



**TOURISM, CULTURE AND  
RELIGIOUS ENDOWMENTS DEPARTMENT**

**ARCHAEOLOGY**

**POLICY NOTE  
2024 – 2025**

**DEMAND No.29**

**THANGAM THENNARASU**

Minister for Finance and  
Human Resources Management

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# DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY

## POLICY NOTE

2024-2025

### 1. Introduction

The principle of archaeology is the study of the human past that deepens our understanding of the world in a more meaningful and resourceful manner. The study of the human past means the study of human behavioural and cognitive systems within given socio-politico-cultural contexts that transformed humanity through time and space. The term *archaeology* is derived from the Greek words *archaeos* meaning 'ancient' and *logos* meaning 'study, discussion, reason, or science'.

#### 1.1. Objectives of the Department

The Department of Archaeology was established in 1961 with the following objectives:-

- To identify, conserve and preserve ancient and historical monuments.
- To conduct systematic archaeological explorations and excavations in

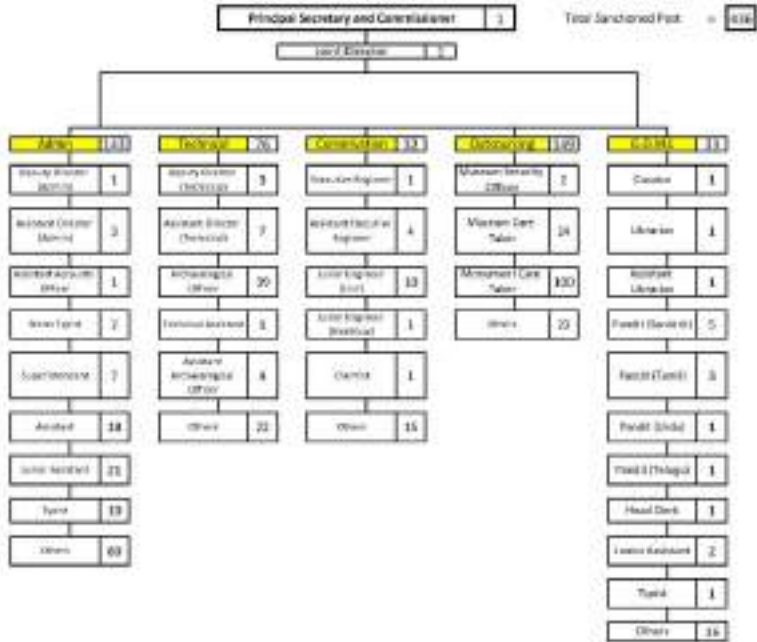
historically and archaeologically important sites throughout the State.

- Documenting stone and copper plate inscriptions by copying, deciphering and publishing them.
- Establishing Site Museums.

## **1.2. Administrative Structure**

The Department is headed by the Commissioner of Archaeology and is assisted by Joint Director (Technical), Deputy Directors, (Technical), Regional Assistant Directors, Executive Engineer, Assistant Executive Engineers, Junior Engineers, Deputy Director (Admin.), Assistant Directors (Admin.), Archaeological Officers and other officers.





### 1.3. Path breaking discoveries

The carbon samples collected in association with Tamili (Tamil-Brahmi) inscribed potsherds from the Keeladi excavations have been scientifically dated to the 6th century BCE (conventional AMS C14 date 580 BCE and calibrated AMS C14 date 679 BCE). This discovery revises the timeline of Tamili (Tamil-Brahmi) script, pushing its origins back to the 6th century BCE, a century earlier than the previously established 5th century BCE. This finding

highlights the advanced literacy levels of the Tamils during this era. The subsequent conventional AMS C14 date of 610 BCE (calibrated AMS C14685 BCE) further consolidated the Keeladi findings.

The Keeladi findings provide conclusive evidence that the second urbanization was present in Tamil Nadu in the 6th century BCE, paralleling the developments in the Gangetic Valley.

Additional significant discoveries come from carbon-dated paddy samples recovered from an urn burial at Sivagalai near Adichanallur. These samples analysed by the Beta Analytical Laboratory in Miami, Florida, date back to 1155 BCE. It scientifically confirms that the Porunai (Tamiraparani) river civilization is 3200 years old. This crucial information was announced by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in the Legislative Assembly on September 9, 2021.

Excavations at Mayiladumparai in Krishnagiri district have yielded two important Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS) dates of 1615 BCE and 2172 BCE, providing valuable insights into the

introduction of iron and the transition from the late Neolithic phase to the Iron Age. These dates from Mayiladumparai confirm the existence of the Iron Age in the beginning of third millennium BCE and indicate a preceding Neolithic phase in Tamil Nadu.

#### **1.4. Conservation of Protected Monuments**

India possesses a rich, vast, and diverse cultural heritage, exemplified by an extensive collection of monuments scattered across the country. Tamil Nadu, in particular, prominently displays its historical and cultural richness throughout her history. Visitors frequently travel to Tamil Nadu to admire its magnificent art and architectural heritage. The art forms found in the region's historical monuments showcase the elegance and skill of ancient sculptors. The vimanas and gopuras of the temples exhibit the distinct characteristics of ancient architecture. The state also boasts cave temples (both cut-in and cut-out temples), monolithic temples, forts, ponds, structural temples, choultries, and mandapas, which encompass both secular and religious.

However, these temples and other historical structures are vulnerable to damage from various natural calamities and human activities. Consequently, there is a pressing need for their proper protection and conservation to preserve this invaluable cultural heritage.

Conservation and restoration work carried out by experts following scientific conservation methods and archaeological principles in ancient heritage sites and archaeological sites are unique.

The Government of Tamil Nadu has enacted the "Tamil Nadu Ancient Monuments and Historical and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1966 (Tamil Nadu Act 25 of 1966) and Rules, 1971" to protect, preserve and reconstruct the historical monuments in the State. According to the above law and rules, "ancient historical monument" means any construction or symbol, which has historical, archaeological or artistic significance and is more than a hundred years old. It refers to a mound, graveyard, a cave, rock sculpture, an inscription, a monolithic monument.

So far, the Government of Tamil Nadu has declared 105 historical monuments and

3 archaeological sites totalling 108 monuments as "Protected historical monuments". Out of the above 108 historical monuments and archaeological sites, Madurai Tirumalai Nayak Mahal, Ramanathapuram Ramalinga Vilasam Palace, Thanjavur Maratha Palace, Manora Memorial Pillar at Sarabendrarajapattinam in Thanjavur District, Danish Fort and the Governor's Bungalow at Tarangambadi in Mayiladuthurai District are important tourist attractions and places that continue to attract tourists.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has so far declared 411 monuments in the State. It preserves a total of 251 historical monuments and 160 archaeological sites in Tamil Nadu.

### **1.5. Newly notified Monuments and Archaeological Sites**

Recently, Cave Temple at Paraikulam Virudhunagar District, Cave Temple at Muvaraivenran, Sivakasi Taluk of Virudhunagar District, Cave Temple at Kalaiyarkuruchi (M.Pudupatti) in Virudhunagar District, Cave Temple at Sevalpatti, Vembakottai Taluk,

Virudhunagar District and Early Pandya period Andhichi Rock Cave Temple at Padhinalamperi, Tirunelveli District have been declared as historical monuments.

Burial grounds and habitation sites found in Kondagai and Agaram villages in Tiruppuvanam Taluk, Sivagangai District; Iron Age Graveyard at Sivagalai Village, Eral Taluk, Thoothukudi District and Habitation mound and Megalithic burial site at Kodumanal in Perundurai Taluk, Erode district are the new sites included in the list of protected archaeological sites.

Accordingly, a preliminary notification has been issued to declare the Cave Temple at Anaiyur in Sankarankovil Taluk of Tenkasi District as protected historical monuments. Further, 60 historical monuments have been identified by the Department of Archaeology for being declared as "protected monuments and sites".

### **1.6. Funds for regular maintenance of Protected Monuments**

A sum of Rs. 2 crore is being provided annually by the Government of Tamil Nadu as recurring expenditure for the maintenance of

protected monuments and archaeological sites. Accordingly, the above historical monuments and excavation sites have been selected on a priority basis and the works are being carried out.

### **1.7. Conservation and Restoration of old Forts and Palaces**

Heritage tourism will be given a boost by restoring and renovating old forts and palaces while retaining their originality. In this regard, the following three protected monuments are being taken up for conservation and restoration work. These works are being executed by the Public Works Department:-

<b>S. No</b>	<b>Name of the Monument</b>	<b>Estimated Cost (Rs. in crore)</b>
1	Sarjah Madi at Thanjavur	9.43
2	Danish Fort at Tarangambadi, Mayiladuthurai	3.77
3	Tirumalai Nayak Mahal at Madurai	3.73
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>16.93</b>

The renovation of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Maratha period mural paintings at the Maratha Durbar Hall in Thanjavur palace premises is being carried out by the Public Works Department at a total cost of Rs. 6.95 crores and the works are in progress.

The renovation of the Governor's Bungalow at Sathangudi village in Tarangambadi Taluk of Mayiladuthurai District as per archaeological principles is being carried out by the Public Works Department at a total cost of Rs.4.46 crore and the works are in progress.

Restoration of the compound wall of the Danish Fort at Tarangambadi in Mayiladuthurai District is being carried out by the Public Works Department at the cost of Rs.0.63 crore and the works had been completed.

### **1.8. Development of Tamili inscriptions and Jaina sculptures tourist spots**

- Neganurpatti Tamili inscription in Villupuram District
- Thondur Tamili inscription in Villupuram District



- Mudalaikulam Tamili inscriptions and Jain beds in Madurai District
- Arittapatti Tamili inscriptions in Madurai District
- Jain sculptures at Anandamangalam in Chengalpattu District

were developed as tourist attractions and infrastructure and basic amenities.

### **1.9. Project for preservation and documentation of unprotected sculptures and inscriptions**

To preserve the various archaeological treasures such as loose sculptures and inscriptions found in different parts of the State in the same place or in a safe place, a sum of Rs.3,22,05,547/- has been sanctioned for the implementation of this project and a sum of Rs.1,38,45,547/- as non-recurring grant is sanctioned for the financial year 2022-2023 for the procurement of 3D scanners, computers and accessories. All the procurements had been made and put in use. During 2023-2024, four

unprotected sculptures were conserved with proper protection measures on the same place.

### **1.10. Archaeological Excavations**

Archaeological excavations are regarded as a critical scientific method for reconstructing a nation's cultural history. While ancient literature and epigraphic records typically reflect the administrative and social lives of the elite, excavations reveal insights into the lives of common people. Additionally, biological samples obtained through these excavations provide valuable information on the palaeo-environment, subsistence patterns and lifestyle changes over time. The metallurgical samples provide great insight on the technological advancement of the past.

In India, the excavations carried out in the respective sites uncovered the Palaeolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Iron Age, Early Historic and Historic settlements. Though the history of Tamil Nadu can be traced from Pre-historic period with the discovery of stone tools as accidental findings, it was those proper and systematic excavations in various sites by different agencies

that lifted the curtain for understanding our cultural past.

When we talk about Archaeology, it is our duty to remember the dedicated works of great pioneers, especially in the area of excavations. The work meticulously carried out by both Foreign and Indian Archaeologists, who shaped the field, are to be recorded and recognized at this juncture. The scholars such as Alexander Cunningham the Father of Archaeology and Tvl. Robert Bruce Foote, Lord Curzon, Sir John Marshall, Sir Mortimer Wheeler, Raymond Allchin, V.D.Krishnaswamy, A. Ghosh, M.N. Deshpande, B.K. Thapar, S.R. Rao, B.B. Lal, H.D. Sankalia, V.N. Misra, R.S. Bisht, K. Rajan and many other Indian scholars have done significant work in the field of excavation.

The Archaeological Survey of India as the central body regulates the various activities in the field of Archaeology while at the State level, the State Governments Archaeology Departments, Universities and other private organizations carry out excavations in their respective domain.

In Tamil Nadu, the Archaeological Survey of India, Chennai and Tiruchirappalli circles; State Department of Archaeology; University of Madras; Tamil University, Thanjavur; Pondicherry University and Sharma Centre for Heritage Education have undertaken excavations over the years and contributed significantly to the development of archaeology in the State.

The excavations are conducted at archaeologically and historically important sites with the help of archaeological sources obtained through well-planned extensive and intensive explorations by the Department. It has so far excavated 40 ancient sites and unearthed significant artefacts of different periods. The excavations carried out at Keeladi, Kodumanal, Sivagalai, Vembakkottai, Porpanaikkottai, Kilnamandi, Perumbalai, Mayiladumparai, Parikulam, Tiruttangal, Mangudi, Modur, Kovalanpottal, Anaimalai, Pallavamedu, Boluvampatti, Perur, Panayakulam, Kurumbanmedu, Kannanur, Tirukkivilur, Vasavasamudram, Poompuhar, Thondi, Korkai, Alagankulam, Pattaraiperumbudhur, Karur, and Gangaikondacholapuram are some of the

important sites dating back from Pre-historic to that of Historic period. They have yielded excellent artefacts confirming the location of the ancient capitals, trade centers and their relationship between South India and North India and between Tamil Nadu and the Roman Empire.

### **Important Archaeological Excavaions**

The archaeological excavation at Adichanallur Parambu complex is the first ever archaeological research undertaken in Indian history. This excavation unearthed many materials that are now considered the oldest archaeological artefacts in the country.

Dr. Fedor Jagor of Berlin, an ethnologist and explorer, determined to clear the Adichanallur parambu, dig trenches and excavate the ancient treasures, he believed that artefacts were buried there. He set sail for India and after along journey via sea, overland on train and other modes, he arrived at Adichanallur and undertook his dig. He took the artefacts unearthed here with him back to Germany, and displayed them at the Berlin Museum.

Then, Louis Laticque of Paris, France did field research here in 1903-04 and added to the corpus of knowledge about Adichanallur.

Alexander Rea undertook extensive archaeological excavation in 1903-1904 in Adichanallur Parambu. Working carefully and diligently, Rea placed trenches in the mound, and retrieved countless artefacts, similar to those found by Jagor. Based on the wealth of material and artefacts discovered and the treasure of objects, he determined that the burial mound must belong to an ancient past. The artefacts discovered and excavated by Alexander Rea are currently displayed in the Government Museum at Egmore in Chennai and are specially accessible to the public for viewing.

### **Arikamedu**

The ancient city of Poduke Emporium, referenced in the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea, attracted significant archaeological attention. In 1941, French archaeologist G. Jouveau Dubreuil first excavated the site. In the summer of 1945, Sir Mortimer Wheeler conducted a more scientific

excavation, revealing a city layout with structures like warehouses, ring wells, and tanks.

In 1949, French archaeologist Jean Marie Casal extended the excavation to nearby sites such as Suttukeny and Kottaimedu. His work established that trade between the Mediterranean and Arikamedu continued beyond 200 AD. Later, in 1994-95, Prof. Vimala Bagley and her team undertook extensive excavations.

The findings, including Arretine ware, red tableware, Mediterranean pottery sherds such as amphora fragments, beads, and metallic objects, confirmed that Poduke or Arikamedu had robust trade relations with Rome.

## **Poompuhar**

Poompuhar, once the thriving port city known as Kaveri Poompattinam, served as the capital of the early Chola kings in Tamil Nadu. It is mentioned in the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea. During the 1960's and 1970's, Thiru K.V. Soundararajan of the Archaeological Survey of India conducted research here on February 25, 1991 and then by the Tamil Nadu

State Archaeology Department and the National Institute of Oceanography conducted an underwater survey, revealing a row of structures in shallow waters about 200 to 300 meter from the seashore.

### **1.10.1. Archaeological Explorations and Excavations – 2023**

During the year 2023, the following eight excavations have been carried out

<b>Sl. No</b>	<b>Excavation Site</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Details</b>
1	Keeladi and its Cluster site Kondagai	Sivagangai	9 <sup>th</sup> Season
2	Gangaikonda cholapuram	Ariyalur	3 <sup>rd</sup> Season
3	Vembakkottai	Virudhunagar	2 <sup>nd</sup> Season
4	Thulukkarpatti	Tirunelveli	2 <sup>nd</sup> Season
5	Kilnamandi	Tiruvannamalai	1 <sup>st</sup> Season
6	Porpanaikkottai	Pudukkottai	1 <sup>st</sup> Season



7	Boodhinatham	Dharmapuri	1 <sup>st</sup> Season
8	Pattaraiperumbudur	Tiruvallur	3 <sup>rd</sup> Season

### **1.10.2. Keeladi Excavations Season-9/2023**

The ninth season of Keeladi excavations were carried out in fourteen quadrants and 804 antiquities were unearthed including gold ornaments, ivory dice, beautifully portrayed terracotta animal figurines, gamesmen, spindle whorls, crystal quartz weighing unit, glass beads, bangle fragments, copper coins, copper needles, bone points and iron nails.

In a trench, 3 to 6 cm thickness a floor made by the mixture of clay and lime has been found at about 35 cm depth. Further excavations revealed a cluster of potsherds spread compactly about two feet deep below this floor including black-and-red ware, red slipped ware, and red ware potsherds.

Apart from these, the excavations revealed perforated potsherds, decorated potsherds, russet coated painted potsherds, and rouletted potsherds

were also disinterred. From the preliminary analysis of these potsherds over two hundred graffiti marked potsherds, where the symbols includes fish, ladder, and geometric symbols were also identified.

#### **1.10.2.1. Kondagai Excavations Season-4/2023**

In Kondagai, 24 urn burials were unearthed. Over 110 black-and-red ware and red slipped ware grave-goods were unearthed from within the burial urns alongside human skeletal remains. The artefacts include carnelian beads, iron knives, chisels, rings, etc. For the first time ever, a ring made of ivory has been found from an urn burial.

#### **1.10.3. Gangaikondacholapuram – Season 3/2023**

Gangaikondacholapuram lies in the Udaiyarpalayam Taluk of Ariyalur District. It was established as the capital of the Cholas by the Emperor Rajendra Chola -I (1012-1044 CE), the celebrated son and successor of the Emperor Rajaraja Chola -I (985-1014 CE). The excavation site Maligaimedu, the palace mound lies 2 km southwest of the famous Gangaikonda

choleeswarar temple and about 2 km south-east of Utkottai village. Earlier explorations and excavations were conducted in 1980, 1984, 1991, 1996 and 2009 in and around Gangaikonda cholapuram. So far, a massive brick structure and a good number of antiquities along with bricks and roof- tiles have been found in Maligaimedu. Many bricks and roof tiles kindled the interest to go for further excavation at this site in 2021, 2022 and 2023 to expose the extension of the possible foundation of the palace remains.

Along with the brick structures, roofing tiles and potsherds also were found. Antiquities such as iron objects, copper objects, copper coins, a silver coin, a gold bracelet, ivory objects, glass beads and fragments of bangles, hopscotch, terracotta objects and Chinese ceramics such as celadon and porcelain also were collected. It is obvious that these findings establish Chinese contacts during the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE. During this season, totally 685 antiquities were collected. In Utkottai, a granite pillar was measuring 7 meter in length and 72 cm in width was unearthed. This pillar consists of four Grantha scripts reading "sha-th-ri-ya". At Guruvalapar koil exposed with

17 courses of terracotta ring well. The excavations revealed considerable evidence to understand the nature of construction activities, the plan of the palace and other political and cultural activities that flourished at the site.

#### **1.10.4.Vembakkottai Excavations – Season-2/ 2022 & 2023**

Vembakkottai is a village located on the northern bank of the Vaippar River in Vembakkottai Taluk in the Virudhunager district. It lies on the Sivakasi–Kalugumalai road at a distance about 15 km from Sivakasi and 23 km south of Kalugumalai.

The excavation carried out in the mound locally called as Mettukadu or Uchimedu and it reveals continuous habitation deposit right from medieval times. Two phases of excavation with 34 trenches have been laid and more than 7800 antiquities were recovered from the site. Antiquities like semi-precious stone beads made of carnelian, agate, amethyst and crystal have been collected. More number of glass beads in various colours, shell bangles, glass bangles, terracotta beads, spindle whorls, terracotta

gamesmen, smoking pipes, terracotta pendants, toy objects, terracotta figurines, terracotta weighing units, terracotta balls, terracotta seals, terracotta hopscotches, terracotta earlobes, terracotta wheels, rubbing stones, iron objects and copper objects were unearthed. Apart from terracotta objects, iron objects, copper objects and eight copper coins were collected from the trenches. More numbers of decorated and plain shell bangles were collected in different trenches. Apart from bangles, shell cores, unfinished shell bangles and shell debitage were collected. The collection of large number of shell objects indicates that, this site might have survived with a shell industry.

#### **1.10.5. Thulukarpatti Excavation - Season-2/2022 & 2023**

Thulukarpatti, Radhapuram taluk of Tirunelveli district lies about 45 km from district headquarters. So far, 3138 antiquities have been recovered from both seasons of the excavation. Antiquities such as one gold ring, silver punch marked coin, ivory object, beads of glass, terracotta, carnelian, soapstone, agate, amethyst, quartz and steatite, nails, daggers, knives, rings,

spearheads and chisels, antimony rod, bangle fragment, and terracotta objects like hopscotches, balls, beads, burnishing tools, gamesmen, spindle whorls, TC figurines and toy wheels were recovered. So far, 12 Tamili (Tamil-Brahmi) fragmentary inscribed potsherds were identified in both seasons. A remarkable finding, nearly 4800 graffiti-bearing potsherds were unearthed.

#### **1.10.6. Kilnamandi Excavation - Season - 1/2022-2023**

Kilnamandi is a small village located in Vandavasi Taluk of Tiruvannamalai district in Tamil Nadu. There are more than 50 graves covering 55 acres of barren land.

The burial ground and a nearby habitation site were excavated in this season. A total number of 12 graves in the burial ground and 10 trenches in the habitation mound were excavated. A total number of 21 sarcophagi were exposed in the burials in which only six of them are still intact; the others have collapsed. These sarcophaguses are of red ware, handmade, and mostly have an oblong tub shape with legs that range in number from 6 to 12. More than 30

graffiti-bearing pot sherds and 43 antiquities were found in the burial ground. Besides, 45 graffiti-bearing potsherds and 46 antiquities were found in the habitation site.

A small hillock located 500 meters towards the northern side of the graveyard contains more than 30 stone axe polishing grooves. In an excavated trenches, about 500 dolerite flakes and over 15 stone axe rough outs were collected from the cairn heap.

#### **1.10.7. Porpanaikkottai Excavation - Season -1/ 2022-2023**

Porpanaikkottai is located at a distance of about 10 km from the Pudukottai town. The discovery of Tamili (Tamil-Brahmi) inscribed potsherds and a memorial stone inscription dates back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE suggested that the settlement was in existence since Sangam Age. The memorial stone was dedicated to a person named Kanang Kumaran, who was martyred while saving the lives of the cattle.

The excavation was carried in the Palace area in which 14 trenches were laid and one trench was laid inside the moat of the Palace.

Furthermore, seven trenches were laid outside of the fortification wall to study about the architecture of the brick structure and its construction methods.

This excavation had yielded 533 antiquities such as hop-scotches, spouts, glass bangles, terracotta lamps, spindle whorls, coins, carnelian beads, rubbing stones, bone tool points and a gold nose stud with six petals. The other important findings of the excavation were graffiti and Tamili (Tamil-Brahmi) inscribed potsherds and circular brick structures.

### **Fort Bastion / Watch Tower**

The bastion is a structure projecting outward from the fortification wall where the guard's surveillance the fort area. The outer fort wall of the Porpanaikottai has a circumference of 2.5 kilometers. The fort wall brick structure is constructed above the 5-meter mud ridge with 1 meter width around the entire Porpanaikottai fort. Around 32 bastions were identified during the Remote Sensing and LIDAR survey around the fort wall. A bastion wall with 13 coarse of brick structure was found in a trench. The fort wall



bastion is made of broken bricks. The height and width of the fort wall is 100 cm. The length and breadth of a complete bastion is 450 cm and 260 cm.

### **Circular Brick Structure**

Brick structures in Tamil Nadu are generally witnessed from the early historic to historic time period. A circular brick structure was identified at the depth of 38 cm. The brick structure had three courses in it, starting from the north-west and extending to the south-east. The diameter of the circular brick structure is 230 cm. In addition to these, a brick channel was found at the depth of 57cm in the north-east with a length of 255 cm.

#### **1.10.8. Boodhinatham Excavation - Season - 1/2022-2023**

Boodhinatham is a small hamlet situated of Pennagaram of Dharmapuri district. The entire habitation area is not in the form of a mound or a flat surface rather it has natural variations in elevation.

Totally 23 trenches in which 19 trenches were laid in habitation area and 5 trenches in the

burial ground. A thin layer of Neolithic associates is observed from the lower level of the trenches which is less disturbed for cultivation. A floor level obtained with multiple postholes in a trench records strong evidence of ephemeral signs of the site. This place is used for a seasonal short lived habitation or as camp site possibly for domestication and agricultural.

The potteries evidence of the site is rich in red ware and red slipped ware compared to that of black-and-red ware. Coarser variety pottery is yielded more in number. The antiquities obtained from the site are mostly of terracotta and the identification of few celt tools in dolerite material at the lower most level of the trenches indicate the Neolithic influence.

#### **1.10.9. Pattaraiperumbudur Excavation - Season -3 / 2022-2023**

Pattaraiperumpudur is a small village lies about 12 km from the taluk headquarters Tiruvallur. The excavations were conducted in two seasons in the years 2015-2016 and 2017-2018. The excavation at the site encountered nearly 1404 antiquities. It includes stone tools, copper

objects, iron objects, glass objects like beads and bangles; bone points, bone beads, paste beads, semiprecious stone beads, pieces of shell bangles, ivory objects, terracotta objects etc. Among them, a bulk of them belonged to the category of stone tools.

The excavation at Pattaraiperumbudur has revealed many interesting and significant aspects pertaining to the Stone Age to early historical period. The antiquities, pottery collection and the structural activity like brick lined well shows the site as a very important settlement in the region.

### **1.11. Archaeological Explorations and Excavations during 2024**

During the year 2023, large-scale archaeological explorations / excavations and underwater explorations / excavations are to be conducted in the following archaeologically and historically important sites with an overall budget allocation of Rs. 5 crores. This is one of the highest budget allocations ever witnessed in any state of India.

During 2024-2025, eight archaeological excavation proposals have been sent for placing

before the Standing Committee of the Central Advisory Board of Archaeology (CABA) for its approval. Permissions for all sites have been received and the excavations commenced by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu through Video Conference on 18.06.2024. The excavation works are also commenced in other sites on the same day. In 2024, the excavations commenced in the following eight sites namely:

<b>S.No.</b>	<b>Excavation Site</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Details</b>
1	Keeladi and its Cluster Kondagai	Sivagangai	10 <sup>th</sup> Season
2	Vembakkottai	Virudhunagar	3 <sup>rd</sup> Season
3	Kilnamandi	Tiruvannamalai	2 <sup>nd</sup> Season
4	Porpanaikkottai	Pudukottai	2 <sup>nd</sup> Season
5	Tirumalapuram	Tenkasi	1 <sup>st</sup> Season
6	Chennanoor	Krishnagiri	1 <sup>st</sup> Season
7	Kongalnagaram	Tiruppur	1 <sup>st</sup> Season

8	Marungur	Cuddalore	1 <sup>st</sup> Season
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## **1.12. New Sites identified for excavations during 2024**

### **1.12.1.Tirumalapuram – Tenkasi District**

Tirumalapuram, Sivagiri Taluk, Tenkasi District is about 6 km west of Ullar village and 10 km north-west of Vasudevanallur, 51 km north of district headquarters Tenkasi. The Megalithic burial ground is located 5.7 km northwest of the present Tirumalapuram village.

The Megalithic burial ground is spread over an area of approximately 25 acres. The burials had the remains of bones, urns and offering goods such as bronze bowl, iron implements like spears, swords, bows, arrow heads and offering pots.

A significant quantity of ceramics was collected from the site and the pottery type includes black-and-red ware, red slipped ware, black ware, white-painted black-and-red ware and white-painted black ware. This site gives us immense evidence of megalithic burials and Iron

Age settlement in this region and systematic exploration and excavation can lead us to discover prehistoric and Iron Age sites in and around this locality and will help us to understand the cultural chronology of this region.

### **1.12.2. Chennanoor – Krishnagiri District**

Chennanoor is a small hamlet situated about 50km south-east of Krishnagiri and 14 km north of Uttangarai taluk of Krishnagiri district. The huge habitation mound at Chennanoor covering an area of more than 50 acres of land located at foot hill of the hill range locally named as Chennanoor guddai. It yielded mostly fine and coarse black-and-red ware, black ware, red slipped ware and red ware. The highest point of the mound can be traced from the north-west part of the hill range. The deposit at this point might be 2.5 m thick cultural deposit. The site yielded antiquities like terracotta hopscotches, spindle whorls and votive lamps. Three rock shelters were noticed with paintings in white ochre.

Considering the invaluable artefacts and antique features at the site clearly establish that

major Microlithic and Neolithic cultural characteristic underneath the surface could bring out through the archaeological excavation. The main aim of the excavation is to identify the earliest inhabitant of the region with a pattern of incessant settlement.

### **1.12.3. Kongalnagaram - Tiruppur District**

Kongalnagaram village is located 25 km east of Pollachi on the Pollachi-Dharapuram road in Kongalnagaram Panchayat, Udumalaipettai taluk of Tiruppur district in Tamil Nadu. The habitation site covering 20 acres of land lies 1km away from the present Kongalnagaram village and the burial site consists mostly of cairn circles entombing cist burial located in and around the Kongalnagaram village.

The famous ancient trade route called Konga peruvazhi connecting the Chera capital Vanji in Kerala and Karur at the confluences of Amaravathi with Kaveri passes through Kongalnagaram. The explorations conducted at habitation-cum-burial site Kongalnagaram yielded graffiti and Tamili (Tamil Brahmi) inscribed potsherds besides a large number of russet

coated ware and black-and-red ware reflecting its cultural potentiality. It is a highly potential site to trace the origin of script in the region and to study its cultural sequence and stratigraphical distribution.

#### **1.12.4. Marungur - Cuddalore District**

Marungur is a small village situated about 12 km away from Taluk headquarter Panruti and 32 km towards west from District headquarters Cuddalore.

On the eastern side of the Marungur tank, there is a cultural mound spread over an area of about 4 acres. Light grey rouletted wares, black-and-red potsherds have been collected at the centre of the mound. In the western lower part of the mound, a brick-structure area has emerged. Bricks measuring 7 x 21 x 42 cm have been used for this construction. A large number of black-and-red ware potteries are found on the banks of the pond near the brick structure exposed area.

Two Tamili (Tamil-Brahmi) inscribed potsherds were collected from the surface. One was inscribed with "a-ma-na" and the other as "a-ta". These inscribed potsherds could be dated on palaeographic ground to 2- 3rd century BCE. Four more graffiti bearing sherds were collected in the



exploration. The above cultural material and the associated graves with urn burials suggest that this site might have inhabited by people belonging to the Iron Age culture.

The Marungur site proposes an imminent settlement associated from the occurrence of Iron Age and Early historic period at surface level with black-and-red ware and red ware potteries, Tamil inscribed potsherds and graffiti sherds.

### **1.13. Neolithic Sites Survey**

To identify Neolithic sites in Tamil Nadu, the Department of Archaeology, in collaboration with the Sharma Centre for Heritage Education, is conducting explorations and scientific investigations along the Eastern Ghats in the districts of Vellore, Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri, Tiruvannamalai, and Salem. Preliminary work involved collecting information about site settings, geo-coordinates, and their geographical, geological, and geomorphological contexts.

Upon gathering this preliminary information, the second phase of the project was conducted in the districts of Krishnagiri, Dharmapuri, and Tiruvannamalai by a team of experts. These field studies encompassed both archaeological and

geological/geomorphological aspects. During the field survey, Celt manufacturing sites were identified, and grinding groove sites were re-examined. Several samples were collected for further study. Currently, artefacts and rock samples are being analyzed with the assistance of the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR).

#### **1.14. Explorations in the Porunai (Tamirabarani) River valley**

The river Porunai, also known as Tamirabarani, finds its source in the Pothigai hills located on the southwestern slopes of the Western Ghats, a significant mountain range in South India. This river valley is delineated into upper, middle, and lower basins, each contributing to the intricate hydrological and socio-economic landscape of the region.

Spanning from its western boundary to the eastern coastal zone at the Bay of Bengal, the Porunai river valley encompasses approximately 670 villages. These villages represent diverse communities and livelihood practices, deeply

intertwined with the river's flow and the surrounding landscape.

Through comprehensive exploration efforts, nearly 160 sites of archaeological significance have been identified within this expansive river valley. The identification and documentation of these diverse archaeological sites within the Porunai river valley contribute significantly to our understanding of the region's cultural heritage, social dynamics, and historical evolution. Furthermore, such endeavours facilitate the preservation and management of these invaluable heritage assets for future generations.

### **1.15. Offshore Reconnaissance Survey of a Sangam Age Korkai Port**

The long coast of India played vital role in the transoceanic trade since Harappan times. Much of the port- based trade activities are witnessed from the time of Early Historic period. The mode of production, formation of trade routes, exploitation of natural resources both organic and inorganic, the emergence of new political order around 6th century BCE, the new navigational techniques, understanding the

existence of outside world, the development of language and script, the foreign contacts and several such congenial factors led to the development of capital cities and port towns along the entire coast of India. Many of the tangible evidences such as habitation mounds, rock-cut caves, structural temples and buildings exposed above the surface could be identified on land and are helpful in understanding the developments at a site. These tangible evidences are not limited to land sites but are expected to extend offshore also. There are chances that the setting could be better preserved from vandalism and destructions from wars, but they are difficult to locate and study due to submergence in the sea.

Unlike developed countries, the Indian subcontinent remains relatively unexplored in the sphere of nautical archaeology. There are hardly half a dozen sites were identified and none of them has a reasonably complete mapping or description or integration to landside evidences. The sites that received attention both on land and sea are Dwarka in Gujarat, Mamallapuram and Poompuhar in Tamil Nadu and Muziris (Pattinam) in Kerala. There are several ancient ports such as

Barygaza (Maharashtra), Tondi (Kerala), Korkai, Alagankulam and Arikamedu (Tamil Nadu), Kottapattinam (Andhra Pradesh), Kalingapattina (Odisha) and Tamiralipti (west Bengal) yet to receive any attention of the marine archaeologists. Besides these, there is no reliable identification of any pre-colonial shipwrecks from a coastline of over 7500 km with a timeline spanning more than two millennia of recorded history.

The Department had undertaken a preliminary reconnaissance survey in collaboration with Indian Maritime University (IMU) and the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) to identify the Korkai port of mid-Sangam Age Pandyas at a total cost of Rs.1.50 crore.

A preliminary reconnaissance first phase survey had been conducted from 02.09.2022 to 09.09.2022 and the second phase of the survey had been conducted from 23.01.2023 to 16.02.2023. In this survey, scientific and technological tools such as Model Kongsung (Model Kongsberg EM712), Sigle Beam

Echosounder (Model Kongsberg EA440) and Sub-bottom Profiler were used.

Korkai has been known to contain remnants of ancient structures through primary sources such as Sangam literature and inscriptions besides the traditional knowledge of the native population, distant memories, folklore and preliminary investigations so far. Using Sonar surveys and diver inspections, an anomalous feature was identified. The sampling operations proposed in this season will settle the ambiguity of whether it is of anthropogenic nature or not. In continuation of the search for archaeological evidences along other sites mentioned above, it is proposed to conduct a sonar survey off Alagankulam.

### **1.16. Archaeological Explorations / Excavations outside the State**

The Government has announced that the archaeological explorations/ excavation will be conducted at major sites outside Tamil Nadu to rediscover the history of ancient Tamils. These sites include Musiri (Pattanam) in Kerala, Palur in Odisha, Vengi in Andhra Pradesh and Maski in

Karnataka. The Hon'ble Chief Minister announced on September 9, 2021, that the Archaeology Department would undertake these expeditions to trace Tamil cultural roots across India and beyond.

Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology and Odishan Institute of Maritime and South East Asian Studies have conducted the excavation at Palur, Odisha in 2024. More than 600 artefacts were unearthed during the excavation. It includes glass beads, bangles, iron and copper objects. The ceramic evidence of the site is rich in rouletted ware, black-and-red ware, northern black polished ware, red slipped ware. The other important findings of the excavation were graffiti potsherds. The purpose of this excavation is to trace the relation between the Tamil Nadu and Odisha. Examining the artifacts discovered here will unveil the relationship between these two regions.

In Kerala, to understand the roots of the Chera country's antiquity and culture, research will be conducted at Musiri (Pattanam) with Kerala's archaeological experts. Additionally, joint

efforts will be made at Vengi in Andhra Pradesh, Maski in Karnataka, and Palur in Odisha. These efforts include collaborations with PAMA in Kerala, the Odishan Institute of Maritime and South East Asian Studies in Bhubaneswar, the Central University of Hyderabad, and the Central University of Karnataka's Department of Archaeology. Joint field explorations for Maski at Karnataka were conducted last month and a proposal has been submitted by the Central University of Karnataka Department of Archaeology to the Central Advisory Board of Archaeology for approval.

### **1.17. Scientific Studies**

Archaeological investigations are rendered meaningful only when the chronological sequences of events are faithfully reconstructed. The antiquities unearthed from ongoing systematic archaeological excavations must undergo scientific analysis in reputable laboratories and institutions.

The field of archaeology necessitates the application of a diverse array of technologies and scientific methodologies at various stages,



ranging from the initial discovery to the final interpretation of findings. This multifaceted approach facilitates the establishment of proper chronological frameworks and enhances comprehension of sequential cultural processes.

To identify optimal locations for archaeological explorations and excavations, the Department employs technologies such as Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) Survey, Magnetometer Survey, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Survey and LiDAR survey.

In terms of scientific analysis, the State Archaeology Department collaborates with various scientific institutions to advance the understanding of Tamil Nadu's cultural history through rigorous scientific methodologies. Partnerships include:

- Collaboration with the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences, Lucknow, and the French Institute of Pondicherry for pollen analysis and phytolith studies to investigate palaeoclimate.

- DNA analysis conducted in collaboration with Madurai Kamaraj University to explore human genome dynamics.
- Metallurgical analysis undertaken in association with the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru, to comprehend iron, steel, and high-tin bronze technologies.
- Ceramic analysis facilitated by the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, Kalpakkam, and Pune University to decipher and analysis the raw material sources.
- Examination of skeletal remains in partnership with Deccan College, Pune, to ascertain social compositions.
- The diatom studies are being carried out in association with Agharkar Research Institute, Pune

Recognizing the invaluable contributions of specialized disciplines to the in-depth analysis of archaeological findings, the Department has decided to collaborate with experts in fields such

as Archaeo-botany, Archaeo-zoology, Metallurgy, Molecular Biology, Population Genetics, Environmental Archaeology, and Linguistic Archaeology. Continuous endeavours are underway to scientifically reinterpret the cultural history of Tamil Nadu.

### **1.18. Archaeological Site Museums**

The antiquities unearthed from archaeological explorations and excavations have been preserved and exhibited for the benefit of scholars, researchers and the general public in the following 15 archaeological site museums situated in various districts of the State:-

Sl. No	Site Museums	Place / District
1)	Danish Fort Museum	Tarangambadi/ Mayiladuthurai
2)	Underwater Archaeological Museum	Poompuhar/ Mayiladuthurai
3)	Gangaikondacholapuram Museum	GangaikondaCholapuram / Ariyalur

4)	Ramalinga Vilaasam Museum	Ramanathapuram
5)	Arcot Museum	Arcot Ranipet
6)	Pre-Historic Museum	Poondi Tiruvallur
7)	Tirumalai Nayak Mahal Museum	Madurai
8)	Rajarajan Museum	Thanjavur
9)	Maratha Museum	Thanjavur
10)	Karur Museum	Karur
11)	Coimbatore Museum	Coimbatore
12)	Courtallam Museum	Courtallam/Tenkasi
13)	Tirukkivilur Museum	Tirukkivilur/ Kallakkurichi
14)	Dharmapuri Museum	Dharmapuri
15)	Keeladi Museum	Sivagangai

### **1.19. Keeladi Museum at Sivagangai District**

World class Keeladi Museum established in Kondagai, Sivagangi District at a cost of Rs.18.42

crore. The construction, spanning approximately 2 acres culminated in a museum complex encompassing a built-up area of around 31,000 square feet.

Mirroring the domestic architectural vernacular prevalent in the region, the museum edifices incorporate architectural elements such as courtyards, thazhvarams, and mandapams, embellished with motifs reflecting indigenous artistry and craftsmanship, thereby accentuating the cultural authenticity.

The museum precinct is delineated into six principal blocks, each dedicated to thematic exhibitions elucidating facets such as Vaigai and Keeladi, Agrarian and Water Management, Ceramic Industries, Weaving and Beads, Sea Trade, and Lifestyle. Furthermore, the complex encompasses semi-open and open spaces fostering interactive engagements, including traditional recreations, craft workshops, and cultural performances, thereby enhancing the experiential spectrum.

The Keeladi Museum was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu on

05.03.2023. The museum has garnered commendation for its substantive public engagement, evidenced by footfall metrics exceeding 2000 visitors on weekdays and nearly 5000 on weekends, underscoring its significance as a cultural and educational landmark.

### **1.20. Keeladi Open Air Site Museum at Sivagangai District**

The excavations at Keeladi have unveiled a treasure trove of historically significant sites, including ancient buildings, ring wells, and industrial structures. To bring these remarkable discoveries to life, an open-air site museum will be created, offering a holistic and immersive educational experience. This museum is designed to enlighten both present and future generations about Keeladi's profound historical significance.

In a major step forward, the Government had issued orders for the establishment of this open-air site museum, which will cover an extent of 4.48 acres. With an estimated budget of Rs.17.10 crore, this ambitious project is poised to begin construction soon. Once completed, it will serve as a vibrant showcase of Keeladi's rich

archaeological heritage, capturing the imagination and interest of visitors from all walks of life.

### **1.21. Porunai Museum at Tirunelveli District**

The Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu announced in the State Assembly on 09.09.2021 that the “Porunai museum” would be set up at Tirunelveli, with all modern amenities to showcase the artefacts obtained in Sivagalai, Korkai and Adichanallur. In 2022, the Government sanctioned a sum of Rs. 33.02 crore for setting up the museum.

The Porunai Museum is slated to occupy a 10-acre expanse near NH 45 at Reddiarpatti, adjacent to Tirunelveli city. Envisioned to encompass an area of 55,500 square feet, the museum will incorporate traditional architectural elements such as courtyards, pillars, and corridors, echoing regional aesthetics.

A work order has been issued to the Public Works Department and so far 50% of the construction works were completed.

Concurrently, efforts are underway to formulate the Story Line/Concept Note, a

foundational aspect of the museum's establishment, aimed at delineating the thematic narrative and conceptual framework.

### **1.22. Gangaikondacholapuram Museum at Ariyalur District**

On 28.11.2022, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu undertook a visit to the excavation site situated at Gangaikondacholapuram. During this visit, it was highlighted that the Chola dynasty, under the reign of its monarch Emperor Rajendra Chola-I, established extensive trade networks and diplomatic relations, notably with China. In acknowledgment of these historical achievements, the Tamil Nadu Government announced plans to establish a museum aimed at commemorating and disseminating these glorious legacies on a global platform.

The establishment of the Gangaikondacholapuram museum on the designated site in an extent of 4.14.00 hectares at a cost of Rs. 22.10 crore is in progress.



### **1.23. Development of Madurai Thirumalai Nayak Mahal Site Museum**

Conservation and display works at a cost of Rs.8.27 crore for the Tirumalai Nayak Mahal, Madurai have been approved by the Ministry of Culture under the Museum Grant Scheme with an 80:20 sharing pattern. (Central share 80% = Rs.661.76 lakh + State Share 20% = Rs.165.44 lakh). The Public Works Department has commenced the work. At present, the works relating to the upgradation of Palliarai, Natakasaalai and the library complex in Thirumalai Nayak Mahal are in progress.

### **1.24. Upgradation of Site Museums**

During the Budget Speech for the year 2022-2023, it has been announced that "Tribal Museum at Courtallam, Tenkasi District, Pre Historic Site Museum at Poondi in Tiruvallur District, Hero Stone Museum at Dharmapuri will be upgraded at an estimated cost of Rs 10 crore.

#### **1. Poondi Site Museum**

Government orders have been issued for the construction of a new building for pre-historic site

museum at Pattaraiperumpudur Village with an estimated cost of Rs. 2.70 crore and the works are in progress, will be completed by this year.

## **2. Courtallam Site Museum**

Government orders have been issued for the construction of a new building for Courtallam folkarts and tribal site museum at Courtallam Village in Tenkasi District at a cost of Rs. 2.51 crore and the works had been commenced and will be completed in this year.

## **3. Dharmapuri Site Museum**

Government initiated to establish a herostone site museum over an extent of 0.21.04 hectares in Adhiyaman Kottai in Nallampalli Taluk of Dharmapuri District. The detailed project report and estimate is under preparation and the works will be commenced in this year.

### **1.25. Epigraphy**

Epigraphy, encompassing the study of inscriptions found on various mediums such as rocks, pillars, temple walls, copper plates, metals, pottery, woods, palm leaves, textiles, conch shells, murals, and coins, represents a captivating

and instructive field of inquiry. These inscriptions serve as paramount sources for reconstructing the history and cultural milieu of ancient civilizations, constituting primary documentary evidence to corroborate legal, socio-cultural, literary, linguistic, archaeological and historical assertions.

The establishment of a dedicated epigraphy wing within the Department in 1966 aimed at systematically copying inscriptions from diverse substrates, including rocky surfaces, stone pillars, slabs, temple walls, copper plates, ceramics and palm-leaf manuscripts. Presently, this wing maintains approximately 26,142 estampages of inscriptions sourced from 38 districts, with ongoing efforts focused on recording inscriptions in Pudukkottai, Sivagangai, and Thoothukudi districts. Of these estampages, 15,945 inscriptions have been deciphered and 10,197 have been published across 67 volumes.

In the fiscal year 2019-2020, the Government of Tamil Nadu allocated Rs. 2 crore to initiate a special initiative aimed at expediting the process of copying, deciphering, and publishing inscriptions. This project is slated for a

five-year duration. The resultant publications will be catalogued under the series "Tamil Nadu Inscriptions."

To facilitate this endeavour, fifteen experts have been engaged to decipher approximately 3,000 inscriptions annually, yielding a total of 6,200 deciphered inscriptions to date, with 2,877 inscriptions published across 15 volumes. Additionally, five epigraphical assistants have been appointed on contractual terms to produce estampages of unrecorded inscriptions and to identify new inscriptions within the state.

### **1.26. Tamil Nadu Institute of Archaeology and Museology**

The Institute of Epigraphy underwent a comprehensive overhaul in the academic year 2020-2021, subsequently renamed as the "Tamil Nadu Institute of Archaeology and Museology" in 2021-2022. Since its inception in 1974, the institution has operated as an educational-cum-training centre located at the departmental headquarters.

The Tamil Nadu Institute of Archaeology and Museology offers several specialized diploma

programs tailored to students with diverse academic backgrounds. A two-year Post-Graduate Diploma in Archaeology, admitting 20 students annually from 2020, targeting individuals with post-graduate degrees in various disciplines such as Humanities, Social Sciences, Chemical Sciences, Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences, Geo Sciences, Engineering, and Computer Science.

A two-year Post-Graduate Diploma in Epigraphy, enrolling 10 students per annum from 2021 to 2022, designed for candidates holding post-graduate degrees in Tamil, Indian History, History, Ancient History and Archaeology, or History and Archaeology.

In 2022-2023, the institute introduced a two-year Post-Graduate Diploma in Heritage Management and Museology, admitting 10 students annually. Eligible candidates must possess a degree in Civil Engineering or a post-graduate degree in Humanities, Social Sciences, Chemical Sciences, Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences, or Geo Sciences.

Each of these diploma programs comprises four semesters, encompassing a total of 24 papers covering theoretical and practical aspects of Archaeology, Epigraphy, Heritage Management, and Museology. Distinguished scholars from various academic institutions provide training to students. A stipend of Rs. 6,000 per month is disbursed to each student, an increase from Rs. 5,000 previously.

The Tamil Nadu Institute of Archaeology and Museology prioritizes hands-on training, encompassing a spectrum of activities such as tool-making, bead-making, bronze casting, structural and chemical conservation, explorations, excavations, documentation, display of antiquities, and copying and deciphering of inscriptions, supervised by experts in respective fields.

Furthermore, students partake in field visits to UNESCO World Heritage Sites and monuments under the purview of various governmental agencies, including the Archaeological Survey of India and the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology. These visits enable students to

comprehend the architectural, sculptural, epigraphical, and historical significance of Tamil Nadu's cultural heritage.

In addition to domestic field visits, students also engage in a comprehensive All India - Field visit to heritage sites and monuments across other states of India. Notable sites visited include those in Odisha and Karnataka, where students gain insight into the archaeological, historical, and cultural richness of these regions.

The Institute also offers training in on-going archaeological excavation sites managed by the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology, as well as conservation training at the Rajarajan Site Museum and the Maratta Darbar Site Museum in Thanjavur. Furthermore, students receive training in the conservation of archival materials, applications of geospatial technology in archaeological and historical research (such as QGIS, Remote Sensing, and GIS Software), and lithic knapping.

## **1.27. Rock Art in Tamil Nadu**

The Rock-Art of Tamil Nadu manifests in two principal forms: petrograph and petroglyph, each presenting distinct characteristics and contexts.

Rock Paintings: These are further categorized based on their location:

- **Natural Rock Shelters:** Paintings found in natural formations such as caves or overhangs.
- **Megalithic Dolmens:** Paintings adorning megalithic structures, providing insight into prehistoric burial practices.
- **Manmade Rock-Cut Caves:** Paintings within artificial caves crafted during historical periods, often associated with religious or secular activities.

Rock Bruising and Engravings: This category encompasses markings made by incising or bruising the rock surface, often portraying symbols, figures, or abstract designs.

To meticulously document the Rock-Art of Tamil Nadu, the Department of Archaeology has



undertaken a comprehensive survey, deploying an expert team comprising 8 members hailing from diverse disciplines including Archaeology, Anthropology, Geology, Folklore, and Art History. The survey encompassed the following villages:

- Karikiyur, The Nilgiris District
- Sirumalai, Dindigul District
- Usilampatti, Madurai District
- 6 sites in Villupuram District
- 49 sites in Krishnagiri District
- 21 sites in Tiruvannamalai District
- 13 sites in Tiruppur District

During this survey, a rich array of rock art themes emerged, illustrating various aspects of ancient life such as hunting, gathering, warfare, cattle rearing, and equestrian activities, indicative of an agro-pastoral subsistence pattern prevalent in antiquity. The predominant colours observed in these paintings were red and white ochre, underscoring the artistic preferences and material availability of the period.

As part of the documentation process, the Department plans to compile and publish the findings in a structured publication format, with the intention of systematically disseminating information about the documented sites to a wider audience. This publication will be released in phases, ensuring comprehensive coverage and detailed analysis of the Rock-Art heritage of Tamil Nadu.

Currently, the Department of Archaeology has successfully completed the initial phase of the Rock Art report, focusing on documentation and analysis of 46 sites out of a total of 239 identified sites across Tamil Nadu. This phase represents a significant milestone in the comprehensive survey and documentation endeavour undertaken by the Department.

### **1.28. Documentation and Digitization of Graffiti and Tamiḷi (Tamiḷ-Brāhmī) Inscribed Potsherds of Tamil Nadu Exploring the cultural link between Indus Script and Graffiti Marks**

This two years project was launched during the year 2022-2023 with grant approval of 77 lakhs with aims to document, compile and analyse

the graffiti bearing potsherds and Tamili inscribed potsherds unearthed in archaeological excavations of Tamil Nadu and compare those graffiti marks with Indus script to understand the cultural relationship between the two.

The documentation of 13,702 graffiti bearing potsherds from 93 archaeological sites were completed both specimen photography and AutoCAD drawings. The database was also created. Based on the drawings, the preparation of sign table is in progress. Once the sign table is prepared, the similar signs available in Indus script will be prepared and analysed.

The documentation of all Tamili inscribed potsherds were initiated and 1197 inscribed potsherds were documented. Preparation of report is in progress and the first draft comprising the chapters on introduction, palaeography, orthography and chronology are completed.

### **1.29. Archaeological and Historical Atlas of Tamil Nadu**

The project is initiated with an aim to prepare an Archaeological and Historical Atlas of Tamil Nadu from Lower Palaeolithic times down to

Vijayanagara times covering a period from 1.50 mya to 1600 CE. The application of the Geographical Information System would serve as the base for preparing maps. The atlas will portray the rich cultural heritage of the Tamil country from the earliest times to the present day. It is envisaged to prepare the atlas through a combination of maps, photographs, drawings, and texts with using Geospatial Technology with an idea to cater to the need of the student and academic communities and also the general public. The final product will be a both physical and digital model. So far, 50% data collection and 25% of map preparation had been completed, the works are in progress.

### **1.30. Government Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Centre**

A manuscript, characterized by its handwritten composition on various materials such as paper, bark, cloth, metal, or palm leaf, holds significant scientific, historical, or aesthetic value. This form of documentation spans hundreds of different languages and scripts,

encapsulating diverse cultural and intellectual traditions.

It's important to note that manuscripts differ from historical records like epigraphs on rocks, fireman, and revenue records, which offer direct insights into historical events or processes.

The establishment of the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Centre in Chennai traces back to a rich historical lineage dating back to 1861. This institution owes its inception to the monumental endeavours of individuals such as Colonel Colin Mackenzie, C.P. Brown, and Prof. Pickford. Since its inception, the Government of Tamil Nadu has been actively engaged in the collection and preservation of manuscripts, underscoring its commitment to safeguarding cultural heritage.

Presently, the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Centre operates under the auspices of the Department, situated on the 7th floor of the Anna Centenary Library in Kotturpuram, Chennai. This repository houses a remarkable collection comprising 72,748 rare

manuscripts and 25,373 reference books, covering a wide array of subjects including Mathematics, Astronomy, Siddha, Ayurveda, Unani, Vedas, Agama, Architecture, Music, Fine Arts, History, among others. These manuscripts, penned in languages such as Tamil, Sanskrit, Marathi, Urdu, Arabic, and Persian, are meticulously preserved to ensure their longevity.

The Library also benefits from generous donations of manuscripts from various sources. Notably, the District Principal Sessions Court, Nagercoil has contributed 43 boxes of manuscripts containing local accounts to enrich the library's holdings. Moreover, the institution has made significant strides in digitization efforts, with over 21,00,000 manuscript pages digitized to date. Among these, 5,00,000 pages distributed across 3,500 manuscript bundles are accessible online through the official website ([www.tnarch.gov.in](http://www.tnarch.gov.in)), facilitating broader access and scholarly research endeavours.

### **1.31. State Manuscript Mission**

In the fiscal year 2019-2020, the Government of Tamil Nadu allocated a recurring

fund of Rs. 50 lakh to initiate the "State Manuscript Mission," aimed at the identification, preservation, and digitization of manuscripts within the state. As part of this mission, a dedicated manuscript centre was established within the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Centre. This centre serves as a focal point for coordinating the identification and preservation efforts of manuscripts dispersed across various individuals and institutions throughout the state. To date, the project has identified a staggering 1,00,000 manuscripts earmarked for preservation and digitization, ensuring their accessibility to future generations.

Operating across five distinct regions, the State Manuscript Mission has made significant strides in its digital documentation endeavours. With over 5,15,000 manuscript pages digitally recorded thus far, the project is progressing steadily towards its overarching objectives.

### **1.32. Manuscripts Resource Centre**

The "National Mission for Manuscripts" (NMM), operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, is dedicated to

the comprehensive collection of manuscripts across India. In this endeavour, the NMM has designated the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library in Chennai as the "Manuscripts Resource Centre" (MRC) for the state of Tamil Nadu. This strategic partnership aims to streamline the collection and digitization of manuscripts within the region.

To date, the MRC has successfully digitized 66,110 manuscripts, forwarding them to the National Mission for Manuscripts headquarters in New Delhi. This collaborative effort ensures the preservation and accessibility of Tamil Nadu's rich manuscript heritage on a national scale.

### **1.33. Important activities 2023-2024**

In honour of the Muthamizharinagar Kalaingar centenary celebration, the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology orchestrated a series of events, showcasing a commitment to scholarly engagement and academic discourse.

- Firstly, essay competitions targeting school students across all districts of Tamil Nadu were organized in three



phases, spanning the months of August, October, and November 2023. Participants were tasked with exploring the theme of "Ancient Tamil Society", with all entrants receiving participation certificates. Noteworthy participants from each district were honoured, with the top three students receiving cash prizes of Rs. 5000/-, Rs. 2000/-, and Rs. 1000/- for the first, second, and third place respectively, along with certificates of commendation, bestowed in the presence of the Chief Educational Officers of the respective districts.

- Subsequently, a State Seminar convened on the 21st and 22nd of September 2023 at Thanjavur Tamil University, centred on the theme of "Recent Researches on Tamil Nadu History". This forum witnessed the presentation of 71 research papers by distinguished archaeologists, scholars, researchers, professors, teachers, and students, subsequently compiled and published as a comprehensive

Proceedings titled "Recent Researches on Tamil Nadu History" and the proceedings were also released on this event.

- Furthermore, a National Seminar convened on the 22nd and 23rd of November 2023 at Madurai Kamaraj University, under the theme of "Reflections on Cultural Development: An Archaeological Perspective". This seminar facilitated the presentation of 41 research papers by archaeologists, scholars, researchers, and students, subsequently compiled and published as a Proceedings titled "Reflections on Cultural Development: An Archaeological Perspective." was also released.
- Lastly, an International Seminar convened on the 15th and 16th of December 2023 at the Anna Centenary Library, Kotturpuram, Chennai, under the theme of "Ancient Tamil Nadu". This seminar featured the presentation of 18

research papers by both national and international Tamil scholars and archaeologists, subsequently compiled and published as a Proceedings titled "Ancient Tamil Nadu".was also released.

- On the occasion of India Day, observed on the 16th and 17th of September 2023, a cultural exposure program was organized by the trainee officers of the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration in Mussoorie, Uttarakhand. At the request of these trainee officers, the program featured a photographic exhibition showcasing artefacts unearthed from the Keeladi excavations in Tamil Nadu.

### **1.34. Conclusion**

The resurgence of interest in Archaeology and Heritage within our State has opened up significant avenues for the exploration and preservation of our rich historical legacy. This renewed focus presents an extensive scope for delving into the past, with the objectives of uncovering, safeguarding, promoting, and

celebrating the diverse heritage of Tamil Nadu. Through these endeavours, we aim to contribute not only to our collective well-being but also to the advancement of knowledge, ultimately situating the history of Tamil Nadu within the broader global narrative.

In Tamil Nadu, the traces of human presence date back approximately 1.5 million years, as evidenced by archaeological findings at Attirampakkam near the Poondi Reservoir in Thiruvallur taluk. The reconstruction of this vast expanse of history spanning 1.5 million years poses a monumental and formidable challenge, one that the Department is committed to undertaking.

The Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology endeavours to embark on comprehensive archaeological research initiatives, leveraging multidisciplinary approaches in collaboration with esteemed institutions worldwide. Our researchers will actively engage in ongoing field projects encompassing various facets such as monument conservation, local archaeological explorations and excavations,

documentation of cultural vestiges, establishment of site museums, and the meticulous copying and deciphering of inscriptions. These efforts will be facilitated through strategic partnerships with reputed institutions and universities both within the country and abroad.

By fostering interdisciplinary collaborations and embracing innovative methodologies, we aim to unravel the layers of Tamil Nadu's rich historical tapestry, shedding light on its profound cultural heritage and contributing to a deeper understanding of its significance within the global historical landscape.

**Thangam Thennarasu**  
Minister for Finance and  
Human Resources Management

## Annexure

S.No.	Place	District	Year of excavation	Nature of Site (Period)
1	Korkai	Thoothukudi	1968-1969 2020-2021	Early Historic
2	Panchalankurichi	Thoothukudi	1968-1969	Modern
3	Vasavasamudram	Kanchipuram	1969-1970	Early Historic
4	Anaimalai	Coimbatore	1969-1970	Megalithic
5	Pallavamedu	Kanchipuram	1970-1971	Medieval
6	Karur	Karur	1973-1974 1994-1995	Early Historic
7	Panayakulam	Dharmapuri	1979-1980	Early Historic
8	Boluvampatti	Coimbatore	1979-1980 1980-1981	Medieval
9	Kovalanpottal	Madurai	1980-1981	Megalithic
10	Thondi	Ramanathapuram	1980-1981	Early Historic
11	Gangaikonda cholapuram	Ariyalur	1980-1981 1986-1987 2008-2009 2020-2021 2021-2022 2022-2023	Medieval
12	Kannanur	Tiruchirapalli	1982-1983	Medieval
13	Kurumbanmedu	Thanjavur	1984-1985	Medieval
14	Palayarai	Thanjavur	1984-1985	Medieval
15	Alagankulam	Ramanathapuram	1986-1987 1990-1991 1992-1993 1994-1995	Early Historic

			1996-1997 2014-2015 2016-2017	
16	Tirukkovilur	Villupuram	1992-1993	Early Historic
17	Kodumanal	Erode	1992-1993 1996-1997 2019-2020 2020-2021	Megalithic & Early Historic
18	Sendamangalam	Villupuram	1992-1993 1994-1995	Medieval
19	Padavedu	Tiruvannamalai	1992-1993	Medieval
20	Tiruttangal	Virudhunagar	1994-1995	Microlithic
21	Poompuhar	Nagapatinam	1994-1995 1997-1998	Early Historic
22	Maligaimedu	Cuddalore	1999-2000	Early Historic
23	Teriruveli	Ramanathapuram	1999-2000	Early Historic
24	Mangudi	Tirunelveli	2001-2002	Microlithic
25	Perur	Coimbatore	2001-2002	Early Historic
26	Andipatti	Tiruvannamalai	2004-2005	Early Historic
27	Modur	Dharmapuri	2004-2005	Neolithic
28	Marakkanam	Villupuram	2005-2006	Medieval
29	Parikulam	Tiruvallur	2005-2007	Palaeolithic
30	Nedunkur	Karur	2006-2007	Megalithic
31	Mangulam	Madurai	2006-2007	Early Historic
32	Sembiyankandiyur	Maiyiladuthurai	2007-2008	Megalithic
33	Tarangampadi	Maiyiladuthurai	2008-2009	Modern
34	Rajakkalmangalam	Tirunelveli	2009-2010	Medieval
35	Talaichankadu	Maiyiladuthurai	2010-2011	Medieval

36	Alambarai	Kanchipuram	2011-2012	Modern
37	Srirangam	Tiruchirapalli	2013-2014 2014-2015	Medieval
38	UkkiranKottai	Tirunelveli	2014-2015	Medieval
39	Pattaraiperumbudur	Tiruvallur	2015-2016 2017-2018 2022-2023	Later Palaeolithic
40	Keeladi	Sivagangai	2017-2018 2018-2019 2019-2020 2020-2021 2021-2022 2022-2023 <b>2024</b>	Early Historic
41	Adichanallur	Thoothukudi	2019-2020 2020-2021	Iron Age
42	Sivagalai	Thoothukudi	2019-2020 2020-2021 2021-2022	Iron Age
43	Mayiladumparai	Krishnagiri	2020-2021 2021-2022	Neolithic
44	Vembakkottai	Virudhunagar	2021-2022 2022-2023 <b>2024</b>	Early Historic
45	Thulukkarpatti	Tirunelveli	2021-2022 2022-2023	Early Historic
46	Perumbalai	Dharmapuri	2021-2022	Early Historic
47	Kilnamandi	Tiruvannamalai	2022-2023 <b>2024</b>	Iron Age
48	Porpanaikkottai	Pudukottai	2022-2023 <b>2024</b>	Early Historic
49	Boothinatham	Dharmapuri	2022-2023	Neolithic
50	Tirumalapuram	Tenkasi	<b>2024</b>	Early Historic
51	Chennanoor	Krishnagiri	<b>2024</b>	Neolithic

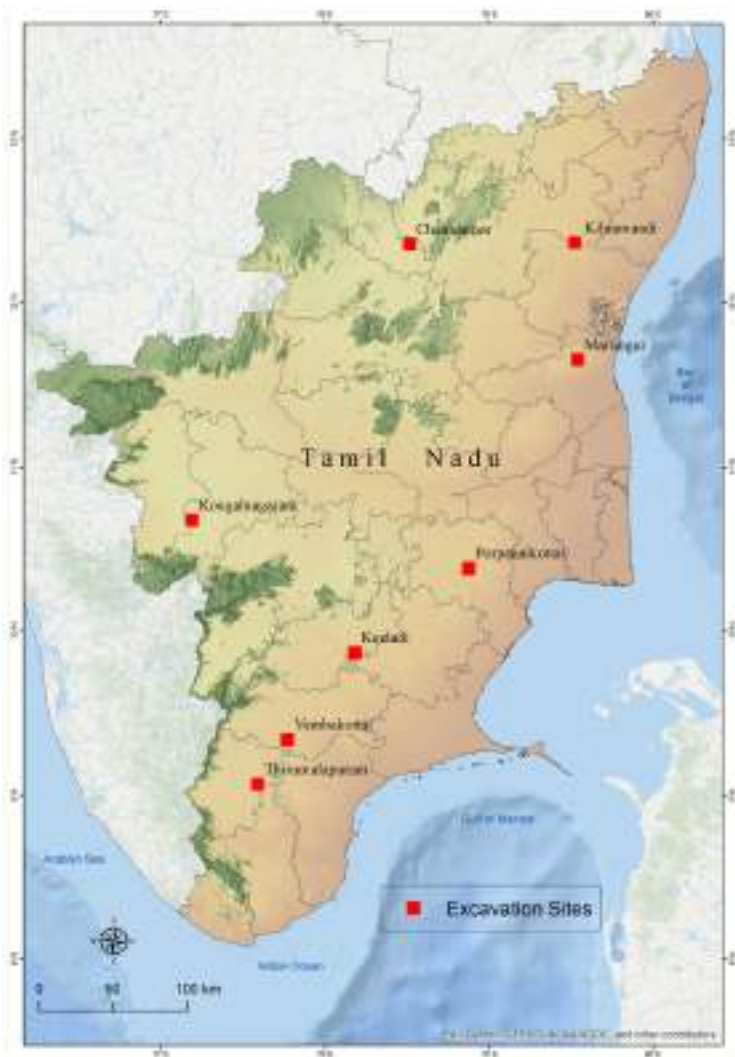


52	Kongalnagaram	Tiruppur	<b>2024</b>	Early Historic
53	Marungur	Cuddalore	<b>2024</b>	Early Historic



The Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu inaugurated the excavation works to be conducted by the Department of Archaeology at eight places in 2024 at the Secretariat on 18.06.2024.

## Tamil Nadu Department of Archaeology Sites to be excavated in Tamil Nadu



## Tamil Nadu Department of Archaeology Excavated Sites in Tamil Nadu





The Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu released two books namely Perumbalai Excavation Report and Tamil Nadu Inscriptions Vol-XXVIII at the Secretariat on 18.06.2024.



The Hon'ble Minister for Finance and Human Resource Management released a book titled "Recent Researches on Tamil History" in the State Seminar held at Tamil University, Thanjavur on 21.09.2023 on the occasion of Muthamizharignar Kalaignar Centenary Celebrations.



The Hon'ble Minister for Finance and Human Resource Management released a book titled "Reflections on Cultural Development : An Archaeological Perspective" at the National Seminar held at Madurai Kamaraj University on 22.11.2023 on the occasion of Muthamizharignar Kalaigal Centenary Celebrations.

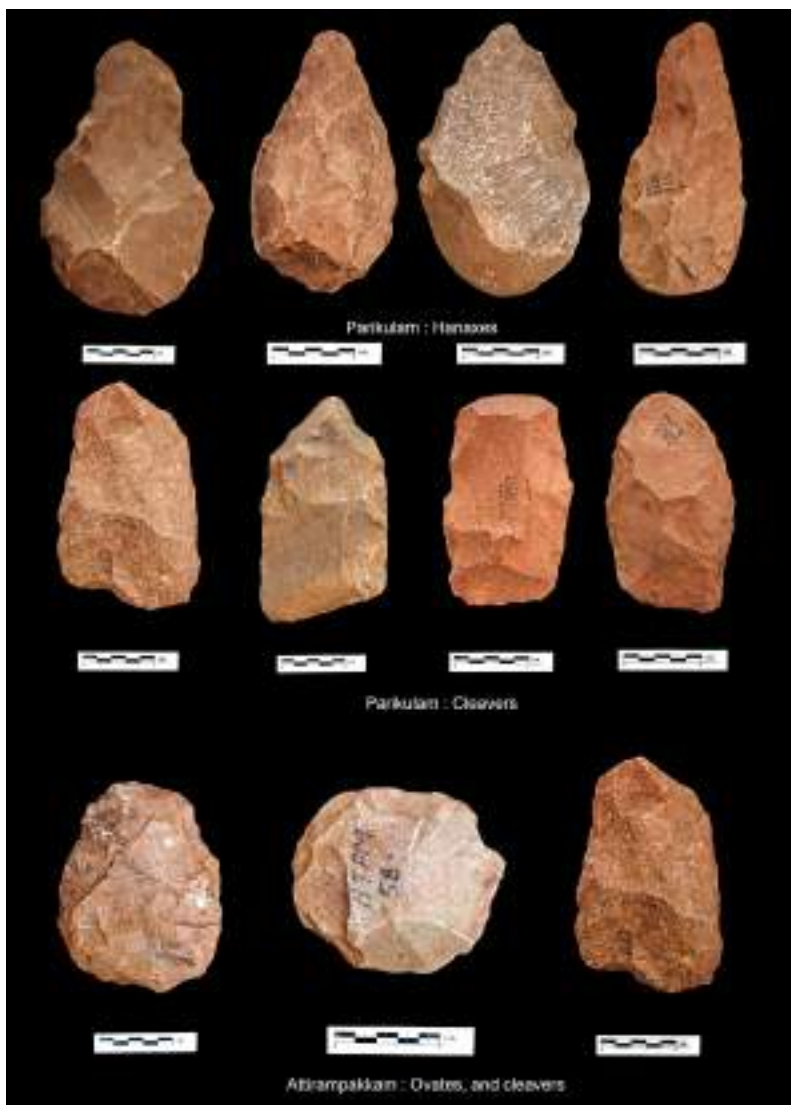


The book "Ancient Tamil Nadu" was released by the Hon'ble Minister for Finance and Human Resource Management in the International Seminar held at Anna Centenary Library, Chennai on 15.12.2023 on the occasion of Muthamizharignar Kalaigarn Centenary Celebrations.





**The Hon'ble Minister for Finance and Human Resource Development and Additional Chief Secretary to Government, Tourism, Culture and Religious Endowments Department visited the excavation site at Gangaikondacholapuram on 5.8.2023.**



Palaeolithic tools, (Period: 15 lakhs to 3.75 lakhs years old) Attirambakkam and Parikulam, Tiruvallur district.



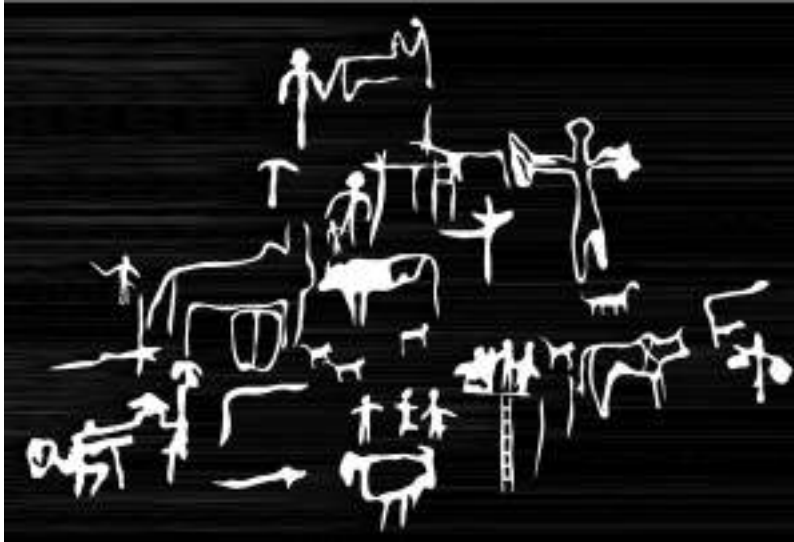
Anthropomorphic (4000 years old) Mottur, Tiruvannamalai district.



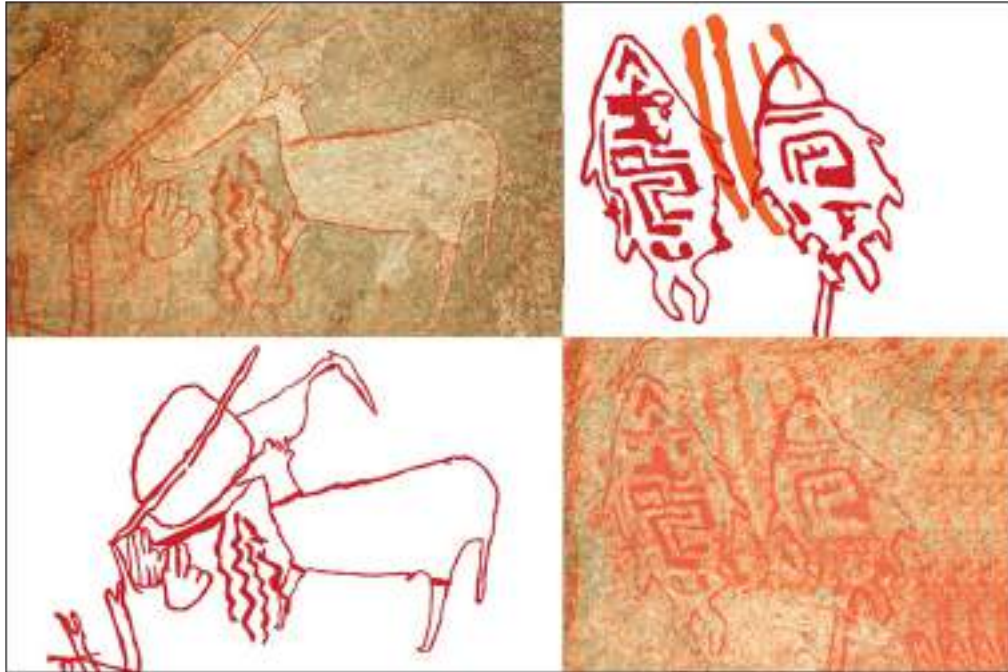
Menhir(4000 years old), Kodumanal, Erode district.



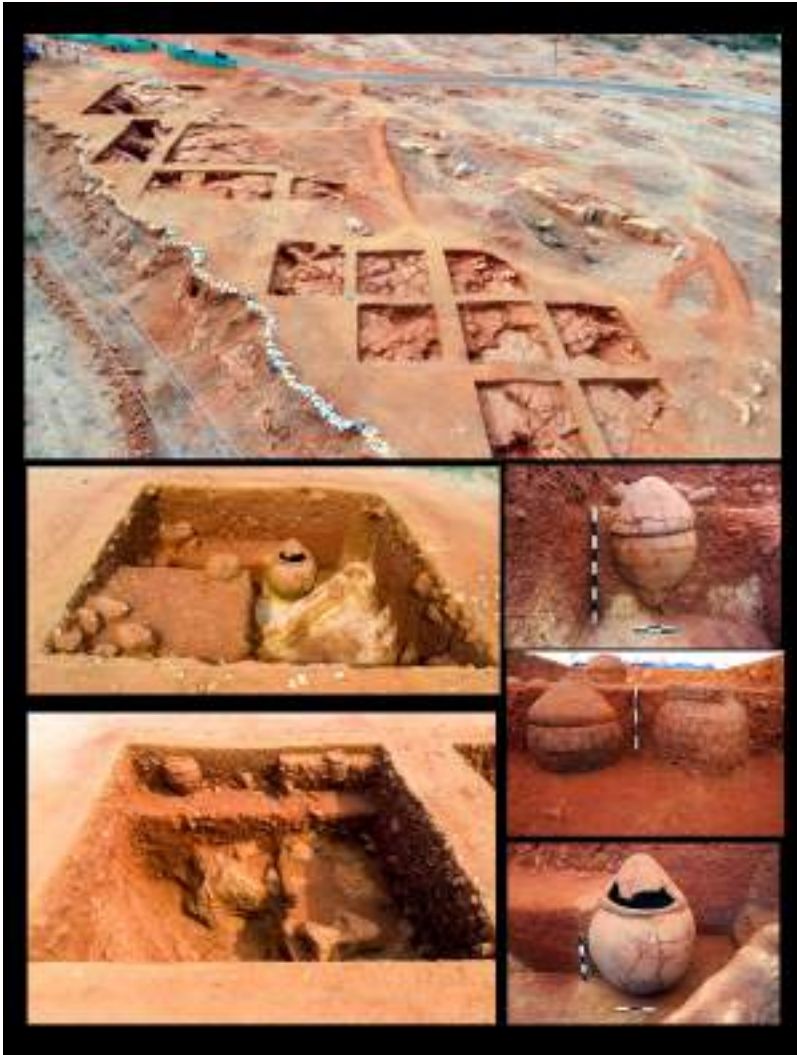
Dolmen - Iron Age (3500 years old), Mallachandram, Krishnagiri district.



Rock Art (3500 years old),  
Nallanpillaipetral, Villupuram district.



Rock Paintings (3500 years old), Settavarai, Villupuram district.



Sivagalai excavation site (3200 years old),  
Thoothukudi district.





Conch objects (2800 years old),  
Korkai, Thoothukudi district.



Black-and-Red ware potteries of graveyard dates back to 2500 years old,  
Porunthal, Dindigul district.



Precious stone beads dates back to 2500 years old,  
Kodumanal, Erode district.



Floor with lime mortar (2500 years old), Keeladi, Sivagangai District.



Tamili inscribed Pot-sherds (2000 years old), Thulukarpatti, Tirunelveli district.



Roman gold coins (1<sup>st</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE),  
Karukkakurichi, Pudukkottai district



Hero stone (7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century CE),  
Mathikonpalayam, Dharmapuri district.



**Monolithic temple at Kazhugumalai, known as the "Ellora of the South India",  
Early Pandya period, 8<sup>th</sup> century CE, Thoothukudi district.**





The Pallava period 'Marpidugu Perunkinaru' known as 'Swastik Well' (Dantivarman- 800 CE), Tiruvellarai, Tiruchirapalli district.



Moovar Koil built by Boothi Vikramakesari of Velir kudi (10<sup>th</sup> century CE),  
Kodumbalur, Pudukkottai district.



A temple built by Eesana Siva Pandita, the guru of Rajendra Chola-I (11<sup>th</sup> century CE),  
Kuzhambandal, Tiruvannamalai district.



Ring well and Granite pillar (11<sup>th</sup> century CE)  
Gangaikondacholapuram excavation, Ariyalur district.



Giant granary, (17<sup>th</sup> century CE), Tiruppalaithurai, Thanjavur district.



Hero stone (14<sup>th</sup> century CE),  
Bhikkualli, Dharmapuri district.



The students of Tamil Nadu Institute of Archaeology and Museology (2022-2024).  
A field trip to the Robert Bruce Foot Archaeological Museum, Sangaganagallu, Karnataka.



**Illustrative work on Stone Tools during field visits to the students of Tamil Nadu Institute of Archaeology and Museology.**





Hands-on training on art and architecture in Malaikkottai cave temple, Tiruchirappalli to Tamil Nadu Institute of Archaeology and Museology students.