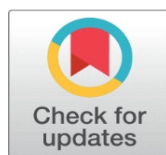
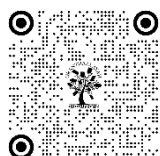


# AN INVESTIGATING INTO THE TYPOLOGY OF IRON AGE MEGALITHS IN THE KRISHNAGIRI DISTRICT OF TAMIL NADU

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## ABSTRACT

In general, the burial monuments constructed with huge stones are called Megaliths. They can be either Sepulchral or Memorial. Universally, Megaliths represent a culture that developed during the Neolithic period and prevailed in the Chalcolithic Ages. In the Indian context, recent studies provide ample evidences to prove that in the southern part of the country, particularly in Tamil Nadu, the Megaliths evolved around 2000 BCE in the Pre-Iron Age context and thrived through the successive cultural phases of the Iron Age and early Historic period. Various kinds of megalithic structures have been observed in this study.

Krishnagiri is an archaeologically rich district in Tamil Nadu. The antiquity of the district goes back to the Upper-Paleolithic age and exhibits a continuous Prehistoric culture, including such as the Mesolithic, Neolithic, Iron age and Proto-historic ages. Megalithism is a cultural phase that occurred in the Iron and Proto-historic ages. Although Tamil Nadu was exposed to pre-Iron Age Megalithic site, scientific dates were needed to establish their presence in the Krishnagiri district.

This chapter attempts to understand the typology of Megalithic monuments based on extensive explorations. Since only two excavations, Mayiladumparai and Oramanagunta, were carried out in the district of Megaliths, the article mostly depends the observations of the disturbed monument. Basic types, such as Cairn circle, Stone circle, Dolmen, Dolmenoid Cist and Menhir were found in the district, along with their variants classified as sub-types in addition to the Pit, Urn, and Sarcophagus. Labyrinths are an important Iron Age monument and that could be the regional-specific in Tamil Nadu. This paper also discusses the features of Mallachandram type regional specific Dolmens, the Portholes and Cup marks, which are characteristic features of Megaliths.

**Keywords:** Megaliths, Chalcolithic, Mesolithic, Bronze, Dolmen, Cairn Circle, Cairn Heaps, Slap Circle, Stone Circle, Menhir, Barrow, Cromlech, Typology, Krishnagiri, Tamil Nadu

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Megaliths refer to the monuments erected for the departed souls from pre and proto-historic cultures. Megaliths are one of the monument cultures that use large stones. They could be actual burials or commemorations. Universally, Megaliths are a culturally developed during the Neolithic age and prevailed in the Chalcolithic Ages. In the Indian context, recent studies provide ample evidences to prove that in the southern part of the country, particularly in Tamil Nadu, the Megaliths evolved around 2000 BCE in the Pre-Iron Age context and thrived through the successive cultural phases of the Iron Age and Early Historic. Various kinds of Megalith structures have been observed till today.

Krishnagiri is a district situated in the north-western part of Tamil Nadu and is archaeologically rich. The antiquity of the district dates back to the upper Paleolithic period and it is followed by a continuous cultural sequence from the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Iron Age to the Pro-Historic, Early historic and Historic period. This paper attempts to understand the basic and sub-types of Megaliths in the Krishnagiri district.

## 2. PURPOSE AND BELIEFS IN THE ERECTION OF MONUMENTS

Erecting a memorial for the departed soul of a loved one is a universal phenomenon. Each and every culture emphasized the importance of proper burial regardless of the type of memorial constructed. The grave goods with the corpse suggest proper burial associated with the belief in the afterlife. Furthermore, the rites associated with burial were among the most elaborate and significant in many ancient cultures. In Mesopotamian Culture, the burial monuments were cut into the ground. This practice was in the belief that the soul of the individual so that buried would more easily reach the afterlife which was to exist underground (Will Durant 2008 ed, p. 121). The Sumerians believed in an afterlife. But like the Greeks, they pictured the other world as a dark abode of miserable shadows, to which all the death descended indiscriminately” and that the land of the dead was beneath the earth. (Ibid, p.128) For this reason, it seems that graves were constructed in the ground to provide the deceased with easier access to the netherworld (Kramar, S.N., 1971, p.163). Similar beliefs are found in Indian, culture that describe two afterworlds; heaven and hell. Heaven is the upper world and hell is the lower world. The dead descended to the afterworld according to their deeds of good and evil. Tools and food were buried with the dead in the ancient burials found elsewhere. In Mesopotamia, it is believed that, if a person was not buried properly, they could return as ghosts to haunt the living (Will Durant 2008 ed, p. 129). These beliefs seem to have existed in Egypt and the Greeks.

In the ancient world, grave culture was generally marked by a stone bearing the person's likeness and name or by elaborate monuments, such as the 'Pyramids' of Egypt (Cooper, Roscoe, et al., 1997) and the 'Tholos' of Greece (Blackman, D., 2001-2002, pp.47-58). However, both get different treatments among the archaeologists in the study of monuments and are not considered Megaliths.

## 3. ANTIQUE OF THE BURIALS

Neanderthal graves were exposed in the archaeological excavations. They were estimated back 1,30,000 years. Israel's grave of Qafzeh, where a group burial chamber of fifteen people buried in a cave along with their tools and other ritual artefacts dates back over 1,00,000 years (Schwartz, H.P., 1988). The Shanidar Cave in the Zagros Mountains of Kurdistan Iraq dates back to 60,000 and 45,000 years ago (Stringer, C.B., Trinkus, E., & Pomeroy, Emma, et al., 2020). The Kebara caves in Israel produced remains of Neandertal dated 60,000 and 48,000 years ago (Bar-Yosef, o., & Vendermeersch, B., et al., 1992). The Red Lady of Paviland in Wales, the earliest discovered grave monument in Europe dates back 29,000 years (Stephen Aldouse, Green and Paul Pettitt 1998).

## 4. MEGALITHS AND DIFFUSION THEORIES

Megaliths are a type of burial monument found worldwide, referring specifically to the monuments of the Neolithic and early Bronze Age dates in North-west Europe that incorporate stones into their construction. The term 'Megalith' literally means a big stone. These man-made structures have different types and sizes. Although Megalithic monuments are generally known for using large stones for construction, they are found in various sizes from huge sizes to stones to stones like Pebbles. The sizes include Stonehenge, Cairn heaps, and Stone Circles.

The most striking similarity in the typographies of Megaliths in different parts of the world led to the development of diffusion theories which claim that Megalithism originated in one part of the world and spread to others. However, these diffusion theories have fallen out of favor among the archaeological community. Archaeologists now prefer a scenario of independent origins to separate locations. However, a satisfactory explanation for the similar forms found at distant locations remains elusive. Contrary to the earlier opinions, it is believed that only the settled societies, rather than nomads are the creators of Megaliths. This is because only the settled societies could generate sufficient resources to afford the Megalithic monuments.

## 5. TYPOLOGY

Numerous kinds of megalithic monuments were found throughout the world. Though, morphologically similar, regional variations are common phenomenon: Menhir, Alignment, Avenue, Cairn, Cairn Circle, Stone Circle, Stonehenge, Slab Circle, Chambered Cairn, known as Passage Tomb, Dolmen, Barrow, Cromlech, etc., are universal basic types.

**Table 1** The Basic Types of Megaliths Around the World

S.no.	Type	Description
	<b>Menhir</b>	This type is the erection of a huge standing stone.
	<b>Alignment</b>	An arrangement of the number of Manhir in certain patterns. Various patterns are noticed. Also known as ' <b>Stone Row</b> '.
	<b>Avenue</b>	An arrangement of two or more Alignment.
	<b>Cairn Circle</b>	It is the erection of a ring of boulders. Entombing Cairn heap or cluster in the middle also known as <b>Stone Circle Encircling Cairn</b> .
	<b>Stone Circle</b>	It is the erection of a ring of boulders where the Cairn heap or cluster is missing.
	<b>Stonehenge</b>	Stone Circle monuments, cemetery. A setting of upright stone pillars forming a ring.
	<b>Slab Circle</b>	It is similar to a stone circle in form but made of slabs.
	<b>Cairn</b>	A structure of a mound of heaped-up or pile of stone or stone rubble.
	<b>Chambered Cairn</b>	A structure of cairn having burial chambers accessed by passage. It is also called ' <b>Passage Tomb</b> '.
	<b>Dolmen</b>	A chamber-like tomb consisting of orthostats and capstone.
	<b>Cromlech</b>	A construction made of large stone blocks. Cromlech applies to two different megaliths: an ' <b>alter tomb</b> ', also known as a ' <b>Dolmen</b> ,' and a large stone circle.
	<b>Barrow</b>	A mound of earth and heaped up to cover one or more burials. Found in different shapes, round, long, oval, and square. The round barrows are called ' <b>Tumuli</b> ' in England. Those made entirely of stone are termed ' <b>Cairns</b> '.

## 6. GENERAL CHRONOLOGY

Modern studies establish that the Megalithic is not a period, but a cultural trait of erecting monuments. The C<sup>14</sup> dates received from various dating methods indicate that the Megalithic structures occurred at different times in different parts of the world from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age and the Iron Age.

The Nabta Playa, Egypt yields the oldest Megalith aged 7<sup>th</sup> millennium and 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE. European Megaliths dated to the Neolithic and early Bronze Age (4<sup>th</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE). (Ravi Korisettar, 2017). In India, Megalithism was very much coexisted with the Iron Age, particularly in South India; with a few incidents of the Pre-Iron Age (Rajan, K, 2022). Grounded on recent chronological studies the Iron Age in Mayiladumparai Tamil Nadu, started around the middle, or in the first quarters of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE (Rajan, K. et al. 2022), and continued till the first few centuries CE. Therefore, further dating results are needed to determine the age of Pre-Iron Age megaliths. However, a few studies suggest that the Megaliths may have developed during the late Harappan age in ancient India, around 2000 BCE to 1400 BCE. However, new dates prior to the late Harappan age were available.

## 7. MEGALITHIC CULTURE IN INDIA

Although Megaliths are found throughout India, their origin and spread remain disputed. Two prominent perspective have emerged regarding the origin and spread of Megaliths in India. Regarding the view of origin, one class points to European and Asian minor and the other class views an Indigenous origin: one class spread to the north and to the south and the other things the reverse. These diffusion theories are not acceptable in the present times. Independent origin theory is embraced by modern Scholarship.

Most of the universally common types of Megalithic structures such as Menhir, Dolmen, Stone Circle, Slab Circle, Alignment, Cairns, etc., are found in India. Some are found as a variant that could be classified as sub-type. The key difference between South Indian Megaliths and India and the rest of the world is obvious. In South India, it was a thriving Iron Age culture. Here the burials present a heterogeneous phenomenon, and even so, they are grouped together under the term 'Megaliths'. However, comparatively, here the Cairns were smaller and Chambered Cairns or the Passage Tombs were not found to be the characteristics of the West Stonehenge was also absent.

Burial monuments like the Rock Cut Caves also known as Rock Cut Chambers, Kodaikkal, Topikkal, and Pattikkal varieties were found in India and were restricted to a particular region, Kerala. The Anthropomorphic figures were likely restricted to Northern Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states. Karnataka possesses the Alignment and the Avenue types. An idiosyncratic Double Horn Pattern in Andhra Pradesh, Correspondingly Draw-well-type burial and Mallachandram-type, the Royal Dolmens with slab circles and masonry stones built as Butter Wall to support the orthostats, and Barrel-like Cairn Circle are restricted in Krishnagiri district in Tamil Nadu and its adjacent Kuppam area in Andhra Pradesh.

## 8. CLASSIFICATION

The Megalithic Monuments found in India have been classified variously by different scholars. Excavations and disturbed monuments give light to various typologies and construction technologies. According to the purpose of the Megaliths, they were grouped into two types, the Sepulchral monument and the Memorial monument. The first is related directly to Funereal and the second is Commemorative. The latter was also erected in the graveyards along with sepulchral ones.

Based on the lithic quantity used to create a structure, they were grouped into two types, the Monolithic type and Polyolithic type. In another type of classification, three regular methods were grouped such as 1. Megalithic associated with Chamber Tombs, 2. Megalithic with Unchambered Tombs and 3. Megalithic is not associated with burials. This classification seems an elaboration of the Sepulchral monument and Memorial monument in which it is considered that the Megalithic of sepulchral nature to be of two groups, the Chambered and Unchambered. Studies taking account of Rock Cut Chambers of Kerala reveals three structures of Megalithic such as 1. Rock Cut Caves, 2. Monoliths, 3. Polyoliths. These describes the three basic groups of Indian Megaliths, 1. Rock Cut Tombs Monuments, 2. Chambered Monuments and 3. Unchambered Monuments. The Rock-Cut Tombs are the burial chambers that are created by cutting into an existing, naturally occurring rock formation. The Chamber tombs usually consisted of a chamber composed of two or four vertical slabs either natural or furnished stone topped by a horizontal capstone. The unchambered burials are non-lithic by nature and associated with potteries and earth digging or burrowing.

**Table 2** Basic Megaliths Groups and Types Found in India

S. No.	Basic Type	Group	Types
	Rock Cut	Rock Cut Tomb	Rock Cut Chamber
	Monolithic	2.1. Standing stone Pillar	2.1.1. Menhir Alignment Avenue
		Figured Menhir or Figured Monolithic stones	Anthropomorphic figure Cruciform stone or Statue Menhir.
		Cap- stones	Topikkal Stone Lid or kalMudi.
	Polyolithic	3.1. Chambered	3.1.1. Cist 3.1.2. Dolmen 3.1.3. Dolemenoid Cist 3.1.4. Kodakkal 3.1.5. Pattikkal or Pathikkal 3.1.6. Draw-well 3.1.7. Masonry stonewall Enclosures.
		3.2. Unchambered	3.2.1. Pit 3.2.2. Urn 3.2.3. Sarcophagus

The Rock-Cut Chambers occupy a distinct place among the structures of all Megaliths. The chamber was quarried beneath the ground level on a Laterite stone formation. The entrance portion was mostly subterranean, rarely at the surface. This unique feature differentiate from other chamber types that use slabs or stones to form a chamber structure above ground. A few variants or sub-types are identified including Single-Chambered, Multi-Chambered, Chamber with Bench, Chamber with Porthole, Chamber with Passage, Chambers with stone circles. In some cases, a flight of steps was carved out to serve as an entrance passage to the chamber. Generally, the entrance is covered by a capstone.

In Uniliths, a Menhir is a single and huge standing stone. The Alignment is an arrangement of numbers Menhirs in rows following a pattern. An avenue is formed by two or more rows of Alignment. The Anthropomorphic figure is a standing stone curved in to a human-like shape, usually without head. Cruciform monoliths are stones carved either in to a male or female figures. Hence, these types of monoliths are called 'Statue-Menhir'. This type of monument is restricted types to Andhra and Karnataka.

Topikkal meaning 'hat-stone' refers to hemispherical laterite stone used as a lid usually for the urn burials. Stone-lid is known as Kal-mudi in Tamil, This type of burials can be considered a variant of Topikkal, categorized by the use of flat circular, square or rectangular stones as lids.

In Polyoliths, among the Chambered tombs, there are three types: the Cist type which is buried fully underground: a Dolmenoid cist which is erected in a semi-subterranean position and a Dolmen which is erected fully above the ground. Kudakkal means 'Umbrella Stone'. It is a laterite monument with a mushroom-shaped structured, featuring an umbrella-like stone supported by clinostats i.e., stone blocks erected in a slanting position. Pattikal or Pathikkal means 'hood of a snake, that refers to a dressed block of laterite arranged to resemble a snake's hood. The Draw-well-type burial, features an arrangement of masonry stones in dry-cemented circular wall. Groups of Dolmens enclosed by masonry stone and dry cementing in various shapes and Barrel-like Cairn Circles are restricted to Tamil Nadu. Specifically, particularly the former is found in Nigiries, the middle in Palani and the latter in Dharmapuri district and Yercaud in Salem districts.

Among the unchambered burials, the pit is like a Burrow dug in the ground. The Urn and Sarcophagi are pottery types used in burials. Though the unchambered group is not marked with stones they are also identified as megalithic burials.

## 9. CAIRN CIRCLE, STONE CIRCLE, SLAB CIRCLE, CAIRN HEAP, BARROW, ETC

The Cairn Circle, Stone Circle, Slab Circle, and Cairn Heap are arrangements of stones of different kinds as an enclosure to the basic types of Megaliths. The difference between the Cairn Circle and Stone Circle was explained as "These monuments, as the name would indicate, are distinguished by a bounding circle retaining a cairn heap within. Sometimes in these as well as in other types where cairn filling is present and occasionally over-flows the bounding borders, either wholly or partially concealing the delimiting circle of stones. These are recognized by the presence of cairn-rubble (hence cairn circle) and the absence of cairn-filling indicates a stone circle" (K.S.Ramachandran, 1980:47). Other explanation which differentiate Stone-Circle, Cairn-Circle with Capstone and Barrow said "Huge Unhewn boulders kept in one or more circles above the ground as stone-circle; frequently, the stone-circle encloses a heap of rubble; it is classified as cairn. If the heaped cairn does not have any lithic circle, it is referred to as a Barrow. Sometimes a single or more flat stones are kept on the cairn in the middle of the circle; this type is called a Cairn Circle with Capstone. Sometimes these four types may contain a pit, an urn, a sarcophagus, or a Cist. It is impossible to predict from the outward appearance the type of burial encloses" (B.Narashimaiah, 1980: 112). "They consist of a heap of stone rubble enclosed within a circle of boulders" and "Cairn Circles enclosing Dolmenoid cist is called Dolmenoid Cist" (B.K. Gururaja Rao, 1972:242).

Irrespective of their design, structure consisting of a circle of stones the piled-up stone or heaped stones or stone circle with cap-stone generally refer to a Cairn Circle. Another term for the structure is Cairn-Stone Circle that refers to the monuments with both circles of stones and piled-up stones.

Another study distinguishes the megaliths into two basic groups 1. Core burials are Mono-faceted and individuals and 2. Peripheral burial structures are Multifaceted monuments or Multiplex monuments. In contrast, the second method of burial structure is structurally complex. The core burial units are Pits, Urns, and Sarcophagus in the unchambered burials, as well as Cist, Dolmen, and Dolmenoid cists in chambered burials. The rock-cut caves are also classified as the mono-faceted group. Both core burials or the Mono-faceted types and peripheral burial structures or Multifaceted monuments can be constructed into either subterranean or surficial or above ground.

The surficial monuments like Menhir, Alignment, Anthropomorphs, Cairn Circle, Stone Circle, Slab Circle, Cairn, Cairn Heap, along with their sub-types, are external structures that form the major part of peripheral burial structures or Multifaceted monuments. These structures or group are built as either enclosing structures to the core burials or as decorative elements of the Mono-faceted burial units. Sometimes, the Dolmen and Dolmenoid types occur erect with single or multiple Pits, Urns, and Sarcophagi, or with Cairn, Stone circles and naturally they fall into the multi-faceted group. Consequently, they form a multiplex structure to a monument (Parthiban, 2010:43-69). In contrast, these do not



have that these additional forms the Core burial group which is rare. It also illustrates the formation of Multifaceted monuments or multiplex structures as shown in Table III.

**Table 3** Formation of Multifaceted Monuments or Multiplex Structures

S.no	Type of multifaceted monuments	Assemblage
	Cairn Circle entombing Pit	Pit + Capstone + Cairn + Cairn Circle
	Cairn circle entombing Cist	Cist + Capstone + Cairn + Cairn Circle
	Cairn Circle entombing Urn	Urn + Capstone + Cairn + Cairn Circle
	Cairn Circle Entombing Sarcophagus	Sarcophagus + Capstone + Cairn + Stone Circle
	Stone Circle entombing Pit	Pit + Capstone + Stone Circle
	Stone circle entombing Cist	Cist + Capstone + Stone Circle
	Stone Circle entombing Urn	Urn + Capstone + Stone Circle
	Stone Circle Entombing Sarcophagus	Sarcophagus + Capstone + Stone Circle
	Cist Entombing Urn	Cist + Urn + Capstone
	Cist Entombing Sarcophagus	Cist + Sarcophagus + capstone
	Cairn circle with Menhir	Menhir + Cairn Circle
	Stone Circle with Menhir	Menhir + Stone Circle
	Cairn Circle Entombing Urn with Menhir	Urn + Menhir + Cairn Circle
	Cairn Circle Entombing Cist with Anthropomorphs	Cist + Anthropomorphs + Cairn Circle.
	Dolmen with Stone Circle	Dolmen + Stone Circle
	Dolmen with Double Circle	Dolmen + Stone Circle + Slab Circle
	Dolmen with Double Circle	Dolmen + Cairn Circle + Slab Circle
	Dolmen with Urn and Stone Circle	Urn + Dolmen + Stone Circle
	Dolmenoid Cist with Stone Circle	Dolmenoid Circle + Stone Circle
	Dolmenoid Cist with Urn and Slab Circle	Urn + Dolmenoid Cist_ Slab Circle
	Masonry Stone Butters Wall Entombing group of Dolmens	Masonry Stone Butters wall + Dolmens.
	Urn with Lid stone	Urn + Lid Stone

Likewise, theoretically, hundreds of types and sub-types of megalithic monuments could be constructed. The above mentioned lists are a few instances observed in the excavations, explorations, and from the disturbed burial monuments". It is also said that the "dug-out pit is the basic burial structure from the earliest known humankind burials; which is practiced till today. Rock-cut cave another dug-out in the stone became another basic burial structure in a later period. Strictly speaking, though, the Cist, Urn, and Sarcophagus are described as mono-faceted burial units that are actually placed in a pit. Thus, they became part of a multifaceted structure possibly giving a mono-faceted face. All multiplex monument types created in both subterranean and surficial became realistic in two aspects protection and decoration or a sense of esthetic along with the development of architecture and pottery skills besides the visible surficial structures are external, and superstructures play different roles such as surface markers to a core burial, thus becoming a symbol or device for communication. The subterranean or hidden multiplex structures might play the same roles for the surficial structures to the diggers" (Parthiban, Ibid).

## 10. MEGALITHS IN TAMIL NADU

Tamil Nadu has a very rich heritage of Megalithism. These Megaliths can be dated from the early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE to the early centuries of CE. Almost all universal types of Megaliths have been found in Tamil Nadu except for

restricted types found in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Alignment types. A few specific types of Megaliths are unique to this state are found including Mallachandram-type, Royal Dolmens and Barrel-like cairn circles.

## 11. MEGALITHS IN KRISHNAGIRI DISTRICT

In Krishnagiri District the Stone Circle type of Megalith is predominant followed by Dolmens, Dolmenoid cists, Slab Circles, Stone Circles, Urn burials, Sarcophagus burials and Menhir. Menhir seems to be a rare type since very few numbers were found during the explorations.

### 1) Cist

Simple individual Cist burials were discovered in Gangaleri, Mariyalam, Pachihanahalli, Sengkottai and Tholuvabetta.

### 2) Urn

Simple individual Urn burials were noticed in Kunthukottai.

### 3) Sarcophagus

A Sarcophagus was accidentally exposed in Jainur and is now kept at the Site Museum in Dharmapuri. Simple individual Sarcophagus burials were noticed in Oramanagunta. In a few instances, the Sarcophagus was possibly entombed with in Cist.

### 4) Cairn Circle

Cairn Circles were constructed using round boulders with a central heap of Cairns or on the top of the capstone. Their height above the ground varies depending upon the nature of the burial and the terrain. In the loose-textured land, the cairns were stunted in appearance and in the hard-textured land, they were more prominent and taller. Table -3 shows the sub-types of Cairn Circle and the locations.

**Table 4** Cairn Circle and Sub-Types of Cairn Circle in Krishnagiri

S.no	Style of Sub-Type	Locations	Remarks
	Cairn Circle	Ammaneri, Andimalai, Ayyur, Balanapalli, Balanayanapalli, Baragur, Bellarampatti, Bilalam, Bilikal, Billigundala, Chandramalai, Chettipalli-A, Devermukkulam, Doddamanchi, Doddattimmaahalli, Echchannahalli, Erumuthanahalli, Gangaleri, Gangavaram, Gollapalli, Gummanur, Gummalapuram, I. Kothapalli, Jenur (Jainur), Jinupalli, Kallavi, Kanavanapatti, Kandekavundanahalli, Kolkothur, Korakuruki, Kottur, Koothapalli, Kuntharapalli, Kunnathur, Kurumpatti, Kuruparahalli, Malanhalli, Mallikajunadurgam, Manchugondapalli, Mattur, Medepatti, Melumalai, Mottur, Nammandahalli, Natampalayam, Oblesapalli, Ompalagutta, Pachchihahahalli, Paleguri, Palaiyamkottai, Puram, Ratnagiri, Royakottai, Santanapalli, Sappamutulu, Sathanur, Sembathamuthur, Senkodachennahahalli, Sikaralapalli (or Chigalarapalli), Tadikallu, Tandarai, Tavalam, Timijipalli, Tippanapalli, Tottikuppam, Uddanapalli, Udubarani, Ullatti, Udedurgam, Vedartattakal, Velampatti, Yeppalappalli, Viramalai.	
	Cairn Circle entombing Cist	Anachandran, Bettamukulalam, Chettipalli-A, Gidlur, Gullaty, I. Kothapalli, Ittikal-Agaram, Kappalvadi, Karigavundanur, Kodugur, Lakshachandram, Maidanapalli, Malthampatti, Mattitir, Mayiladumpari, Mittapalli, Moohgilpudur, Moramadugu, Nagamangalm, Nakkalpalli, Pachchihanapalli, Pattakapatti, Sokadu, Togarapalli, Vedartattakal (Santhur).	\$1: Excavated site.
	Cairn Circle entombing Urn	Attanur, Benellipudur, Karuvanur,	
	Cairn Circle Entombing Sarcophagus.	Mayiladumparai.	
	Double Cairn Circle Entombing Cist	Ittikal-Agaram, Kuruvinyanapalli.	

	Cairn Circle with Cist with Passage.	Moongilpudur,Pachchihanapalli.	
	Cairn Circle with Cist with two Circles of Stone circle in the inner and slab circle in the outer.	Pachchihanapalli, Ittikal-Agram	
	Cairn Circle with Cist with two subsidiary cists, each with portholes.	Pattakapatti	
	Cairn Circle with two circles, the inner with triangular slabs arranged to form a wall-like structure; the outer with vertical slabs raised above ground level.	Pattakapatti.	
	Cairn Circle entombing Cist with Porthole and Cupmarks	Anachandran, Mottur	
	Cairn Circle Entombing Cist with Porthole.	Belur, Ittikal-Agaram, Karuvanur, Karigoundanur, Malthampatti, Pachchihanapalli, Pattakapatti, Sokadu, Togarapalli,	
	Cairn Circle entombing Cist with Cupmark	Vedartattakal (Santhur)	

## 5) Stone Circle

**Table 5** Stone Circle and Sub-Types of Stone Circle in Krishnagiri

S.no	Style of Sub-Type	Locations	Remarks
	Stone Circle	Bettamukulalam, Enusonai, Kottaiyur, Kovalli, Soolagiri, Ulibande,	
	Stone Circle with Cist	Bootherikottai, Melur, Metupparai,	

## 6) Dolmen

Dolmen was another major type in Krishnagiri, after the Cairn Circle. The architectural features of Mallachandram are noteworthy. Four types of Dolmen structures and arrangements were observed here. A distinctive regular feature of these Dolmens, is the rectangular slab circle that resembles a wall or stone railing. Sometimes, more than one circle is observed. In this case, the outer circle is lower in height than the inner circle. The whole structure resembles a fortification wall raising from base to top. To avoid any inward or outward collapse of the vertical slabs, rectangular brick-shaped stones were placed in a number of courses between the slab circles and dolmen, covering around half the size of the dolmen. Another feature is found the altering arrangements of slabs with semicircular and rectangular tops, placed alternatively around the dolmen. In the cases with double circles, the tall vertical slab with a semi-circular top, standing in the inner circle against the dolmen's porthole, also had another pothole. In contrasts, the slab erected in front of the porthole of the outer circle lacks a porthole. This Characteristics differs from the one reported by B.R. Branfill near Irulabenda in Palamaner Taluk of Chittoor district, Andra Pradesh. Here, the vertical slabs with alternating flat or round-topped are arranged in three concentric circles around the cist. All the vertical slabs placed in three circles kept against the porthole, features had a porthole. In Mallachandram, some dolmens features a passage in front of the porthole, made of small rectangular slabs placed in five to six courses on either side of the porthole almost reaching porthole level and



closed with another slab on the east. In this type, the whole structure is encircled by a circle formed out of triangular stone slabs placed in six courses. The gap between this enclosing circle and the dolmen is filled with loose slabs. Another interesting feature noticed here is in five cases, about 10 or less of small dolmens were erected around a comparatively bigger dolmen placed in the centre. It looks like a security guard standing around an important man. Interestingly, the porthole is also seen on the northern side in one of the dolmens. On another occasion, one of the dolmens placed that is around the main dolmen had three orthostats except for the south which may be missing, or does not have the porthole. Hence it may be presumed that the fallen or missing southern orthostat would have the porthole. The smaller or miniature dolmens placed around the bigger faces are all cordial points as the porthole indicates (Rajan K., 1997: 147-148).

**Table 6** Dolmenand Sub-Types of Dolmens in Krishnagiri

S.No	Style of Sub-Type	Locations	Remarks
	Simple Dolmen	Alathi, Alapatti, Baleguli, Chinnabellarampalli, Barathur, Bastharapalli, Chandrapuorthapara, Chennasandram*, Chinnakothur (BaireGouni), Doddattimmanahalli, Ettrapalli (or Eddrapalli), Ekalnatham, Ennagolpudur, Enibanda, Gangaleri, Kendikanapalli, Kolatti, Koothandapara (Bootherikottai), Kunthukottai, Kuruvinayanapalli*, Marigampalli*, Marudapalli, Maruldevapalli, MelKottai- Othikuppam*, Moongilpudur, Moramadugu, Muluvaanapalli, Nedungal, Oramanagunta*, Pachchihanahalli, Salivaram, Santanapalli, Maruldevapalli, Nedungal, Sulamalai, Sulikunta, Talapalli, Thimarayanahalli, Torapalli, Varagachandram, Varatanampatti, Varattanapalli,	*With Rock paintings.
	Dolmen with porthole	Chandrapoorthapara, Ekalnatham, Gangaleri,	
	Dolmen encircled by one or multiple slab circles.	Bettamukalalam# Maharajakadai#&*. Mallachadram *	#Mallachandram type. *with Rock paintings.
	Dolmen with passage	Mallachandram	
	Dolmen with Cairn Circle	N.Thattakal.	
	Dolmen with two circles of Stone Circle by inner and rectangular slab by outer with Porthole	Kuruvinayanapalli	
	Dolmen with Stone Circle	Moongilpudur	
	Dolmen with two circles of Stone Circle by inner and rectangular slab	Moongilpudur,	

## 7) Dolmenoid Cist

The Dolmenoid cist burials in Krishnagiri have many interesting features. These features were observed from various explorations and from the disturbed Dolmenoid cists. They were less than one meter in height and erected above the ground level. Capstone is placed either on rubbles or boulders, rather than orthostats. In the case of using the slabs, each side consisted of more than one small, irregular slabs. Three sides were closed. The remaining sides, which faced outward, was kept wide open. The porthole was missing i.e., did not arranged (Rajan. K., 1997:118).

**Table 7 Dolmenoid Cist and Sub-Types of Dolmenoid Cist in Krishnagiri**

S.no	Style of Sub-Type	Locations	Remarks
	Simple Dolmenoid Cist	Aganelli, Bhastrarapalli, Desupalli, Gangadevanahalli, Keelpallam, Mudippinayanapalli, Othikuppam, Uddanapalli, Togarapalli,	
	Dolmenoid cist encircled by Stone Circle	Uddanapalli, Thimmalpatti,	

## 8) Menhir

Menhirs, in Krishnagiri district, are at present look like a stand-alone stone without Carin or Stone circles, but they might probably have erected with Stone or Cairn Circles which are now missing due to vandalism or land clearing for agricultural activities.

**Table 8 Types of Menhir in Krishnagiri**

S.no	Style of Sub-Type	Locations	Remarks
	Menhir (Probably Encircled by a Stone circle)	Beemandahalli	
		Devarkundani-Ettrahalli	
		Erudukottai	
		Gudalapalli.	
		Kuppuchiparai (Sevvai Sandai)	
		Pentu in Sriamanapalli*	* (found carved with latter period Hero Sculpture)
		Samanthamalai – Kundarapalli	
		Sajalapalli	

## 9) Labyrinth

Labyrinth was also an interesting and a rare type of burial associated with the Megalithic culture of the Iron Age. So far two labyrinths have been noticed in Aganelli, Baire Gouni and Chinnakotthur.

The Baire-Gouni labyrinth was a classical type with an unusual Indian development known as the “Chakra-vyuha” style. It was based on a three-fold rather than four-fold seed pattern and was consequently drawn with a spiral at the centre.

## 10) Porthole

The porthole of a dolmen was invariably found on the eastern orthostat. Two exceptions of the regular features were the porthole found on the western orthostat noticed at Togarappalli (Narashimhaiah, 1980:135) and Pattakappatti (Rajan, 1997:119).

**Table 10 Types of Portholes in Krishnagiri facing East.**

S.no	Style of Sub-Type	Locations	Remarks
	Trapeze Shape.	---	Found on the burial yards on the bank of river Kaveri (Rajan.K.1997:119). Places not disclosed.
	Round Shape.	Mayiladumparai, Belur, Ittikal-Agaram, Karuvanur, Karigoundanur, Malthampatti, Pachchihanapalli, Pattakapatti, Sokadu, Togarapalli*1	*1: in Cist *2: Dolmens *3: Dolmenoid cist

		Chandrapoorthaparai*2 Uddanapalli, Timmalapatti, Togarapalli*3	
	'U' Shape.	Pachchihanapalli, Malthampatti, Pattakapatty, Udedurgam, Bodampalli (Bodampalli)*3	*3: Dolmenoid cist
	One porthole on each slab of two rows placed one in front of the other usually round shape.	Mallachandram*4,	*4: Round in Dolmens,

### 11) Capstone with cup-marks

The cup-marked capstone is a rare feature in a cist burial. They were found on its upper surface. This feature was noticed in Vederthattakkal and Anachandram.

## 12. CONCLUSION

The Megaliths of Krishnagiri show certain distinguishing characteristics. Besides universal types such as Cairn Circle, Stone Circle, Dolmen, and Dolmenoid cist, Menhir found various sub-types and regional-specific Mallachandram-type Dolmen that architecturally look like forts or royal chambers. Among the Cairn Circle, 12 types were observed, including the basic type (table IV); in the case of the Stone Circle, two types were observed (table V). In the Dolmen type, 8 types were noticed including the basic simple Dolmen type (table VI). Two types of Dolmenoid cist types were found (table VII). Menhir in eight places (table VIII) and Labyrinths in two places were other megaliths found in the district. The Labyrinth of Baire-Gouni was a classical type with an unusual Indian development known as the "Chakra-vyuha" style. The Cup Mark on the upper surface of the Capstone and Porthole were other interesting characteristic features. The Cup marks were exposed in two places. Whereas three types of Portholes were observed and one sub-type (table IX).

Based on the above observation, it is evident that Cairn Circle and its sub-types were the predominant Megalith type in Krishnagiri. Dolmens, Dolmenoid Cists, Stone Circles, and their sub-types, as well as Menhir, and Labyrinth forms were present. The latter is found to be the rare type. The regionally specific Mallachandram-type Dolmen, which architecturally resembles forts or royal chambers, were significant and show matured architecture skills. Except for a few cases of Urns and Sarcophagus which were unchambered and Mono-faceted, all other types were multifaceted. All other structures were multifaceted monuments or Multiplex monuments. These structures date back to the Iron Age.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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**Figure 1**



**Figure 1** Carin Heaps, Mettur, Pannaivadi, Salem district, Tamil Nadu



**Figure 2**



**Figure 2** Labyrinth, Agenelli, Denkanikottai taluk, Krishnagiri district, Tamil Nadu

**Figure 3**



**Figure 3** Cairn Circle with Cist, Mayiladumpari, Bargur taluk, Krishnagiri district, Tamil Nadu

**Figure 4**



**Figure 4** Stonehenge, Minnakkal, Salem district, Tamil Nadu



**Figure 5**



**Figure 5** Alignment, Uruli, Sivaganga, district, Tamil Nadu

**Figure 6**



**Figure 6** Dolmen, Soolagiri taluk, Mallachandram, Krishnagiri district, Tamil Nadu

**Figure 7**



**Figure 7** Anthropomorphic Figurine, Mottur, Tiruvannamalai District



**Figure 8**



**Figure 8** Cairn Circle with Cist Perundurai taluk, Erode district, Tamil Nadu

**Figure 9**



**Figure 9** Dolmen with Port hole, Kuruvinayanapalli, Bargur taluk, Krishnagiri district, Tamil Nadu



**Figure 10** Menhir, Thirumalaivadi, Palacode taluk, Dharmapuri district, Tamil Nadu



**Figure 11** Dolmen,Soolagiri taluk, Mallachandram, Krishnagiri district, Tamil Nadu