
Iron Age in Krishnagiri District, Tamil Nadu: A Study

S. Paranthaman¹

¹. Department Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Madras, Chepauk, Chennai – 600 005, Tamil Nadu, India (Email: paranthaman26@gmail.com)

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Abstract: *Iron Age in Tamil Nadu succeeds Neolithic culture, where Black-and-Red ware became the most significant pottery type. In Tamil Nadu, Megalithic culture is considered and used as synonyms for Iron Age. The Iron Age in India mainly during first millennium BCE was a period when the social transformation towards the formation of urban society and states occurred. Since the first discovery of Megalithic burials by Babington in 1823 at Malabar in north Kerala, many scholars took interest and many Megalithic burial sites were discovered and excavated. The Megalithic culture represents a widespread phenomenon and its geographical significance and chronology varies from place to place.*

Keywords: Iron Age, Megaliths, Raw Material, Ceramics, Burials, Krishnagiri, Tamil Nadu

Introduction

The present study area, Krishnagiri district is located between 11°12'N and 12°49'N of the latitude and between 77°27'E and 78°38'E longitude (Figure 1). This district is situated on the northwestern part of Tamil Nadu. The district is bounded by Vellore and Thiruvannamalai district (Tamil Nadu) in the east, Bangalore (Karnataka) in the west, Kuppam (Andhra Pradesh) in the north and Dharumapuri district (Tamil Nadu) in the south. Geographically the present study area forms part of Tamil Nadu uplands situated at an elevation of 300 m to 1400 m above the Average Mean Sea level (AMSL). Falls under one of the terraces of Mysore plateau called Baramahal, which is characterized by the hill such as Javadi, Thierthmalai and Kalvarayans hills.

Iron Age

Iron Age in Tamil Nadu is succeeded by the Neolithic culture, where Black-and-Red ware was its most significant pottery type. In this context it is noted that Megalithic culture is considered as a synonym for Iron Age. The word Megalith derived from two Greek words namely *megas* meaning big and *lithos* meaning stone. Usually *Megalithic* tombs and related monuments were constructed with large slabs or blocks of granite. They were either selected as such in a natural state or roughly quarried and trimmed in desirable need. The first millennium BCE of India is characterized by the period of Iron Age. It is believed that during this time the initial social process of social

transformation towards the formation of urban society and state hood were started. Since the first discovery of Megalithic burials by Babington in 1823 at Malabar in north Kerala, many scholars took interest in this aspect (Banerjee 1965, Childe 1947, Phillips 1873, Branfill 1880, Aiyappan 1945, Rao 1972, Krishnaswami 1947, Moorti 1994, Narasimhaiah 1980, Rao and Sasisekaran 1997, Rajan 1991). As the result more and more Megalithic burial sites were discovered and excavated in the peninsular India. This culture is represented as a widespread phenomenon in different geographical areas. Hence its significance and chronology vary from place to place.

Location of the Megaliths

Most of the sites having Megalithic burials from Krishnagiri district (Rajan 1991, Rajan 1992) are found in the proximity of availability of raw material for erecting memorials. The availability of the raw material in the nearby area or in some approachable distance played a major role in selecting the graveyard. There are different types of burials noticed from this part of Tamil Nadu (Figures 2 – 7) and they are, 1. Cairn-circle, 2. Cairn-circle with cist, 3. Dolmen, 4. Dolmenoid cist, 5. Cairn-circle with porthole cist, 6. Cairn-circle with urn, 7. Cairn circle with Sarcophagus. For constructing all these types of burials, availability of stones is the most important factor. The Megalithic people for burying their dead ones in the burial they utilized the locally available raw material. The location of all Megalithic burials from Krishnagiri District clearly demonstrates that the stones used in burials are available within the distance of 1 or 2 kilometer. They used boulders for the circles and slabs for orthostats for constructing chambers. Cists burials were made of both undressed and dressed slabs and capstones were generally undressed ones. Majority of the dolmens and the associated slab were built of dressed stones only. The dolmenoid cist used big flat capstone rested on boulders or walls made of rubble.

The megalithic people observed certain norms while paying homage to their departed soul. The availability of the raw material in the nearby area or in some approachable distance played a major role in selecting the graveyard. Usually in this region, the burial monuments like cairn circles are found on the slopes of the foothills and hillocks overlooking rivers. Cairn circles with porthole cist were found mostly in the present densely forested areas and the cairn circles with urn burial were found in and around small hillocks. The dolmens and dolmenoid cists were located on the top of the high, rocky grounds or hills overlooking a tank or in the vicinity of perennial ponds. It seems that an elevated area was always preferred for cemeteries. And the major part of this district is so undulated that the megalithic people never found it difficult to select a land to meet their purpose.

Raw Material

They utilized the raw material locally available and easily transportable. The present location of the graves clearly demonstrates that the raw materials were available within the distance of one or two kilometers. They used boulders for the circles and slabs for

the orthostats chambers. The cists were made of both undressed and dressed slabs and capstones were generally undressed ones. Majority of the dolmens and the associated slab were built of dressed stones only. The dolmenoid cist used big flat capstone rested on boulders or walls made of rubble (Senji 1985).

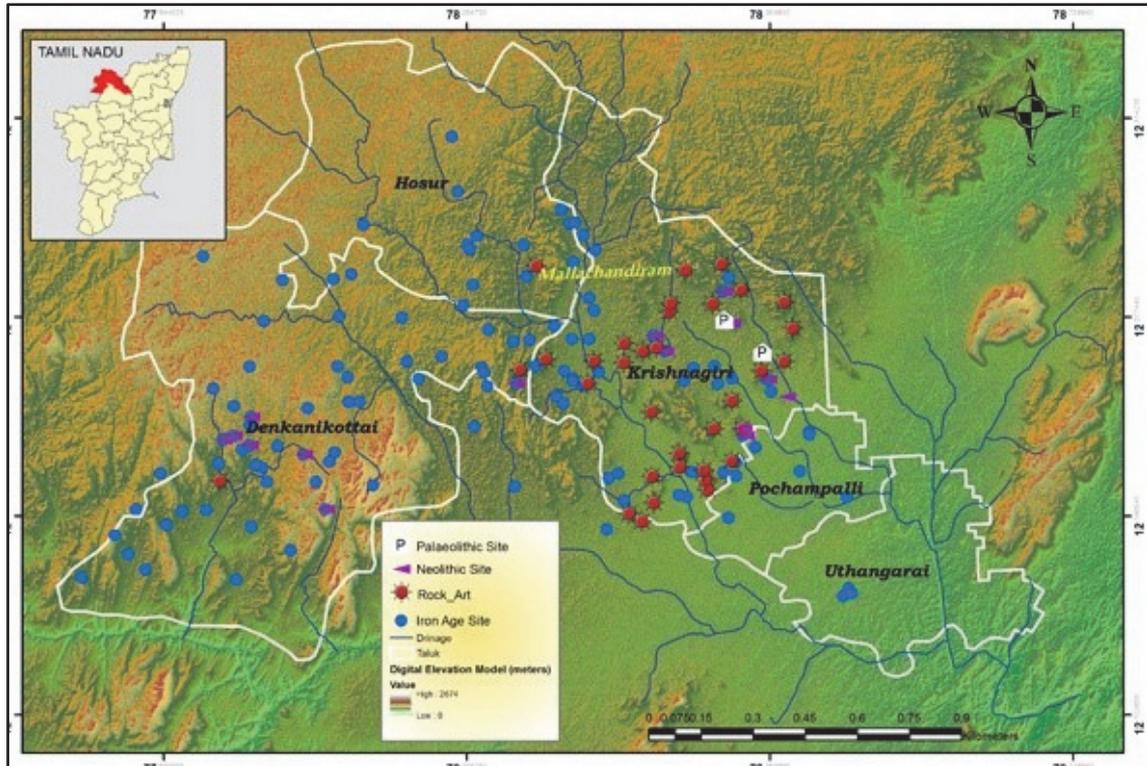


Figure 1: Archaeological sites in Krishnagiri District



Figure 2: Porthole dolmen, Mallachandiram



Figure 3: Double slab circle dolmen, Mallachandiram



Figure 4: Double porthole dolmen, Mallachandiram



Figure 5: Dolmen, Bootherikottai



Figure 6: Dolmen, Othikuppam



Figure 7: Cist burial, Seengkottai



Figure 8: Rock Art, Mallapadi

Table 1: List of Iron Age sites in Krishnagiri District, Tamil Nadu

No.	Name of the Site	Latitude	Longitude	Taluk	Remarks
1	Aganelli	12°25'53.96"N	77°42'56.29"E	Denkanikottai	Dolmonied Cist and Labyrinth
2	Alathi	12°25'10.64"N	77°44'16.35"E	Denkanikottai	Dolmen
3	Alapatti	12°29'12.61"N	78°4'55.88"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen
4	Ammaneri	–	–	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle
5	Anasandram	12°47'33.00"N	77°59'14.00"E	Hosur	Cairn Circle with Cist
6	Andimalai	12°24'56.55"N	78°15'25.88"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle
7	Attanur	12°39'50.00"N	78° 0'19.00"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle with Urn
8	Ayyur	12°24'59.00"N	77°50'52.00"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle
9	Balanapalli	12°35'29.00"N	78° 0'2.00"E	Hosur	Cairn Circle
10	Balanayanapalli	12°29'53.66"N	78°18'12.73"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle
11	Baleguli	12°30'20.65"N	77°51'48.09"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen
12	Bennelliputur	12°23'9.58"N	78°10'23.32"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle with Urn
13	Baranthur	12°37'18.65"N	77°47'9.23"E	Denkanikottai	Dolmen
14	Barugur	12°32'9.39"N	78°21'21.94"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle
15	Basthalapalli	12°39'48.76"N	78° 4'19.58"E	Hosur	Dolmen
16	Bellarampalli	12°30'9.90"N	78° 8'54.93"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle
17	Belur	12°34'43"N	77°51'12"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle with Cist
18	Bettamukulalam	12°22'39"N	77°53'37"E	Denkanikottai	Stone Circle, Cairn Circle with Cist, Dolmen
19	Bilalam	12°24'50.41"N	77°48'38.63"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle
20	Bilikal	12°19'5.35"N	77°35'12.81"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle, Habitation Site
21	Billigundala	12°11'14.32"N	77°43'47.92"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle
22	Thimarayanahalli	12°26'3.23"N	78° 5'4.67"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen
23	Bootherikottai	12°23'53.94"N	77°45'41.12"E	Denkanikottai	Stone circle with cist
24	Chandramalai			Uttamgarai	Cairn Circle
25	Chandrapoorthapara	12°37'29.74"N	78°18'58.05"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen
26	Chennasandram	12°38'35.37"N	78° 7'53.58"E	Hosur	Dolmen, Habitation Mound

27	Chettipalli. A	12°43'37.64"N	77°59'39.01"E	Hosur	Cairn Circle with Cist
28	Chinnabellarampalli	12°29'57.21"N	78° 8'54.95"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen
29	Chinnakotthur	12°42'26.79"N	78° 7'10.36"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen,
30	(Bairagauni)				Habitation site,
31	Desupalli	12°35'38.84"N	78°17'48.64"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmonied Cist
32	Devermukkulam	12°19'30.68"N	78°10'16.37"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle
33	Doddamanchi	12°17'59.84"N	77°47'44.29"E	Hosur	Cairn Circle
34	Doddatimmanahali	12°37'22.12"N	77°50'46.19"E	Denkanikottai	Dolmen, Cairn Circle
35	Echchanahalli	12°29'43.47"N	78° 1'46.64"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle
36	Eddrapalli	12°41'21.56"N	78° 7'36.80"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen
37	Ekalnattam	12°39'30.55"N	78° 0'31.11"E	Hosur	Dolmen
38	Ennagolpudur	12°34'0.04"N	78° 6'32.92"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen
39	Enibanda	12°26'11.14"N	77°43'38.38"E	Denkanikottai	Dolmen
40	Enusonai	12°36'58.39"N	78° 0'44.19"E	Hosur	Stone Circle
41	Erumuthanapalli	12°20'53.97"N	77°41'43.21"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle
42	Gangadevanahalli	12°27'32.00"N	77°44'53.42"E	Denkanikottai	Dolmonied Cist
43	Gangaleri	12°30'45"N	78°09'42"E	Krishnagiri	Stone Circle, Dolmen, Cist
44	Gangavaram	12°24'19"N	78°19'28"E	Pochampalli	Cairn Circle
45	Gidalur	12°25'21.31"N	78°20'51.92"E	Pochampalli	Cairn Circle with Cist
46	Gullaty	12°22'53.12"N	77°49'31.54"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle with cist
47	Gollapalli	12° 33' 25"N	78° 13' 43.5"E	Krishnagiri	Habitation Mound, Cairn Circle
48	Gummanur	12°26'50.13"N	78° 0'49.28"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle
49	Gummalapuram	12°24'5.58"N	77° 45'13.91"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle, Habitation
50	I.Kothapalli	12°26'42.64"N	78°17'54.81"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle
51	Ittikal-Agaram	12°31'9.63"N	78° 5'11.27"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle with Cist, Inscription
52	Jagadevi	12°28'43.31"N	78°19'12.43"E	Krishnagiri	Megalithic Habitation site and Rock Art
53	Jenur	12°36'2.04"N	78° 8'59.92"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle, Sarcophagus

54	Jinjupalli	12° 33' 54.3"N	78° 9' 57.7"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle
55	Kalkottur	12°21'33.35"N	78°11'29.60"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle
56	Kallavi	12°14'44.32"N	78°27'6.48"E	Uthangarai	Cairn Circle, Habitation mound
57	Kanavanapalli	12° 40' 13.1"N	77° 42' 50"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle
58	Kandekavundanahalli	12°31'5.27"N	78° 1'21.21"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle
59	Kannukanur	12°21'47.65"N	78°27'21.62"E	Krishnagiri	Megalithic Habitation site
60	Kappalavadi	12°29'19.99"N	78°21'59.49"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle with Cist
61	Karigavundanur	12°21'50.44"N	78°15'58.03"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle with Cist
62	Karuvanoor	12°15'18.72"N	78°27'29.94"E	Uthangarai	Cairn Circle with Urn
63	Keelpallam	12°24'5.58"N	77°45'13.91"E	Denkanikottai	Dolmonied Cist
64	Kendikanapalli	12°31'6.46"N	77°44'48.64"E	Denkanikottai	Dolmen
65	Kodugur	12°29'54.00"N	78° 3'47.00"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen, Habitation Site
66	Kolkottur	12°21'33.35"N	78°11'29.60"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle
67	Kolatti	12°25'20.40"N	77°49'13.83"E	Denkanikottai	Dolmen
68	Koothandaparai (Bootherikottai)	12°22'53.80"N	77°46'2.57"E	Denkanikottai	Dolmen
69	Korakurki	12°44'4.00"N	78°59'33.00"E	Hosur	Cairn Circle
70	Kottaiyur	12°16'37.95"N	77°37'22.60"E	Denkanikottai	Stone Circle
71	Kottur	12°26'29.00"N	78°24'42.00"E	Pochampalli	Cairn Circle
72	Koothapalli	12°37'42.39"N	77°52'2.83"E	Hosur	Cairn Circle
73	Kovalli	12°17'43.78"N	77°36'10.11"E	Denkanikottai	Stone circle
74	Kuntharapalli	12° 34' 16.6"N	78° 10' 42.7"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle
75	Kunthukottai	12°25'30.93"N	77°44'47.87"E	Denkanikottai	Dolmen, urn, Habitation Site
76	Kunnattur	12° 20' 52.2"N	78° 30' 37.7"E	Uttangarai	Cairn Circle
77	Kurampatti	12°23'34.37"N	78°16'19.17"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle, Habitation Mound
78	Kurubarahalli	12°35'6.70"N	78° 9'21.02"E	Hosur	Cairn Circle
79	Kuruvinayanapalli	12°38'29.00"N	78°18'26.60"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen, Rock Painting

80	Lakshachandiram	12°31'08"N	77°51'04"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle with Cist
81	Madepatti	12°32'10.53"N	78° 8'22.25"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle
82	Maharajakadai	12°38'02"N	78°15'52"E	Krishnagiri	Rock Art, Dolmen
83	Maidandapalli	12°34'23"N	77°45'50"E	Hosur	Cairn Circle with Cist
84	Malanahalli	12°16'22.71"N	77°37'5.79"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle
85	Mallachandiram	12°38'22"N	78°05'15"E	Hosur	Dolmen, Rock Art (Figure 8)
86	Mallikarjunadurgam	12°26'55.91"N	77°44'50.62"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle
87	Manchugondapalli	12°16'4.88"N	77°32'51.01"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle
88	Marigampalli	12°30'14.57"N	78° 7'51.86"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen
89	Marisettipalli	12° 23' 6.9"N	78° 16' 29.1"E	Krishnagiri	Iron Age habitation site
90	Mariyalam	12°22'57.70"N	77°42'40.95"E	Denkanikottai	Cist burial
91	Marudapalli	12°31'01"N	78°16'27"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen
92	Mattiyur	12° 16' 8.9"N	77° 36' 55.8"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn circle with cist
93	Mattur	12°23'39.56"N	78°24'2.16"E	Pochampalli	Cairn Circle
94	Mayiladumparai	12°26'43.11"N	78°19'55.34"E	Krishnagiri	Habitation Mound and cist (Rajan 2004)
95	Mealkottai (Othikuppam)	12°36'37.66"N	78°19'51.25"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen, Rock Art
96	Melumalai	12°37'34.57"N	78° 4'33.09"E	Hosur	Cairn Circle
97	Melur	12°24'20.90"N	77°50'29.86"E	Denkanikottai	Stone circle with cist
98	Mettuparai	12°33'5.97"N	78° 8'59.80"E	Krishnagiri	Stone circle with cist
99	Mittapalli	12°31'8.53"N	78°17'56.10"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle with Cist
100	Moongilpudur	12°33'5.92"N	78° 7'48.09"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle with Cist, Dolmen
101	Mottur	12°26'14.94"N	78°24'41.28"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle, Memorial stone
102	Moramadugu	12°28'59.09"N	78° 6'39.28"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle with Cist, Dolmen

103	Mudippinayanapalli	12° 40' 49.8"N	78° 5' 36"E	Hosur	Dolmenoid Cist, Ironslag, Rock Painting
104	Muluvanapalli	12°28'18.44"N	77°43'40.09"E	Denkanikottai	Dolmen
105	Nagamangalam	12°30'17"N	78°19'11"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle with Cist
106	Nakkalapalli	12° 29' 8.7"N	78° 5' 46"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle with Cist
107	Nammandahalli	12° 27' 29.7"N	77° 58' 18"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle
108	Natarapalayam	12°15'55.42"N	77°43'50.38"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle, Memorial Stone
109	Nedungal	12°21'56.41"N	78°15'24.72"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen
110	N.Thattakal	12°22'21.58"N	78°17'29.74"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen with cairn circle
111	Oblesapalli	12° 32' 17.1"N	78° 10' 21.6"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle
112	Ompalagutta	12° 34' 15.5"N	78° 7' 59"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle
113	Oramanagunta	12°35'45.47"N	78°22'55.67"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen, sarcophagus Rock Painting
114	Pachchihanahalli	12°29'44.00"N	78° 8'35.00"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle, Cist, Dolmen, Habitation Mound
115	Palaguri	12°30'5.00"N	78° 7'52.00"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle
116	Palaiyamkottai	12°29'33.79"N	77°42'13.16"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle
117	Pattakapatti	12°23'18.98"N	78°19'28.95"E	Pochampalli	Cairn Circle with Cist
118	Puram	12°40'30.92"N	78° 8'35.72"E	Hosur	Cairn Circle
119	Ratnagiri	12°28'36.82"N	77°52'39.20"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle
120	Rayakottai	12°30'41"N	78°01'32"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle, Fort
121	Salivaram	12°25'27.01"N	77°46'48.08"E	Denkanikottai	Dolmen
122	Santanapalli	12°28'09"N	77°48'57"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle, Dolmen, Habitation Mound
123	Sappamuttulu	12° 28'3.3"N	78° 21' 13.6"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle
124	Sathanur	12°38'59.56"N	77°41'28.29"E	Hosur	Cairn Circle
125	Seengkottai	12°19'40.47"N	77°44'56.40"E	Denkanikottai	Cist

126	Sembatamuttur	12°33'1.02"N	78° 4'45.02"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle
127	Sengodachennahahalli	12°33'46.32"N	78° 1'48.66"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle
128	Chigaralapalli	12°46'8.98"N	78° 7'47.58"E	Hosur	Cairn Circle
129	Maruldevapalli	12° 42' 40.9"N	78° 2' 54.3"E	Hosur	Rock Art, Dolmen
130	Sokadu	12°28'29.84"N	78° 7'10.90"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle with Cist
131	Soolagiri	12°40'25.79"N	78° 0'59.45"E	Hosur	Habitation, Stone circle
132	Sulamalai	12°30'7.79"N	78°15'46.91"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen
133	Sulikunta	12°32'56.02"N	78° 3'37.88"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen
134	Sundekuppam	12°27'56.09"N	78°13'27.91"E	Krishnagiri	Habitation Mound, Rock Painting
135	Tadikallu	12°28'35.65"N	77°51'51.85"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle
136	Talapalli	12°31'26.91"N	78°11'28.29"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen, Rock Art
137	Tandarai	12° 34' 46.2"N	77° 46' 20.3"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle, Memorial Stone
138	Tavalam	12°30'49.71"N	78° 7'13.97"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle, Habitation Mound, Memorial Stone
139	Thiruchitrambalam	12°34'12.79"N	78°19'10.72"E	Krishnagiri	Habitation
140	Tholuvabetta	12°20'56.10"N	77°50'11.61"E	Denkanikottai	Cist
141	Timijipalli	12°30'15.78"N	77°56'50.71"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle
142	Tippanapalli	12° 33' 36.3"N	78° 10' 9.6"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle
143	Torapalli	12°41'15.44"N	77°52'55.85"E	Hosur	Dolmen
144	Uddanapalli	12°34'37.42"N	77°55'40.17"E	Hosur	Cairn Circle
145	Udubarani	12°20'56.58"N	77°36'43.69"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle
146	Ulibande	12°23'29.49"N	77°38'27.33"E	Denkanikottai	Stone Circle
147	Ullatti	12°31'51.18"N	77°58'30.14"E	Hosur	Cairn Circle
148	Udedurgam	12°31'29.83"N	77°56'0.46"E	Denkanikottai	Cairn Circle
149	Varagachandiram	12°41'24.07"N	78° 8'1.38"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen
150	Varatnampatti	12°23'31.10"N	78°11'7.14"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen
151	Varattanapalli	12°34'37.10"N	78°18'44.19"E	Krishnagiri	Dolmen, Habitation, Rock Art
152	Vedartattakkal	12°23'35.39"N	78°18'36.35"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn Circle, Habitation Cup Marks

153	Velampatti	12°14'56.11"N	78°27'43.75"E	Uthangarai	Cairn Circle
154	Yeppalappalli	12°22'33.95"N	78° 3'41.83"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn circle
155	Viramalai	12°20'18.60"N	78°18'55.79"E	Krishnagiri	Cairn circle

Distribution Pattern

The observation made in a few selective sites in Krishnagiri district containing more than 100 burials of different types yielded some clues on their distribution pattern within a burial complex like Oramagunda, Moongilputhur and Pachikanapalli. When a site enclosed more than one type of burial, each type occupied a separate portion within the complex. Krishnagiri district most of the burials are located in the elevated field or were close to the foothill and some other burial complex are located in the land. The distance between two adjacent burials was normally two to five meters. An interesting observation made at Mallachandram, Enibenda, Kattchuvadi, Bootherikottai and Kundhani that there were small dolmens at regular intervals around comparatively bigger dolmens encircled with boulders and slabs.

Types of Burials

Based on the architectural features, these burials can be broadly divided into two groups, namely, cairn circle, cairn circle with cist, urn and dolmens.

Cairn Circle: The cairn circles were constructed using round boulders with a limited cairn packing in the centre. As noted above, their height above ground depended upon the nature of the terrain. If the land was soft with sediments either the cist or urn was placed about 30 to 60 cm below the ground level and then the pit was covered and entombed with cairns. In this case, the cairns were not raised more than 60 cm and the cist is projected out to one to two meters above the ground level. The diameter of the circle varied from 6 to 20 m.

Dolmen: A burial chamber was built of walls on three sides of a rectangular slab placed as a floor slab and it had a wide opening on one side. The direction of the slope decides direction of the opening. The side walls were built of rectangular-shaped stone blocks and this chamber was closed with flat capstone. They were generally raised on the rocky surface on the hill top.

Cist Burial: The Cist is a box-like structure constructed of four orthostats kept in clockwise or anticlockwise direction on the floor and is covered with a capstone. The eastern orthostat has invariably a round port-hole at the centre. Due to the hidden nature of the cist, it is premature to say anything on its further classification.

Iron Industry

Smelting of iron by megalithic people in Krishnagiri region was noticed at many places. It has been reported in Paiyampalli excavations. The C14 dates of Period II at Paiyampalli come to 315 ± 100 B.C. for the Iron Age (i.e. the megalithic period) (Rao 1967-68: 26-30). The iron, locally smelted, has been evidenced at the site of Guttur, near

Barugur in Barugur taluk, which was discovered by the K.V.Raman, University of Madras. The habitation and burial sites are located very near to this site. It may be pointed out that the site is located on the southern foot of the Guttur hill, which is rich in iron content. More than 15 furnaces were noticed in this site but now two furnaces are in good condition. Each furnace was found to have been built up of rectangular clay rolls with a thickness of 4 cm. A hole at the bottom was provided for the tapped slag. Two tuyers, each about 3.5 cms in diameter and about 15 to 20 cm in length, made of clay which contained a lot of quartz grains were found. These were obviously attached to the bellows. Abundant amount of tapped slags and cinder pot sherds of red ware and black and red ware associated both with megalithic burials and habitation and iron ores were recovered near the furnace complex. From the available evidence it thus appears that iron technology was well advanced and stabilized in Krishnagiri region as early as 5th century BC, if not earlier.

Ceramics

During the Iron Age period different groups of ceramic industries were developed in south India. They were the black and red ware, white painted black and red ware; russet coated and painted ware, black ware and coarse red ware. For more than a century, a large number of Iron Age burials have been excavated in south India, which yielded the black and red ware. This led the archaeologists to name it as megalithic ware as well. The black and red ware pottery occurs in all the Iron Age habitation sites as well as burial sites of the study area. It has been suggested that inverted firing technique was employed to achieve the varying surface colours. The all black ware is both interior and exterior black in colour. It occurs in a thin and polished variety and a thick and less polished variety. The common shapes of this variety are deep bowl, dishes, dishes with incurved rim and the like. The russet coated and painted ware and the russet coated and painted black and red wares are the two varieties of this class, which are generally described as russet coated and painted ware. Red ware is very common and has many variants. The surface colour is normally red to reddish brown. It has a fine red slip on both sides and lustrous surfaces. In these types of potteries are found all the habitation sites and burial sites in Krishnagiri region.

Discussion

Exploration of this district has brought to light the evidence of continuity in culture right from prehistoric time till Early Historic period. The distribution patterns of Megalithic burials, the burial monuments like cairn-circles are found on the slopes of the foothills and hillocks overlooking rivers, whereas, Cairn circles with porthole cist were found mostly in the present densely forested areas and the cairn circles with urn burial were found in and around small hillocks. The dolmens and dolmenoid cists were located on the top of the high, rocky grounds or hills overlooking a tank or near perennial ponds. It seems that an elevated area was always preferred for cemeteries. Major part of this district is so undulated that the megalithic people never found it difficult to select a land to meet their purpose.

Unlike the other part of Tamil Nadu, the present study area has shown the evidences of inflow of two different Megalithic traits but confined interesting to two geographical zones. The first of the megalithic culture containing the cairn circle variety seems to have entered into this region along the river Kaveri from the Mandya district in Karnataka. The second one contains the dolmen and dolmenoid cist variety entered via Kuppam and other passes from the Kolar district along the Pennaiyar River. The above said two traits, it seems, got mingled with indigenous urn burials. The concentration of cairn circles with porthole cists could be observed in the Balaghat region comprising the Hosur, Denkanikottai, Soolagiri, Barugur and Krishangiri taluk. This is extension of Mysore tableland and resembles Mysore in general features. As the region had close link with the Mysore plateau, naturally the cultural traits also had the same impact. The distribution of Cairn circles with cist burial was concentrated north of Melagiri, Rayakottai and west of Ankusagiri. The location of burials was identified in river valleys like the Sanatkumaranadi (Chinnaru), Kaveri and pennaiyar and in the basins of Natrapalayam, Anchetti and Urigam. The second geographical zone east of Ankusagiri and Markandanadi river and north of Kaveripattinam and mattur facing against the Kuppam and Tirupattur passes had much concentration of dolmen sites and a few dolmenoid sites. This is the area just above the plains and almost covers the entire Krishnagiri taluk. Few cairn circles were also observed in this region mostly confined to the southern part of this zone.

Conclusion

The preliminary investigations carried out in the Krishnagiri district have provided a glimpse on the existence of human settlement in the rugged terrain. Further, intensive investigations are needed to understand the archaeological potentiality of the region.

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