

## A Peep into the Archaeological Discoveries from the Krishna-Tungabhadra Valley

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**Abstract:** A large-scale salvage operation was undertaken in the Srisailem submergible area in the State of Andhra Pradesh slated to be concluded before completion of the Hydro-electric Project across the river Krishna near Srisailem, the famous Saivate Pilgrimage Centre. The number of villages which came under the submergence were 110. According to reliable sources the houses submerged were 11,309 and the displaced population totaled 52,049. Several stone age sites of the Lower, Middle, Upper Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Megalithic habitations were noticed at many places. Several sites were excavated and material discovered have been displayed in the museums at Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The historical sites coeval with the Mauryan, Satavahana, Chalukya, Rastrakuta and Vijayanagara periods were also noticed. Some temples of exquisite models once stood on the river banks were transplanted at higher levels. Similarly, some outstanding images discovered at various places were shifted to various museums in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana States.

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### Introduction

Due to the construction of Hydro-Electric Dam at Srisailem across the river Krishna in Andhra Pradesh which is the second largest Hydro-Electric Project in the country, nearly 110 villages in Mahbubnagar, Narayanpet, Wanaparthy, Nagarkurnool, and Jogulamba Gadwal districts of Telangana and Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh located all along the river banks of Krishna, Tungabhadra and Bhavanasi and their tributaries were submerged.<sup>1</sup> The construction of the Srisailem Dam was started in 1960 and completed in 1981. (Plate-I) According to the policy decision taken by the Govt. of India, various agencies had undertaken explorations collectively and excavated a few sites individually from the late sixties to middle seventies to salvage and preserve the rich cultural heritage for posterity. The study is covered by the present states of Telangana - 5 districts and Andhra Pradesh - 1 district. (Plate-II)

### Stone Age Cultures (PLATE-III)

**Early Paleolithic:** In the valley of Krishna-Tungabhadra, number of early paleolithic settlements were noticed along the banks of river Krishna at Somasila, Pragatur, Chinnamarur, Budidapadu, Bheemavaram, Kyatur, Amarabad. The river Tungabhadra, a tributary of Krishna is also rich in stone age sites particularly at places like Satanikota, Allur and Sangameswaram. The river Bhavanasi which joins at Sangameswaram is reported rich in early paleolithic tools. Important site of the early man is

Amrabad in Mahbubnagar district of Telangana located on the sloping mounds of the hill range to the west of the village. There is also small lake nearby which is filled up with water always. When noticed on the section of the nallah-bed, there is a deposit of quartzite pebbly bed of 40 to 80 cm thickness associated with Acheulian hand-axes, cleavers, choppers and flakes.<sup>2</sup>

**Middle Paleolithic:** Taking into consideration the typology, technique, raw material and stratigraphy, this culture is different from the earlier and later periods. During this period man appeared to discard the heavy and unwieldy tools. While the early palaeolithic tools were made of quartzite, the tools of this period were made of new material like agate, chert, jasper and chalcedony. The occurrence of chopper like cores diminutive hand-axes, employing basic Levalloisian techniques, suggests the existence of a genetic link between the early and middle palaeolithic ages, but, in all probability the later industry must have grown out of the early palaeolithic, marking the transitional development that has been observed from Abbevillion to Acheulian industry in early paleolithic age.<sup>3</sup>

He occupied mainly the river banks and perennial streams for hunting and food gathering. The tools included simple flakes, borers, points, scrapers, blades on thick flakes and choppers. There were good number of sites near the river basin and inside the caves. Belum, Amrabad plateau, Srisailam, Siddaraja-lingapuram, Pudur, Satanikota, Sangameswaram all in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh; Uppalapadu, Chagatur, Yapalapadu, Manchalakatta, Somasila and Budidapadu all in Mahbubnagar district of Telangana are some examples.

**Mesolithic:** This culture succeeded the middle paleolithic culture which is also described as microlithic and late stone age culture. The mesolithic culture of this valley is assigned to the Holocene period, as may be seen from the evidence of the domestication of animals and the presence of rock art in association with the microliths at Bollavaram, Ketavaram, Siganapalli and Dupadugattu. It is widely distributed in this region. The important tools used in this period are crescents, triangles, trapezes of geometric type, arrow-heads, borers, scrapers and blades. Due to their miniature size, they were hafted to bone or wooden handles so as to form as composite tools like sickles, knives, arrow-heads or harpoons. Important cultural sites are Karpakala, Tadikonda, Budidapadu, Ramatirtham, Mustipalle, Upperu, Garlapadu all in Mahbubnagar district of Telangana; Muchchatla Chintamanugavi, Ketavaram, Old Bollavaram and Durgam villages all in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh.<sup>4</sup> As far as the date of this culture is concerned, at Rangapur in Gujarat, the mesolithic culture was found below the Harappan levels and gave a date prior to the Harappan culture around 3000 BC.<sup>5</sup>

**Neolithic:** This culture resulted in rapid change from food-hunting to food producing stage. According to Gordon Childe, "*Neolithic revolution was not a catastrophe, but a progress.*" It brought about basic changes in the fabric of social life. With the advent of settled agriculture economy, there was an agricultural revolution to sustain the growing folk. There was a cultural evolution. There was a transition in the way of life from food gathering to food producing and domestication of animals. A large number of neolithic sites were excavated in South India which include Brahmagiri, Sanganakallu, Maski, Piklihal, Tekkalakota, T-Narsipur, Hallur, Terdal, Kodekal and Hemmige in Karnataka; Nagarjunakonda, Utnur, Palvoy, Polakonda, Jami, Hulikal and Budigapalle in Andhra Pradesh; Paiyampalli in Tamil Nadu to understand the neolithic settlements. In Krishna-Tumgabhadra valley excavations were undertaken at Chinnamarur, Chagatur, Ieej, Hulikal, Veerapuram, Belum, Siganapalli, Ramapuram, Gandlur, Guttikonda Bilam, the neolithic cultures have shown remarkable evidences. The cave excavations at Muchchatla Chintamanugavi in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh show that the mesolithic culture represented by pure microlithic stage entered into agricultural stages

as revealed by the occurrence of neolithic perforated pottery, non-edge ground tools, copper bangle pieces of neolithic-chalcolithic period over the microlithic deposit.<sup>6</sup> The presence of painted black-on-red, perforated pot sherds and steatite disc beads from Ramapuram, Chagatur, Veerapuram, Hulikal and Chinnamarur show close parallels with those reported from Brahmagiri, Piklihal, Hallur and Tekkalakota from South India where these finds are assigned to the late phase of the neolithic. The pottery made on slow wheel suggest a late date from 1500 -1000 BCE.<sup>7</sup> For the early neolithic culture at Utnur, the C-14 date obtained in this region is 2160 BCE which forms the upper limit and this date is more or less the same as at Kodekal in Karnataka and the corresponding date is 2361 BCE.<sup>8</sup>

**Megalithic:** (Plate-IV & V) In the valley, we find the neolithic-chalcolithic and megalithic cultures over lapping each other. The megalithic culture, also known as Iron Age is characterised by the use of iron as principal metal for manufacturing tools and other material. Krishnaswamy<sup>9</sup> adopted a systematic classification for different kinds of burials and also proposed a suitable terminology for identifying the megaliths. Excavations were conducted at the places like Chinnamarur, Peddamarur, and Somasila in Kollapur taluk; a habitational mound at Budidapadu in Wanaparthy taluk; Karpakala, Serupalle, Chagaturu and Uppalapadu in Alampur taluk; Uppuru and Erladinne in Gadwal taluk all in Mahbubnagar district of Telangana of the river Krishna in the lower reaches at Huzurnagar in Nalgonda district and Gandluru in Guntur district; a habitation site at Veerapuram and burial complexes at Gajjalakonda, Satanikota and Ramapuram in Kurnool district all in Andhra Pradesh. The material recovered from these sites provide ample evidence of cultural data in the form of grave goods like iron implements, pots, beads and food grains etc. which will help us to understand the various aspects of the life of the megalithic folk in this region.<sup>10</sup> The material evidence obtained from various sites like Chinnamarur, Ramapuram, Uppalapadu, Gajjalakonda and Peddamarur leads us to believe that the megalithic culture began in 1100 BCE and continued up to the early historic times.

## Historical Period

Megalithic culture in this area was succeeded by the early historic period. The cultural material belonging to Satavahana, Maharathi, Ikshvaku and Vishnukundi periods was unearthed at many places. The early historic evidence is gleaned from the excavations undertaken at the sites like Pydigutta, Veerapuram, Peddamarur, Chinnamarur and Satanikota, Kyatur. There was an evidence of well fortified townships and dwelling structures built of well burnt bricks. Ceramic wares during the Satavahana period were noticed like russet coated painted ware and rouletted ware besides other types of pottery. Another important feature of this period is the evidence of writing in the form of inscriptions and usage of coinage.

Saivate brick temples were noticed at Veerapuram,<sup>11</sup> Kurnool District of Andhra Pradesh built by Sivakhada and Pahalamasi of Maharathi kings who succeeded the Satavahanas in this area. The early temples were square and built over a well laid out platform. They are significant by their porch. Inside the shrine there is evidence of *linga*. The sanctum is conspicuous with a water chute (*pranala*) to collect *abhisekha* water in a rectangular *receptical*. (Plate-VI) Even in the Krishna valley at Nagarjunakonda of the same district, temples were constructed in brick during the Ikshvakus who ruled from the third to fourth century CE. Ikshvakus were the successors of the Satavahanas in the eastern Deccan.

A large number of temples were noticed in the valley built by various ruling dynasties like Chalukya, Rastrakuta, Kakatiya and Vijayanagara. Due to the patronage of these dynasties, temple architecture flourished in this valley. During the early period, temples were built with brick. At that

stage, the plan was mainly based on the geometrical designs like square, rectangle and apsidal. During the passage of time, elaborate architecture was developed based on the principles of Vastu Sastras. Different styles of temple architecture introduced by various dynasties were evolved and developed to such an extent that they were known with particular dynasty based on the evolution of different styles.

Some of the outstanding group of ancient temples once located in the submerged area of Srisailam project were dismantled and reconstructed at higher altitude under “*salvage archaeological operation*” Apart from the temples selected for transplantation, the other temples left in the submerged area which represent various schools were selected for preparation of scale models and exhibited in the Centenary Heritage Museum, within the precincts of the Department of Heritage, Govt. of Telangana, Hyderabad. (Plates-VII)

Inscriptions available at the temple sites belonging to various dynasties were identified and estampages taken before submergence of the area. Some of the inscriptional slabs which are historically important have been shifted to the museums at Alampur, Pillalamarri and Hyderabad all maintained by the Department of Heritage, Govt. of Telangana, Hyderabad as well as Kurnool museum maintained by the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Govt. of Andhra Pradesh. These inscriptions are useful to reconstruct the history and culture of various dynasties who ruled this area.

### Architecture

Various architectural components like door-frames, pillars and other accessory items recovered from various places who ruled this area by different dynasties are transported and displayed in different museums at Kurnool, Alampur and Centenary museum with in the precincts of the Department of Heritage, Govt. of Telangana, Hyderabad. (Plate-VIII)

### Iconography

In Hindu mythology, icons play an important role. Icons of various faiths like Saivate, Vaishnavate and Sakti cults took different forms and gradually developed in course of time based on the texts of Silpa Sastras.

More than one hundred icons of different pantheons were discovered from different places from the submerged area. They include Anantasayana, Ardha-Narishwara, Bhadrakali, Bhairava, Brahma, Chamundi, Dikpalas, Ganesa, Kartikeya, Lakshmi-Narayana, Lakshmi, Lakulisa, Mahishamardini, Nataraja, Rati-Manmadha, Saraswati, Siva, Surya, Uma-Maheswara and Veerabhadra. They are now displayed in the museums at Kurnool in Andhra Pradesh and Centenary Heritage Museum and State Museum both located in Hyderabad belonging to Telangana State. A few icons are shown at Plate-IX

### Art Forms

Various types of art forms like sculptural art, stucco art, terracotta art have been in existence in the valley right from the Satavahana period and flourished till the end of the Vijayanagara period, patronized and developed by different dynasties. Some of these art forms which are in existence in Krishna-Tungabhadra Valley are shown in Plate-X.

**Sculptural Art:** Hundreds of historical sculptures belonging to various dynasties like Chalukya, Kakatiya and Vijayanagara were collected from the submerged villages and shifted to various museums in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

**Stucco Art:** This art is primarily meant for decoration purpose. The Krishna-Tungabhadra valley yielded a rich crop of stucco figurines which include men and women, animal heads, architectural decorations mostly of floral and vegetal origin as well as intricate geometric designs.

**Terracotta Art:** A few objects of terracotta art have been recovered particularly of Satavahana period at Satanikota, Kurnool District of Andhra Pradesh but not as rich as in the case of Nagarjunakonda and Yeleswaram on the banks of Krishna river not far away from Krishna-Tungabhadra Valley patronized by the Ikshvaku dynasty, immediate successors of the Satavahanas in Eastern Deccan. A large quantity of terracottas discovered there in the Krishna valley are now displayed in the island museum at Nagarjunakonda. There was a spectacular and unprecedented growth of terracotta industry during the Satavahana period due to Indo-Roman trade. They can easily be distinguished by common denominator of theme, form and style. A distinct feature of the dress and ornaments presented on the terracotta of this period reveals the taste of the people.

### Concluding Remarks

A few reports were published on individual sites like Veerapuram by the Birla Archaeological and Cultural Research Institute, Hyderabad; Satanikota by the Archaeological Survey of India. *Proto and early historic studies in Andhra Pradesh* by Krishna Sastry; *Pre and Proto-historic studies in the K-T Valley* by Subrahmanyam; *Pre-historic environment and Archaeology* by Varaprasad gave some details about the Pre and Proto-historic aspects of Krishna-Tungabhadra Valley. But, none of the above studies dealt with the aspect of Art, Architecture and Iconography. This paper now deals with all the aspects like Pre and Proto-historic period, Art, Architecture and Iconography in a holistic manner relating to Krishna-Tungabhadra Valley.

After the excavations were conducted in the Valley long ago before the construction of the Srisailem Dam, lot of fresh evidence has also come to light since then due to various new discoveries in the surrounding area. In view of this, there is a vast scope to study the whole material in a synchronized manner by the new Research Scholars in future. It would be, in fitness of things to study the subject matter in depth to know this river valley culture and also to examine and compare with the other river valley culture at Vijayapuri on the Krishna river not very far from here. A few monuments discovered at Vijayapuri were shifted from the valley and transplanted them on the Nagarjunakonda island and the antiquities were placed in an island museum before the submergence of the valley.

### Acknowledgements

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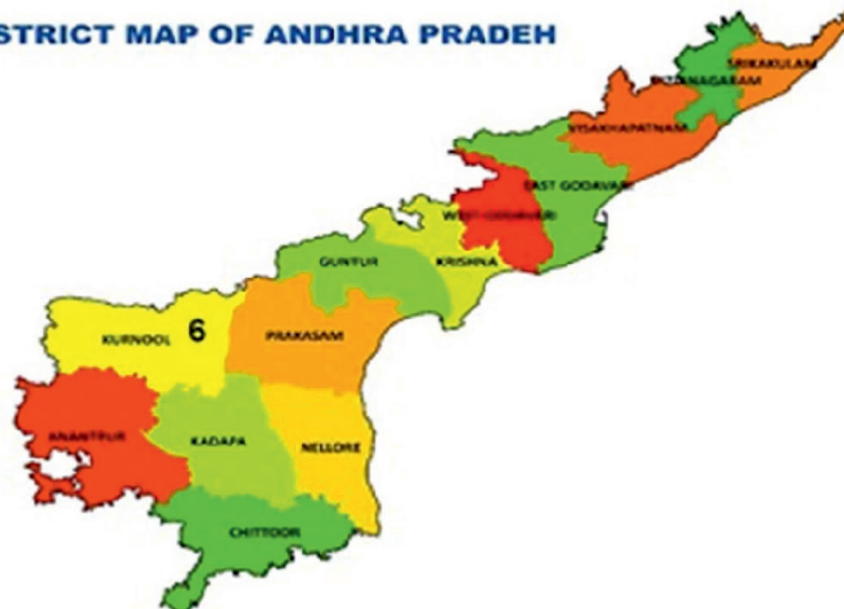
PLATE-I

1. ANTIQUARIAN REMAINS BEFORE SUBMERGENCE UNDER SRISAILAM HYDRO-ELECTRIC PROJECT
2. VIEW AFTER CONSTRUCTION OF THE DAM

### MAP OF TELANGANA



### DISTRICT MAP OF ANDHRA PRADEH



### PLATE-II - AREA OF STUDY

1. MAHBUBNAGAR 2, NARAYANPET 3.WANAPARTHY 4. AGARKURNOOL
5. JOGULAMBA GADWAL DISTRICTS OF TELANGANA
6. KURNOOL DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH



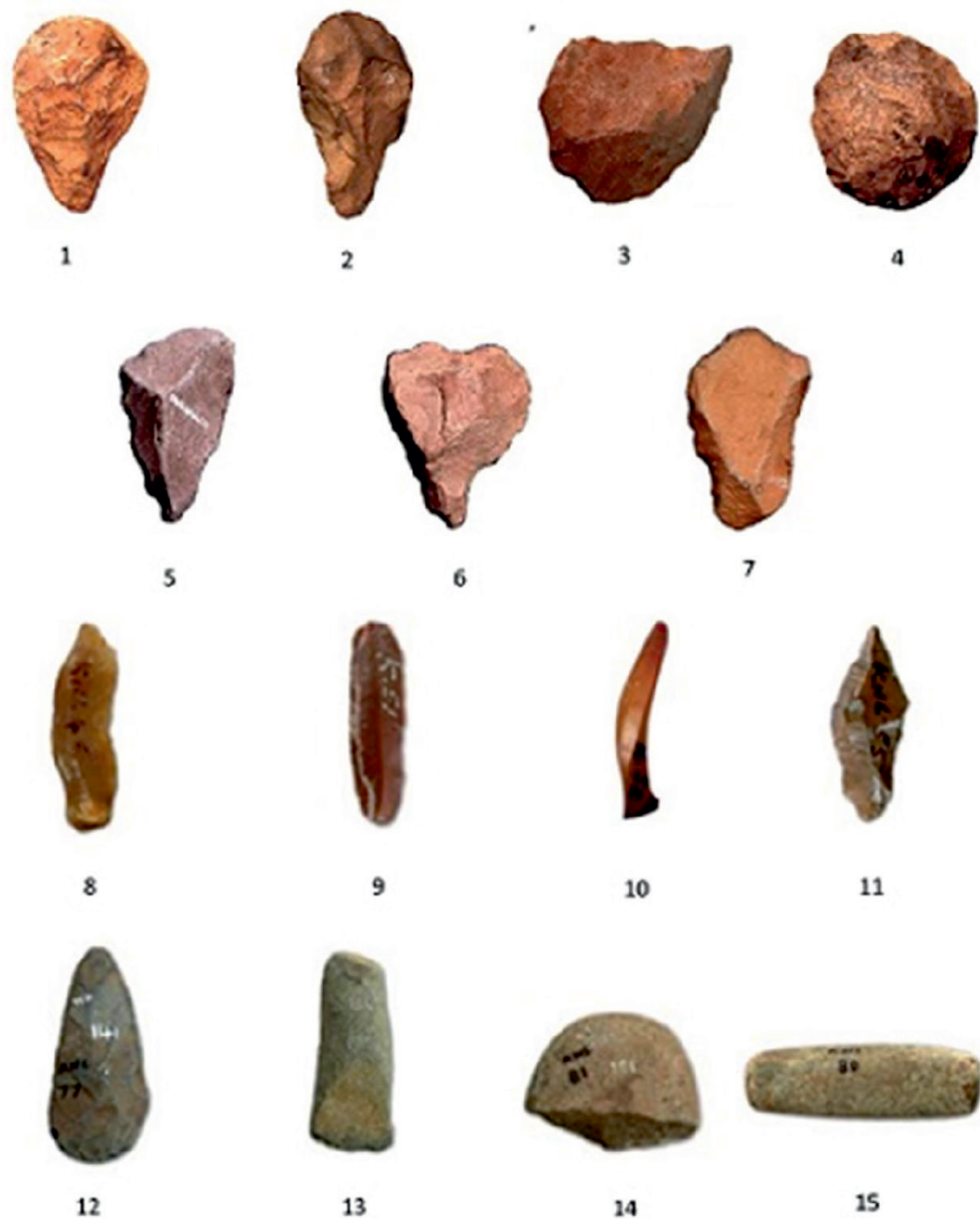


PLATE-III - PRE-HISTORIC TOOLS

Lower Paleolithic: 1&2: Hand axe; 3: 'U' Shape cleaver; 4. Spheroid (All from Amrabad, Mahbubnagar District, Telangana)

Middle Paleolithic: 5. Triangular shape scraper; 6. Borer ; 7. 'V' shape cleaver (All from Amrabad, Mahbubnagar District, Telangana)

Upper Paleolithic: 8.Flake blade; 9. Parallel sided blade; 10. Flake with bulbous or Microliths Distal end; 11. Leaf shape arrow-head (All are from Muchchatla Chintamanugavi, Kurnool District, Andhra Pradesh)

Neolithic Period: 12. Triangular axe; 13. Rectangular chisel; 14. Rubbing/grinding stone; 15. Pestle (All are from Chinnamarur, Mahbubnagar District, Telangana)



**PLATE-IV : MEGALITHIC PERIOD POTERY & TC OBJRCTS**

1, 2, 3, 6, 10,12: Chinnamarur; 5,11: Peddamarur; 4, 7, 8, 9: Erladinne;

13: Head of terracotta figure of He-Buffalo with facial features shown on one side and the other side is luted to the sarcophagus as if it is carrying the clay coffin to the other world. Pedda Marur, Mahbubnagar District

14. Handmade Archaic terracotta figure of a ram, Serupalli, Mahbubnagar District. (ALL ARE FROM TELANGANA)



**PLATE-V : MEGALITHIC PERIOD METALIC OBJECTS**

1, 2 & 9 : Cinnamarur; 5-8 &12: Peddamarur; 3 & 10: Uppalapadu;

4: Serupalle; 11: Karpakala (ALL ARE FROM TELANGANA)

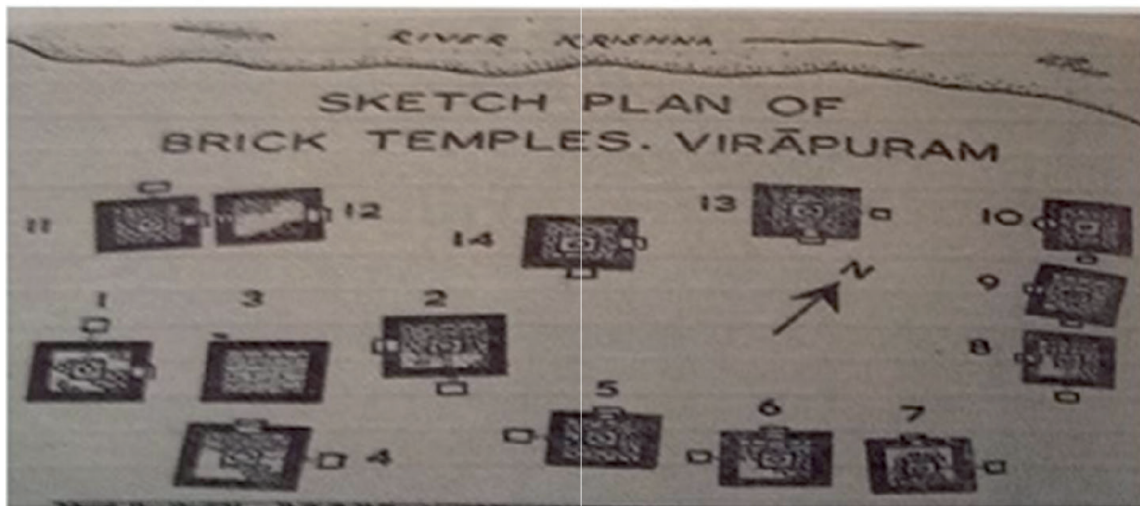
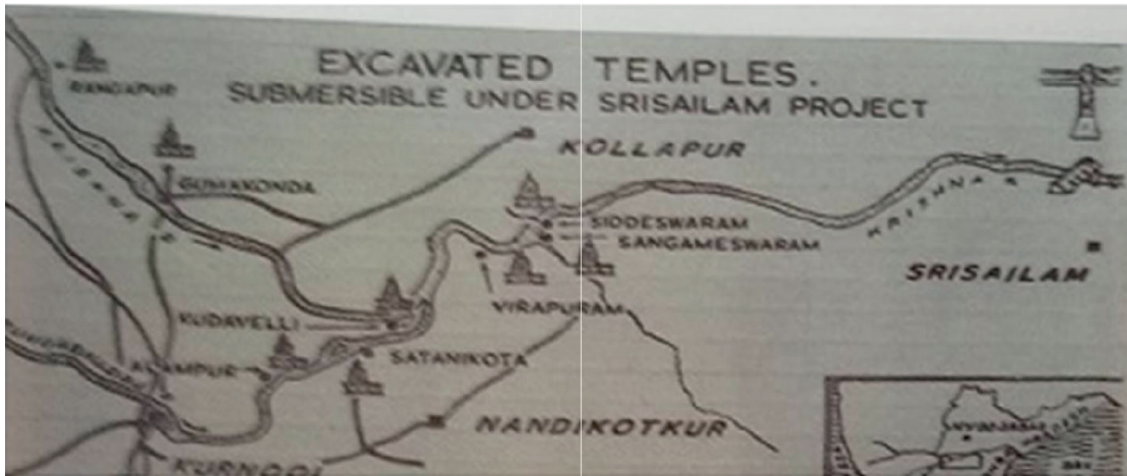


PLATE-VI : EXCAVATED TEMPLES IN THE SUBMERGED AREA



**PLATE-VII : TEMPLES FOUND IN THE VALLEY BEFORE SUBMERGENCE. SMALL SCALE MODELS WERE PREPARED AND EXHIBITED IN THE HERITAGE MUSEUM AT HYDERABAD.**



#### PLATE-VIII : ARCHITECTURE

1. Door-Jamb from Sangameswaram, AP and 2. Door-Jamb from Pratakota, AP, both shifted to Silpa Kala Vedika at Hyderabad; 3. Door-Sakha from Pragatur, AP, shifted to the Department of Heritage at Hyderabad. 4. Reconstructed Sixteen Pillared Mandapa behind the Kurnool museum complex shifted from Kokkarencha, AP. 5. Reconstructed Four Pillared Mandapa behind the Kurnool museum complex shifted from Siddaraja Lingapuram, AP. 6. Reconstructed Chalukyan temple behind Kurnool Museum shifted from Pratakota, AP. 7, 8 & 9: Lintel and door-jamb from Pratakota, AP. Lintel is depicted with *lalata bimba* containing the Gajalakshmi motif in the centre. There are two verticals with *dwarapalas* on either side at the bottom. (ALL ARE OF CHALUKYA PERIOD)



PLATE-IX : ICONOGRAPHY

1: Ganesa, Gondimalla (C); 2. Veerabhadra, Betamcharla (K); 3. Daksha, Alampur (C), 4. Surya, Gudem (C) 5. Kubera, Pratakota (C); 6. Siva as Kankala-Murti, Malleswaram (C) . 7. Dakshina-Murti, Alampur (C); 8. Chandiswara, Sangameswaram (C); 9. Brahma, Rupala- Sangameswaram (C); 10.Siva- Kesava, Rupala-Sangameswaram (C);11. Mahisha-Mardini, Alampur (C); 12. Sapta-Matrukas, Pratakota (C) 13. Saraswati, Sangameswaram (K); 14. Rati-Manmadha, Maremunagala (C); 15. Ananta-Sayana, Malleswaram (K) 16. Nataraja, Pratakota (C);

(C): CHALUKYA; (K): KAKATIYA;

(2,5,8,9,10,12, 13,16 are from Andhra Pradesh and the rest are from Telangana)



1



2



3

1. SCULPTURAL ART :

2. STUCCO ART :

3. TERRCOTTA ART :