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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**IRON AGE BURIALS OF THIRUKKOVILUR REGION IN KALLAKURICHI DISTRICT,  
TAMIL NADU: A STUDY**

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**Abstract**

Archaeology is the study of ancient humans and their society by reconstructing environmental settings and cultural patterns, typically from their remains. Often, history and Archaeology interact together to provide a broad view of the human experience. Great civilizations have been brought to light through archaeological excavations in recent times. Thus, according to Archaeology, Tamil Nadu history dates back to pre-historical times and archaeological evidence points to this area as one of the longest-continuous habitations in India. In history, megalithic is the most important one. The megalithic age was known as the Iron Age. This period was constructed of large slabs and blocks of stones. Megaliths, or structures built with large stones, are present all around the world in large numbers. The megaliths in India are mainly from the Iron Age. Megaliths, originally meaning large stones, are monuments that represent the megalithic period. Constructed mainly as commemorative memorials or burial sites, these monuments are known to be the earliest surviving human-origin structures constructed mainly as commemorative memorials or burial sites. These monuments are known to be the earliest surviving human-origin structures.

**Keywords:** Megalithic burial, Menhir, cairn circle, Urns, Cist burial and Dolmen in Thirukkivilur Region.

**Introduction**

The study area of the Thirukkivilur region/taluk (Latitude 11°58.34.2 N; Longitude 79°12.30 E) is situated in Kallakurichi district, Tamil Nadu, lies

Latitude 11°58.34.2 N; Longitude 79°12.30 E having an area of 7194 Sq.km. and falls in the north and north-eastern part of the Kallakurichi district. This region is situated on the southern bank of the river Then-pennaiyar and it is located in the northern

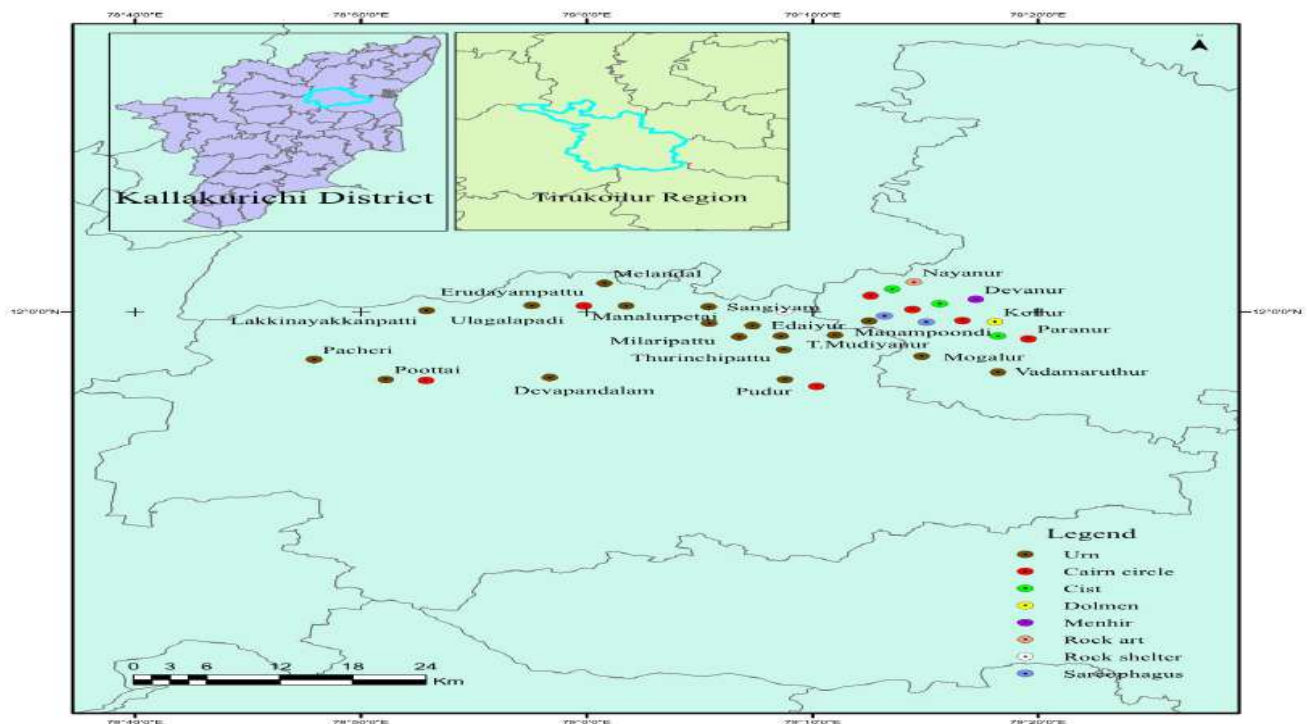
border of the Kallakurichi district. It shares its boundaries with the Bay of Bengal in the East, Cuddalore in the South-East, the district of Thiruvannamalai in the North, Salem in the South-West and Dharmapuri district in the North-West. A greater part of the district is covered by metamorphic rocks and this gneissic series occupies the western part of the region. This area enjoys a suitable climate with moderate temperature and this area receives heavy rainfall than other regions of this district.

### Iron Age

Thirukkivilur region is in the Kallakurichi district with very significant archaeological remains. The history of this district is a long one from the Pre-Historic Period. The Iron Age remains of megalithic burials such as Stone Circle, Cairn Circle with Cist, Transfected Cist, Urn, and Menhir (Kollur and Devanur) are reported in this region. The name of this region shows its fame and history. The Neolithic

culture succeeded the Iron Age in Tamil Nadu, where Black-and-Redware was its most significant pottery type. In this context, it is noted that Megalithic culture is considered a synonym for Iron Age. Megalith is derived from two Greek words: *me-gas* meaning big and *lithos* meaning stone. Usually, Megalithic tombs and related monuments were constructed with large slabs or blocks of granite. They were either selected as such in a natural state or roughly quarried and trimmed in desirable need. The first millennium BCE of India is characterized by the Period of Iron Age. It is believed that during this time the initial social process of Kollur and Devanur in 1876 by J.H. Garstin<sup>1</sup>. In 1980, B. Narasimhaiah explored this region. He documented cairn circles, urn burials and anthropomorphic figures. In 1997, Rajan explored the North Arcot and South Arcot districts. He noticed stone circles, cairn circles with implecist, urns, hero stones and historical sites.

Figure 1: Types of Iron Age Burials in Thirukkivilur Region







**Figure 6:** Cairn circle with Dolmen, Kollur



**Figure 8:** Cairn circle, Puthur



**Figure 7:** Dolmen, Kollur



**Figure 9:** Urn Burial, Pachcheri

**Table 1:** List of Iron Age sites in Thirukkivilur Region, Kallakurichi District -Tamil Nadu

<b>S.NO</b>	<b>Name of the site</b>	<b>Latitude</b>	<b>Longitude</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Typology</b>
1	Manampoondi	11.98534	79.208456	Thirukkivilur	Urn
2	Vadamaruthur	11.937104	79.270485	Thirukkivilur	Urn
3	Edaiyur	11.958989	79.112507	Thirukkivilur	Urn
4	Mandapam (Keeranur)	11.961570	79.183311	Thirukkivilur	Urn
5	Thurinchipattu	11.937983	79.145689	Thirukkivilur	Urn
6	Melariattu	11.977652	79.122454	Thirukkivilur	Urn
7	Manalurpetai	12.008584	79.089835	Thirukkivilur	Urn
8	Sangiyam	11.993089	79.118160	Thirukkivilur	Urn
9	Melandal	12.047839	79.013210	Thirukkivilur	Urn
10	Mogalur	11.926995	79.247185	Thirukkivilur	Urn
11	Nayanur	12.019334	79.214097	Thirukkivilur	Cairn circle Cist
12	Devanur	11.996684	79.219904	Thirukkivilur	Cairn circle, Cist, Menhir, sarcophagus
13	T. Mudiyanur	11.960201	79.143425	Thirukkivilur	Urn
14	Erudayampattu	12.022366	78.987500	Thirukkivilur	Cairn circle

15	Kollur	11.984290	79.250990	Thirukkivilur	Cairn circle, cist, dolmen, sarcophagus
16	Lakkinayakkanpatti	12.002334	78.881819	Thirukkivilur	Urn
17	Pacheri	11.921289	78.798618	Thirukkivilur	Urn
18	Paranur	11.972555	79.290143	Thirukkivilur	Cairn circle and cist
19	Pudur	11.896494	79.167148	Thirukkivilur	Cairn circle and urn
20	Sripathanallur	12.010114	79.029069	Thirukkivilur	Urn
21	Poottai	11.926832	78.863743	Thirukkivilur	Cairn circle and urn
22	Devapandalam	11.901075	78.920267	Thirukkivilur	Urn
23	Ulagalapadi	12.010892	78.959491	Thirukkivilur	Urn and Menhir
24	Vadamaruthur	11.937104	79.270485	Thirukkivilur	Urn
25	Anthili	11.967879	79.229607	Thirukkivilur	Cairn circle

### **Types of Burials**

These burials can be broadly divided into two based on the architectural features. Groups, namely, a cairn circle, cairn circle with cist, urn, and dolmens.

#### **Cairn Circle**

was covered and entombed with cairns. In this case, the cairns were not raised more than 60 cm and the cist is projected out to one to two meters above the

The cairn circles were constructed using round boulders with limited cairn packing in the Centre. As noted above, their height above ground depended upon the nature of the terrain. If the land was soft with sediments, either the cist or urn was placed about 30 to 60 cm below the ground level and then the pit

ground level. The diameter of the circle varied from 6 to 20 m.

## **Dolmen**

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

## **Cist Burial**

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

## **Sarcophagus**

A sarcophagus primarily denotes a stone coffin, but a majority of sarcophagi are made of terracotta. In Tamil Nadu, these sarcophagi are found individually as well as associated with Iron Age megalithic burials.

**Menhir:** A Menhir consists of a dressed or undressed freestanding monolithic stone with its base driven into the ground. These monuments vary in height from short to tall and are frequently planted in the northern to southern parts of the circle.

## **Urn Burial**

One of the predominant burial practices found in Tamil Nadu is urn burials. These burials are mainly found in pits in the coastal area and cists in the upper Region.

## **Conclusion**

Summarizes the important finds of megalithic burials in the Thirukkivilur region and places them in the wider cultural context of South India. The preliminary investigations carried out in the Thirukkivilur Region have provided a glimpse of the existence of human settlement in the rugged terrain. Further, intensive investigations are needed to understand the archaeological potentiality of the region.

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