

22 July 2025

Context: The Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA) has successfully concluded the Marungur excavation in the Cuddalore district, revealing a habitation and burial site that dates from the Iron Age to the Early Historic Period.



About the Marungur excavation:

- A comprehensive archaeological excavation focused on uncovering prehistoric settlements and burial practices from the Iron Age to the Early Historic period, conducted by the TNSDA.
- **Location:** Situated in Panruti taluk, Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu, between the Thenpennai and Vada Vellar rivers, which is part of the ancient Naduvil Mandalam.

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Key Features:

- **Habitation mound & burial site:** Both elements discovered together – a rarity in Tamil Nadu.
- **Artifacts:** 95 items including Tamil-Brahmi potsherds, terracotta ware, microliths, beads, bone tools, conch shells, iron implements, antimony rods, and Chola-era coins.
- **Advanced techniques:** Employed UAV mapping, LiDAR, AMS carbon dating, and phytolith analysis to establish an accurate chronology.
- **Burial system:** Megalithic urn burials accompanied by concentric laterite stone circles, grave goods, iron swords, and jasper beads.
- **Stratified excavation:** Trench layers indicated clear signs of human activity extending up to 6 m, demonstrating continuous habitation.

Significance:

- **Chronological breakthrough:** Provides insights into the transition from the Iron Age to Early Historic life in Naduvil Nadu.
- **Epigraphic value:** Rare Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions discovered on grave pots – among the earliest scripts found in Tamil Nadu.
- **Cultural evolution:** Supplies evidence of urban settlement patterns, trade connections (Arikamedu, Poompuhar), and burial customs.