

Unearthing Tamil Nadu's Glorious Past: Archaeological Excavations and Historical Discoveries

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Abstract:- Archaeology plays a crucial role in unraveling the story of mankind's past through the examination of material remains. In the case of Tamil Nadu, a state in southern India, this discipline has been instrumental in understanding the region's long history and rich cultural heritage dating back thousands of years. Archaeological excavations have shifted from mere treasure hunts to systematic searches for valuable information and answers to specific questions about ancient societies. This article celebrates the efforts of archaeologists, historians, and the government in preserving and promoting Tamil Nadu's unique cultural heritage. By exploring historical sites and interpreting artifacts, Tamil Nadu's excavations continue to captivate the world, shedding light on its past and enriching our understanding of human civilization. This detailed research, titled "Unearthing Tamil Nadu's Glorious Past: Archaeological Excavations and Historical Discoveries," explores the significance and effects of these excavations, emphasizing their contributions to tourism and the preservation of the region's historical legacy.

I. INTRODUCTION

The evidence of past civilizations and cultures that have left their mark on the terrain, Tamil Nadu has a vast and glorious history that dates back thousands of years. In order to uncover the past and throw light on the many stages of human settlement and cultural history, archaeological excavations have been conducted in this area. Settlements from the Paleolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic, and Iron Age were discovered during the excavations that were conducted at the respective locations. Though the history of Tamil Nadu may be traced back to the prehistoric era thanks to the accidental discovery of stone implements, it was the careful and methodical excavation in numerous sites by various authorities that lifted the veil for comprehending the past. The department conducts excavations at historically significant locations that have been located with the aid of archeological sources. The majority of people have some interest in the past and are constantly interested in the legacy that their forebears have left

behind. In order to understand culture, know history, protect heritage, and promote tourism, archaeology deals with the past of man as told by his material remains. The classification and interpretation of ancient society artifacts in light of human evolution is the responsibility of archaeologists.

II. BACKGROUND HISTORY OF TAMIL NADU

The state of Tamil Nadu is well known for making important contributions to literature, art, commerce, and architecture. Numerous dynasties have left their mark on the area, each adding to the rich fabric of its historical legacy, starting with the Indus Valley civilization and continuing with the Cholas, Pandyas, and Cheras. The historical view of Tamil Nadu has been drastically altered by the archaeological investigations that have been conducted in the excavation area over the past 50 years. The reasonably complete information gathered from the excavations attested to the existence of the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Iron Age cultures, illuminating a number of facets of contemporary human life during this time. The chronological period of the locations is now significantly more accurate than was previously known thanks to the published scientific study reports that have become available in recent years. As a result of public curiosity, scientific inquiry methods, and a fresh knowledge of the dynamics of culture, the tale behind these archaeological discoveries is undoubtedly quite intriguing.

III. THE PALEOLITHIC CULTURE

The collection of animal footprints, the first of their sort to be recorded in South Asia, was a very intriguing find. These include a collection of 17 round impressions, a set of hood-prints, and three fossilized teeth, including an upper molar from a water buffalo, a lower molar from a horse, and a left lower molar from a nilgai. Attirampakkam, Vadamadurai, and Gudiyam are some of the significant prehistoric sites that were excavated and supported the discovery at the Kortallayar basin. The Attirampakkam excavations uncovered the Paleolithic Culture, which defined the type of hominid activity

at the site in the context of the surrounding environment and the age of the assemblages. In beds of clay that had been laminated, thousands of tools of Lower Paleolithic Acheulian hominids were discovered, suggesting a probable lagoon or swampy environment close to the Paleo-Kortallayar River basin.

IV. MESOLITHIC PERIOD

This culture made great use of fishing equipment made of Microlithic stone. The excavations at Mangudi, Triuthangal, Thiruneveli, T.Kallupatti, Mayiladumaparai, Dailamalai, Togarapalli, Mullikadu, and Kovalanpottal yielded a number of microlithic implements. The significant discovery in the Mangudi excavations was the presence of microliths in the stratified layers. The megalithic cultural phase was followed by a sterile layer. The microliths were discovered beneath this sterile layer. These discoveries undoubtedly established the existence of the microlithic culture in Tamil Nadu within the context of cultural chronology.

➤ *The Neolithic period*

When studying Tamil Nadu's prehistoric era, people and their towns are equally remarkable. But fewer studies of late ancient relics, such as enigmatic monuments from the Neolithic and Iron Age periods, were conducted in South India. The discovery of numerous sorts of stone tools in Tamil Nadu's Dharmapuri, Vellore, and Tiruvannamalai regions is particularly noteworthy. This factor has to be the focus of more research in order to address Tamil Nadu's Neolithic issue. The megaliths, which can be seen all throughout the South Indian peninsula, appear to have been built for the purpose of interring the deceased. Up until recently, the majority of South Indian prehistoric archaeology concentrated on description and chronological reconstruction. Further research on this period's migration patterns and cultural characteristics will require a great deal of interpretation. The Paiyampalli excavation's pit home revealed a distinctive aspect of Neolithic and Megalithic societies. The dig also revealed some changes in the way that people lived, such as the adoption of a method for making ground and polished stone axes and the mixing of microlithic tools with Neolithic society. (Paranthaman, S., Saravanakumar, A., & Murugan, 2020) The Microlithic, Neolithic, and Iron Age prehistoric stages were discovered during the excavation at Mayiladumaparai. The discovery of iron age tools, black and red ware potsherds, and handmade red ware pot shreds coupled with Neolithic stone tools demonstrate that the transition from Neolithic to Megalithic culture took place in the area. Large numbers of polished stone artifacts and other stone artefacts, as well as sherds of grey, brown, and tan clay pots, are found in Tamil Nadu, where the Neolithic civilisation is dated to 3000 BC.

Iron Age Culture: The use of iron, which was more readily available than copper and bronze and was tougher and less expensive, was a significant phenomenon of the Iron Age

of the Megalithic period. Iron tools and tools contributed to the development of agriculture, which in turn helped civilizations grow. The general phenomena of this era include the development of writing systems and languages, which served as the foundation for all modern literature and languages, the advancement of art and architecture, the establishment of vast empires and the growth of towns and cities, the emergence of a wealthy and powerful middle class, and mass human migration. Social inequality started to exist to some level during this time period, and it later evolved into a negative force in our current society. Excavations in Sanur, Amirthamangalam, Kodumanal, Adichanallur, and Mallappadi have revealed the existence of Iron Age settlements and associated cultural characteristics in Tamil Nadu.

➤ *Historical Era*

The historical era and the classical Sangam Period are regarded as one in Tamil Nadu. The literature of Sangam captures the first glorious age in the history of the Tamil homeland. (Paranthaman, S., and AR Saravanakumar. 2020. The archaeological evidence supports the suggestion that a Roman workshop existed in the first century and supports the time period given for the Sangam age. Studying the ancient Roman society and the economic relations between Tamil Nadu and Rome were made possible by the discovery of Roman pottery at Arikamedu. According to their feature and utilitarian importance, the majority of ancient Roman ceramics fall into three broad categories. The import and export of wine, olive oil, and quam were the primary uses of the original clay amphorae. The appearance, form, shape, quality, texture, and color of the clay as well as the ornamentation, which has regional variations, are used to judge the unstamped postsherds. In the excavations at Arikamedu and Alagankulam, several potsherds marked with Arretine and the African Red Slip were discovered. The East coast had a Roman commercial center, which was made clear by the antiquities found in Alagankulam. Tiny glass beads in shades of dark blue, dull red, and a few other colors that were discovered in profusion at Arikamedu are further significant artifacts that demonstrate the link between India and the rest of Asia. These beads are comparable to those discovered in Thailand and Korea, where 10,000 of them were discovered in a king's tomb from the year 523 CE. Along the coasts of East Africa, South East Asia, the Philippines, Indonesian Islands, and Japan, similar beads were also discovered. At light of this, it is reasonable to believe that items were produced at Arikamedu and shipped elsewhere. For the first time, a few fragments of Northern Black Polished ware dating to the third to fourth century BC were discovered during the dig at Korkai. Another significant discovery from the excavation at Vasavasamudram was the neck section of an amphora of Mediterranean origin with handles on either side. The ancient people's structural endeavors and their engineering prowess shown that they were great builders of water reservoirs, wharves, and the basement of Buddha Viharas. Numerous inscribed potsherds were found during the excavations at

Uraiyur, Tirukkampuliyur, and Alagarai, demonstrating the widespread use of writing by all social strata.

➤ *Medieval Period*

When the Mahajanapadas attained fame, cities and urbanization predominantly developed in the Ganga Plains. This was eventually imitated in other areas, such as South India and the Deccan. Along with trade, the rise of powerful political regimes and the diffusion of faiths all contributed to the construction of cities. As a result, Buddhism and Jainism have an impact on this. Urban centers did not form immediately; their expansion and trade thrived and persisted far into the fifth and sixth centuries and well into the second millennium. As urban centers, temple cities such as Thanjavur, Madurai, Kanchipuram, and Srirangam persisted.

➤ *Modern Era*

A plethora of written materials, including Chronicles, Annuals, and Official materials of British, French, Portuguese, Dutch, Danish, and Others who came to India for Trade and Occupation, are Available for the Study of Modern Period. The structural activity was revealed during the excavations at Gingee, Tranquebar (Taragampadi), and Panchalankurichi, which helped us understand the design of the citadel and fortification wall, among other things. Additionally, the antiquities discovered during these digs, such as Chinese porcelain pot fragments, glass bottles, stone ball cannons, and other artifacts, shed light on the daily activities and warfare of the time. (Radha, R., I. Sivakumar, and A. Saravanakumar, 2022). Our knowledge of prehistoric Tamil Nadu and the larger cultural history of the Indian subcontinent has greatly improved as a result of the Keeladi digs.

V. CONCLUSION

The archaeological excavations conducted in Tamil Nadu have been of immense significance in unraveling the mysteries of ancient Indian history. Through these excavations, we have been exposed to the vibrant urban centers that once thrived in this region, the extensive trade networks that linked it to far-off lands, and the remarkable cultural accomplishments of past civilizations. Notably, these excavations have not only affirmed existing historical narratives but also presented opportunities to challenge and refine them. By shedding light on lesser-known periods of Tamil Nadu's past, they have expanded our understanding of the region's historical evolution. The value of conducting archaeological excavations in Tamil Nadu's historical sites becomes evident as researchers dig through layers of soil and uncover fascinating artifacts. These remnants offer valuable insights into the lifestyles, cultural customs, and technological advancements of the ancient inhabitants, allowing historians and archaeologists to reconstruct a more precise and comprehensive understanding of the area's past. In essence, the excavations in Tamil Nadu have played a pivotal role in unearthing the richness of the region's history and providing a deeper understanding of the lives and cultures of its ancient peoples. As a crucial area of

study, they continue to captivate academics and enthusiasts alike, contributing significantly to our grasp of human legacy and the broader tapestry of world history. The exploration of Tamil Nadu's archaeological heritage remains an ongoing endeavor that enriches our appreciation of the past and its connection to the present.

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