



MEGALITHIC MONUMENTS IN DHARMAPURI DISTRICT

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Introduction:

Geographically speaking Tamilnadu can be divided in two parts, the Tamilnadu uplands and South Sahyadri region and the Eastern Coastal Plains. Dharmapuri district fall in the Sahyadhri region. The northwestern part in Tamilnadu may be considered to be a continuation of the Mysore plateau and falls into two distinct terraces; they are the Balaghat and Baramahal. Dharmapuri district is in the Baramahal plateau along with Harur, Uthangarai, Pappireddipatti, Krishnagiri, Pochampalli and Thirupathur taluks, whose height varies from 310m to 620 m. Whereas the Balaghat plateau is over 930m in height above the sea level. The Baramahal is characterized by hills and hillocks. Notable among them are the Javadis, the shervoroys, the Kalrayans and the Pachaimalai, which are collectively known as Tamilnadu Hills.¹

The major river system in Dharmapuri is Ponnaiyar and Kaveri, and the important tributaries are the Chinnar, Nagavathi and Thoppaiyar for Kaveri and the Vaniyar, Pambar, Kallar for Ponnaiyar.²

Megalithic culture in Dharmapuri district has its own characteristic features which show some definite variation from rest of Tamilnadu. New finding and excavation in Mayiladumparai (in Krishnagiri district) pushed up the date of the beginning of megalithic culture in the region; the anterior date maybe fixed about 1500BC.

Megalithic Types:

1. Transepted Cist Passage 2. Dolmenoid Cist and its variants, a) Dolmenoid cist with multiple orthostat, b) Dolmenoid cist with four orthostat placed contraclockwise, with port-hole in the east or west, c) Dolmenoid cist with four orthostat kept contra-clockwise with U-shaped prothole on the top corner of the eastern orthostat; and d) Dolmenoid cist with four orthostats arranged contra- clockwise. 3. Sarcophagus, 4. Menhir, 5. Stone Circle with its variants a) Cairn circle; b) Cairn circle with capstone; c) Burrow, and 6. Urn Burial

Distribution Pattern:

Transepted Cist with Passage: Not reported in Dharmapuri district

Dolmenoid Cist with U Shaped Porthole: This is a very rare type of burials in Tamilnadu. Only in Dharmapuri and North Arcot districts, this type has been noticed; and they were few in numbers.

Dolmenoid Cist with Porthole on the East:

Laligam, 15km south of Dharmapuri towards Salem, in Dharmapuri taluk, is one of the extensive sites with dolmenoid cist with porthole on the east type of burials occupying five acres of land. B. Narashimaih in his exploration in this village has noticed, one of the disturbed burial has a rectangular chamber oriented east by west, measuring 2.55m east-west and 2.10m north - south. The orthostatic slabs are erected in contra-eastern, northern, western and southern orthostat. The eastern, northern, western and southern orthostats measure 2.45, 2.95, 2.60 and 2.85m respectively. The cairn packing rises to a height of nearly 0.75m from the ground level. The capstone is missing. The diameter of the stone -circle which bound the cairn packing is 8.15m.

There are many more burials which have not been disturbed, with stone- circle and tumuli rising to the height of 0.75 to 1.15m. the capstones are flush with cairn packing. It is difficult to say whether cairn packing of such impressive height is due to the stocking of rubble from surrounding field by the cultivators.³

Indur, 20km north-west of Dharmapuri on the Dharmapuri - Pennagaram road is another impressive site in Dharmapuri taluk. Here existed many dolmenoid cist with porthole on the east type burials. The sites are not so much concentrated in this taluk and they are also not as extensive as in the case of Krishnagiri and Hosur taluk.

Harur taluk in this district also has some dolmenoid cist with porthole on the east type of burial sites.

Three kilometers north of Puddur which is one the Dharmapuri - Harur road, 16km from Dharmapuri, in a field there are a number of dolmenoid cists with porthole on the east, in various stages of destruction. One of the rectangular chambers measuring 2.25m east-west 1.95m north - south internally, has porthole on the eastern orthostat. The eastern, northern, western and southern orthostats measure 2.30, 2.85, 2.55 and 2.70m respectively. The cairn packing rises to a height of 0.55m from ground level. The diameter of the stone-circle which bounds the cairn packing is 7.85m some of the burials in the site have a capstone surmounting the chamber.⁴

Dolmenoid Cist with Porthole on the West:

This is another rare type of megalithic burial in Tamilnadu in distribution and in the number of sites. Not reported in present Dharmapuri district.

Sarcophagus:

The sarcophagus is a long oblong tub with relatively high walls and cured sides. This is in two varieties viz. with and without legs. The larger sarcophagus the more number of legs. Sarcophagus legs are rare, but they are present.⁵

Menhir: This is rare type of megalithic burial, a huge menhir is found in Tirumalvadi village in Palacode Taluk.

Burrow: Not reported in present Dharmapuri district.

Stone Circle, Cairn Circle and Its Variant:

These types occurs almost all the sites in Tamilnadu. These megalithic may entomb Urn-burials, Pit-burials, Sarcophagi and Cist. Infact, there is no indication on the surface which would throw light on the type of burial in them. It is to be noted that the terminology of Cairn circle is commonly used by the archeologist and historians for Cairn heap structure too; the researcher follows the same unless otherwise needed.

Urn – Burial:

This class of monuments may not necessarily be delimited by bonding circle. But the distinguishing feature is the interment of big Urn in a pit of a size just enough to receive a big Urn. The Urns are covered with a lid. If the bounding stone is present it helps to retain the cairn-filling rising to a low cone; otherwise normally, the site is either plain or indicated by low spread of rubble or low tumuli's. In some areas where the bounding stone-circle is available, a capstone covers the pit into the urn has been lowered.⁶

Megalithic Types and Sites Present in Dharmapuri District⁷

Harur Taluk:

S.No	Place	Megalithic Type				
1	Achalvadi	C.C				
2	Adikarapatti	C.C				
3	Ellapuliyampatti	C.C				
4	Gobinathampatti	C.C				
5	Indira Nagar	C.C				
6	Jammanahalli	C.C				
7	Thallankottai	C.C				
8	Maniyampadi	C.C				
9	Mukkanur	C.C				
10	Moolakottai	C.C				
11	Morappur	C.C				
12	Nattanur	C.C				
13	Navalai	C.C				
14	Pudur	C.C			D.C	
15	Bodamali				D.C	B.C.H

Pennagaram Taluk:

S.No	Place	Megalithic Type				
1	Adanur Adda	C.C				
2	Addaoni	C.C				
3	Arakasanahalli	C.C				
4	Chinnakadaimadai	C.C				
5	Eriyur	C.C				
6	Erupalli	C.C				
7	Karumariamman koil	C.C				
8	Kudalpatti	C.C				
9	Kuthappadi	C.C				
10	Manjanaickanpatti	C.C				
11	Naducheri	C.C				
12	Nallampatti	C.C				
13	Pannappatti	C.C				
14	Puduppatti	C.C				
15	Rangasamimalai	C.C				
16	Kariyampatti	C.C				
17	Kodiur					M

Dharmapuri Taluk:

S.No	Place	Megalithic Type					
1	Addaguttai	C.C					
2	Adiyamankottai	C.C					
3	Balajangamanahalli	C.C					
4	Cekkarappatty	C.C					
5	Indur	C.C			D.C		
6	Karubaiyanahalli	C.C					
7	Kolathur	C.C					
8	Laligam	C.C			D.C		
9	Megamampatti	C.C					
10	Modur	C.C					
11	Mukkanur	C.C					
12	Nagarkudal	C.C					
13	Nathappatti	C.C					
14	Nartampatti	C.C					
15	Nerkunthi	C.C					
16	Palanikuttai	C.C					
17	Pudur	C.C					
18	Rajagollahalli	C.C					
19	Rajathoppu	C.C					
20	Sivasubramania Nagar	C.C					
21	Thammattakkal	C.C					
22	Indamangalam ⁹	C.C					

Pappireddipatti Taluk:

S.No	Place	Megalithic Type					
1	Ramaiahalli	C.C					
2	Samanthahalli	C.C					
3	Senguttai	C.C					
4	Thengaraikottai	C.C					
5	Thalanatham	C.C					
6	P.Thathampatti	C.C					
7	Thippampatti	C.C					

Palacode Taluk:

S.No	Place	Megalithic Type					
1	Chettihalli	C.C					
2	Lumiccanahalli	C.C					
3	Palacode	C.C					
4	Nalappampatti	C.C					
5	Thirumalvadi	C.C					

(Apr: C.C= Cairn Circle and Its Variant; U=Urn; M=Menhir; D.C=Dolmenoid Cist; C=Cist; B.C.H= Barrel type Cairn Heap)

Findings:

The above tables clearly disclose the Cairn Circle type Megalithic burials were found throw out the district irrespective of geographical character, plain or hilly region. Natural rough boulders of various sizes are used to construct these Cairn circle and its variants; near uniform size of boulder is used in developing a stone circle; as a packing substance various sizes is used; the use of slab circle a variant is unfound so far in the district.¹⁰ The scatted foothills in Palacode and Dharmapuri taluks have reported menhir and dolmenoid cists. A special mention has to be made on Barrel type Cairn Heap a rare and only site reported in South India for the first time.¹¹

Barrel Type Cairn Heap:

This type is reported for the first time in South India. Two such type Megalithic monument is recently found in Bodamalai in Harur taluk. A Barrel like Cairn Heap structure is erected to 5-7 feet height with cairn and rubbles.¹²

Conclusions:

Irrespective of geographical physical variations Cairn Circle and it variant are major type of megalithic burial present in the district. The foothills have presented some Cist, Dolmenoid cist and Menhir types. The rare and only one reported so far the Barrel type Cairn Circle is also present on a hilltop. Strictly speaking the barrel

type maybe grouped under the variant of Clain circle; if do, it become the first case reported; finding of Cairn circle variant on the hilltop in Dharmapuri district.

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