

India is a place of a long history of human occupation. The southern Peninsular India with a unique landcover and physical and geographic factors including its geology and geomorphology e.g., The Western and Eastern “ghats” hill formations, the chiefly east flowing river systems...) contributes to a multitude of diverse climatic regimes that in turn contribute to the diversity of vegetation and ecotypes present in this formation. Much scientific research has been done on both aspects – namely, the Biophysical and the Historical/archeological, mostly in isolation. There is however, a growing awareness of the need for a more integrated approach that judiciously combines the two, though the methodology may be debated.

At the French Institute of Pondicherry (IFP), which has long since evinced keen interest in studying the “nature” and “culture” of India and given the recent completion of the Historical Atlas of south India by its Indology Department and the sustained work of the Department of Ecology (<http://www.ifpindia.org/Ecology-.html>) dealing with the past, present and future changes in vegetation history of south India, this new Interdisciplinary thrust has been proposed to draw on its strengths of ecological and historical expertise in south India.

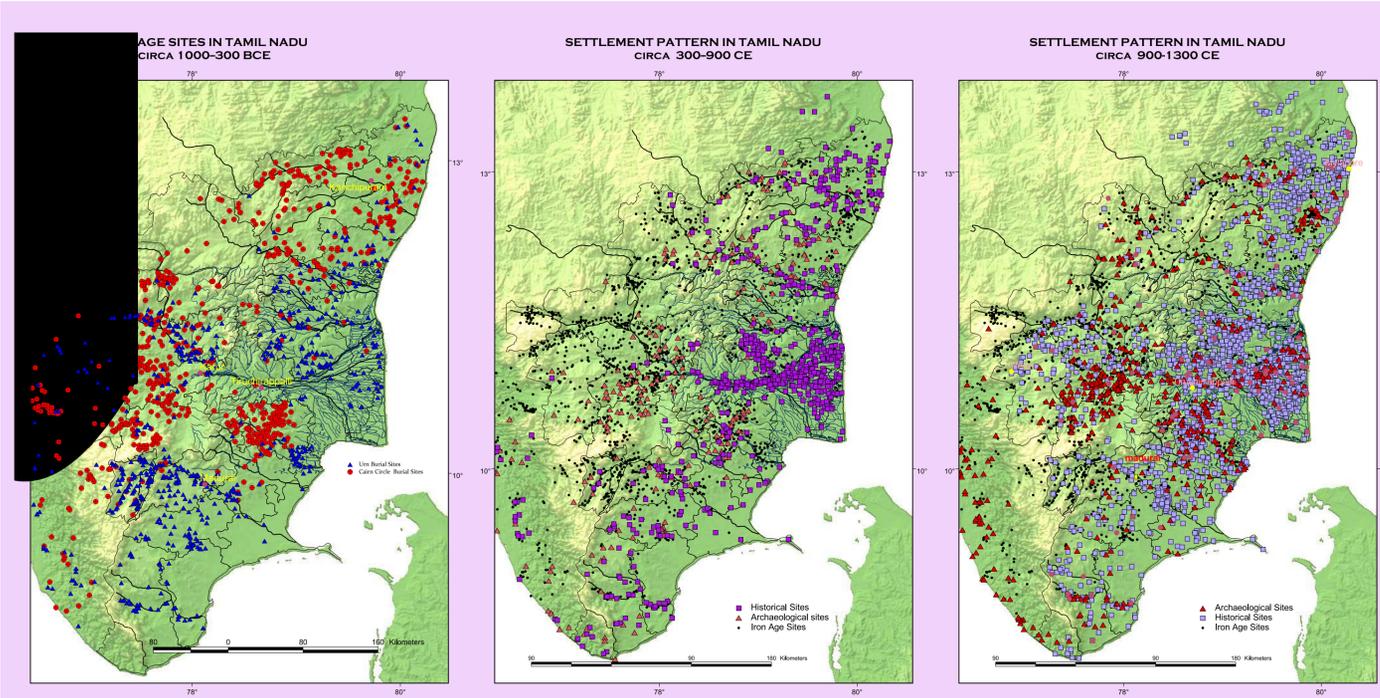
In this poster, we present:

(1) The story of Human habitation in the state of Tamil Nadu in south India from 1000 BCE up to nearly 1300CE through 3 maps showing clearly the succession of different types of records (Iron age, Archeological (only artefacts, temples, sculptures....) and Historical (inscriptions));

(2) The distribution of terrestrial, marine and offshore paleoenvironmental records – published and ongoing works at different sites distributed in India.

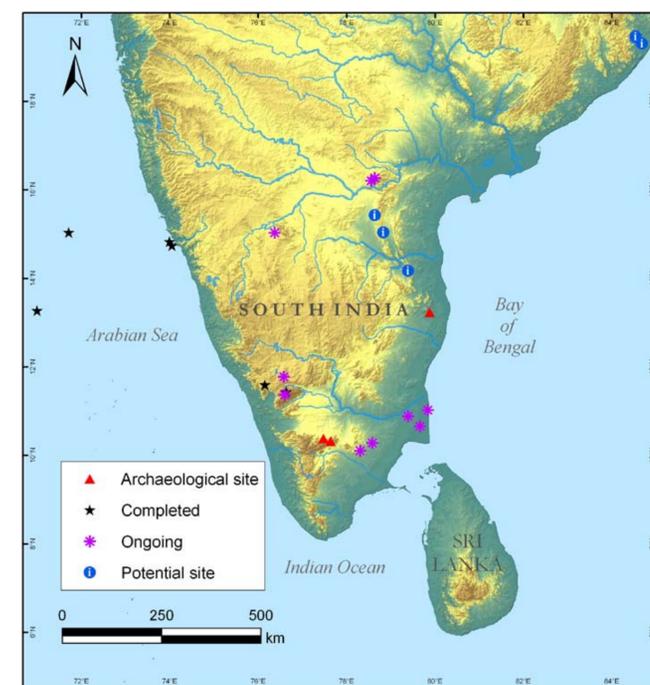
The aim here is **to present for debate** the potential for development of at least one interdisciplinary project along the following lines:

To initiate a compilation of the wealth of information, mainly from “historical inscriptions (on stone) dating nearly from 1500 to 500 YBP from the point of view of the socio-ecological dynamics of

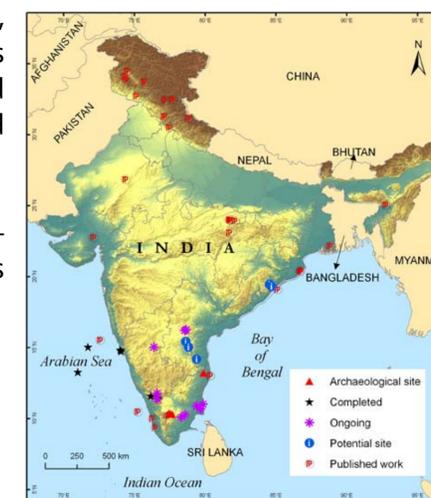


human history in south India. This implies, in equal part if not more, looking for patterns, events and other markers (in history) as well as proxies (in sediment and other physical records), overlaying and combining the two types of reconstructions to get a holistic integrated “earth history” at the regional scale of tropical south India.

This research programme takes shape from an ongoing project – “Tracking the Environmental Record in Reservoirs and Agro-ecosystems of Peninsular India”.



*Published, ongoing and potential sites in South India*



*Overview of paleoenvironmental studies in India*

We plan to continue using these *apparently “man-made”* irrigation reservoirs but in this project, the human history component will be equally balanced with the biophysical proxy reconstructions.

In the pilot study the focus will be on historical information already compiled in the Historical Atlas project for Tamil Nadu. One approach is to tap the rich corpus of inscriptions of the Chola period (9th century AD to 12th century AD). The idea is to collate and collect all the information relating to climate and the physical and biological environment, especially the monsoon and water – its availability, distribution and management, the contemporary state-of-the-art of

agriculture and trade, from these inscriptions source, which is spread over most parts of Tamil Nadu in south India.

It is hoped that this pilot study will help initiate a dialogue about methods and approaches in the two fields and will identify both possible lacunae and other “unexpected information” that the inscriptions can yield.

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