



LRF KANYAKUMARI
MUSLIM ARTS COLLEGE
Thiruvithancode, Kanyakumari, Tamilnadu, India.




LEMURIA RESEARCH FORUM
SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms A. SHAHILA BANU, Asst. Professor, Department of History, Muslim Arts College, Thiruvithancode, has participated in the Second International Conference of Lemuria Research Forum on "REVELATIONS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION" held at MUSLIM ARTS COLLEGE, Thiruvithancode, on 22/08/2022 and presented a paper entitled "Revelation of Keezhady Excavations"


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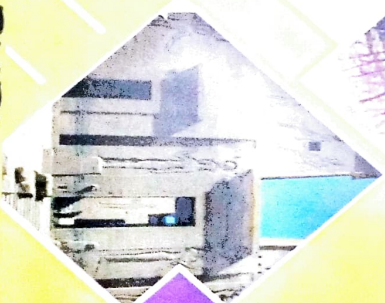
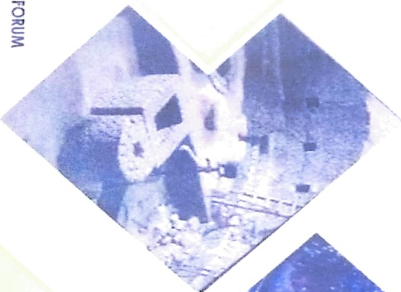
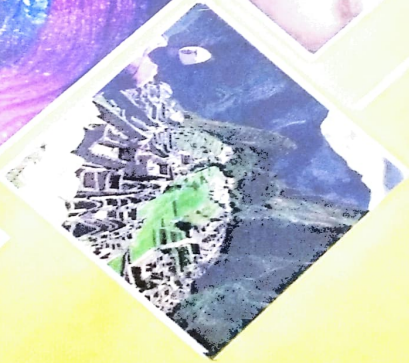
ISBN : 978-81-908060-8-4

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEMURIA RESEARCH FORUM,
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**SECOND
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THE LEMURIA RESEARCH FORUM
KANYAKUMARI



22.08.2022

**REVELATIONS OF
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
EXCAVATION**

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE LEMURIA RESEARCH FORUM
KANYAKUMARI
MUSLIM ARTS COLLEGE, THIRUVVITHANCODE**

Conference Proceedings
(Multi disciplinary)



**SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF LRF -
2022**

Theme : REVELATIONS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

அகழ்வாராய்ச்சியின் கண்டுபிடிப்புகள்

Date : 22-08-2022



**LEMURIA RESEARCH FORUM - KANYAKUMARI
MUSLIM ARTS COLLEGE, THIRUVVITHANCODE
Pin - 629174, Tamil Nadu, India**

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REVELATION OF KEEZHADI EXCAVATIONS

*Open Presented to the International seminar organized by the URF Kanyasulkam,
Madurai College, Thiruvithankode entitled, Revelations of Archaeological
Excavations held on 12th August, 2017*

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Abstract

The recommendation of the State Department of Archaeology, the Central Advisory Board of Archaeology (CAB) had permitted Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology to conduct excavations at Keeladi, Sivagangai District during the years 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. The analysis of carbon samples collected from the Keeladi Excavations resulted as 6th century BCE (580 BCE). Likewise, the date of Tamil Brahmi is pushed back to 6th century BCE that is a century earlier than the hitherto held view of 5th century BCE. Which is evidence for the high literacy level that was well achieved in 6th century BCE in Tamil Nadu. It is generally believed among the scholars that second urbanization observed in Gangaic valley did not occur in Tamil Nadu. But, the Keeladi excavations clearly suggest that the second urbanization too happened in Tamil Nadu in 6th century BCE.

Keeladi (also as Keeladi) excavation site is a Sangam age settlement that is being excavated by the Archaeological Survey of India and the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology. This site is located 12 km southeast of Madurai in Tamil Nadu, near the town of Keeladi in Sivagangai district. It comes under the Thiruppuvaram Taluk of Sivagangai district. This is a large-scale excavation carried out in Tamil Nadu after the Adichanallur archaeological site. The settlement lies on the bank of the Vaigai River and it reflects the ancient culture of Tamil people. Epigraphist V. Veluchandram, who served as a domain expert for the excavation, dated the excavated remains between 6th century BCE and 3rd century CE.

In 2013-14, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) carried out

explorations in 293 sites along the Vaigai river valley in Theni, Dindigul, Madurai, Sivagangai and Ramanathapuram districts. Keeladi in Sivaganga district was chosen for excavation and artefacts unearthed by the ASI in the second phase of the excavation at Pallichanhai.

Thidal of Keelzadi pointed to an ancient civilisation that thrived on the banks of the Vaigai. Carbon dating of charcoal found at the Keelzadi site in February 2017 established that the settlement there belonged to 200 BC. The excavations thus proved that urban civilisation had existed in Tamil Nadu since the Sangam age.

The exquisitely crafted pot, measuring 72 cm in width and 42 cm in height, was found by an ASI team led by K. Annamath Ramakrishna, Superintending Archaeologist. "This is for the first time such a decorative pot has been found in a habitation site in Tamil Nadu during

excavation," says Mr. Amarnath. Two similar pots of different shapes have started to emerge in two other pits of the excavation site. The huge red pot, which is among a variety of earthenware discovered in the area, was found embedded alongside a water storage facility. Noted epigraphist V. Vedachalam says that the kind of antiquities found at the site, "Pallichandai Thidal," reaffirm the belief that nestled among three ancient places — Konthagai, Keezhadi and Manalur — was an urban settlement that had trade links with North India and the western world during the Sangam Age. References to Manalur are found in Trinvilayadapuram. During a later period, Konthagai and Keezhadi were merged as Kuntidevi Chaturvedimangalam and gifted to Brahmins. The excavations conducted so far on just one out of 100 acres of identified land at the spot at Pallchanthai thidal had led to discovery of 4,125 artefacts pointing to the existence of an ancient Tamil civilization that could have thrived on the banks of Vaigai. The State government has also evinced interest in setting up a site museum at Keezhadi to display the 5,300 antiquities that have been unearthed so far and has even offered to allot 72 cents of land for the same.

Phases of Keezhadi excavation

In June 2015, an Archaeological Survey of India group led by Amarnath Ramakrishnan started the first phase of the excavation in the area near the Vaigai river in Keezhadi. The second phase began on 2 January 2016. Various documents, including medical jars, antique kitchen wells, and factory and government seals, were found. At the end of the second phase, more than six thousand artefacts were found. It was confirmed that these artifacts were 2,200

years old when they were tested by radiocarbon dating. The third phase of the excavation was conducted under the chairmanship of Sri Ramanan of the Archaeological Survey of India from January 2017. The work ended on 30 September

2017. In the third phase, 16 digging sites were selected, taking up a total area of 400 square meters, which is 80 acres of land. The fourth phase of the excavation was conducted between 2017 and 2018, bringing out 5,820 artifacts. This phase was conducted by the Tamil Nadu Archaeology Department while the first three phases were conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India. Six carbon samples collected from the fourth phase of excavation at Keezhadi were sent to Beta Analytic, Miami, Florida, USA for Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS) dating, samples collected at a depth of 353 cm, were dated between 580 BCE and the 1st century CE. The graffiti marks on the artifacts obtained from the excavation site were said to be similar to the Indus Valley script by the excavators. In June 2019, the Tamil Nadu Archaeology Department began the fifth phase of the excavation led by Dr R Sivamantham. This phase was completed in four to five months in which 15 trenches was planned to be dug. In the 5th stage of excavation, Sangam-era bricks and more than 700 objects were found and these have been sent for testing. Sixth phase of excavation along with simultaneous excavation in neighbouring villages (Manalur, Kondhagai, and Agaram) began on 19 February 2020. The seventh phase was launched on February 13 and began on February 19, 2021. It came to an end on September 20, 2021. On February 11, 2022, the eighth phase of excavations began.

Findings

Brick wall found in the excavation

Almost 48 square pits have been cut and various structures and artifacts have been found, including frosts, brick walls, roof tiles, pottery, mimic accessories, skeletal tools, iron Vel, and Tamil-Brahmi letter-etched plates. This place is considered to be Pandyan dynasty's city called "Perumanalur", the pioneer of literature. The use of fired brick, the size of the building complex, an array of pots placed in such a way that it must have been used either as a lamp or for painting, and other findings suggest that the settlement is of a more civilized population than was previously suspected during the Sangam period.

Canals and sewage system

Water supply and wastewater are considered as important landmarks of civil development. At the bottom of the settlement, there are buildings with a sewage canal facility made of ceramic tubes

Ring wells and brick walls

Ancient earthenware and ring wells have been found. Archaeologist Veluppan said that this proves the ancient tradition of Tamils indicating that they used these wells in river shores and ponds for water. Brick buildings are considered rare in ancient times but a large number of brick buildings have been found.

Pottery

The rouletted, arretine-type ceramics brought by merchants demonstrate business connections with the Roman Empire. It is noteworthy that such products have been discovered. Furthermore, black and red parchment fragments and white-colored black, red papillae and reddish-pitted

pieces have also been unearthed. There are Tamil words engraved on the potteries that mention the names of individuals like 'Athani', 'Uthirani' and 'Thiesani'.

Tamil-Brahmi script and graffiti marks

In the fourth phase of excavations at Keezhadi, 72 pots/birds with Tamil-Brahmi script were discovered at the site. Some of these artifacts have inscribed graffiti marks, similar to graffiti marks which some believe to have evolved from the Indus script. According to T. Udhayachandran, the artifacts found at Keezhadi excavation site may point to a link between the scripts of the Indus Valley civilization and Tamil-Brahmi

Ornaments and antiquities

Ornaments have been found including sponges, marble, agate beads, green, yellow and blue glass beads. The findings also include elephant tusks, copper ointment and sheets of wire. Rare artifacts including iron edged corners, gold ornaments, stylus, terracotta stamps, diaphragm tiles, firefly toys have been found as well, along with other tools.

Conclusion

Excavation work, during this season had yielded 5820 antiquities with enough cultural traits in the form of structural activity (brick structures, terracotta ring wells, fallen roofing tiles with double holes and deeply finger pressed grooves to draw rain water).

Antiquities like few pieces of golden ornaments, broken portions, copper objects, iron implements, terracotta gamesmen (chessman), hop scotches, ear ornaments, spindle whorls, figurines and portions besides beads of terracotta, glass, semi-precious stones (agate, carnelian, crystal,

etc.).

Popular ceramic types like finer variety of Black and Red ware, Black ware, Black Polished ware, Red ware, Rouletted ware, few pieces of Arretines were also found. There are also enough numbers of graffiti sherds of both pre and post firing nature. A good number of Tamil Brahmi sherds also have been unearthed.

All these finds clearly indicate the cultural richness of the ancient civilization of the Tamils of this region having its close proximity to the temple city Madurai. Hence it becomes essential to continue to probe such cultural hidden treasures of Kozhachi site in future and reveal the cultural wealth of the ancient Tamil society.

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