EXCAVATIONS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN TAMILNADU

Modur (2004-2005)



EDITOR

T.S.SRIDHAR, IAS,

Special Commissioner

Department of Archaeology
Government of Tamilnadu, Chennai

2005

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Front Cover : TC Mother Goddess - Neolithic
Neolithic Grooved Hammers

Back Cover : Editor reading the inscription of
Vira Chola Deva on the natural rock
at Singaperumal temple
General view of the Excavated trenches
Cross section of an Excavated trench
TC Mother Goddess - Historic period

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CONTENTS

	Page
Preface	v
INTRODUCTION	1
CULTURAL SEQUENCES OF MODUR	9
POTTERY	17
ANTIQUITIES	34
CONCLUSION	42
Annexure I	45
Annexure II	47
Table 1 - STONE OBJECTS	50
Table 2 - ARTEFACTS	50
PHOTO PLATES	I-VI

LIST OF PHOTO PLATES

		Page
1.	Grinding Stones, Celts, Oval Discoids	I
2.	Sling Stones, Pestles, Sharpening Stones	II
3.	Round Discs, Stone Dabbers, Spheroid Rubbers	III
4.	Spindle Whorls, Smoking Pipes, Ear Lobes, Terracotta Ram, Bowls With Graffiti	IV
5.	Conch Bangles, Launch Meeting, Exhibition at Dharmapuri	V
6.	Inauguration of the Seminar, Special Exhibition	VI

PREFACE

The history of Tamil Nadu can be traced from the Pre-historic period with the chain of discoveries made by Sir Robert Bruce Foote, who accidentally discovered a stone tool at Pallavaram in the year 1863 CE, followed by the finding of number of artefacts in and around Poondi, near Chennai. This tremendous breakthrough in the field of Pre-historic archaeology pushed back the antiquity of man in Tamil Nadu to more than half a million years. Subsequently, various sites were explored and excavated by different agencies in Tamil Nadu. The Archaeological Survey of India, Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology, Madras University, Tamil University, Tanjore and other organisations were actively involved in bringing to lime light the historical importance of Tamil Nadu.

Since then the Department has identified and carried out excavations at historically important sites. It has so far excavated 27 sites and unearthed various artefacts. Some of the excavated sites have also been converted into site museums and the antiquities collected in the excavations are displayed there. Kovalanpottal, Anamalai, Thondi, Korkai, Pallavamedu, Boluvampatti, Panayakulam, Kurumbanmedu, Palayarai, Kannanur, Alagankulam, and Perur are some of the important sites which have yielded excellent artefacts confirming the location of the ancient capitals, trade centers and their relationship between south India and north India and between ancient Tamil Nadu and Rome. Though the Mesolithic (Microlithic) period artifacts were discovered far south in the Teri sites of Tirunelveli, it is for the first time that microlithic stone tools were found in the excavations at Tiruthangal and Mangudi. Hence, to continue the chain of occurrences, it was proposed to carryout excavation in the northwestern part of Tamil Nadu where many Neolithic stone implements were found during exploration.

Two sites, namely Modur and Andipatti were selected for carrying out excavation during the financial year 2004-05,. The Government of Tamil Nadu was pleased to allot Rs.5.00 lakhs under Part II scheme and approved the excavation. Modur is about 15 km from Dharmapuri town in Palacode Taluk of Dharmapuri District. The antiquity of Modur village goes back to the Neolithic age (about 10,000 years). Three distinct habitation mounds were identified by the Archaeological Officer of this district during field exploration. In the surface collection, the site yielded large number of Black and Red ware, Red ware, Black ware, Red slipped ware, few Grey ware, and potteries of the Megalithic Period (about 3000

years old). Two Hero stone inscriptions of a Hoysala king were also located here. Artefacts like Neolithic celts and tools, Iron Age utensils, potteries, beads, and other iron objects, and terracotta figurines of the historic period are noteworthy findings of the excavation.

As a preparatory work, Preliminary survey was carried out before commencement of excavation under the guidance of Special Commissioner of Archaeology, Thiru.T.S.Sridhar, I.A.S., in the presence of Thiru. Ashish Vachani, then Collector of Dharmapuri District at Modur village. During the exploration artifacts such as Neolithic Celt, core sample and varied potsherds were collected.

Before commencement of the actual digging, a briefing about the excavation was done with power point presentation to the District Collector and other officials of the district administration. A special exhibition was organized at Dharmapuri Collectorate with the unearthed antiquities for the benefit of the local school and college students, scholars and others interested in Archaeology. The combined exhibition of both Andipatti and Modur excavated antiquities was organised at Chennai Museum Theatre on 22.06.05. Thiru V.C.Shanmugam, the Hon'ble Minister for Commercial Taxes, Education and Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Department, presided over the function and inaugurated the special exhibition. Scholars from various states in the field of archaeology participated, presented papers and expressed their valuable opinion on the antiquity of Modur.

I feel happy to bring out this publication for the benefit of scholars, research students and the general public. It is a matter of great satisfaction that the entire cycle of excavation covering a wide range of activities - from approval to trench cutting, classifying of artifacts, conduct of exhibition and seminar, documentation and publication of results - have all been achieved within the span of eighteen months. I hope this report will encourage further study into the Neolithic period of Tamil Nadu as represented in Dharmapuri District. The results of Modur corroborate and confirm the findings from Paiyampalli excavation conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India in the years 1964-65 and 1967-68. I wish to commend the Archaeological Officers Thiru Selvaraj and Subramaniam and the support team of archaeologists, geologists, engineers, photographers and administrative staff for their dedication in carrying out this task satisfactorily.

T.S. SRIDHAR, IAS,
Special Commissioner

INTRODUCTION

Modur is located about 15 km north west of Dharmapuri and 5 km west of Dharmapuri-Krishnagiri road (N.H-7) in Palacode taluk, Dharmapuri District. It lies in the latitude of 12° 13' N and Longitude of 78° 10' E and is a small village in Boomandahalli Firka, Karimangalam Panchayat. It is interesting to note that the Neolithic habitation sites Paiyampalli and Toggrapalli excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India, are located near this village. The name of the village is derived from the word Moodur, which means ancient or old in Tamil; it is also mentioned in the Singaperumal temple inscription of Raja Raja III located nearby.

Dharmapuri District is mainly an undulating rugged terrain in the middle and surrounded on the east by Javadi hill ranges and on the south Chitteri & Shevaroy hill ranges. The major rivers draining this district are Pambar, Ponnaiyar and Chinnar. The Cauvery flows along the Southwestern boundary of the district. The village Modur is more or less a raised and undulating landscape with number of mounds at close proximity. Though no major rivers are flowing here, a few perennial dry tanks are located in the vicinity.

The major rock formation found in this district is Crystalline rock formations of Archaean metamorphic complex with minor intercalations of Granitic Gneiss. The occurrences of Charnockite group rock formation with granitic gneiss and discontinuous patches of Schistose rocks are noticed around this village. The Charnockite group of rocks comprises Charnockite, Pyroxene-granulite, Meta-norite and metamorphosed basic dykes and sills. The most important dyke rock, Dolerite making perpendicular cut relationship with the country rock is spotted at number of places in this district. Limestone from Samalpatti, Tippampatti and iron ore in the form of Magnetite-Quartzite at Tirthamalai are some of the important minerals found in this district.

Five temples are under worship at Modur and are dedicated to Lakshmi Narayana, Narasinga Perumal, Mandru Mariamman, Sanniyasikal and Bairavar. The Narasinga Perumal temple, which is in the western side of the village, is in dilapidated condition. Another Lakshmi Narayana temple is situated on the top of the Modur hill and a small Bairavar temple is also present in another hillock of Modur. The other temples Mandru Mariamman and Sanniyasikal are located in the village premises.

LITERARY AND EPIGRAPHICAL EVIDENCES:

The Sangam literature 'Thagadur yattirai' mentions Modur ' Mallan moothur pal sandrirey' (Thagadur Yattirai-27). Similarly, there is a reference about Moothur in Purananuru, which states 'pinikathir nellin semman moothur', (Song-97). And, Agananuru refers to 'Azhiya vizhalin anjuvaru moothur' (Song-115). It can be inferred that the name mentioned in the above literatures might be identified with the present Modur.

There are three inscriptions noticed in this village. One is a Vatteluttu inscription and the other two are Tamil inscriptions belonging to 13th CE. Vatteluttu is engraved on a small slab and now kept in the Modur Mariyamman temple. The inscription refers to a lake called 'Modur Lake' and also gives the details of the capacity of the water saved in the lake. Another inscription of Chola king Thirubhuvanachakravarti, Vira chola deva engraved on the natural rock is found in front of the Singa Perumal temple. It mentions the donation of land for maintenance of the same temple.

The third inscription belongs to the Hoyasala Dynasty, which is located in the center of the Mandru and is in worn out condition. It mentions an officer who possessed the strength and power of the Hoysala King Vishnuvardhana and also refers to the remission of the marriage tax at Tagada-nadu.

During the reign of Hoysala King Vira, a lake called Tillai Samudram was excavated and it was donated to a Brahmin for the welfare of Tillai Kuttan, son of a revenue officer of Thagadur and Modur nadu. This shows that Modur was in the status of Nadu in that period. In the center of the village two Sanyasi stones

are also noticed and they are in worship. There are two Hero-Stones found near the Sanyasikal and stylistically they belong to 6th CE.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCES:

Three distinct habitation mounds are noticed in between the three hillocks. The first mound found on the western side of the hillock covering an area of 10 acres yielded coarse red ware, grey ware and Neolithic Celt. This is the highest mound in this area. On the basis of the antiquities collected from this mound, it is assigned to the Neolithic period.

The second mound covering an area of more than 25 acres lies further west of the above said mound. The occurrence of black and red ware, red slipped ware, all black ware and brown ware clearly indicate that this mound belongs to the Iron Age.

Another mound locally called Kottaimedu, is on the eastern side of the hillock. This mound is also called Boothi medu (Ash mound) covering an area of 80 acres. The dominating ware namely coarse red ware and historic period artifacts were collected from here during exploration.

EXPLORATION:

These areas were explored in 1989 by a team of Archaeologists consisting of Dr.K.Rajan, Tamil University, Thanjavur, Thiru.S.Selvaraj, and Thiru.T.Subramanian, Archaeological Officers of State Department of Archaeology. Several antiquities of Neolithic and megalithic period were collected by them. And, they have also reported the presence of megalithic burials and habitation mounds.

On account of collection of large number of stone implements like Neolithic stones, Hammer stones, Rubbing stones, Polishing stones, etc., in the surface, it was proposed to conduct systematic excavation at Modur to study the Neolithic problem relating to Tamilnadu.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AROUND MODUR:

Three cultural deposits were noticed in the exploration. They are Neolithic, Iron age and the historical period. Both the habitation deposits and burials of Iron Age are found in this area. More than fifty megalithic burials, which are disturbed, are found at a distance of 1 km south west of Modur. Two kinds of burials, such as cist with cairn circle and sarcophagus with cairn circle are noticed.

Modur is surrounded by important Archaeological sites namely Koilur, Panaiyakulam, Mattilampatti, Palavadi, Kolahattur, Pikhana halli and Thirumalvadi.

KOILUR:

In the Koilur hillock two Jain cave shelters were identified by the State Department of Archaeology. In the shelter four beds were chiseled in east west direction without any headrest. Portions of this shelter are in damaged condition. In these beds later period carvings are also noticed. Five memorial stones are found in the Kunthiyamman temple. These herostones are engraved on the rocks. One important herostone has the carvings of a local priest. He holds a bell in his left hand and the right hand is shown raised above the head. To his right a lady is shown in standing posture holding a spouted vessel (kendy) in her hand. It belongs to the Vijayanagar period.

PANAIYAKULAM:

A Hero stone, locally known as 'Pulikkutti Pattankal' was noticed near the mound belonging to historical period. The hero, holding both bow and arrow, is shown facing north. Now, it is housed in the Department Site Museum at Dharmapuri.

In the historical mound the Department conducted trial excavation; antiquities such as black and red ware, red slipped ware and red ware potsherds were collected. A sluice inscription was also noticed in the 'Panayakulam Eri'.

PALAVADI:

Palavadi lies three km west of Modur. Four historical memorial stones are noticed and they are locally called as 'Veerankal'. Among the four hero stones two of them are having Vatteluttu inscriptions of 8th century CE and one has a Kannada inscription, but the fourth one is noticed without inscription.

A habitation mound was also identified and covers an area of 40 acres with two metre height above the ground level. It yielded black and red ware, red slipped ware and terracotta figurines. The mound is called as 'Natta medu' or ' Perumal medu'.

KOLAKATTUR:

The village Kolakattur is situated 6 km south east of Modur. The habitation mound, locally called as 'Thammuka medu', is covering an area of 75 acres in the northern side of the village. It yielded black and red ware, all black ware and red slipped ware. A disturbed cairn circle was also found about a km from the habitation site.

KADAGATTUR:

Kadagattur is also one of the important ancient cities in Dharmapuri region. Two Buddha sculptures were collected from this village and are displayed in the Department site Museum. One of them is in standing posture while another one is in sitting posture. The standing Buddha sculpture resembles that of the Amaravathi sculptures. A chola period inscription is also found in the temple of this village.

THIRUMALVADI:

It is located 20 km from Modur. Near the Thirumalvadi junction (koottu) Road about 100 cairn circles of 10 to 15 mts in diameter are noticed. One outstanding menhir is also located in the center of the burial site. It is a monolith slab 3.25 mt tall with a broad base and tapering top. The local people call this menhir as 'Nattankal' or ' Anai kattum kal'. It is surrounded by a cairn circle. This is one of the interesting findings in Dharmapuri district.

Sudalaiandiamman koil is found very close to the burial site. The presiding deity of this temple is in sitting posture with two Gandarwas flanking on either side of the deity. Below this sculpture a hero is seen seated in Padmasana. The left hand of the lady figure is raised above the head. This kind of sculpture represents the Satistone. In the center of the village a Sanniyasi kal was also found near the Mariyamman koil. During the Thai pongal festival cattle are brought and made to pass through the gap between these stones.

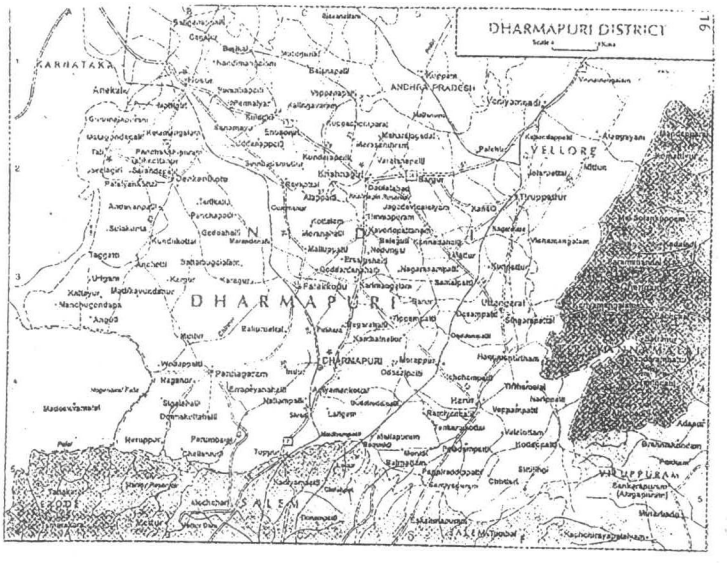
BIKHANAHALLI:

This village is situated near the Anaikal pass which connects Tamil nadu and Karnataka. This is one of the important passes to reach Karnataka from Tamilnadu. In Bikhanahalli a heap of Neolithic celts and Neolithic implements were noticed in the Mariyamman temple. Neolithic implements were also found at Vattalmalai, near Bommidi. Three memorial stones were noticed and two of them are housed in the Department Site Museum at Dharmapuri. One is kept in the village itself. All belong to the Vijayanagara period.

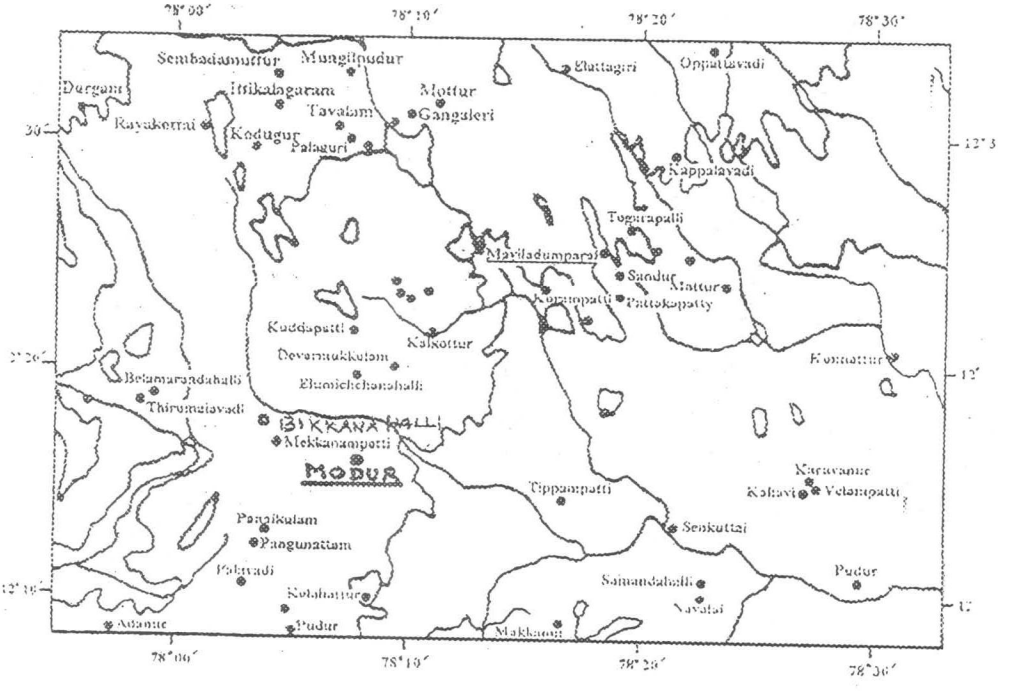
NEOLITHIC SITES IN SOUTH INDIA



DHARMAPURI DISTRICT MAP



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN AND AROUND MODUR



CULTURAL SEQUENCES OF MODUR

Explorations in Dharmapuri region exposed the remains of the Neolithic culture mainly concentrated in Harur, Dharmapuri and Palacode taluks. As many as five Neolithic habitation sites and one factory site of pecked and ground stone industry were brought to light. In addition, the excavation at Modur has revealed three cultural periods, which are arrived on the basis of antiquities and associated findings. It is observed that the habitation of this site commences from Neolithic culture and continues unbroken through Iron Age upto 14th century CE.

The Neolithic period is well exposed in the Mandu area where the excavation yielded large number of stone objects along with limited number of potsherds. Hand made potsherds and Neolithic Celts, sharpening stones, grinding stones, pestles, spheroid rubbers, discoid and grooved hammers were collected from the deposits of this period.

The occurrence of black and red ware, iron implements and graffiti marked potsherds establish the existences of Iron Age period (megalithic) in Modur village. Trenches like MDR-5 and MDR-8 revealed the deposits yielding megalithic appendages.

In the southwestern side of the village 50 burials were noticed. Most of the burials are found to be disturbed for agricultural purpose. Excavation at megalithic burial site yielded iron implements, black and red ware sherds and few carnelian beads. The interesting feature is that the distribution of both megalithic burials as well as habitation sites are noticed in Modur village.

The third period is the historic period. The deposit of this period was highly disturbed. The historic period deposits occurred in the trenches MDR-7, MDR-10 and MDR-14. Megalithic culture was completely absent in this area. So, it denotes that the earliest period settlements are noticed in the western side of the hillock. In the historic period this settlement moved towards the eastern side of hillock. These habitation mounds are called as Bhoodhi medu and Kottaimedu.

The predominant ware is coarse red ware. The antiquities collected from the deposits of historic period include spindle whorl, shell bangle pieces, ear lobe, gamesmen, hip-hops, terracotta figurines, tiles and smoking pipes. Hence, the antiquities from these cultural deposits clearly reveal the existence of habitation since 3000 BCE.

The earliest habitation is found between the two hillocks. In the historic period it shifted to the eastern side of the hillock. It is seen that the whole cultural area from Neolithic to the historic period extended around the three hillocks.

Period –I Neolithic period- 3000 BCE to 1000 BC
Period –II Megalithic period –1000BCE to 500 CE
Period –III Historic period – 500 CE to 1400 CE

EXCAVATIONS:

The antiquity of Modur village goes back to the Neolithic age as large number of Neolithic Celts and associated potteries and megalithic appendages are found in this area. Besides this, the occurrence of historical hero stones and Chola inscriptions infer the continuous human inhabitation of this place. On account of this, it is ascertained that this village might have been inhabited since Neolithic times through 14th century CE. (T.S. Sridhar and S. Vasanthi, *Man and Environment* XXX(1):108[2005], Indian Society of Prehistoric and Quaternary Studies).

In the course of excavation fifteen trenches were laid in the Modur village. Of these fourteen trenches were laid on the habitation sites and one at the cairn circle burial site. Trenches were named in short as MDR.

CUTTINGS:

MDR-1

The first trench MDR-1 was laid with an extent of 4 x 4 mt at the place called 'Mandu', located at the foothills of Modur hill. In the course of excavation potteries namely black and red ware, black ware, redslipped ware, graffiti potsherds and thick brown potsherds with slip, probably Neolithic period, were collected. Besides this, stone objects such as long semi cylindrical grinding

stone (8 x 11.5 x 6.5 cm, Depth - 1.20 mt) was also collected. Other antiquities that were collected in this trench include a well-finished and polished rectangular grinding stone (17.5 x 8.5 x 7 cm) oval shaped rubbing stones with semi-circular top and flat base, and stone rubbers (Depth-1.50 mt). It is believed that these stones might have been used in Neolithic period for rubbing the floor.

The yielding of Neolithic implements like flat stone tools, long cylindrical implements and stone tools for sharpening and smoothening were noticed in this trench. In association, black and red wares in fewer numbers along with thick variety of brown ware, which are hand made, were also collected. The texture of the thick variety potsherds is gravel mixed, highly polished and roughly finished.

In addition, antiquities like spindle whorls, hip-hops, sling balls, decorated shell bangle pieces, iron nails, terracotta wheel, small copper bangle and dice like object were also obtained from this trench.

MDR-2:

This trench, measuring 4 x 4 mt, exposed three stratigraphical layers, of which the first layer yielded antiquities viz spindle whorls, hip-hops of different sizes, terracotta knobs of a spouted vessel, small black bangle pieces etc. The soil was ashy & grey in colour with loose texture. The second layer yielded rectangular rubbing stone, cylindrical shaped and highly polished stone tools like pestle, oval, square and rectangular hammers, grinding stones and hammer like object and polishing stone rubbers etc. The soil was slightly hard and grey in colour. In the last and third layer stone rubber, stone hammer and grinding stones were obtained.

MDR-3:

The third trench was laid in the field of Thiru.Laxmi narayanan of Modur. In the course of excavation, hip-hops, small sized terracotta lamps, terracotta gamesmen, Ceremonial pots, conch bangle pieces and copper objects were collected from this trench.

Besides this, pottery namely coarse red ware, black and red ware, red slipped ware and brown ware were also collected. The occurrence of Graffiti potsherd and a Celt along with number of stone implements were encountered at the depth of 1.25 mts. and 1.30 mts respectively. Hence, it is believed to be a habitation site of Neolithic period.

MDR-4:

This trench, with an extent of 4 x 4 mt, was laid east of first trench and near the Modur hillock. Different types of stone objects namely discoid rubber, stone dabber, triangular polishing stone tools, and a stone hammer with deep grooves on top were collected. This pattern might have been used after tying with a rope on the grooves. So, it is called as grooved hammer.

Other antiquities namely stone hip-hops, terracotta knob of a lid, knob of a spouted vessel were also collected from 0.50-mt depth. Pottery as for the occurrence of coarse red ware, red slipped ware and black and red ware and graffiti mark potsherds were noticed.

A fine variety of potsherd with applique decoration and finger-impressed decoration was noticed at the depth of 0.65 mt. Round shaped hopscotches, black bangle pieces, and an iron arrow head of 9 cm in length were recovered from 0.70 mt. Two spheroid rubbers, oval shaped grinding stone and few potsherds with well-slipped outer surface were also noticed.

MDR-5:

This trench is located at the end of the mound. From this trench were recovered a full shaped lid, broken bowl, a cup, grey ware with floral design below the two bands of grooves on the shoulder. A deep and shallow bowl of black and red variety, a broken basin with round beaded rim and other thickened out-turned rim of deep pots were unearthed in this trench. These pots were for storing water and other liquids.

Antiquities, namely a decorated grinding stone and two oval discoid rubbers, were collected. Soil was loose & grey in colour with large numbers of small stone blocks etc.,

MDR-6:

This trench was laid to the north of MDR-1. Coarse red ware, brown ware, black and red ware, red slipped ware and all black ware were exposed in this trench. A flat based and polished grinding stone, sling stone, broken lamp portion and knob of a spouted vessel were also collected. An iron smelting furnace was traced in this trench.

MDR-7:

This trench, with an extent of 4 x 4 mt was laid in the field of Thiru.Sakthi, Modur. The site, known as 'Bhoodi medu', is located opposite to Modur Hillock. Totally, four layers were exposed. First layer was loose and grey in colour. The second layer was clay mixed and hard. The third layer was smooth and mixed with large number of artifacts. The antiquities collected include hip-hops, conch bangle pieces, broken terracotta smoking pipes, pendent, steatite objects, spindle whorls, ear lobes, etc.,

Pottery of coarse red ware, all black ware and red slipped ware were found in this trench. The prominent ware was coarse red ware which exhibit shapes such as basin, cups and pots with thickened rim.

Besides this, a terracotta figurine- Mother Goddess with 'Jata Maguda', ear ornament and necklace was recovered at the depth of 1.00 mt. Lower and upper garments are absent. The other interesting artifact is a ram and mould of a human figure.

MDR-8:

This trench is located at the edge of the mound and west of MDR-5. It yielded crucibles, spouted knobs, broken stone pestle, three types of bowls, cup like ware, terracotta bead and few stone rubbers which are mostly oval and cylindrical in shape. They might have been used for grinding purpose. Besides this, an iron pipe in broken condition was also unearthed at the depth of 1.10 mt.

MDR-9:

MDR-9 (extent of 4 x 4 mt) was laid at the foothills of Modur hillock. In this trench soil was hard and mixed with large number of stone blocks. This might be a base of an ancient stonewall of a

house. Antiquities viz broken celt, broken oval shaped stone rubber, stone dabber and a terracotta crucible were unearthed from this trench.

Cylindrical stone pestle, shell bangle pieces and a spouted knob, stone hip-hop, graffiti marks on potsherds, deer horn, a spherical top polished stone tool and few decorated potsherds of thick variety were also noticed.

MDR-10:

MDR-10 was laid in the ash mound near the trench MDR-7. In the course of excavation terracotta leg portion, ear lobe, broken smoking pipe, a steatite pendent with a hole in the center, spindle whorl, coral beads and iron objects were unearthed from this trench. Potsherds like coarse red ware, red slipped ware, all black ware and few graffiti marks on potsherds were also found. Natural soil was reached at the depth of 2.70 mt

MDR-11:

The new trench-11 was marked at the foothills of Modur following the collection of two broken stone objects on exploration. One of these stone objects is rectangular in shape while the other one is triangular. They may be polishing stones. They are found to be highly polished with cup marks on all sides. It may be the working edge.

MDR-11 yielded coarse red ware, red slipped ware, all black ware and grey ware. A spouted vessel knob, broken iron implements, iron nail and copper rings were also collected and antiquities namely oval discoid rubber, Celt, rectangular stone pestle (Depth- 1.00 mt), a polishing stone, measuring 6 x 13 cm (Depth-1.15 mt) were also unearthed from this trench.

The finding of Terracotta figurine- Mother Goddess without ornament and beaked head is an interesting collection of this excavation. It is crude in nature and hand made. The recovery of terracotta figurines from the trenches resembles the prehistoric paintings of Tamil Nadu.

MDR-12:

It is located near MDR-3. The extent of the trench was 4 x 4 mt. It yielded spindle whorl, spouted knob and shell bangle pieces, hopscotches, terracotta bead, steatite stone weight, 'L' shaped tiles and terracotta crucibles. Pottery of coarse red ware, red potsherds, black potsherds, red ware, grey ware and fine variety of brown ware were collected in considerable number.

The furnace portion at southwest corner and a full shaped pot were exposed in this trench. Round stone disc obtained in this trench might have been used below the wooden pillar. In this trench the occurrence of megalithic and Neolithic artifacts were noticed. Soil was loose and colour of the earth was red and gravel mixed. In this trench a rare occurrence of red ware with highly polished outer surface was encountered.

MDR-13:

This trench was marked near MDR-3. It yielded coarse red ware, black and red ware, red slipped ware and painted potsherds. A full sized bowl with graffiti mark (Depth-2.00 mt), highly decorated black and red potsherds (Criss-Cross design), polished stone objects, stone rubbers, ear lobe, hopscotches and L' shaped tiles were also obtained.

MDR-14:

Trench MDR-14, with an extent of 4 x 4 mt, was laid on Kottaimedu near Modur hillock by the Special Commissioner of Archaeology. It yielded large number of potsherds, perforated potsherds, shell bangle pieces, terracotta spouts, hip-hops and a copper coin in a highly corroded state. It may belong to Vijayanagar period.

In association, antiquities namely ear lobe, small lamp portion, terracotta dabber, carnelian beads, potsherds with floral design, spindle whorls with nail in the center, terracotta gamesmen, stone hip-hops, small deer horn, broken Celt, grinding stone (9.5 x 9.5 x 5.5 cm, Depth - 1.35 mt), unfinished Neolithic celt (Depth - 1.45 mt), a full shaped Celt (at 1.50 mt), stone pestle (Depth-1.85 mt), broken stone hammer and sling stone were also unearthed.

MDR-15:

This trench is located south west of Modur village. More than fifty burials were identified here. Except a few, most of them were in disturbed condition. On account of this, the occurrence of Cairn circles were clearly visible.

Three burials were selected for trial pit. In the course of excavation a piece of sarcophagus was found from the first burial wherein boulders of cairn were found undisturbed. The width of the cairn circle of second burial was measured to be 19 feet. It yielded six carnelian beads and pieces of un-burnt sarcophagus. The third burial exposed four orthostates, which are dislocated from the original place. The occurrences of cist burial, sarcophagus in Modur megalithic burials are confirmed from the excavation.

The type of carnelian beads found in this excavation is the same as that noticed in megalithic burial site at Kodumanal in Erode district.

POTTERY

Pottery, the most important and informative antiquities, helps the Archaeologist to reconstruct the ancient material and economic life. Before the invention of metal, pottery was the dominant material in the ancient period. So the people of those times were dependent on the pottery vessels for cooking, storing and many other activities of their day-to-day life. Some pots were also used for ceremonial purposes.

In short, pottery for an Archaeologist represents the source material, which is durable and most widely used and easily available of all the remains of Pre and Proto-historic period.

The cultural sequence as revealed by the ceramic evidences from the Modur excavation from lower most level to upper most level is as follows.

1. Neolithic pottery
2. Megalithic pottery
3. Historic pottery

NEOLITHIC POTTERY: PERIOD-I

In Modur excavation potteries of Neolithic period were found in considerable number. The dominant ware of this period is grey ware, burnished red ware, brown ware, tan ware and coarse red ware.

GREY WARE:

The clay used for the production of grey ware vessel is generally fine-grained variety. Most of the grey ware vessels in the Modur excavation are medium in size.

This pottery is normally well fired and having dark grey and pale grey colour due to the result of firing technique. Majority of the grey ware vessel are vase, storage jar and pots. These are all of thick varieties. Grey ware sherds were also collected in Thoggrapalli, Dailamalai and Mailadumparai in Dharmapuri district.

BROWN WARE:

Limited number of brown ware sherds was unearthed in this excavation. The fabrics exhibited by this ware are coarse, slipped and burnished. The section is invariably thin and well baked. This kind of pottery was also represented at Thoggrapalli and Mullikkadu in Dharmapuri region. The pottery is mostly plain but occasionally with simple grooves and incised strokes. Storage jar and vase are the shapes observed among collection.

TAN WARE:

Limited number of Tan ware sherds were noticed in this site. All are thick variety and exhibit shapes like vase and basins. The outer surface is highly polished. This kind of pottery was also found in the excavation at Mullikkadu, in Dharmapuri region.

BURNISHED WARE:

To obtain smooth surface in the sherds it is burnished either internally or externally or on both sides. The fabric of the ware is coarse. This kind of burnished red ware was also found in Mullikkadu and Toggarapalli in Dharmapuri region.

MEGALITHIC POT SHERDS- PERIOD-II

Five main varieties are observed among the collections. They are Black and Red ware, Black ware, Brown ware, Red slipped ware and Coarse red ware. These varieties are commonly associated with South Indian megalithic culture.

BLACK AND RED WARE:

The black and red ware sherds are of highly polished and burnished surface. They are made out of well lavigated clay without salt glazing. The firing technique used for the black and red ware sherds is village pit firing technique (i.e) the pots are kept inverted in the kiln. Due to this, the interior and the portion around the neck are burnt under reducing condition and become black while the rest of the exterior is burnt under oxidizing conditions and takes bright deep red colour or brown colour. The firing seems to have been usually in low temperature since the core became blackish in colour.

This ware is mostly wheel made. Storage jars, bowls, lids, vase, plates, etc are some of the interesting vessels found in this excavation. Small vessels with large rim or without rim are also collected in large quantity. The vessels without rim may be called as tableware.

ALL BLACK WARE:

The all black ware is almost identical in fabric and texture. The difference is only in the colour of the ware. The all black ware surface is a result of firing under completely reducing condition. Outer surface of the black ware is highly polished and made of well lavigated clay. This variety of sherds occurs in the megalithic period. Large numbers of lids were collected in Modur excavation.

RED SLIPPED WARE:

The red slipped ware is highly polished and well fired. The fragments of the red slipped ware are reported from a number of sites in South India. The ware is recognized as one of the most important ceramic industries of the megalithic and early historical period. This ware is comparatively inferior in body fabric and well fired in the open kiln. The pots are sturdy and produce a metallic sound. The Common types observed in the Modur excavation are the jars with grooved rim, bulbous body and ring footed base; the bowl with in-curved beaded rim and carinated shoulder; and the bowl with convex sides and thick in-curving rim.

COARSE RED WARE: PERIOD-III

The coarse red ware is often coarse in fabric, normally not polished and slipped, and ill fired. It was meant for rough use in daily needs. Storage jars, cooking vessels, lids, bowls, large shallow basins, featureless thick rim, small size globular vessels etc are some of the shapes noticed among collections of Modur excavation. Further the ornamentation on the rims consists of one, two or more horizontal and thin or deep bands of grooves. Also, rope designs, ridges and nail impression are commonly seen. Besides this, decoration on the shoulder is also noticed.

PERFORATED WARE:

Four sherds with perforations in the base of the pot are found

in this excavation. The holes might be made with the help of small stick. This process was probably done when the clay was in wet condition. This perforated ware might be used to filter the boiled grains like rice, horse gram, etc., Generally, the lids are also found having perforation in the bottom portion.

Graffiti on Pottery:

Graffiti marks on potsherds mainly as post-firing scratched marks, are found on Indian pottery. However, the occurrences of potteries with pre-firing graffiti marks are also found. Though mostly geometric forms are represented, natural objects like sun, fish, man, hill, river, tree and man made objects such as ladder, boat, arrow head, bow & arrow and trident are also noticed in graffiti form on the pottery.

The scratches are mostly on the exterior surface after firing. Mostly it was scratched in between the rim and base, that is, on shoulder portion. The symbols can be classified in to single and ligature graffiti. The graffiti marks denote the location of the people. Scholars have agreed that graffiti are the proto types or earlier script. And, it may represent a transition period of script.

Totally twenty-four graffiti marks on potsherds were collected in Modur excavation. The graffiti marks are found more or less exclusively on megalithic pottery. Symbols commonly found on the potsherds of Modur include Triangular, Two opposed triangular symbols / shapes meeting at apex, Trident, Triangle with zig-zag line on one side, Parallel vertical lines, Vertical lines cut by a transverse lines, Fish symbol and oblique lines.

Triangle symbols and two opposed triangles meeting at apex were found in five numbers. It indicates that the people were living near the hillock. The finding of black and red pot with two types of graffiti marks comes under ligature graffiti mark in which overlapping of marks are noticed.

The single as well as ligatured graffiti marked potteries have also been reported from sites like Thirukkampuliyur, Alagarai, Karur, Kodumanal, Alagankulam and Mangudi.

DECORATED POTSHERDS:

Decoration on potsherds reflects the artistic culture of our ancestors. In Modur excavation large number of decorated sherds were collected from all three periods. Mostly grooves are noticed around the neck or body portion.

The following decorations are noticed in Modur collection. They are

1. Thin raised band
2. Pinched mark
3. Fingertips
4. Twisted cord design
5. Nail incision design
6. Criss cross design
7. Oblique line
8. Herring bone design
9. Triangular pinches
10. Floral decoration
11. Applique bands, etc.,

The incised design occurs either in the form of straight horizontal lines, diagonal lines or herring bone bands.

1. Grey ware decorated with row of stamped stylized leaves below a grooved shoulder.
2. Grey ware decorated with multiple grooves above a panel of zig zag.
3. Coarse red ware decorated with a band of thumb impression on the shoulder.
4. A zig zag band in between the nail incision on a coarse red ware potsherd.
5. Criss cross lines are seen on the shoulder portion of a red slipped ware.
6. Dollar like design decorated on the red slipped ware.
7. A parallel nail design on the red slipped ware
8. A red slipped ware decorated on the shoulder with a row of stamped stylized mango pattern below a groove.

9. Leaf pattern below with oblique lines on the shoulder of a red slipped ware.

10. A thick zig zag twisted cord band on the shoulder portion of a coarse red ware present in between the deep nail incision design.

11. A band of pinches and a triangle line on the shoulder with grooves are seen on the red slipped ware.

12. A lid of black and red ware with decoration of a dotted floral design on the interior surface.

13. Ash grey ware decorated with a row of stamped stylized mango pattern below multi-grooves on shoulder.

14. A thick variety of red ware with criss cross line on the shoulder

15. A triangle pinches above the triangular lines running on the shoulder of Red ware.

16. A red slipped ware with a band of thumb impression design on the shoulder portion.

POTTERY DESCRIPTION:

Clay is the most abundantly available material, which Mother Nature has in store. It has the quality of taking any shape desired and sensitive to touch. After drying and baking it becomes permanent in this impermanent world. The earliest potsherd was coarse red ware.

COARSE RED WARE:

Figure-

1. Fragment of a wide mouthed vase of red ware with splayed rim and grooves on the shoulder.

2. Fragment of a vase of a red ware with flaring out-turned rim. Deep grooves externally on the shoulders.

3. Fragment of a vase with splayed out rim with thick section.

4. Fragment of a globular pot with out-turned beaded rim. Grooves on the shoulder portion and zig zag line design below the grooves.

5. Fragment of a storage pot with out-turned beaded rim with straight sides and fine fabric.

6. Fragment of a basin of red ware with in-curved rim. Two bands of finger nail impression separated by two shallow grooves are seen.

7. Fragment of a vase of red ware with flaring out turned rim. A group of grooves present.

8. Fragment of a red pot with wide mouthed out-turned rim with grooves.

9. Fragment of a basin of red ware with in-curved beaded rim. Medium fabric with thin section.

10. Fragment of a red pot with in-curved thickened rim. Bulged sides with medium fabric.

11. Fragment of a small narrow necked jar probably used for carrying water and other substances.

12. Fragment of an out-turned thickened rim with fine fabric.

13. Fragment of a basin of red ware with in-curved beaded rim .

14. Fragment of a basin of red ware with incurved beaded rim with medium fabrics.

15. Fragment of a large globular jar with a short and curved rim with a prominent groove in the interior. Medium fabric.

16. Fragment of a red ware with short neck

GREY WARE:

Figure-

1. Narrow mouthed long necked globular pot with prominent alternative thick ridges and deep grooves. Thick section with fine fabrics.

2. Large globular pot with multi grooves on the rim

3. Fragment of a vase of a grey ware decorated with incised zig zag below two grooves on the shoulder.

BLACK AND RED WARE:

Figure-

1. Deep bowl with slanting sides, rounded bottom, finely polished slipped and well fired. The clay is finely lavigated.
2. Small shallow bowl with slightly bulging sides, somewhat rounded bottom and featureless rim. Highly polished, slipped and well fired. Clay is well levigated.
3. Small deep bowl with bulging sides, flattened bottom and featureless rim. Polished and slipped well.
4. Lid-cum-bowl with low domical top and internally bent rim with broad deep groove on the sides. Well-polished, slipped and well fired up to the rim.

RED SLIPPED WARE:

Figure-

1. Fragment of a red ware pot with wide mouthed out-turned and beaded rim. Well-fired and well lavigated.
2. Fragment of a bowl of a red slipped ware with incurved sharpened rim.
3. Fragment of a basin of a red slipped ware with out-turned and sharpened rim.
4. Fragment of a wide mouthed pot of red slipped with out-turned thickened rim and narrow neck.
5. Fragment of a basin of red slipped with thickened rim, a prominent edge and grooves are seen in the neck portion.
6. Fragment of a basin of red slipped ware with incurved beaked rim. It is decorated with grooves externally below the rim portion.

7. Fragment of a deep bowl of a red slipped with in-curved rim.

8. Fragment of a wide mouthed vessel with thickened rim.

9. Fragment of a wide mouthed pot with out-turned multi grooved rim. Well slipped and well decorated with fine fabric.

10. Fragment of a red slipped pot with prominent splayed out rim. The shoulder portion of the pot decorated by deep grooves with square impressed design.

11. Fragment of a deep bowl with sharpened featureless rim.

12. Fragment of a large high-necked globular vase with long straight neck.

13. Fragment of a vase of a red slipped ware with flanged rim and bulged profile.

14. Fragment of a wide mouthed basin of a red slipped ware with out-turned sharpened converged rim.

RED WARE (BURNISHED WARE)

Figure-

1. Globular pot, straight neck and flattened rim with fine fabric.

2. Globular pot with short slightly curving neck.

3. Globular pot with out-turned thickened beaked rim. Well slipped with thick section.

4. Fragment of a basin of red slipped ware with incurved thickened rim. A zig zag line design seen in between the grooves.

5. Fragment of a beaked out-turned rim with straight sides. Nail impression design seen on the rim portion.

BROWN WARE:

Figure-

1. Fragment of a basin of a brown ware with sharpened rim with medium fabric. Well fired and highly slipped.

2. Fragment of a brown pot with beaked out-turned thickened rim.

3. Fragment of a lid with featureless rim.

4. Fragment of a thick brown out-turned beaded rim with thick section.

5. Fragment of a basin of a brown ware with incurved beaded rim with convex profile.

6. Fragment of a tiny globular vase of a brown ware with out turned beaked rim. Short narrow neck with bulging profile.

7. Fragment of a brown ware with beaded rim.

8. Fragment of a sharpened thickened rim with short neck.

RED WARE: FULL POT

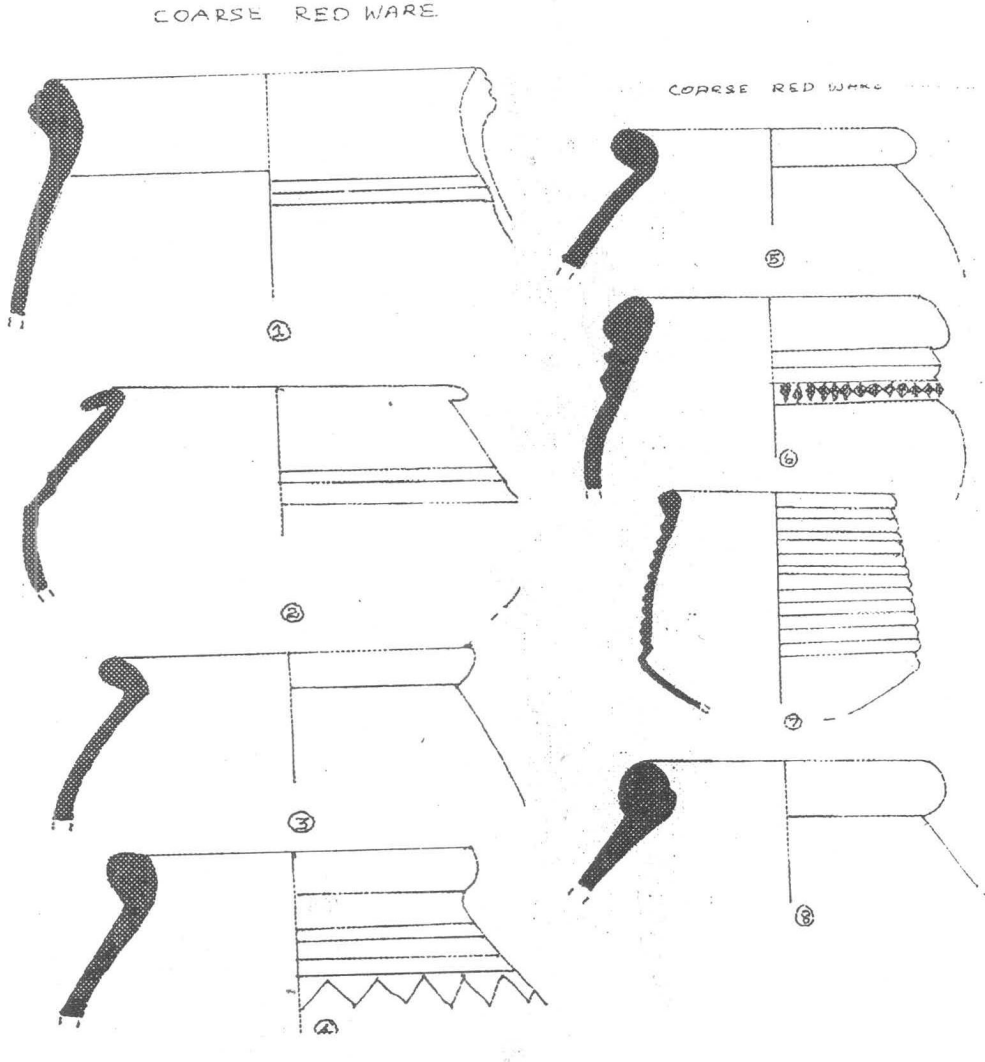
Figure-

1. A thick featureless rim with slight bulged body with conical base. Red slipped and highly polished, well fired and the clay is well levigated.

2. Black and Red ware bowl. A thin featureless rim of a deep bowl with slanting sides. Finely polished and well fired. A graffiti mark seen on the exterior side of the shoulder portion of the bowl.

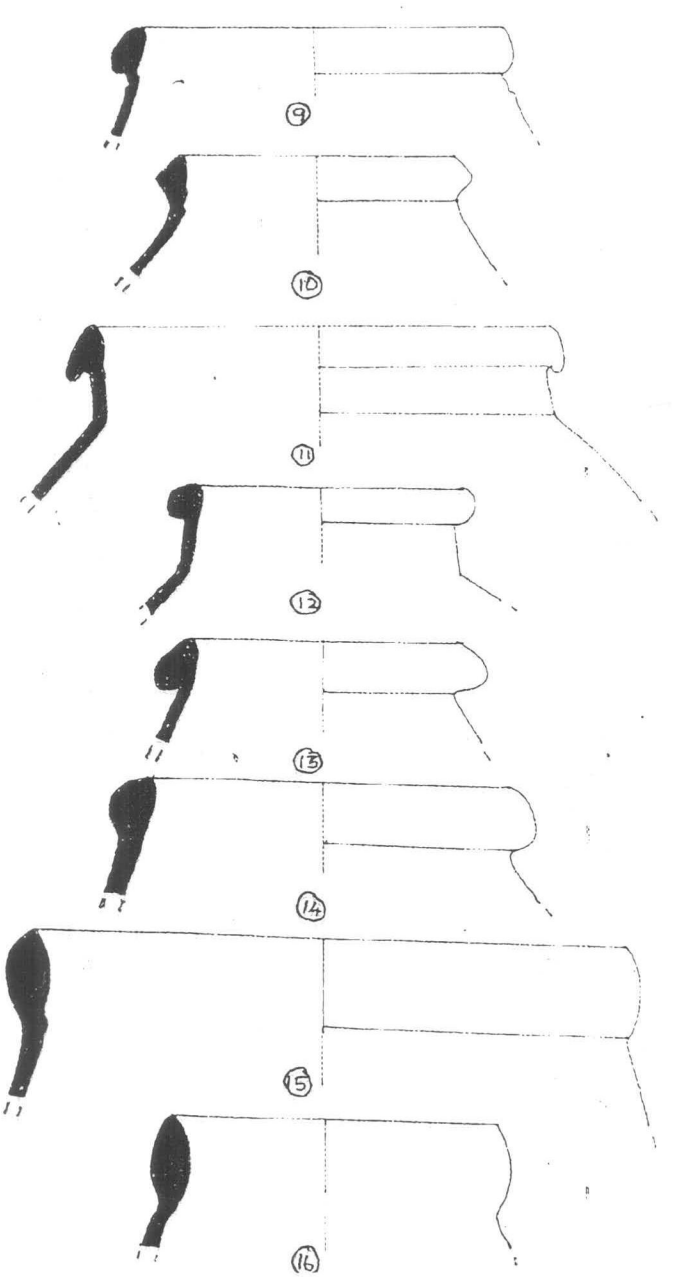
3. Black and Red ware as variant of fig.2 oblique design was applied on the exterior surface of the deep bowl.

POTTERY DRAWINGS



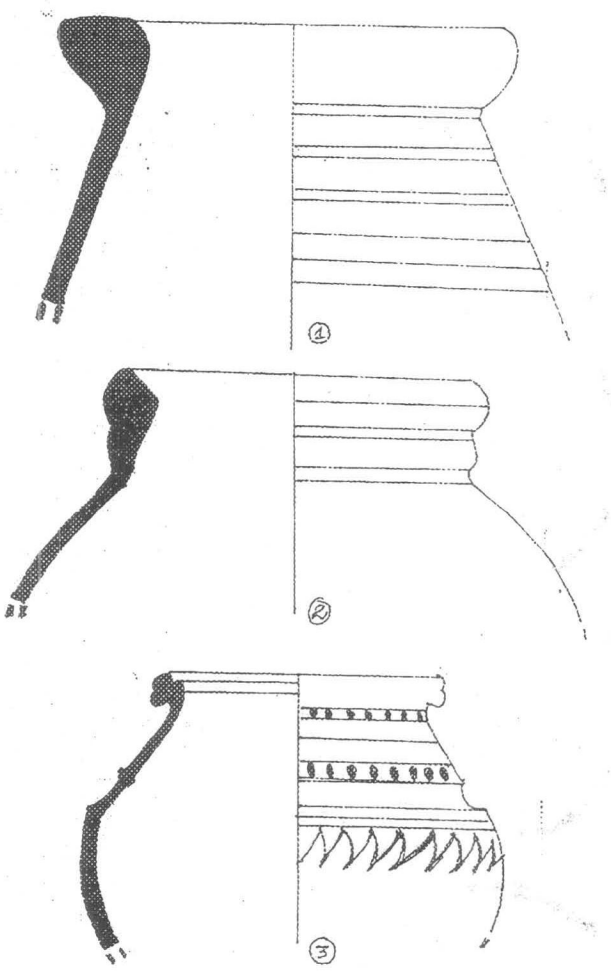
POTTERY DRAWINGS

COARSE RED WARE

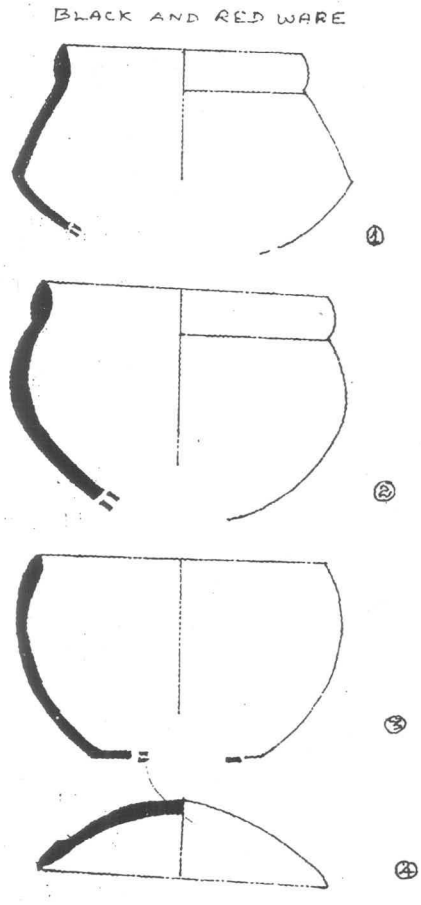


POTTERY DRAWINGS

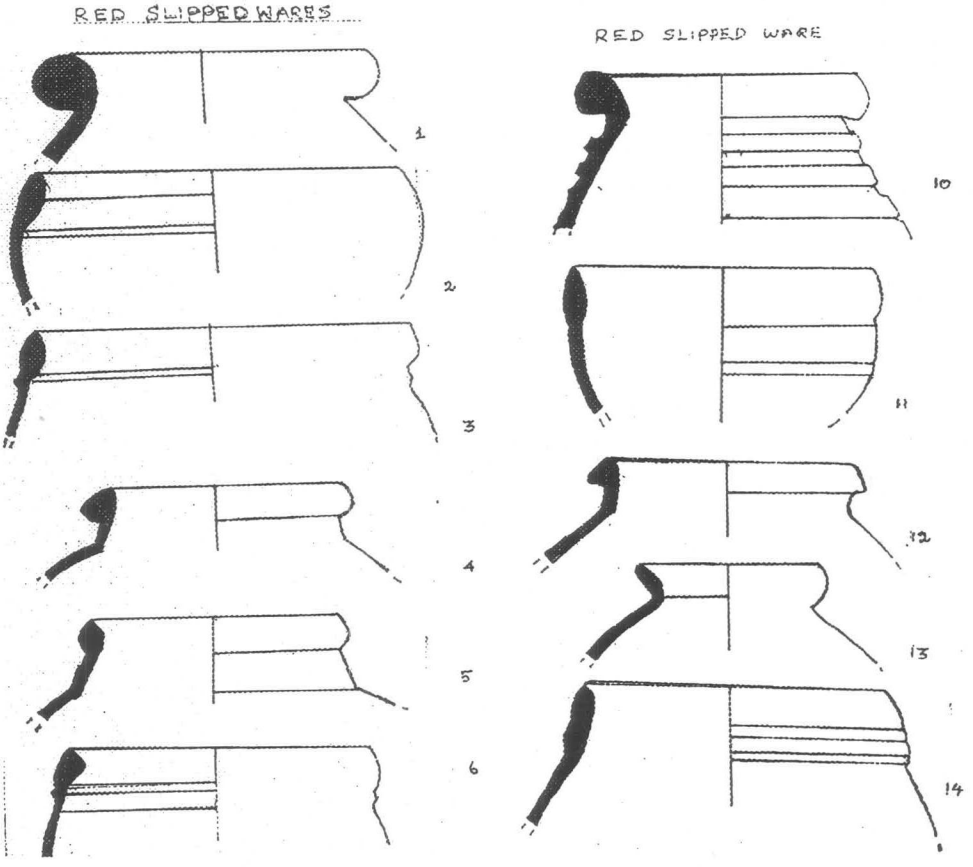
GREY WARES



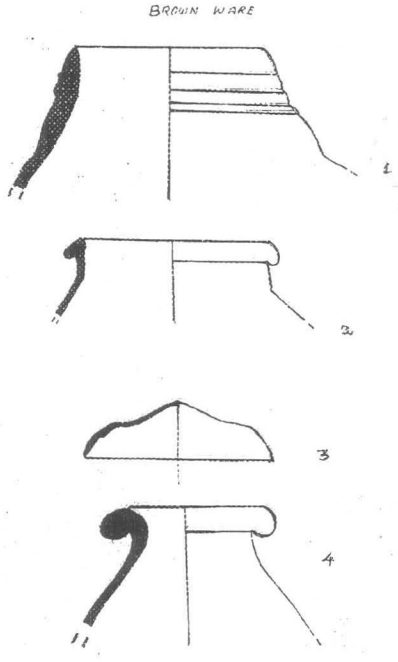
POTTERY DRAWINGS

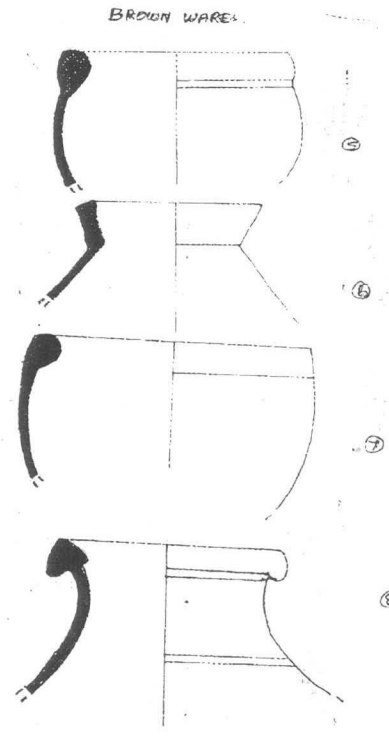


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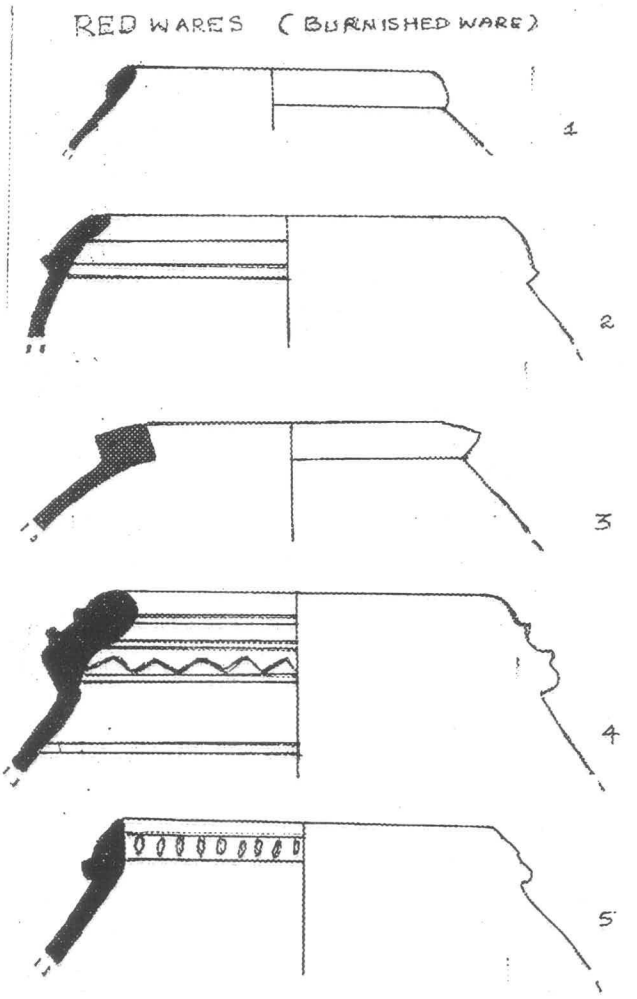


POTTERY DRAWINGS





POTTERY DRAWINGS



ANTIQUITIES

In Modur excavation seventeen Neolithic celts were unearthed. All are made out of Granite stone. Four full shaped Celts and ten broken pieces of Celts were observed. Three unfinished Celts were also collected in the excavation.

SLING STONE:

Thirteen spheroid shaped stone balls were collected in Modur trenches from different levels. Spheroid balls are generally small in size and finely smoothened all over. These could have been used as playing balls or for attacking the small animals like birds, etc., These stone balls occur mostly in the megalithic phase except one from an overlap phase at this site. The occurrences of Sling balls in Europe have been reported from Mesolithic levels. In India, they have been reported from the Harappan sites. The sling stone at Modur are mostly from the megalithic phase.

PECKED AND GROUND STONE TOOLS:

A large number of stone tools finished by pecking and grinding were found in all trenches. Most of the tools were obtained in the Neolithic level and the level representing the period of overlap between the Neolithic and the megalithic. Local granites are the raw materials used in the preparation of stone tools like Celt, polishing stone and pounders.

One hundred and fifty seven artifacts made of dolerite, granite, white stone, red stone, which are heavily patinated, have been collected in Modur excavation. The finer grained rocks are suitable for making tools and the coarser for rubbers, grinder, hammers, dabbers, grooved hammers, discoid and hand hammers, etc.,

The pestle, cylindrical pestle, Axe hammers and spheroid rubbers are made of granite and finely polished. It is note worthy that many tools of Modur excavation are similar to the collection of tools from excavation at Piklihal, T.Narsipur, Payampalli, etc., More than thirty spheroid rubbers, eleven oval shaped discoid, eight discoids round in shape, three grooved stone hammers, eleven pestles, eight sharpening stones and few flat grinding stones

were collected in Modur excavation. This is the first time in Tamilnadu more number of stone tools from an excavation have been unearthed.

Spheroid rubbers:

In Modur excavation stone balls of spherical and spheroid shape were collected in considerable number. They have been prepared out of the local granite and have well worked sides all around. They are varying in sizes, which range from 4 cm to 8 cm in diameter. The specific use of the spherical and spheroid balls are still not determined. More than thirty spheroid balls were collected. This might be used for rubbing the floor. So, spheroid balls used for rubbing floor are termed as spheroid rubbers.

These spheroid rubbers might, probably, be employed for a variety of domestic uses mainly for crushing and rubbing or pounding and also as hammers. They might be made from roughly squared stone blocks.

Flat grinding stone:

Grinding stones collected in this excavation are more or less with flattened surfaces on either side. The thickness of the grinding stones is found to be two to three cm. They were probably used for grinding powder, etc. Nearly ten specimens in broken condition were collected in Modur excavation.

Oval discoid rubbers:

Eleven specimens of oval grinding stones with rectangular cross section were collected in this site. These are flat tabular chunks, flaked or pecked into an oval form. The flat surfaces are found to be smooth due to usage. Besides this, grinding stones with elongated oval cross section and plano-convex cross section were also collected. The oval grinding stones found at Modur vary in shape and size. A few grinding stones of semicircular top with flat base were also encountered in the course of excavation.

Circular disc:

Nearly eight specimens were collected in Modur excavation. The diameter and thickness of the round disc ranges from 6 to 15 cm, and 4 cm respectively This might be used as a base for wooden pillars of their huts.

CYLINDRICAL PESTLES:

Eleven pestles were collected in Modur site. However, they are found in broken condition. Except few, most of the pestles are noticed with highly polished surface. And, a steatite pestle with a round top and a groove was also obtained in this site.

GROOVED HAMMERS:

Large grooved stone hammers were found in considerable number from all the trenches that were laid at Modur. It might have been used for tethering an animal or perhaps for some sort of heavy-duty quarry hammer, suspended from a rope held between two men.

STONE DABBER:

Stone dabbers are noticed with oval bottom and a small round top. These tools might be used to level and attain the required shape for the pot. Totally, two specimens were collected from Modur excavation.

POLISHING STONE:

The polishing stones found in this excavation are in rectangular shape with flat bottom and concave top. The upper surfaces are very smooth. Polishing is confined mostly to the working edges. Nearly eight polishing stones were collected. Exploration around the site also yielded a specimen of polishing stone. Besides this, a rectangular polishing stone tool with flat bottom and semi circular top was also collected. The stone tools might be used for polishing the tools namely Celt.

The above-mentioned stone tools also occurred in Pikhlihal and T.Narasipur excavations.

POTTERY DISCS:

This group formed the bulk of the finds in the excavation and occurred in all periods. Totally, 113 specimens of circular discs of 1.5 to 6 cm diameter were collected. These pottery discs are of coarse red, red slipped and brown variety. It exhibits round as well as rectangular shapes. Out of these 45 discs are well finished. These hopscotches are exposed from the lower most level

to the upper most level. These kinds of hip-hops are found almost at all the sites in South India. However, this kind of stone hip-hops occurred at Modur for the first time. This might be the earliest form of hopscotches.

Shell objects:

In the Modur excavation 65 shell bangle pieces were unearthed. In association with the bangle pieces few sawed conches and shell studs were also collected. This shows that this site might be a manufacturing center of shell objects. Decorations of Criss Cross lines are noticed in a few bangle pieces. Some of them are thin or thick varieties.

Spouts:

Three types of spouts such as tubular, spout inserted with in the pot and elongated spouts were obtained. These type of spouts belong to the Neolithic period.

In the historical period knob of the vessel were prepared separately and inserted in the body of the vessel when it was in leather hard condition. Thirty-one knobs of red, black and red slipped variety were collected. These kind of spouted vessels were observed from the Neolithic period to historic period.

Spindle whorls:

In the excavation 14 spindle whorls were obtained from the historic period. It is found in the shape of an areca nut with a hole at the center for inserting iron needle for spinning purpose. It is made of clay. They are disc or plano-convex in section with grooves on the neck portion. During excavation three spindle whorls with iron piece were collected.

Gamesmen:

In the historic period gamesmen were made out of clay material. Three types of gamesmen were observed in the historic layer of Modur. These objects might be used to play the ancient games like chess. The varieties include solid cylinder having flat circular disc base and cylindrical with round base and hemispherical top. Totally five specimens were collected.

Dice:

Dice, collected in this excavation, is rectangular in section and found without incised dots. Modur excavation yielded one terracotta dice. It is measured to be 5 x 2 x 1.3 cm. Particularly in Tamilnadu, the dices of early historic period were found to be made of bone, ivory, etc., Excavation at Alagankulam yielded a dice made out of rouletted sherd.

Ear lobe:

Three varieties of ear ornaments were found in this excavation. They are terracotta ornaments. One of the ear lobe is round in shape with concave edge and looks like a badragundala. The other one looks like crescent shape. Grooves are seen around the body of the ear ornaments. Third variety is 's' section and flat base with hemispherical top. Totally, seven objects were unearthed.

Beads:

Thirty-one beads were found at Modur. It includes eight terracotta beads, eight carnelian beads and eight coral beads. Majority of the beads are simple and round shaped. Few of them were found with smooth surface, which might be obtained from application of a thin solution of fine clay before firing.

Carnelian is the second most common material for beads at Modur. Out of eight, two beads were collected from habitation site while other six beads from the burial site. All are round in shape with a hole in the center. Decorations are seen on the edges of the beads.

Besides this, a long barrel shaped paste beads, a hexagonal glass beads, Agate bead and crystal core were also found in the course of excavation at Modur.

Smoking pipe:

Few broken pieces of smoking pipes and one full shaped were obtained in the deposits pertaining to historic period. All are red in colour. It is a round receptacle with knobbed bottom. The knob is having a circular hole in the bottom, probably, for inserting pipe.

Crucibles- Furnace:

The crucible is heat resistant container used for melting of glass and iron. Crucibles of Modur are thick walled and are in the shapes of conical, cylindrical, oval and cup.

The average diameter and length of the crucibles is 8 cm and 8.5 cm respectively. The thickness of the wall is measured to be 3 cm. The surface are often vitrified and enameled. The residues of metal and glass adhering to the crucible suggest their usage in smelting of iron and glass for making domestic objects. These crucibles are mostly occurred in the Iron Age culture. Two large cylindrical furnaces and nine other small cup shaped crucibles were also collected.

Terracotta Lamp:

Most of the terracotta lamps found in this excavation are without channel. The bottom portion of the lamp is decorated with star motif. Few lamps with handles on one side were also collected. The practice of using lamps called "Agal" in Tamil still exists today. Totally, ten lamps were unearthed in this excavation.

Tiles:

In the historic period 'L' shaped tiles were used for the roof. These kinds of tiles were collected in this site. These tiles are rectangular with semi-circular end and L shaped on the top. Thirty-two tile pieces were occurred in this site. Besides this, few full shaped tiles were also collected. The dimension of the tiles is 3 cm x 6 cm x 1.5 cm. Inner surface of the tiles are smooth in compare to outer surface, which are rough.

Metal object:

Sixteen metal objects were recovered from the digging. The collection comprises twelve iron objects and three copper objects. And, one bronze object was also found. The occurrences of Bronze and copper objects were noticed in the pre megalithic period. During excavation two copper bangles and a bronze bangle were unearthed from the trenches. A small ring like ornament was also collected.

Iron objects is concerned arrowheads were collected in the Modur excavation. Of the two objects, one is in good condition while the other is in highly corroded state. The arrowhead is measured to be 9 cm in length. In addition, iron nails (Length- 3 to 7 cm) and handle portion of a sickle (corroded state) were also obtained in this excavation.

TERRACOTTA MOULD:

A broken piece of the mould was unearthed in the Modur excavation. The collected mould piece is a portion for making cast of a human head in metal. Inner side of the mould was beautifully carved. The head decoration and elongated ear are having minute carvings. This mould is made of lavigated clay and well fired.

STEATITE OBJECTS:

Steatite object is also known as soapstone or potstone. Generally, it is grey in colour. It has been used for manufacture the beads, seals, etc., In the excavation four objects were recovered and they are round, square, rectangular in shape. A rectangular object may be a pendent with a hole in the center, was also found here.

T.C.DABBER:

Four terracotta broken dabbers were found in this excavation. These dabbers are having round bottom and handle like projection in the top. These kinds of dabbers are still in usage for shaping the pottery. Among collection, four dabber are in red while other objects are grey. Two main techniques namely turntable and anvil technique were employed in pot making in the ancient times.

TERRACOTTA OBJECTS:

Most of the excavations yielded large number of terracotta objects. These objects might be used for votive purpose or offering in the ceremonial functions. The earliest terracotta animal figurines were found in the Chalcolithic sites in North India. In association with the animal figurines, human figurines were also obtained in Tamil nadu. For (e.g.) at Paiyampalli, Kodumanal, Alagankulam, etc.,

In Modur excavation eight terracotta objects were obtained. Three of them are Mother Goddess figurine, one is a ram, and the other four are broken parts of other terracotta objects.

Mother Goddess - 1:

The first human terracotta figurines have been found in Baluchistan. Human figures and animal figures appeared in the Indus Valley Civilization also. In Neolithic period terracotta were crudely modeled. This kind of crude female figurine was unearthed in the Modur excavation from the trench MDR-11 which is located at the foothill. It is a broken one and bust alone is exposed. It is solid and the interesting aspect is the beaked head and breast is fixed manually. The hands are short. Backside of the figurine is plain. It looks like an anthropomorphic figure. Also, it has similarity with that of pre historic paintings at Kilvalai. This kind of terracotta mother goddesses were also found in the excavation sites at Kulli Valley in Afghanistan.

Mother Goddess - 2:

The standing mother goddess figurine was obtained in the trench MDR-7 at the depth of 1.00 mt. It is a solid figure. The headdress is highly ornamented and looks like 'Jata maguda' form. The elongated ear with ear lobes and neck ornaments are seen. It is a nude form. It might be used for votive purpose. It is measured 15.5 cm in height.

Ram:

This is a small animal figure obtained in the trench MDR-7 at the depth of 0.90 mt. It is hand made. The occurrences of this kind of ram have been reported from most of the excavations conducted in North and South India.

CONCLUSION

The last part of the Stone Age is traditionally known as Neolithic (Greek neos= new, lithos=stone) or New Stone Age. It followed the geological age of Late Pleistocene and early Holocene (the present geological age). The scholars had identified this Age as the period which witnessed the beginning of cultivation and culmination of usage of polished lithic implements. Later on extensive usage of metals in making tools emerged in the Copper Age (Chalcolithic), Bronze Age and Iron Age. Depending upon the geographical factors these cultures developed in various regions.

The study of worldwide Neolithic culture revealed the specific behavioural characteristics, which is associated with growing of crops and domestication of animals. The survey of Neolithic culture indicates that from 9000 BCE to 7000 BCE it was limited to rearing sheep and goats, but by 7000 BCE it included cattle, cultivation of domesticated plants, permanently or semi permanently inhabited settlements and the use of pottery and ground-stone tools rather than flaked ones. The adoption of these technologies was not uniform and varied from region to region in the Neolithic period.

The Salient features of Neolithic culture are;

1. A Settled and Sedentary life –style.
2. People were engaged in pastoral- cum-agricultural operations
3. They employed polished stone tools for cutting as well as dressing the wood.
4. Used fully ground stone implements for hunting and tilling the soil.
5. Domesticated humped cattle and other animals
6. Used burnt cattle dung as fuel for domestic activities
7. They lived in circular shallow pits, which were covered by reeds etc, resting on undressed wooden posts.
8. Used hand made pottery of grey ware and red ware, and
9. Disposed the dead inside or outside the dwelling place.

Neolithic culture of India can be divided into three zones. They are north-western, eastern and southern zones. The

Northwestern zone is represented in the Kashmir valley and the eastern zone is represented in Bihar, Orissa and upto Deccan. Karnataka, Andhra and Tamilnadu belong to the southern zone.

In Tamil Nadu, districts like Salem, Dharmapuri and Vellore are endowed with castellated hills and natural caverns, which were an ideal regions for habitation of Neolithic peoples. Some of the important Neolithic habitation sites are Paiyampalli, Chandrapuram, Gollapalli, Toggarapalli, Pannimaduvu, Dailamalai, Mullikadu, Kappalavadi and Bargur.

So far in Tamil Nadu only three Neolithic sites namely Paiyampalli, Maiyladumparai and Modur have been excavated. In addition, section scrapping method was also adopted for exposing Neolithic settlements at Mullikadu, Toggrapalli and Dailamalai.

Three distinct habitation mounds were excavated at Modur. The area near Modur malai (Modur hill) yielded potsherds and Neolithic Celts. Black and red ware, Red ware and Russet coated ware of the Megalithic period were collected from the near by area of this mound. The third mound Kottaimedu lies on the eastern side of the hillock from where the antiquities belonging to the historic period were encountered.

Three cultural phases were identified in the excavations. Period-I (3000-100BCE) is characterized by Neolithic Celts, grinding stones, rubbing stones and hammer stones. Modur excavation has yielded more than 17 Neolithic Celts (both finished and unfinished). In trench Nos. 4 and 11, Neolithic Celts were recovered at a depth of 120 cm to 130 cm i.e.., in the lower most levels. Besides, good number of pecked and ground stone tools were also collected in the same trenches in the upper most part of the same layer at the depth of 105 cm to 110 cm. As far as the living place is concerned the pit dwelling of Neolithic period was not encountered in Modur when compared to Paiyampalli where pit dwelling and stone industry were exposed. The potsherds such as Tanware, burnished ware, grey ware and painted ware were also exposed in this layer and were identified as the potsherds of Neolithic period. The recovery of terracotta figurines from the trenches resembles the prehistoric paintings of Tamil Nadu. The beaked face noticed in one of the terracotta figurines is same as that of Painting of Kilvalai in Villupuram district. This kind of mother goddess was also recovered in the excavation conducted

at Inamgaon in Maharashtra by the archaeologists of the Deccan College, Pune.

The other salient features of Neolithic period concerned with pastoral and agricultural activities, domestication of animals, and mode of disposal of dead was not found in the excavation. However this does not mean that these features were completely absent here.

On analysis of the above features at Modur, it is observed that the occurrence of varied type of ground polished tools insitu attest that this area would have served as a factory site.

Period II (100 BCE-500 CE), is characterized by Black and Red ware and iron objects. The continuous occupation of Modur was witnessed by the recovery of iron objects such as iron knife, sickle in association with black and red ware sherds throw light on the cultural habitation of Iron Age people in this village. In addition, the presence of burials of megalithic period in large number reveals their inhabitation in the nearby hillock.

Period III (500-1400 CE) is characterized with the occurrences of terracotta figurines of a ram and a mother goddess, spindle whorls, shell bangle pieces, smoking pipes, hip-hops and graffiti marked potsherds and smoking pipes. The full size terracotta figurine (in nude posture) found here resembles a very ancient form of Mother Goddess. The practice of worshipping Mother Goddess is a fertility cult. This kind of terracotta figurines of historic period were also collected from the places like Indur, Mattlampatti, Panayakulam etc, in this area.

The yielding of invaluable antiquities from the excavation at Modur in Dharmapuri clearly reveals the existence of three culture periods in chronological succession. It helps us to understand the history and socio-cultural condition that prevailed in ancient times. The continuous occupation of the site from Neolithic through megalithic upto 14th century is well attested by the unearthed antiquities and the inscriptional remains found in surrounding hillock and hero stones. Further exploration and horizontal excavation in this region certainly will through light on the Neolithic settlements in this area.

Based on the findings it is concluded that the habitation at Modur village commence in Neolithic period i.e 3000 BCE and continued in the Iron Age (Megalithic Period) upto 14th century.

ANNEXURE I

Some Observations of Dr.B.Narasimaiah, Superintending Archaeologist (Retd.), Archaeological Survey of India during his visit at the Office of Special Commissioner, Department of Archaeology, Egmore, Chennai-8 on the Modur excavation findings:

Neolithic culture in general is a stage in the man's history when he crossed over from food gathering to food producing stage. This level of his growth is rightly called as revolutionary stage in man's history. He took lakhs of years to reach this stage from food hunting stage. But, with in a span of less than ten millennium years he has reached the present level of development.

Man could achieve this fast progress because he learned the documentation of animals and plant for food producing. Above all, he learned sedentary life, community living, division of labour, leader of the community who could lead his people, etc.

The Neolithic culture in India, in general is recognized, at the out set by availability of tools of pecked and grounded stone industry supplemented by, in some cases, microlithic industry, hand made pottery, etc. Most important, the Neolithic people lived for many centuries at one place in hamlets and villages in huts made of wattle and daub.

The habitation site of the Neolithic site should represent all the above mentioned traits. For example, if we encounter only tools representing pecked and grounded stone industry, like polished stone axes, pestles, rubbers, etc., it can not be called as a Neolithic habitation site, because, Neolithic tools survived in one way or the other till this day. Therefore, occurrence of Neolithic tools alone is not an indicator.

The microlithic tool industry is represented by points, arrowheads, scrapers, lunettes, etc. Especially, the occurrence of lunettes or crescents is important, because this indicates the domestication of plants. The crescents are used as composite tools for harvesting. However, the microlithic tools were displaced by

copper. If the microlithic tools are absent in a particular site, we may assume that the people had acquired the knowledge of smelting copper. Therefore, it is said that the Neolithic sites belonging to later period are Neolithic/ Chalcolithic in nature.

The Neolithic pottery is represented by hand made burnished gray ware. We should not go by the colour of the pottery. We have to take into consideration the fabric, texture, finishing, and above all method of manufacturing. The colour is secondary. The pottery should be hand made with coarse texture and fabric. The finishing should show either slip or self-slip and neatly burnished surface. Almost all pottery of the early period is ill fired, indicating that they were burnt in open furnace. But, later pottery shows the sign of making them either on slow wheel or turned table.

Coming to the result of the excavation at Modur, we have not come across any microlithic or pottery belonging to Neolithic period. The pottery identified by the excavator as Neolithic do not have any features of the Neolithic pottery. They seem to be of late origin. The identification of the pottery as Neolithic by the excavator is subjective.

The thickness of the deposits as belonging to the Neolithic is more than 1.50 mt. The question arises about the nature of these deposits that seems to have yielded Neolithic polished tools assemblage, because there is no habitation layer identified in the deposit. Then, is it debris layer or does it belong to some other period? In addition, there are no indications of existence of dwelling place, like post holes, house plans, floor levels, etc, let alone other antiquities. Therefore, it can be said on the basis of available data at present that the Neolithic people might have been wandering in this area.

It is felt that the excavation at Modur, instead of throwing more light on the Neolithic people of Tamil Nadu, has posed more questions to be answered. Therefore, horizontal excavation of the site is very essential. Only horizontal excavations can throw more light on this deposit. Time of taking up vertical excavation is over now; the need is for taking up larger trenches and excavate carefully. Then only we can get good results.

ANNEXURE II

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SEMINAR ON 'RECENT EXCAVATIONS AT ANDIPATTI AND MODUR' HELD ON 22.6.2005 AT GOVERNMENT MUSEUM THEATRE, GOVERNMENT MUSEUM, CHENNAI - 8.

MINUTES OF THE SEMINAR - SESSION II

A seminar was held on 22.06.2005 to highlight the findings of the two excavations. The second technical session started with the introduction of scholars by Thiru. T.S. Sridhar, I.A.S. Special Commissioner of Archaeology and was presided over by Dr. T.Sathyamoorthy, Superintending Archaeologist, Archaeological survey of India, Southern Circle, Chennai. In his speech he congratulated the department for the two fascinating excavations conducted at Andipatti and Modur. He praised the efforts taken by the Special Commissioner of Archaeology for organizing the seminar and exhibition of antiquities. He also mentioned that the excavations like Paiyampalli (North Arcot District) and Mayiladumparai in Dharmapuri district are important to study the Neolithic culture of Modur area.

1) Dr. B.Narasimaiah - Superintending Archaeologist, (Retd.) Archaeological Survey of India, Southern Circle, Chennai was the first speaker. He explained that the Neolithic settlers domesticated the animals and lived in one place; this was the transmission of food gathering phase to food producing phase. Polished stone tools, burnished gray ware and microlithic tools were the salient features of the Neolithic culture. The following points are to be studied further;

I. The typological classification of stone tools
II. Habitation settlements
III. Type of dwellings
IV. Cultural deposits and their time scale.

He has also pointed out that the horizontal excavations and study of the stratified layers would give greater evidence for the Neolithic culture of Modur in the forthcoming excavations.

He appreciated the efforts taken by the Special Commissioner in obtaining the experts' opinion about the archaeological exhibits of Modur, Andipatti and Algankulam.

DISCUSSION:

Dr.T.Sathyamoorthy pointed out the importance of study and classification of stone tools and pottery of Neolithic period. Dr. A. Sundara expressed that the area in and around Modur has to be combed thoroughly and Neolithic habitational sites are to be identified properly.

2) Dr. A.Sundara, Retired Professor of Ancient Indian History and Epigraphy, Karnataka University, Dharwar was the second speaker. In his talk he had mentioned about the Iron age-Megalithic sites of South India. He has noted different types of burials and compared them with similar sites Karnataka. He observed that the graffiti marks in pottery are abundant in Tamilnadu. Tamilnadu is considered as a potential area for studying Megalithic - Iron Age culture. He also mentioned that at Modur Iron age traces are found in the excavated antiquities.

DISCUSSION:

Dr. R.Chembakalakshmi and Dr. T.Sathyamoorthy participated in the discussion and expressed that further study of the Iron Age in the context of Tamil culture should be encouraged.

Dr. A.Sundara opinioned that the typology of megaliths should be studied exclusively. The Thermo Luminescence Dating of the Pottery might be highly useful to fix the chronology of the site.

3) Thiru. S. Selvaraj Archaeological officer and excavator of Modur presented his paper on 'Significance of excavation at Modur'. He explained the details of Modur excavations and the typological variations of the stone tools with power point presentation.

Dr. A. Sundara emphasized the necessity of studying and identifying the Neolithic culture by examining the occurrence of tools and their find spot and soil layer with ash deposits along with analyzing the occurrence of bones and constructional activities of their dwellings. Dr. B. Narasimaiah and Dr. T. Sathyamoorthy also participated in the discussion and observed that the stone objects and other antiquities need to be studied in detail.

Valedictory Programme of the Seminar

Dr. A. Ekambaranathan, Professor and Head, Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Madras delivered the valedictory address.

He explained the need for the study of potteries in detail and compared them with potteries of other excavations. He also said that further excavation of Modur would help to fix the cultural sequence and chronology of the site. Regarding the 'Mother Goddess' terracotta figurine he desired that it should be compared with similar objects from other excavations. He also appreciated the efforts taken by the Special Commissioner of Archaeology to coordinate the scholars from other departments in studying the antiquities.

Thiru. T.S. Sridhar, IAS. Special Commissioner of Archaeology while in his summing up speech called the function a 'Mupperumvizha'. i.e.. "Seminar on recent Excavations, Exhibition of antiquities and the release of book on Alagankulam excavation". He also expressed his happiness about efforts in bringing together various archaeological departments of central, state and university levels in one dais to discuss the findings of Andipatti excavations. He concluded that the seminar might be very useful to the scholars as it opens up avenues for further research in this field.

Dr. N. Marxia Gandhi, Assistant Superintending Epigraphist delivered the Vote of Thanks.

Mrs. S. Vasanthi, Archaeologist introduced the speakers to the audience.

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TABLE 1- STONE OBJECTS

Trench No.	Celt	Sling Stone	Grinding Stone	Sharpening Stone	Spheroid rubber	Pestle	Grooved Hammer	Discoid rubber	Stone Dabber	Round Disc	Stone Hip hop	Stone Hammer
MDR-1	-	1	1	1	6	1	-	1	-	1	-	-
MDR-2	3	1	2	3	4	-	-	2	2	-	7	2
MDR-3	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
MDR-4	1	2	3	-	6	2	-	-	1	-	1	1
MDR-5	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	-
MDR-6	-	1	-	-	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
MDR-7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
MDR-8	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
MDR-9	2	-	-	-	3	1	-	3	1	1	2	-
MDR-10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MDR-11	2	5	2	1	4	1	1	2	-	1	-	1
MDR-12	1	6	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	2	-	4
MDR-13	1	-	-	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	-	3
MDR-14	3	2	3	2	2	1	-	2	-	2	-	2
MDR-15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

TABLE 2 - ARTEFACTS

Trench No.	Hip Hop	Spindle whorl	Shell Bangle	Crucible Furnace	Iron	Black Bangle piece	Gamesmen	Earlobe	T.C. Dabber	smoking Pipe	Beads	Copper	Pendant	T.C. Lamp	Fry Pan
MDR-1	16	1	5	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
MDR-2	6	1	-	2	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	4	-
MDR-3	13	-	6	-	-	2	1	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
MDR-4	3	2	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MDR-5	2	-	2	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
MDR-6	6	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
MDR-7	9	4	8	2	1	-	1	2	-	4	4	-	1	-	-
MDR-8	4	-	1	3	1	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	-
MDR-9	-	-	3	3	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
MDR-10	22	2	7	-	-	3	-	1	-	1	6	-	-	-	1
MDR-11	2	-	7	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-
MDR-12	6	2	5	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-
MDR-13	13	2	4	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
MDR-14	15	4	8	-	1	-	1	2	2	-	6	-	-	-	-
MDR-15	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-

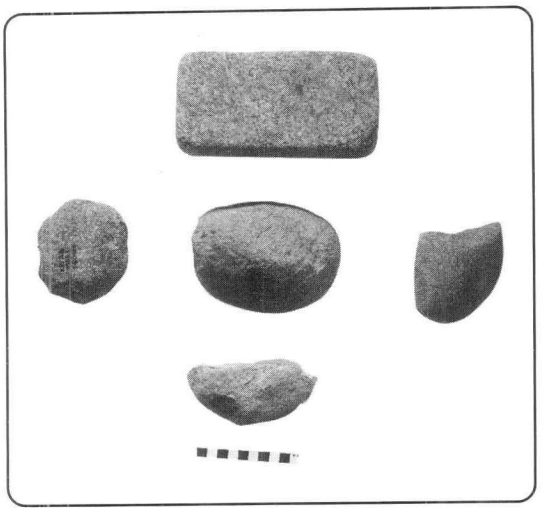
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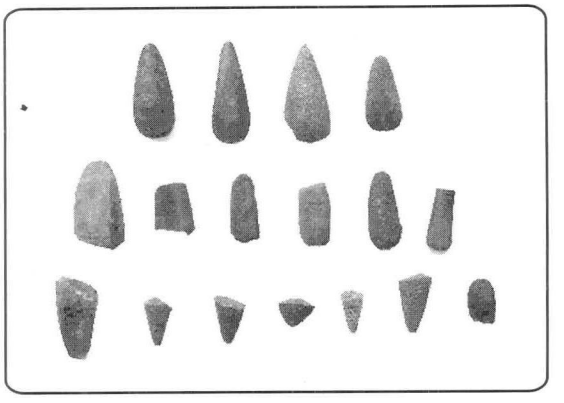
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13.	Report on conservation of Monuments	93-00
14.	கல்வெட்டு காலாண்டு இதழ் – 66, 67	10-00

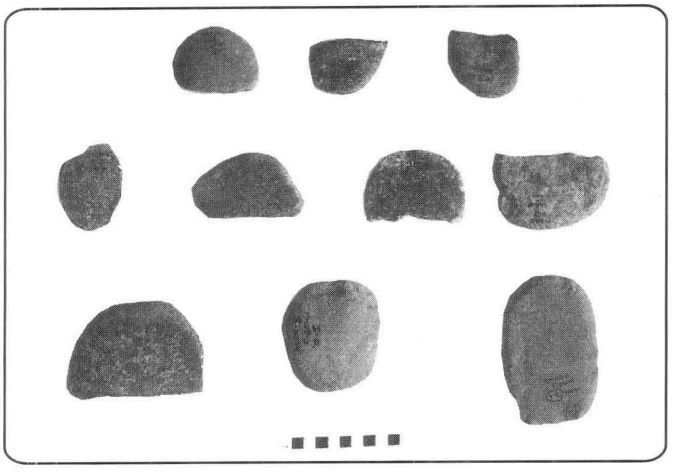
Grinding Stones



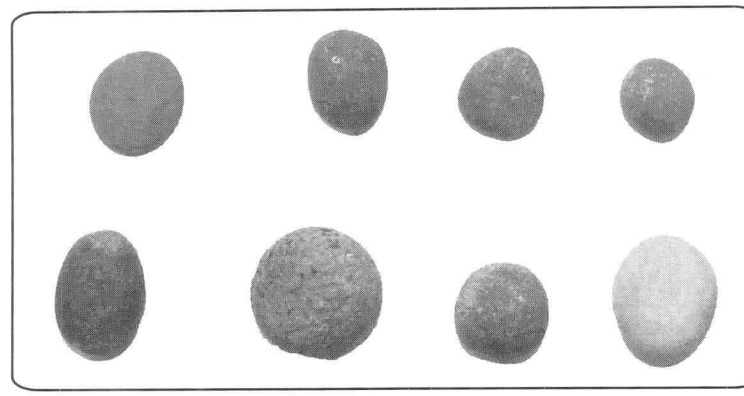
Celts

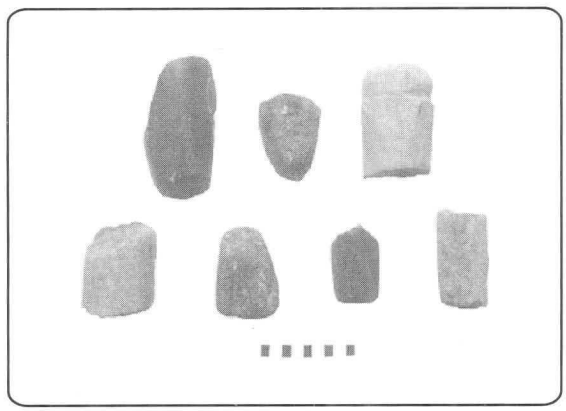


Oval Discoids



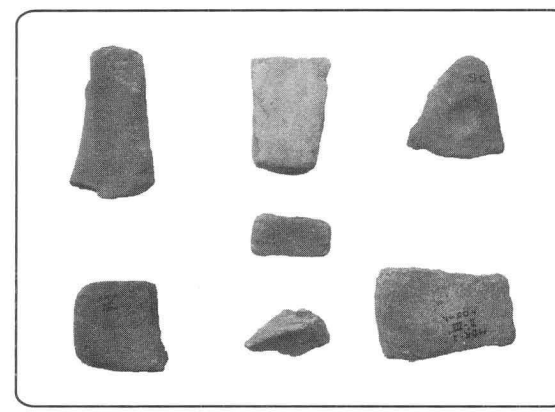
Sling Stones



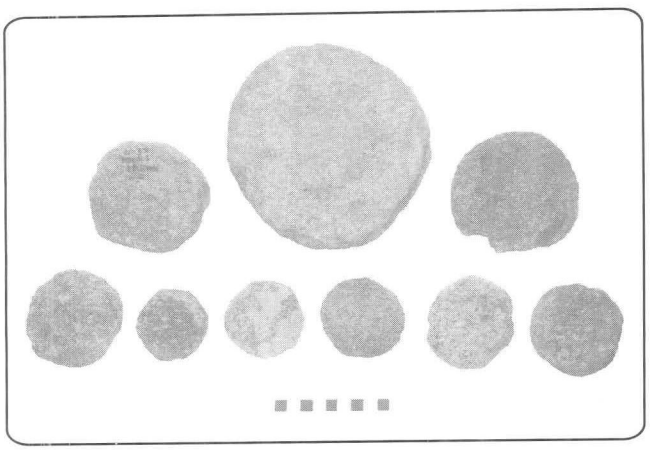


Pestles

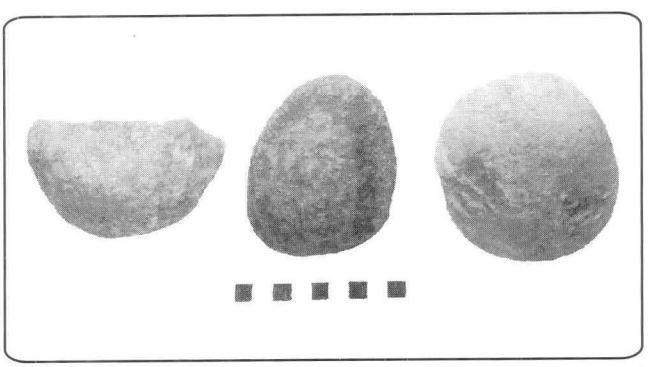
Sharpening Stones



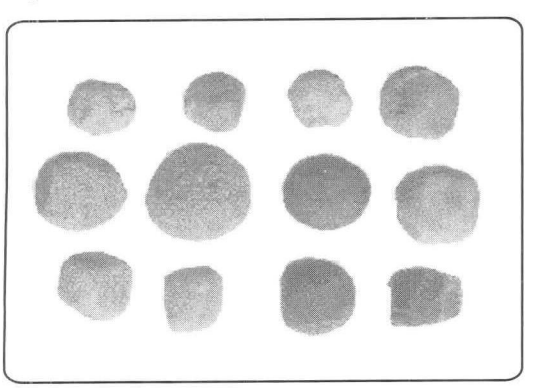
Round Discs



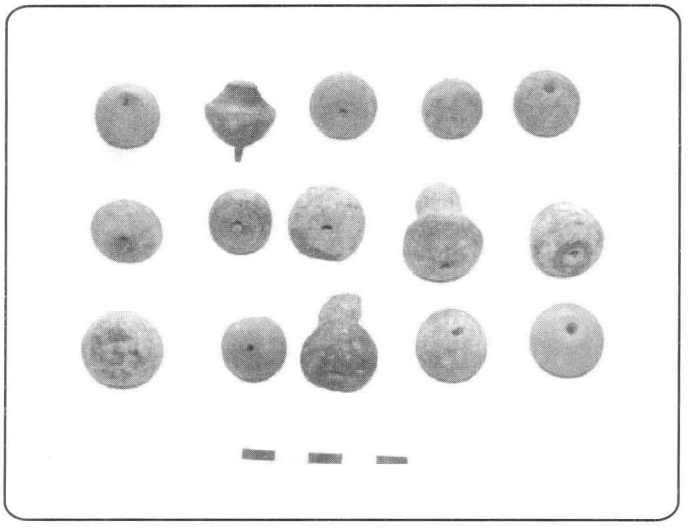
Stone Dabbers



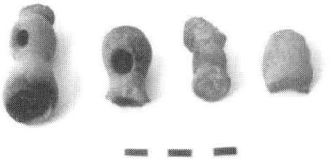
Spheroid Rubbers



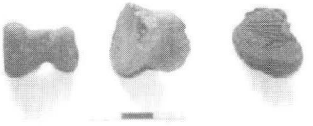
Spindle Whorls

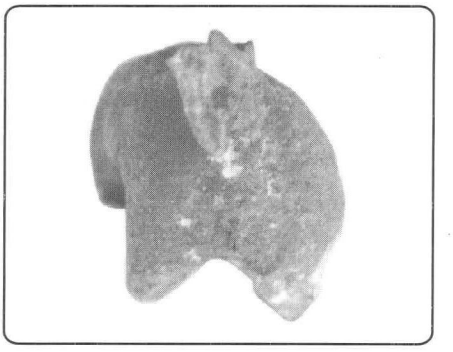


Smoking Pipes



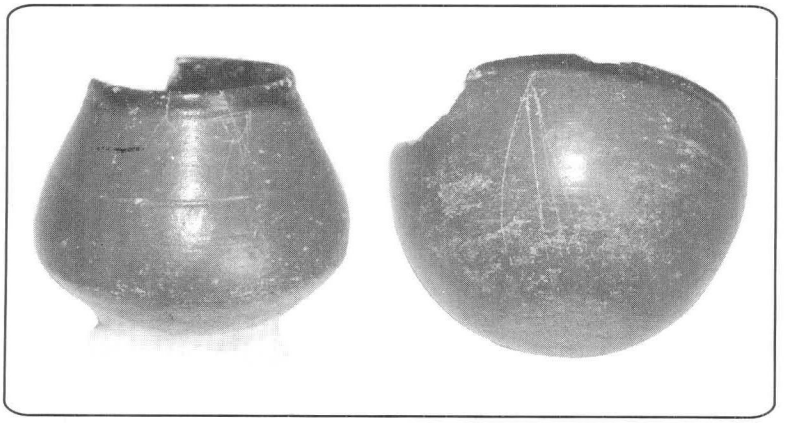
Ear Lobes



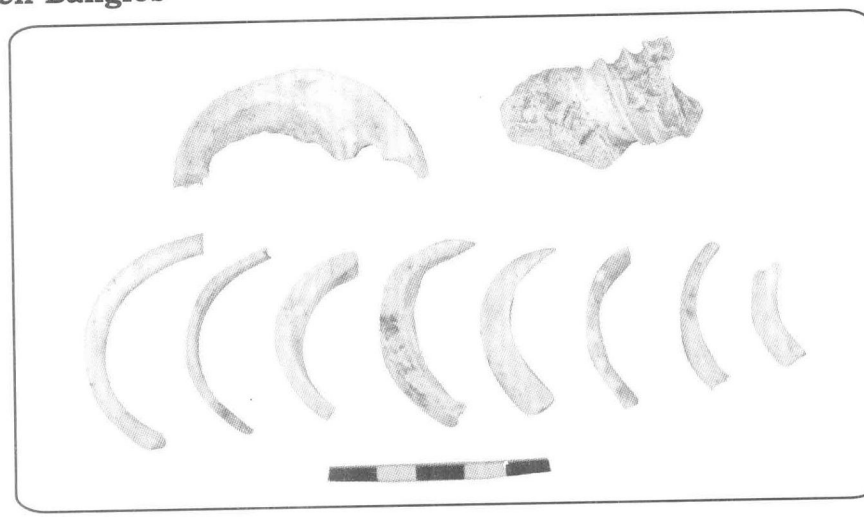


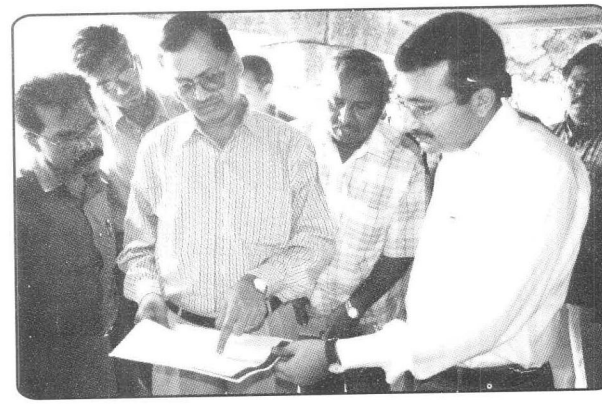
Terracotta Ram

Bowls With Graffiti

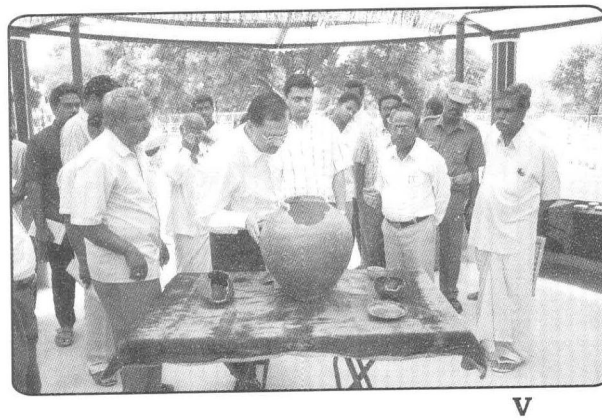


Conch Bangles





Thiru. Asish Vachani, I.A.S., the then District Collector, Dharmapuri with the Editor Thiru.T.S. Sridhar, I.A.S., at the Launch Meeting held at Dharmapuri on 14-12-2004



Thiru. Sudeep Jain, I.A.S., the then District Collector, Dharmapuri with the Editor Thiru. T.S. Sridhar, I.A.S., at the Exhibition held at Dharmapuri on 22-4-2005

INAUGURATION of the Special EXHIBITION





Thiru C. VE. SHANMUGAM, Hon'ble Minister for Tamil Development and Culture, Education and Commercial Taxes inaugurates the Special Exhibition on 22-06-2005 at Museum Theatre, Chennai.

PARTICIPANTS

Headed by :

T.S. SRIDHAR, IAS, Special Commissioner

Associates :

In Charge : K. Sridharan, Registering Officer, Chennai

T. Subramanian, Archaeological Officer, Thanjavur
S. Selvaraj, Archaeological Officer, Dharmapuri
V. Ramamurthy, Pre His. Archaeologist, Chennai
R. Narayanan, Junior Engineer, Chennai
T. Thangavel, Assistant Engineer, Chennai
K. Olimalik, Junior Engineer I/c, Trichy
M.S. Ashok Deen, Chemist, Chennai
S. Srikumar, Technical Assistant, Chennai
M.T. Sridharan, Photographer, Chennai







