Kongu Nādu one of the most striking trading centres right from the ancient times, with a wide diffusion of the megalithic sites are focussed in this study. Although there are several books on the history of Kongu and of the Megalithic burials, there is still need for a study on the ideas, Concepts and the theories in this field. A spatial combined with the cultural formative period has been discussed in an Anthropological, comparative and interpretative methods.

Region the geographical location of the Kongu region by itself attracts the settlements through its potentiality, its rich mineral resources, and since it was a low rainfall area which was relatively easier to traverse than the forested regions further East and formed a corridor linking the Northern part of the sub-continent to the Southern as early as the Chalcolithic period. This may be evinced through the artefacts procured from the Thandikudi excavations which unveiled both the stages of the Chalcolithic and the Megalithic periods. It was about this time that the first agricultural settlements developed. These early agricultural communities could, however, neither expand spatially nor demographically on account of several restraining factors.

In the first place, the rivers of the Western Deccan do not flow in Valleys of their own erosion, but occupy fault planes or rifts in the Plateau. Hence no extensive alluvial plains are available along their banks for agricultural exploitation.

Secondly, the fertile black soil is restricted to relatively small pockets, and coupled with this is the uncertain rainfall with the middle
stretches of the river valleys lying in an arid zone. Under these circumstances agricultural expansion would be slow and would have to be restricted to certain fertile pockets, as in the case of Kongu Nādu.

The Surface features and the Sub-surface features have been discussed in order to exhibit their cultural traits and the trajectories which ultimately paves the way for the study of the complexity in the social set up. The Various sub-systems which brought about the emergence of the Megaliths have also been discussed, the Religious, Social, Economical, Environmental, Geological and the Technological subsystems which paved the way for the emergence of this particular ‘subsistent’ groups who also were ‘itinerant traders’ together formed a Megalithic Complex as a whole.

The origin of the Burials may be dated back to the Neolithic and Chalcolithic phases, but the emerged Megaliths were the influences of the animistic concepts. The concept of Animism clearly potrays the way in which the souls have been given a concrete manifestation due to various psychological factors. This has been discussed in the psychological subsystem.

The Anatomical features and the Anthropometric analysis potrays the existence of the “proto-Australoid” races from the burials of the Kodumanal excavations. Apart from this the posture of the skeleton placed in the burial (padmāsana) alludes the fact that they basically belonged to the artisan group and the general features of the burial artefacts unveils, that they were ‘Elite’ in nature. Further the configuration, placement of the burials, the Port-holes and it direction
signifies the ideological context. The tribal system which existed among the Megalithic people were mainly of lineage societies and in such kind of a tribal system authority cannot be enforced but is dependent on the good will of members of the tribe and on traditional ties. In the absence of coercive powers traditional bonds can only be established and maintained by gift-giving and the redistributive mechanism. The redistributive network also functions as an inbuilt control system inhibiting the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few.

The Megalithic people of Kongu Nādu with their control on the sources of iron were best suited to attain a dominant position. Iron tools could be used to clear forests and to expand various other industrial complexes. Thus the prosperity ushered in by trade and the need to control trade routes is apparent in the choice of the sites by the Velirs. The presence of the “primitive Valuables” reveals their trading activities and the status symbols those accompanied the burials brings out another important distinction, the way in which a socially “inferior” group attempted to adopt the life-style of a socially “Superior” group for better acceptance.

The Rock paintings have also been discussed inorder to bring out the antiquity and magico-religious activities, and apart from all these the social aspects of the Megalithic people.

The Social conditions during the Megalithic period in Kongu Nādu was mainly based on the economic move made by the population and the artefacts obtained were segregated on three broad divisions as Technomic, ideo technomic and socio-technomic so as to
confine the variegated artefacts within a particular niche. The Technomic artefacts projects the technological developments made by the megalithic people. The ideo- technomic were the ideologically placed artefacts and this type of artefacts dominate the Megalithic burials, since in the primitive stages of their Urbanisation, the people mainly gave significance to these kind of rituals and practices. This obviously was the outcome of their psychological and otherwise known as the ‘Stimulus Diffusion’ where, the like people having like feelings merge together to form a social group. Such Kind of groupism was mainly found among these Megalithic builders in Kongu Nādu.

The Socio-technomic artefacts signifies the artefacts those symbolise the status, rank etc. As such the ‘Primitive Valuables’ were focussed in this particular division, wherein the horse bits, Carnelian beads, semi precious stones, and the paddy obtained from the Porunthal excavations are considered as ‘Primitive valuables’ by some scholars hence there were no instances of rice cultivation in the Kongu region and the so far conducted Pollen analysis portrayed only the existence of millets, wild lady’s finger etc., so it comes under the Socio-technomic artefacts. The ‘Primitive valuables’ were kept among the socially ranked persons inorder to exhibit their rank or the elite nature. The Velirs were the people who controlled the entire trade during the Megalithic period and thus held their sway along the trading centres. The Velirs controlled all the potential areas which yielded the raw materials for the production of the crafts which was one of the main occupation of the people in Kongu region. Thus the
social stratification among the people were horizontal in nature depending upon the economic activities of the people.

Another major component that dominated the Megalithic society was the religion. This is nothing but ‘the structure of mutually adjusted beliefs relating to the supernatural, as expressed in a body of doctrine and a sequence of rituals which together interpret the environment to the society in terms of its own percepta’. The religious concepts in the broadest sense, play an active part in constraining the activities of individuals in the most societies the religious rituals provide a further communication system redundantly reinforcing the channels for passing religious information in the coded form of celebrations, feasts, dances, games and ceremonies of all kinds. The artefacts from the Excavations in Kongu Nādu especially the Kodumanal excavations exhibits certain religious attributes, which in a wider aspect also the society to a greater extent.

The Significance laid on the Black and Red ware, a unique cultural entity found as a “Stimulus diffusion” is found among the Megalithic folks. The incidental way of the making the Black and Red ware potteries and the symbolic representation of the ‘Black’ representing the ‘womb’ and the ‘red’ symbolizing the blood (life giving nature). The Megaliths in Various countries apart from the Black and Red ware potteries makes it a part and parcel of their burial ritual.

The Origin has many hypothetical and controversial statements portrayed by various scholars since the Megalithic cultural complex was basically an intercommunicating network of attributes or entities
forming a complex whole. An ensemble of attributes, consisting of Monothetic and in marginal aspects consisting of Polythetic entities in it. Apart from the archaeological evidences, the Sangam anthologies portrays the Sangam society and about the Mullai and Kurinji tracts and the society and the kin based society that existed, which also parallely coinciding with the Megalithic cult. The Velirs were the people who dominated the lineage system in the Kongu Nādu during the Megalithic period and had a threshold over the resource studded and Potential areas and this was also considered as the reason for segregating the eco-zones as the Kurinji, Mullai, Marutam, Neithal and as Pālai. There also existed various micro and macro zones during the megalithic period in the Kongu Nādu. The macro zones were controlled by the Velirs and the chieftains (who were also considered to have been ruling a lineage system ) whereas the micro zones were controlled by various chief of their respective clans. In Kongu Nādu the main trading routes were controlled by the Velirs, Podhini is a place which connects the trade routes between the Palghat pass and Madurai and the places like Ānaimalai, North Bōdinatham, C.Kalaily såmuthur etc. which yielded many Roman coins and these places were under the sway of the Velirs. Apart from the Velirs, the Kilars, Kosars, Kuravars, Kongars and Eyinars, took part in the social reticulum that existed in the Konga Nādu.

In dealing the social concepts of the Kongu Nādu, there are high standard of similarities that were prevailing among the Jains and the Megalithic builders in Kongu Nādu.
1. The ‘primitive Tumulus’ and the Stupa

2. The trading activities undertook by both the Jains and Megalithic Folk.

3. The Brahmi Script found both in the Jain caves and pot sherds procured from the burials.

4. The names found in the burials and the Jaina caves

5. The ‘Padmasana’ posture of a burial from the Kodumanal excavations

6. The name “Pāndava” being oriented with both Jains and the Megalithic burials etc.

The diffusion of the Megalithic people in Konga Nādu were both of Primary and Secondary in nature. The early period of the Megalithic builder being Primary, later due to the influence of various Techno-cultural matrix drifted to the pattern of the ‘Secondary diffusion’, wherein, the process by which cultural elements spread beyond the limits of the culture area of origin.

The Economic conditions of the Megalithic people in kongu Nadu were broadly divided into (1) Agriculture (2) Pastoralism (3) Trade. The Agriculture was mainly based on the “Hoe culture”. This culture was associated with the hand-cultivation of small fields or plots, the work being done by women, with the mixed planting of different crops in the same plot, with an emphasis on Roots and Tubers, although not to the exclusion of grains and with the abandonment of plots when their fertility was exhausted.”Hoe culture
being regarded as ancestral to agriculture” was practised in the Kongu region which was an arid zone and the hoes obtained from the excavations and most of the Megalithic sites located near the river beds than the coastal regions, adduces the fact that they practised “Hoe culture” with the internal trade as their main focus.

The Pastoralism, which was regarded as the main economy that prevailed during the Megalithic period in the Kongu region were highly specialized “Parasite” strategists, but this may not always have been the case. The marginal and in most cases increasingly arid attitudes and territories were slowly penetrated at the expense of a slow repatterning of the economic strategy. Eventually, in order better to exploit the vast areas of thinly grassed land a more fully mobile socio cultural system was developed. The kongars and the Eyinars were the main pastoralists found in the kongu region during the megalithic period.

Kongu Nādu being a main trading centre and the routes passed through this connecting the Palghat gap indulged in the Long distance trade which obviously influenced in the growth of urban centres in another way. It produced expensive and was also specialized items of consumption and was also a transit zone. We could get many references about the trade of expensive and specialized items from the Kongu Nādu from the “Arthasāstra” - “Vaidurya” (Beryls) in ‘Mahabhararta’, Plinys “Natural History and from the” Periplus of Erythrean sea”. The Roman artifacts unearthed from the archaeological excavations at Kodumanal, Perūr, Vellalūr, Nāttukkalpālayam, Chettiipālayam, Sūlūr, kaniyāmpūndi etc. provide the extent of the trade observed during the first two centuries.
The excavations revealed the existence of the various industries, such as the Iron and steel Industry, Copper, Gold, Pottery and the Bead Industry. The people excelled in the Bead making technology. Apart from this they inherited the knowledge of quarrying and lifting huge boulders and slabs. They had the knowledge of building large sized cist/dolmens and erection of huge monolithic pillars those present in Kodumanal, Gobichettipālayam, Mallachandram, Kilsippuli and Tirumalvādi. They also acquired the knowledge of irrigation, working on the shells etc. Thus the Megalithic culture formed a unique entity representing its socio-cultural, religious, economic and ritual aspects during the pre-historic and the early historic periods.