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*IJMASRI, Vol. 2, issue 1, pp. 229- 232, Oct. -2023*

<https://doi.org/10.53633/ijmasri>

**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY  
ADVANCED SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND INNOVATION  
(IJMASRI)**

**ISSN: 2582-9130**

**IBI IMPACT FACTOR 1.5**

**DOI: 10.53633/IJMASRI**

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**PALEOGRAPHY OF TAMILI IN VILLUPURAM REGION: A STUDY THROUGH GRAFFITI AND  
EPIGRAPHY**

**Pushparaj J**

*Ph.D., Research scholar, Department of History, Annamalai University,*

**Abstract**

This article has focused to reveal the paleography of Tamil through graffiti and epigraphical sources. Villupuram is the prominent places having the enormous history and culture, which depicted by the sources. Earlier, it was conjoined by the other nearby districts namely Villupuram and Kallakurichi and renowned as South Arcot District. While known the history through the sources. Paleography is the ancient writing system which seen from ancient antiquities in very meager scale. However, this could be the rudimentary writing style of the people in India, especially Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu has enormous archaeological sources and epigraphical sources. These are revealing through excavations and exploration by the researchers. Cuddalore is having the great potential of ancient writing system that evolved the Archaeological excavation by the Department also the individuals. Writing style is originated from graffiti form and epigraphical form in ancient India, particularly Tamil Nadu. Moreover, these letters are authenticating by the literary sources.

**Keywords:** Tamil, Epigraphical sources, graffiti, writing style, South Arcot District, Paleography.

**Introduction**

Villupuram is the prominent places having the enormous history and culture, which depicted by the sources. Earlier, it was conjoined by the other nearby districts namely Villupuram and Kallakurichi and renowned as South Arcot District. While known the history through the sources. Paleography is the ancient writing system which seen from ancient antiquities in very meager scale. However, this could be the

rudimentary writing style of the people in India, especially Tamil Nadu. Tamil Nadu has enormous archaeological sources and epigraphical sources. These are revealing through excavations and exploration by the researchers. Cuddalore is having the great potential of ancient writing system that evolved the Archaeological excavation by the Department also the individuals. Writing style is originated from graffiti form and epigraphical form in ancient India, particularly Tamil Nadu. Moreover, these letters are

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authenticating by the literary sources. This article has focused to reveal the paleography of *Tamili* through graffiti and epigraphical sources.

### Early Historic

The letters were found in pots, caves and mountain walls referred to as Early Historic. Given the historical resources, the evolution of the letters and scripts is known as the Sangam Age. This period, which lasted from 500 BC to 500 AD, is also known as the Indo-Roman period or the Megalithic Age in Tamil Nadu.<sup>1</sup> The earliest stage of history can be divided into three parts. The first part covered the prehistory from prehistory to 1st century BC. The second part covered the first century BC to 3rd century AD. The third part covered the 6th century BC to 6th century AD. The first two parts of the early history correspond to the Indo-Roman maritime trade. The third part of the history corresponds to the after the Sangam Age.<sup>2</sup>

Each of these epochs had a distinct development.<sup>3</sup> The earliest stage of history can be divided into three parts. The first part covered the prehistory from prehistory to 1st century BC. The second part covered the first century BC to 3rd century AD. The third part covered the 6th century BC to 6th century AD. The first two parts of the early history correspond to the Indo-Roman maritime trade. The third part of the history corresponds to the after the Sangam Age.<sup>4</sup> The earliest stage of history can be divided into three parts. The first part covered the prehistory from prehistory to 1st century BC. The second part covered the first century BC to 3rd century AD. The third part covered the 6th century BC to 6th century AD. The first two parts of the early history correspond to the Indo-Roman maritime trade. The third part of the history corresponds to the after the Sangam Age.

### Early historic sites in the South Arcot District

The earliest stage of history can be divided into three parts. The first part covered the prehistory from prehistory to 1st century BC. The second part covered the first century BC to 3rd century AD. The third part covered the 6th century BC to 6th century AD. The first

two parts of the early history correspond to the Indo-Roman maritime trade. The third part of the history corresponds to the after the Sangam Age.

**Table No.1.1: Brahmi Inscription found in Cuddalore region**

S.No	Name	Taluk	District	Nature
1	Nekanurpatti	Gingee	Villupuram	Tamil – Brahmi inscription
2	Thondur	Gingee	Villupuram	Tamil- Brahmi inscription, Jain beds

### Source<sup>5</sup>

### Sangam Age

The period between the time of the prehistory and the time of the Sangam was very important for human history. He may have learned about the hunting and gathering, the permanent settlement, the agriculture, the writing system, etc. These changes were shown at the excavation sites of Villupuram. Therefore, Villupuram can be considered as the museum of the transition from the prehistory to the time of the Pallavas. The same period also saw the emergence of the kingship. The region of Tamil Nadu was ruled for a long time by the kings and the royals. We used to know history only from literary graffiti marks and the sacred songs. Some legends were born in the place and some migrated from there. The period of the imperial kingship extended in Tamil Nadu and the Cholas, the Pallavas, the Satahanas, the early Cholas, the Kalabhras, and the legends that lived before 9th century ruled the region for a while.<sup>6</sup>

### Paleography of *Tamili*

The Tamil-Brahmi(Tamizh Brahmi) are the earliest written source of the ancient tamil people. This record has possessed much valuable messages of Tamil Country and the people, particularly the period of Sangam (or literary age). The date of *Tamili* can be deduced from the palaeography of Tamil Brahmi. The

simple and rudimentary form of letters found in cave inscriptions and pottery inscriptions, which is almost certainly earlier than the standard form of Asokan Brahmi. There is no evidence of the Tamil Brahmi script being used in the Cuddalore taluk. However, there is more evidence in the nearby regions, namely Jambai (Villupuram district), Maligaimedu (Cuddalore), and Marunkur (Cuddalore).<sup>7</sup> The scripts are found specifically in early Tamil and are expected to contain the letters "la," "ra," and "na." As a result, Tamil epigraphists and scholars refer to it as "Tamil-Brahmi" or "Tamizhi," dating between the 5th century B.C. and the 3rd century A.D.<sup>8</sup>

The Tamil-Brahmi script at Jambai has put all speculation to rest, as the epigraph reads: the abode given by "Athiyar Neduman Anci, the Satyaputo." (See picture No. 3 on Plates). The Jambai inscription of Adiyaman Nedumanji must belong to the second century A.D. In that inscription, Adiyaman is referred to as Sathyaputo, and the title is spelled exactly the same way as in the second rock-cut inscription of Asoka at Girnar. The letter shape is similar to Asokan edicts but not to the well-known legend on Satakarni King's coin from the second century A.D.<sup>9</sup> In Marungur, Tamil Brahmi is found in the potsherds on the burial site. Also, it gives the inscription of two letters reading "a-m." The urn burials, broken in nature, had the inscription, which also contained the buried bones. Perhaps this site has been identified by Tamil-Brahmi letters on the grave sites.<sup>10</sup>

The potsherds with Tamil Brahmi writing could be placed in three distinct urns. The urns were not the only burial artifacts (pottery) that were observed. It had five Tamil Brahmi letters: "a-ti-y (a)-ka-n." This could be read as "Atiykan" in Tamil, but the front position was horrifying consonant. The potsherd was made up of four Tamil Brahmi letters, similar to "a-m." Others have graffiti marks that look like Indus script. The final portion having the three letters "ma-la-a" and "major portion" was omitted. The sources are paleontologically dated to the first century B.C. This could be the major source of Tamil letters in the graffiti version found in the Cauvery Delta.<sup>11</sup>

Maligaimedu is situated in Panruti Taluk, very near Cuddalore. The excavation was made by the Department of Archaeology in Tamil Nadu. The excavation was divided into three phases. There are a lot of artefacts found in this region, like Red Ware, Black and Red Ware, Rouletter Ware, pottery with graffiti marks, and lead coins with the Ujjain symbol. (From 300 B.C. to A.D 1300, this region belonged to the people who lived there. The Tamil Brahmi letters were presented in the Red Book. This must be authenticated to demonstrate that people knew how to write during the ancient period.

In Cuddalore taluk, there is no reference to Vatteluttu inscriptions (the transformation of Brahmi script). However, the nearby region of Cuddalore has a large amount of the same. Due to the hills absence, the early inscriptions were not found in this region. But the Villupuram District, next to Cuddalore, traced Vatteluttu inscriptions from Thriunatharkundru, Arasalapuram, Paraiyanpattu, Neganurpatti, Onkur, Thumber, Pakkam, Eduthavainattam, Melsirunagalur, Kalsirunagalure, and Sendiyampakkam.<sup>12</sup>

Several settlements grew up in Tamil Nadu during the archaic period, particularly in hilly areas. But the plains like South Arcot District (especially Cuddalore) were remarkable. Perhaps the coastal sites on the Coromandel Coast (present day Bay of Bengal) are limited. The archaeology excavations and explorations depicted coastal cities like Arikamedu, Uraiyur, Kaveripattinam, Vasavasamudram, Alankulam, and Karaikadu. The geographical and physiographic advantages that provided great opportunity to Cuddalore flourished from prehistoric to modern times. The artefacts are identified in the place of Karaikadu and reveal the significance of trade and commerce flourishing, which looks a lot like Arikamedu.<sup>13</sup>

As evidenced by archaeological sites, these prehistoric men are the ancestors of modern men. Cuddalore has the antiquities to know about human transmission, skills, a writing system, and foreign trade. The Sangam age premises in this region revealed the significance of early rulers, which matched literary sources and coins relatively well. The Malaysians'

history revealed that they were dominated in this region by Kovalur. There are few sources depicting the Satavahanas in this region, but given the impression that their territory extended all over India, these sources are not very reliable. Pallavas from Kanchipuram ruled Thondaimandalam, which stretched all the way to Cuddalore, while the Thiruppadiripuliyur and Thirunavukkarasar were related to Mahendra Varma I. Finally, the Pallavas lost their territories, while later, the Cholas rose to power in the South Arcot District for many years.

## Conclusion

Tamil is the classical language believed the root language for other Dravidian languages. The origin and growth of languages of Tamil was in archaic period in Tamil Nadu. The Archaeological sources like graffiti and epigraphical exhibited the genesis of the writing system of Tamil Nadu, especially in Villupuram region. Earliest version of Tamil has been renowned as *tamili* are identified in and around places of Villupuram, may reveal the proper evidence of growth of tamil language. Indeed, these sources are symbolizing the historical importance of Villupuram through the sources. Thus, the paleographical evidences proved that the inhabitants are happened more ancient, also know that the people are intellectuals.

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