

## CHAPTER—II

### HISTORY

#### I. Prehistoric, proto-historic and archaeological periods

Pondicherry may be said to have had roughly four distinctive stages of its cultural past, namely, the Prehistoric, the Archaeological, the Historical and the Modern. In the widest ambits, these stages could be taken as having prevailed in the remote geological past, prior to the first half of the first millennium B.C.; in the second half of the first millennium; and from the Christian epoch downwards to the XV century A.D., and in the last four centuries till Independence. We are now concerned with only the first two stages.

The second stage is essentially taken up by the widely observed and recorded provenance of the funerary culture known as the 'Megalithic', in the Iron Age, when the entire South India and with it, Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry area, received their highest stage of material and temporal prosperity which became truly the base and the foundation, as it were for the building of the grand mansion of the regional culture, of which the third and fourth stages are the corporeal entities. The earliest and in a sense indeed the remotest and scarcely well recorded or well established stage is that of the dwindling hours of the primitive prehistoric stone age, when man emerged from the mere hunting stage and the oppressive thralldom of the environment and the inherent dangers, and turned out to be capable of exploiting the innate reflexes and limbs of his, towards controlling the ecological factors and ensuring for himself a steady supply of food in the first instance and the other elementary amenities that sedentary schedule that was the sequel, offered. This Late Stone Age terminal and beginning of the geological 'present' is represented by a heterogeneous microlithic culture and the emerging Neolithic culture traits like polished stone axes (or celts), advent of subsistence agriculture and advent of hand-made pottery and domestication of animals for farming and foraging for the first time.

The narrative below starts from the later to the earliest stage backwards into time. This has the advantage of appreciating the causative chain or link of each stage with the previous, proceeding from the known to the unknown, as is the archaeological method of enquiry.

### The Era of Indo-Roman Trade :

The advent of the Mediterranean maritime entrepreneurs into the Indian Ocean catering to the Imperial needs of Rome was one of the most eventful stages in the cultural as well as the commercial map of Southern India. The unknown author of the maritime chronicle 'Periplus Maris Erythraci' had much information to give about the hazardous voyages in the open Arabian Sea and along the coastal marts, punctuating the indented peninsular coast all the way round from the mouth of Narmada to the mouth of the Ganga-Brahmaputra estuary. Baryagaza (modern Broach), Calleana (Kalyan), Muziris (Cranganore), Nelcynda, Colchoi, Khaberis emporium, Sopatma, Poduca, Maisolea, and so on form a long list of the busy centres of trade on the Indian Coast, which had much to offer by way of fancy, fashionable and prestigious goods such as silk, ivory, pepper and pearl. The Roman court life was eager to absorb all this and more, first as status-symbols, and additionally as the prologue to the carving out of colonies and enclaves beyond the land-locked Mediterranean in the fabulous Orient, for which the Roman gold issues were sufficient lure, on the *quid pro quo* basis. The prospect in the long range was of great promise and the adventure implicit in these perilous though exciting voyages, was an additional challenge to the Roman imagination. The result was that the sea-routes were repeatedly reconnoitered and the oceanic phenomenon carefully explored. Then, to their luck, Hippalus the Greek, discovered that the monsoon winds in the Indian Ocean have this peculiar knack of swinging the boats in the high seas, around the Indian-Sri Lanka peninsular tip, into the Coromandel Coast without any humming and having at the wheel or at the sail-ropes. Having thus obtained the means of cruising into the calm bay-waters of the east coast of South India, the frequency of their visits to these Tamil marts became a matter of smooth schedule. This roused, as only such periodic alien economic incursions into the shores could rouse, the cultural and commercial thinking, and local autonomous chieftains of the Chera tract, Pandyan kingdom, Cholanadalam and Oymanadu (the area of South Arcot District) were busy exploiting this impact to increase their status and gold standard, not to mention the cultural acclimatization and interchange of thought and heritage, that such a direct mixing-up afforded. The term 'yavana' which was just a literal equivalent of these alien Greeks (and Romans) became a bye-word for endearment for aesthetics, for extravagance and a key to the worlds beyond in the West.

The Romans, besides gold, were able to offer the choicest mediterranean wine, Italian preferred, brought in large corrugated amphora jars, with their elongated body, tapering peduncular bottom, tall narrow neck and two flattish strap handle loops on either side of the shoulder and neck. There had been considerable remains of these amphora jars noted at Poduca (Arikamedu) and other Roman marts of the east coast, which by their resinous residue at the bottom of the interior

give evidence of the wines they had held in those distant times. Such emporia or marts were generally divided by the Romans into 'noumenon emporion' (lawful market) and 'enthesmon emporion' (privileged market). The latter carried special legal provision for trading to be fixed or cancelled by the local chiefs of the mart area. The Tamil ports trading with the Romans had seemingly only such an arrangement and not a regular commercial port obligated to the Romans for trade. Permanent agencies of the Graeco-Roman traders might have been posted at these emporia, and their organization was perhaps the model for the Portuguese, Dutch, French and British factories of the much later date.

In a similar way, there was the clear distinction made in the 'Periplus' of the nature of trade in India, respectively the terminal trade and the transit trade. The former was the appearance at the coastal marts of the products of the sub-continent itself, while the later was only the relay of the goods produced from farther afield, as from Central Asia, or China, which were routed through the Indian ports. With Southern India, the traffic was essentially of the former kind and the spices, muslins, pearls and jewel-stones produced here involved thus the exchange of great quantity of gold and silver coins and it is implied by Periplus that 'in no year does India absorb less than 50 million Cesterces'. The economic factor involved in this bulk trade was no doubt the respect that Indian merchants and rulers had for the integrity of Roman coinage which became shaken only from the time of Nero's debasement of his silver currency in 63 A.D. Subsequently also, the trade continued or even increased, but the currency was 'cancelled' by an incision across the issues, and taken on its bullion value and not its status as a legal tender seemingly also to put coins such as these out of circulation, once these passed into Indian hands. The 'defaced' currency recovered from various 'hoards' and scattered occurrences in excavations now, cover a wide range of time from Nero and Vespasian to Hadrian and even Constantine. The largest number of hoards are accounted for from South India, especially Tamil Nadu and the Coimbatore region of that State. It is not surprising this is so, as the Coimbatore District virtually formed the tri-junction of the ancient Chera, Chola and Pandyan kingdoms, and much social, military, cultural and economical transactions and trends were confined to the area covering Coimbatore to Karur (anciently the Chera capital perhaps). This is one of the reasons why we do have many important marts on the east coast, as already listed earlier, including Arikamedu or Virampattinam, but very little or no gold coins were recovered from these eastern marts owing to the centrifugal trends operating towards the Coimbatore-Karur area, and the practical influx of circum-peninsular traffic around Kumari cape was only from about the second half of the first century A.D. Consistently with this, no coins earlier than Nero or Vespasian are recorded from Sri Lanka, and the story is the same for much of the Bay of Bengal marts of Tamil Nadu.

Arikamedu or the bristling coastal village of Virampattinam, south of Pondicherry, was first noticed for its relics of the opening centuries of the Christian era when a local French antiquary collected finds there in 1937, among which a gem (now lost) with an *intaglio* portrait of Augustus was a distinguished relic. Subsequent more business-like investigations by the French workers at Virampattinam and Arikamedu recovered some sherds which were only subsequently to be identified by Dr. Mortimer Wheeler, as the Italian red glazed 'Arretine' ware and amphorae forms, apart from Roman lamp fragment and a second *intaglio* in untrimmed gem, with cupid and bird motif in it. This necessitated firm and systematic investigations which were carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India under Dr. Mortimer Wheeler as its then Director General in 1945. The work was resumed by Mon. J.M. Casal, the well-known French archaeologist in 1947-48. This had, for the first time, produced a firm and wide'y applicable datum for the associated local culture. Among the important structural evidences recovered from Arikamedu excavations were a substantial brick structure, evidently a ware house, and another series of tanks or 'dyeing vats' apparently for carrying on a textile trade of some significance.

The site also produced a class of pottery known as the 'black and red ware' which is found generally associated in great bulk typically with the Iron Age megalithic burial monuments of South India and especially Tamil Nadu. More will be mentioned of these monuments in the succeeding pages. This pottery by its occurrence at Arikamedu along with the dated 'Arretine' and rouletted ware, tends to give, as it were a *terminus post quem* to its provenance in this area and in Tamil Nadu. This also helps in the reconstruction of the cultural history of this region which is remarkable for an awakening of classical Tamil literature and the blossoming of the Tamil ethos along with it resulting in the great kingdoms like those of the crowned heads, Chola and Pandya in the south and Pallavas in the north.

Thus, the excavations at Arikamedu near Pondicherry had several important consequences. It identified the 'Poduca' of the classical geographers of the West, and made the name of Puduvai more meaningful; established the site of the Indo-Roman trading station and the activities there, in terms of the link with the mediterranean; gave a datum line for first century A.D. deposits in Tamil Nadu and all along the coastal parts of Andhra and Bengal, and even in land areas of Karnataka, etc., by the identification of the Arretine and Rouletted ware with their counterparts in the Roman areas of the Mediterranean; enabled archaeologists to distinguish the types of Roman antiquities which were found in the east coast Roman marts from those of the west coast where a pottery akin to the Roman 'Samian ware' was invariably associated with the period of Roman impact in the early historic cultures; by the

association of black and red ware that was found in the sites in the Roman levels, gave a posterior terminal date to this ware which is associated invariably elsewhere with megalithic Iron Age cultures in Tamil Nadu and the rest of South India.

The advent of wine, table-ware beyond local skill, lamps of a strange sort, glass and cut gems, with the traders from far off mediterranean was indeed a new stage in the leisurely life of the people till then. During the excavations, at the northern or seaward end of the site, at water level, was found a large simple brick structure more than 150 feet long which was obviously a ware-house. South of this were courtyards walled with brick and timber containing brick tanks and cisterns, drains, wells and soak-pits, the last made in the typical local fashion of superimposed tiers of terracotta rings. Beyond was a formidable revetment in brick with a batter and surviving to about 1.83 m. height which had been traced by the French archaeologist Casal to nearly 76.25 m. eastwards from its broken river end joint. This was probably a tank or reservoir but equally plausibly, might have been a defensive revetment. Thus, storage and industrial activity is evidenced by the above that could be connected to the 'Agaritic' dyed muslin, mentioned by Periplus as the export of the region.

It would seem that most of the brick structures were posterior to the stoppage of arrival of the arretine imported ware from Italy which would have been around c. 45 A.D. The supply of wine, however, continued unabated. The depth of deposits of nearly 4.83 m. containing amphorae jar fragments under the warehouse, seems to corroborate the fact that the age of the site could be beginning at least a century prior to the stoppage of arretine ware. But the main function and contacts of the site continued till about the close of the second century A.D.

A feature of the imported arretine pottery was that they carried four potters, stamps, namely, VIBIE, ITTA, CAMVRI and C. VIBI OF, mostly in the northern (warehouse) sector of the site. These were well-known potters and merchants of Arezzo and Rome in the first century A.D. Of equal importance is also the Roman glass, including a typical 'pillared' bowl of the first century A.D. type, and Roman lamps. Roman coins were completely absent, seemingly due to the reason mentioned already earlier that imported currency were immediately cancelled and converted into bullion, as no monetary exchange was to be envisaged.

### **The proto-historic period :**

*Later stage :* It has already been mentioned that the advent of the foreign impacts on our coasts was mainly due to the opening up of maritime impulses everywhere in the world especially in the Graeco-Roman period of the second half of the first millennium B.C. It gained momentum seemingly from the time Alexander the Great ventured into the Indian soil for expanding his empire and met with a

foeman worthy of his steel in Porus in the Punjab. His Viceroy Selukes Niketar was again successfully stalled by the Mauryan chief Chandra Gupta who contracted a matrimonial alliance also in the bargain. It is said that among the prized objects of tribute paid to the former was included some choice specimens of Indian iron and steel weapons. The Asokan empire was seemingly able to expand upto the lower South India mainly by this metallurgical development. Thus, immediately, Indian enterprises in the 'black gold' namely, iron had been at its zenith, around this time. It is this advanced stage of the Iron Age that is the period that finds in Pondicherry and its environs in South Arcot District, the proliferation of the typical diagnostic trait of South Indian Iron Age, namely the 'megalithic' funerary tomb structures erected for and over the dead kinsmen by the indigenous communities of the area, and truly indeed in all parts of Tamil Nadu as well. It should be appropriate to outline, in a brief manner, the genesis and distribution of the megalithic types in this region. The culture which apparently sprung from the western seaboard around northern Karnataka area, as an integrated cultural impulse working into the iron using people (who had already become a viable group by the adoption of a typical ceramic namely, black and red ware, became alike the hall—mark of the advanced ethos of the community by the cult significance of the practice, as also the expression of the highly specialised skills of the artisans in iron metallurgy, both for attack and defence as for the application of these tools for quarrying, dressing, cutting and erecting the funerary burial tombs of the dead in that society. The *modus operandi* for the burial was that the dead body is exposed to nature and carrion birds and animals of a secluded clearance in the forest nearby, and after the flesh and skin had been fully removed and the bones have also been detached in the process, these bones and skull—or indeed such as survive the onslaught of preying animals—are collected and temporarily kept in an urn. After several members of the same clan or family have passed away, these secondary and fractional bones and skulls of multiple individuals are collected together and interred into terracotta legged coffins called *sarcophagi*, which are themselves placed inside a 'dolmen' chamber tomb. This tomb comprises multiple orthostats and a hood or cap-stone. Where perfect rock for quarrying and dressing is available, these are fixed in the form of a 'cist' or box like coffin chamber, partially sunk into the soil, which has four regular side slabs, a floor slab and a flattish cap-stone. The eastern side of the dolmen or cist, as the case may be, generally contains a rough gap or a regular port hole opening, closed by a door slab or block, in either case. Outside this orientation feature—which has a general association with the direction of the rising sun, but is likely also to be southwards in some regions—there is also invariably a causeway-like passage formed for a stretch, suggestive of a passage and portal of a dwelling house. The other end of this passage is generally the bounding circle of stones which most frequently delimits a cist or dolmen tomb, and is bearing a full heap of earth and rubble or

cairn which partially covers the cist monument making only the cap-stone visible over the heap of the tomb. In the case of the dolmen, however, the cairn heap bounded by the stone circle may cover upto the cap-stone or may keep the dolmen tomb chamber practically standing out in the landscape like a colony of huts. The interior of the tomb chamber contains, in the case of the dolmen, the burials only in sarcophagi, single or multiple, while in the case of the cist tomb, the bones etc., are laid right on the floor slab itself. The other grave furniture include weapons and objects of iron like lances, swords, daggers, arrow tips, axes or adzes (sometime with a ring fastener around it for hafting it on to a wooden handle, hoes, etc., stone objects like pestles, mortars, occasional neolithic celts and pounders and ring-stones brought into the tombs, out of the chronological context, and merely indicative of the presumable earlier neolithic cultural stage in the same region or in the neighbourhood, or as a legacy to this specific communities in whose tomb they are to be found; beads of terracotta, stone, gold and semi-precious stones like agate, chert, chalcedony or jasper, some of which occasionally are also liable to be of the 'etched' variety, pick out and filled up in Kaolin with a variety of designs suited to the shapes of the beads; shell and chank objects, occasional gold ornaments; a large variety of pots and pans, mainly of the black and red ware (which have the whole of the interior black including the outer rim, while the entire exterior is otherwise red or pale pink) but also comprising other types like all-black ware, and red wares of well-fired texture. The typical shapes are conical vessels which can be placed only on ring stands which, as a sequel, are also in plenty, tulip vases and knobbed handled lids, funnel shaped pots, bowls, dishes and pans of various sizes, apart from storage jars and three-legged pots. It is interesting to note that at least one type, namely the ring stand—and also in the analogous black ware type—is also noticeable in far off Egypt in the Nubian Valley (where now the Aswan High Dam stands) and datable there to the middle of the second millennium B.C. A variety of markings, mostly after firing, are engraved on some of the pots. These markings are single as well as multiple, and recent studies have brought out the feature that at least fifty of these 'graffiti' marks, as they are called and are found all over South India, in these black and red ware fabrics, are akin to the corresponding pictographic script forms of the Harappan (or Indus civilization) culture. All these, though not making any coherent reading, do indeed emphasise the albeit distant links that these separated regions must have had, at one time, the vestigeal relics of which these 'graffiti' marks and ring stands constitute.

A type of tomb that invariably accompanies the cist or dolmen tomb in Tamil Nadu especially is the mere stone circle. This comprises a ring of stone blocks or slabs, well planted into the ground within which, inside a cairn heap, are to be found generally multiple burial urns which might contain inside bone fragments, pots and

iron objects and such other knick-knacks. These cluster around the dolmen or cist tombs and also preponderate in many of the sepulchral site, in gross numbers. It is not yet clear if they represent a diverse community grouping and if so, what its mode of erection was. These urns all appear, however, to have been interred in any given stone circle, at the same time. These burials, on the whole, however, are of an inferior order, with very little grave furniture and no outstanding buried features or articles for which reason, one might be tempted to guess that they might be poorer sections of the community buried with less of ostentation. All the same, the fact that no urn is generally found inside a cist or dolmen, suggests that they might yet be having a variation or diversity underlying them.

It is however, to be noted here that the statement above regarding urn not being found inside a cist or dolmen is to be qualified as holding good for most but not all regions. For instance, in Pondicherry region and in the adjacent South Arcot District, it is common to find sarcophagi, interred inside regular slab cist monuments with port-holes etc. The dolmen type which is more prevalent in Chengalpattu District does not generally fancy an urn inside this tomb, but has always only sarcophagi coffins. The regions of the Coimbatore and Salem Districts and partly Pudukkottai District, show the feature of urns being found inside a cist-tomb, whereas the classic and seemingly the progenitor region of the port-holed slab-cist tomb type, namely, Karnataka does not have, as already mentioned while describing a cist, any inner burial coffin or container and has the bones and grave goods placed directly on the floor. On a consideration of the fact that the urns which are found inside the tombs of Coimbatore, Salem and Pudukkottai are large sized pyriform urns with peduncular or pointed bottom, these are perhaps different from the comparatively smaller and thinner urn types to be found inside stone circle monument type. Such large sized urns are to be found in great numbers in the necropolises of Madurai, Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli Districts. This would show that these districts which have only extensive urn fields for their burial places, in the pre-historic times, and do not have any 'megalithic' appendage around or upon the burials, might have, during their expansion or dissemination in the neighbouring region come into touch with the cist or the dolmen types and by impact and partial absorption, had produced hybrid types like cists with sarcophagi as in Pondicherry area or cists with urns, as at Pudukkottai, Salem, Coimbatore, etc.

With this background, we must examine the types found in Pondicherry area. These are of two main kinds, namely, urn-burial sites like Mutturapalaiyam and slab cist types with port-hole, roof slabs, stone circle etc., as in the case of Suttukanni. These two sites were excavated by the French archaeologist (Casal) in the fifties of this century and the excavated relics along with some Arikamedu Indo-Roman excavated data are to be found in the Pondicherry Museum at No. 1, Rue Romain Rolland.

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A type of tomb that invariably accompanies the cist or dolmen tomb in Tamil Nadu especially is the mere stone circle. This comprises a ring of stone blocks or slabs, well planted into the ground within which, inside a cairn heap, are to be found generally multiple burial urns which might contain inside bone fragments, pots and

The site at Muttirapalaiyam produced a large number of such urns. They were invariably without any external megalithic or stone built features, not even a stone circle, and are generally of more than medium size, in the urn-forms. They had rich burial pottery but comparatively poor articles of other kinds. A feature of interest among the black and red ware pottery of this site, is the flat based ware which are generally found only rarely in other sites of the black and red ware, but is also to be seen here, in the Arikamedu site, alongside the Roman levels, of around the first century A.D. date and later. This would indicate a new impact on the pottery forms of the region, caused by the foreign trading enterprises, by which flat based bowls, which are not of the Indian ilk generally, were also being manufactured. They are doubtless suggestive of the very fading out of the black and red ware use itself and with it the advent of new and changing patterns of life and industries in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry, as elsewhere. They cease to belong to the proto-historic legacy and were standing four square on the early historic threshold.

The other important megalithic type, namely the cist tomb, has been, as already briefly referred to, exemplified at Suttukanni. It is, by all standards a hybrid zone of tomb architecture. It revealed in the centre of a carefully arranged stone circle, a flush-to-the-ground cap-stone slab, clearly indicating the presence of the cist tomb within. It did not, however, have any substantial cairn heap, perhaps, from the beginning since it would have otherwise overwhelmed the cap-stone—which is not generally the diagnostic character of the set-up of the cist tomb elsewhere. Excavations of this tomb also by the French archaeologist Casal showed that the large cist was found within a few inches of the cap-stone base and was, though not lacking a symmetry and general organisation in the placement of the four orthostatic slabs, was not with ideal care, as happened in earlier stages, but with the side slabs having a tendency to go out of plumb. It was, however, standing in good shape, and its two important features were the replacement of a normally circular and fairly large port-hole opening by a somewhat irregular and small 'kennel hole', asymmetrically cut in one part of the base of the eastern slabs; and the occurrence of a sarcophagus inside the cist chamber resting on the floor level of the cist. This sarcophagus also had evolved way beyond the characteristic Chengalpattu terracotta legged sarcophagus coffin container and had a comparatively long and substantial series of legs, not going well with its relatively low upper coffin container proper, suggestive of a later stage in the cist tomb architecture of the region as a whole. There was not much of grave goods or iron objects or other antiquities. But, strangely enough, just below the floor level of this tomb, was found a pit, which contained a *cache* of gold jewellery of necklaces, ear-rings etc. From the very nature of the pit in relation to the tomb and its levels, it is clear that the *cache* is earlier to the tomb as such. However, as it is unlikely that the ornaments were belonging to a stratigraphically and cultural remote period and as the pit which had been dug for erecting the cist should have some relationship with the *cache*, it is to be

inferred that the grave either contained a pit circle type originally, within which the jewellery was interred and later on the cist tombs came to be erected in it, or more plausibly prior to the erection of the cist tomb, soon after the ground level of the pit had been prepared, the *cache* for some unknown reason had been buried, so as to be free perhaps from grave robbing. The fact that the sarcophagus and the capstones were undisturbed, as seen by the excavators, would show that the original purpose of the erection of the cist in secreting the *cache* below the floor, had been fully served. The entry of sarcophagus into a cist is found only in Pondicherry region and the adjacent South Arcot District, whereas the corresponding feature as at Coimbatore and Pudukkottai was the entry of an urn into a cist as noted already. The pottery from the megaliths generally are different from those of the black and red ware producing layers of the site at Arikamedu, and by that very token, the black and red ware types known from megaliths elsewhere in the adjacent districts of Tamil Nadu.

*Early Stage :* The proto-historic period had an earlier phase everywhere in India, when the end of the Stone Age barbarism gave place to food-producing pastoral communities who produced hand made pottery and had domesticated certain farm animals, and were using for their tool equipment chipped, pecked and polished stone axes, adzes and the like, generally fabricated out of dolerite or basalt. The raw material is largely available in the form of veins running into the Cuddapah series. But where such material is not available and had to be brought from afar, it is evident that there would either be no chance of these tools having been made or no context for its borrowal from others who have access to it. In Tamil Nadu, these sources are identified in North Arcot and Salem Districts especially, and in the western part of Madurai in a small measure. Thus this 'Neolithic' stage of human development, in so far as its tool facies are concerned, are to be confined to these districts, as exemplified at Paiyampalli in the first mentioned, several sites in the hills of the Salem District, and in T. Kallupatti of the last mentioned. It is likely that certain western hilly parts of the South Arcot District might have had the chance of borrowing these tool making impulses from their knowledgeable neighbours. But certainly, the eastern seaboard of this district and neighbouring Thanjavur District had no chance of acquiring this trait. It could also be that the ecological compulsions of the littoral might have caused the continuance of the Later Stone microlithic industries. In this connection, it is pertinent to note that all along the eastern coast, oscillations of the sea-level in the remote past have been surveyed and identified, in the main, and found indicated by the 40 ft, 20 ft, and 10 ft. benches above sea-level, by the U.N. Ground Water Project Programme of the Kaveri basin also, in recent times. It would seem that these three former sea-level horizons, which have now become raised, represented from a cultural point of view variously the Later Stone Age; the Later phase of the proto-historic (as affiliated to the Iron Age and black and red ware described earlier) and ending with the early

inferred that the grave either contained a pit circle type originally, within which the jewellery was interred and later on the cist tombs came to be erected in it, or more plausibly prior to the erection of the cist tomb, soon after the ground level of the pit had been prepared, the *cache* for some unknown reason had been buried, so as to be free perhaps from grave robbing. The fact that the sarcophagus and the cap-stones were undisturbed, as seen by the excavators, would show that the original purpose of the erection of the cist in secreting the *cache* below the floor, had been fully served. The entry of sarcophagus into a cist is found only in Pondicherry region and the adjacent South Arcot District, whereas the corresponding feature as at Coimbatore and Pudukkottai was the entry of an urn into a cist as noted already. The pottery from the megaliths generally are different from those of the black and red ware producing layers of the site at Arikamedu, and by that very token, the black and red ware types known from megaliths elsewhere in the adjacent districts of Tamil Nadu.

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Indo-Roman Settlements along the coast in the early historic time; and finally the historical dynasties like Pallavas as at Mamallapuram, etc. Chronologically they are relatable, on the basis of archaeological evidence now, with the Teri sand dune microlithic sites of Tirunelveli and Ramanathapuram Districts datable to 10000 B.C.-4000 B.C.; with the excavated sites of wharf, etc., in Kaverippattinam (Pumpuhar) on the mouth of Kaveri datable to c. 250 B.C.-100 A.D.-Arikamedu, Nattamedu etc.; and the last 10 ft. level to the port cities of the Pallavas, as around the VI-VII century A.D. It is seen also that, after the 'Iron Age, to Roman stage, the sea-level dropped appreciably and this might indeed have led to the abandoning of these places as worthy ports. This is clearly seen in a site like Korkai of the Pandyas in Tirunelveli District, which after its Roman contacts had lost its sea-level situation and is now located nearly 6.5 kms. inland. It was this that led to the present day Kayalpattinam (Cael of Marcopolo) to rise in importance near Korkai, from the early mediaeval times. This evidence is widely confirmed by high sea-level changes in other stable regions of the earth with sea coasts, as in the Mediterranean, the Pacific islands, etc.

### The prehistoric stage :

This Late Stone Age horizon has its own vestiges in Pondicherry region in the nature of reddish brown ferruginised lateritic high ground, as seen immediately west of Pondicherry town and running south along the Neyveli site. This high-ground presents a fossil, anciently marine-level and represents the consolidation of the sand dunes, on the Tirunelveli Teri analogy. Occasionally, microlithic tools of chert, chalcedony, crystal, agate and jasper have been picked up from these pelley lateritic high-ground, though systematic study of this area has yet to be done, as in other areas. The area, in its laterite, apparently presents an overlap of the detrital laterite (as of the Red hills-Pulaleri of the North Chengalpattu District) of the Late Stone Age, mixed with the Holocene ferruginised dune sand of the time bracket mentioned earlier (c. 10000 B.C.-1000 B.C.) and thus it would be necessary to identify and separate both in vertical section and in tool assemblage, the microlithic facies of these remote times.

Of the early Stone Age (Middle to late Pleistocene) times, Pondicherry area had been comparatively untouched by human settlement and was perhaps under the sea, as could be seen from the earlier discussion.

To sum up, human activity might have dawned, for the first time, in Pondicherry area somewhere about 12,000 years ago, and was largely nomadic but mainly given to small game with diminutive weapons like microlith, used for arrow-tip, knife-edges and the like. Then around 1000 B.C. or later, richer and settled life should have been acquired by the men, invested with Iron Age tool equipment, pottery

utensils and agricultural pursuits. They also acknowledged the cult of the dead and raised affectionate monuments to the dead kinsmen, in the form of 'megaliths' and urn burials, and there was maritime activity also. They rose into spectacular limelight with the attraction into their shores, of aliens like Greeks and Romans around the Christian epoch.

## II. Early period

The beginnings of the early history of the area cannot be traced with much precision. It appears that the empire of Asoka, the Great Mauryan Emperor, extended as far as Ponnaiyar or Gadilam in South Arcot District and most likely included the area covered by the modern Pondicherry region. Mamulanar, a Sangam poet, says that the Mauryas led a warlike expedition to the south to subjugate the chieftain of Mohur (identifiable with the place of the same name in South Arcot District) when the Kosar were not able to conquer him. This is indirectly confirmed by the Tibetan historian Taranath who refers to Bindusara's conquest of the Deccan and South India lying between the two seas. Asoka in his inscriptions makes a distinction between the territories and peoples within his Empire and those outside by using the term *vijita* to denote the former and terms *anta*, *prachanta* and *pratyanta* to denote the latter. Those who were thus outside his Empire in the South were the Cholas, Pandyas, Keralaputras and Satyaputras. There were two branches among the Cholas who are referred to in plural, one of them according to Ptolemy (second century A.D.) ruling from Orthura identifiable with modern Uraiyur (a part of the present Tiruchchirapalli) and the other from a place called Arkatos, identifiable with Arkkadu, now a village near modern Thanjavur which was in the Chola period the headquarters of an administrative division called Arkkattu Kuram. Thus, if the Cholas who were in Asoka's period ruling over the lower Kaveri delta on the borders of his Empire in the south it may be presumed that the Empire of Asoka extended as far as the Gadilam in the South Arcot District and thus included a good part of the South Arcot District and the Pondicherry area. The region appears to have been occupied by a people who were mentioned in the Mackenzie manuscripts as the Kurumbaras.

Not much is known about political conditions in the Pondicherry area till one comes to the period of the Pallavas of Kanchipuram in the fourth century A.D. Early Tamil literature mentions two territorial divisions in the northern part of the Tamil country, namely Aruvanadu and Aruvavatalainadu. The Aruvanadu was probably the same as Arunoi mentioned by Ptolemy with its capital at Malanga ruled by Basaronaga. Malanga was obviously the same Mavilangai. This Aruvanadu covered the region between the Gadilam and Ponnaiyar in which were included the Pondicherry territory besides Marakkanam and Tindivanam in the