could collect more than 300 inscribed potsherds. This quantified assessment is provided just to understand the enormity of the situation as well as the level of literacy.

According to Rajan.K “For the first time, an AMS date (Acceleration Mass Spetrometry) is obtained for a grave that is associated with Brahmi script. Now the date of Brahmi script can be pushed back two hundred years earlier to Asoka. Thus the AMS date obtained for the Paddy grains from the Porunthal site has the following implications.

(1) The Brahmi writing system in India can be pushed back to 5 BCE.

(2) The intensive paddy cultivation goes back to 5 B.C.E.


These dates of 490 BCE (Cal. 520 BCE), 450 BCE (Cal. 410 BCE) and 330 BCE (Cal. 380 BCE) assigned to Damili (Tamil - Brahmi) script clearly urge us to have a relook on the introduction of Damili (Tamil-Brahmi) script in TamilNādu and finally the origin of
Brahmi writing system in India. Thus the abundant availability of Brahmi script inscribed potsherds in the Megalithic burial shows that some sort of literacy prevailed in Kongu Nādu during the Megalithic period.

**Games and Amusements**

Hunting was the ancient occupation in TamilNādu and later when agriculture took its swing, hunting which was a also parallel an equal occupation was considered also as an amusement and was undertaken during the festive occasions. This kind of changing hunting taking its shape as an amusement can be seen through the rock paintings found in Kizhvalai, Mallappadi etc in TamilNādu and in Kongu Nādu in Vettaikkaran Malai we find these paintings.

Next from the excavations in Porunthal near the palani hills we get the terracotta dice, which vividly portrays the practise of playing dice which was one among their games and amusements during the Megalithic period. This was the standard game which was played both by the old and the young people. The word 'Thayam' (snake and ladder) means 'Urimai' (right), hence from the meaning of the word we may come to know that this game was also played to enrich and stablise their rights as far as political tussle is concerned. This can also be adduced by the story of Mahabharata, wherein Pandavas were sent to exile for 14 years after they lost in this particular game with the Kauravas. This shows the significance being vested on this game.

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114 Ibid.
Finally we have the hip hop being discovered from the Kodumanal excavations which gives a retrospective view of its use as a game played by the children during the Megalithic period. The scholars consider this as a game known as 'pāndi' being played by the girls, this has been procured in terracotta, stones etc in various shapes and hence this might be the 'Vallāttam' played during the Sangam age and this is proved by the song.

'............... Mandrathu
Narai Mathalar Adhir Thalaiyirakkik
Kavai Manathu Irunthumvallu Vanappu Azhiya' 118

Through this song, we come to know that this game was played by the elderly people and they were the ones who expertise in this particular game.

Thus through these artefacts we can read the games and amusements that was in practise among the Megalithic people in Kongu Nādu and apart from this, the games and the amusements of these people brings out their social encrustations through the external influences.

Shell bangles

The shell bangles which were procured from the Kodumanal excavations and various other excavations in Kongu Nādu symbolises the status of the dead and this was also considered as one of the 'prestigious article' for (eg) the song from Nedunelvādai mentions

118 Aham, 377.
how the queen of a pandya king was wearing the shell bangles along with the gold bangles as,

'Polakkodi Thinra Mayirvarmunkai
Valampuri Valaiyodu Kadigai Nul Yathu'\textsuperscript{119}

The people of the Megalithic period in Kongu Nādu considered these shell bangles which comes, from different geographical zone as a precious one and they had the knowledge of the presence of Calcium in these shell bangles and believed that by cooking the food and water from the hand wearing shell bangles entails good health.

\textsuperscript{119} Nedunelvādai, 142-143.