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# SILENT STONES OF KURUMBRANAD: ECHOES OF A MEGALITHIC PAST

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Kurumbranad was one of the important nadu in medieval kerala.it situated between Polanad and Kadathanad on the Malabarcoast. Kurumbranad was bordered by Akalapuzha in the east, Nairanithod in north, Arabian Sea in west, and Korapuzha in the south[1]. Now Kurumbranad scattered to different taluk,the area of my study focused on the places of old Koyilandy Taluk. As a part of Malabar Kurumbranad also a focusing area of study. Many excavations have been carried out in Malabar then a part of the Madras Presidency since the beginning of the British era. These discoveries, which shed new light on the early history of Malabar, were led by British officials such as Babington, Todd, and Logan. Subsequent expeditions in the region were conducted on the basis of these earlier findings[2]. As in many parts of Kerala, investigations related to the megalithic culture in this region progressed very slowly. In Kurumbranad taluk, a part of Malabar, systematic expeditions began only in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when K. J. John initiated such studies. Following this, excavations in several megalithic sites continued over the subsequent decades[3]. Together, these efforts indicate a gradual but steady advancement in research on the megalithic culture.

The Megalithic builders were taken certain criteria to select stone or area for construct thei monument. Which means that the availability of megalithic types depends upon the local burial practice and raw material. And as well as they had knowledge about season of the region.[4] That might be led the more representation of Umbrella stone in Kerala, because it solve weathering problem of laterite due to rain. So, we can understand that the climate condition of the region determines the shape of the monument[5].

The answers to where our history begins are found through various excavations. In this way, most of the evidence capable of redefining the history of Kozhikode has

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been obtained from regions that once formed part of ancient Kurumbranad. The place included Perambra, Kinalur, Cheruvannoor, Panthalayini are giving valuable evidences regarding the megalithic culture of Kerala. Moreover, many new objects related to the Megalithic culture are being discovered and preserved in other places that form part of this region. Artifacts that differ from those found in excavations in other parts of Kerala have also been unearthed from this area.

The details of both minor and major investigations are recorded below.

**Kodakuthi– Perambra**

The place name Kudakuthi is linked to an old legend associated with the spot where the Pandavas pitched their umbrella. This area, located in Koothali Panchayat near Perambra, was excavated in 1979 by K. J. John, who unearthed the umbrella stones (kudakkallu) found there. This was the second umbrella-stone excavation in North Kerala. Iron weapons and bronze vessels were recovered from the site, giving Kudakuthi a special place in the archaeological record as one of the few sites in North Kerala where bronze vessels have been discovered.

The umbrella stone here consists of a finely dressed and polished orthostat combined with a very low clinostat. Although these structures are aesthetically impressive, they have not been properly preserved, and many of them are now found in a damaged state.

**Paithoth**

The Paithoth rock cut chamber had a square type inner space and about 1.5 m height form the base toroof. The entrance part of the cave and the entire area around the monument was demolished owing to the laterite quarrying. The site yielded very significant artefacts including the broken pieces of the Coarse Red Ware, Black and Red Ware, Red Slipped Ware, iron objects and a few bone fragments. This site is located in a private plot where the laterite quarrying was rapidly progressing. As the photograph shows the surroundings of the cave was completely quarried by the plot owner.

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**Chakkottupara**

A cluster of cist burials made of granite slabs was found near to a laterite quarry at Chakkottupara Changaroth Panchayath near Panthirikara, Perambra. About four cist burials were there and one among them was found opened and partly destroyed. During the salvaging operation, a few iron implements and a copper object were found. Another important object found was a broken piece of bronze lid. This site is very near to the Perambra Kodakkal site from where K. J. John had discovered a bronze bowl. A few fragments of bones were also unearthed. Few pieces of typical Megalithic potsherds including Red Slipped legged jars and Black and Red Ware were also discovered. All these artifacts are coming from a single context.4 Very close to these cist burials, a destroyed urn burial was also found. According to the local information, a number of small potteries in red colors were found from the urn and all these were destroyed[6].

**Pannimukku-Pambirikunnu**

An umbrella stone has been found at Pampirikkunnu of Pannimukku near Perambra. It is located in a private garden land. It is made of dressed laterite blocks and found intact.

**Cheriyeri Paramba Pambirikunnu**

Near to the Pampirikkunnu umbrella stone site, a rock-cut sepulcher was found accidently during a house construction work at Cheriyeri Paramba.As informed by the plot owner, it was a multi-chambered rock cut sepulcher. They refilled the cave immediately after the opening. The plot owner has shown some of the reaming pottery which includes a three legged red slipped jar, two red slipped potteries with graffiti marks. Now these potteries are preserving at the Department of History, CKG Memorial Government College Perambra. Different types of graffiti marks could be found in these potteries. They were found below the neck body part in the potteries[7].

**Kodakkallu- Atholi**

Another single umbrella stone was found in 1 K M away Atholi. It was big shaped umbrella stone, the place was known by local name of the monument.

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**Kinalur - Balussery**

The site of Kerala Industrial Development Centre Park, Karradi, Panangad Village, Kozhikode district revealed urn burials when rain water harvesting pits were dug in 2015. In 2016 the Arts and Science College, Calicut, with the permission and support of the Kerala State Archaeology Department. Several urn burials are exposed in the pits dug for rainwater harvesting. They suggest that these were occupied by Iron Age Early Historic people. The remains of iron slag prove that iron smelting was undertaken near to this location. However, chronology of the iron smelting evidence is not clear, as no clear associated ceramics could be identified. Further research is required at this location.

The urns produced black and red ware bowls and one urn produced 4 etched carnelian beads. No iron objects were found inside the urn burials. Over all these urn burials are similar to the burials found in Kerala and they can be broadly dated to the Iron Age-Early Historic period (1000 BCE to 500 CE), based on the material culture but detailed scientific study is necessary to date these burials. An important find from the excavation are the microliths made of quartz and they clearly belong to the Mesolithic context. The microliths are found on the surface and they are also found along with the soil found in and around the urn burials and they point that the site is disturbed[8].

**Viyyur - Koyilandy**

Excavations in the Viyyur Laterite cave in Koyilandy taluk of Kozhikode district yielded several unique Megalithic-age relics, including a rare earthen sarcophagus, 27 other earthen pots, 12 iron tools, and 86 rare quartz pearls. The discovery of rare sarcophagus (stone coffin), said to be 2,000-year-old from the Iron Age–Megalithic era, was discovered from a rock-cut[9].

Cave at Viyur.The entrance of the cave was on the eastern side. “The square-shaped door has equal length of 50 centimetres on all sides. Different types of pottery, mostly four-legged jars and iron implements, were found in the cave[10].

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**Poovambayi – Kinalur**

Poovambayi Nannangadi: Poovambayi Nannangadi (Urn burial) found from the Poovambayi A. M. Higher Secondary School in Kinalur, Kozhikode. It was the shreds, which were found while digging in the ground for sports purposes that led the Department to the excavation. When the soil at the bottom of Nannangadi was removed, a Mesolithic micro-stone weapon made of quartz was found. Nannangadi, excavated from here, is characterized by a pyriform bottom[11].

In addition to these, the urn burials discovered near Koothali High School and the stone tombs (cists) at Keezhpayyur and Meppayyur may also be mentioned here. This suggests that the region had been inhabited about 2000 years ago, and that the people who lived here believed in ancestor worship and followed a tribal way of life. The construction methods of the monuments and the objects recovered from them reveal distinctive features, as well as the technological knowledge and craftsmanship of that period[12]. Another notable aspect is the location of these monuments they are mostly found in areas unsuitable for agriculture. Since the ancient port of Pantalayani Kollam was part of Kurumbranad, it can be inferred that this region, like many others, had cultural connections with various parts of the world[13]. Some discoveries that may provide further insight into such connections are likely to emerge from the ongoing excavations at Pantalayani Kollam.

The information currently available about Pantalayani Kollam is also included here. Another important finding from Panthalayini Kollam, the old port of Kerala that a very rare type of pot, which is the 94-cm, well-baked, globular urn with a Pedunculated. The bud like projection at the bottom pins the urns into the earth and helps to keep them in position, rim is featureless and the diameter mouth is 6 cm. normally the capstones of megalithic burial urns are flat and circular. The capstone of this urn is a granite boulder with 15 cm in length and 12.5 cm width and weighs 3.64 kg[14].

In addition to these, the urn burials discovered near Koothali High School and the stone tombs (cists) at Keezhpayyur and Meppayyur may also be mentioned here. This suggests that the region had been inhabited about two thousand years ago, and that the people who lived here believed in ancestor worship and followed a tribal way of life. The construction methods of the monuments and the objects recovered from

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them reveal distinctive features, as well as the technological knowledge and craftsmanship of that period. Another notable aspect is the location of these monuments they are mostly found in areas unsuitable for agriculture. In addition, variations observed in the size, form, and construction of the monuments, as well as the differences in the grave goods recovered from them, may indicate the existence of distinct social strata within the community[15]. The later emergence of temples and organized settlements in close proximity to these megalithic remains Kinalur being a notable example suggests a continuity of occupation and cultural transformation over time. Thus, it may be inferred that the Megalithic cultural complex constitutes a foundational layer in the historical evolution of contemporary society.

## ENDNOTES


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