ABSTRACT:
This paper is about the role and representation of archaeology in Tamilnadu heritage tourism. The main issue is about how archaeology and archaeological sites are represented in brochures and ‘flyers’ which have been produced in Tamilnadu for the tourist market. The discussion centers on the relationship and representation may have with issues of Tamil identity and the conservation, management and use of archaeology in modern Tamilnadu. The disparity between the explanations and descriptions of archaeological sites offered in tourism brochures and those to be gleaned from even superficial browsing of academic literature is the matter of issue. The important aspect to be concerned severely is the relationship between ‘the public’ and archaeology; and the correlation between popular representations of archaeology and current issues in Tamilnadu archaeological resource management. This paper deals with Tamilnadu tourism promotional literature, ranging from brochures and flyers to guide books. It quickly became obvious that, how important are the archaeological monuments and artifacts to the represent Tamilnadu as a tourist destination.

KEYWORDS: Brouchers, Archaeology, Toursim, Curiosity, Selectiveness

This paper is about the role and representation of archaeology in Tamilnadu heritage tourism. This group is normally made up of people who are aged in their 50’s and above who would like to visit historical monuments\(^1\). The main issue is about how archaeology and archaeological sites are represented in brochures and ‘flyers’ which have been produced in Tamilnadu for the tourist market. The discussion centers on the relationship and representation may have with issues of Tamil identity and the conservation, management and use of archaeology in modern Tamilnadu. The portrayal of Tamilnadu, both at regional and national level, has long been dominated by tourism images. In turn, prevalent within and among these images are archaeological monuments and artefacts, whose primary role seems largely to support a particular understanding of the culture of Tamilnadu in the past and present. The temples, churches and mosques displays ingenuity and the artistic skills of sculptors. The history of some of the pilgrim centers dates back to even 1000 years. The architecture is unique as well as inspiring and the marvels of engineering technology of the bygone era\(^2\). Parallels are drawn between the language and imagery employed in the brochures, and that of 19\(^{th}\) century Tamilnadu. While archaeology’s pivotal position in modern Tamilnadu heritage tourism is acknowledged, it is argued that the presentation and management of archaeology renders it intangible, static and ‘otherworldly’. This not only pre-empts public engagement with the processes.
behind the formation of the archaeological record in the past (and present), but facilitates the unquestioned use of archaeology in economic and political spheres.

The disparity between the explanations and descriptions of archaeological sites offered in tourism literature, and those to be gleaned from even superficial browsing of academic literature is the matter of issue. The important aspect to be concerned severely is the relationship between ‘the public’ and archaeology; and the correlation between popular representations of archaeology and current issues in Tamilnadu archaeological resource management. “Because of people’s inclination to seek out authenticity, including that of traditional cultures, heritage tourism has become a major “new” area of tourism demand, which almost all policy – makers are now aware of and anxious to develop”

Familiarity with, and easy access to, Tamil tourism literature made this an ideal place to start the initial research on the subject concentrate d on the nature of the representation of archaeology in Tamilnadu tourism literature. This paper details the main findings and discusses, in particular, their implications in the areas of Tamilnadu state identity and archaeological resource management.

This paper deals with Tamilnadu tourism promotional literature, ranging from brochures and flyers to guide books. It quickly became obvious that, how important are the archaeological monuments and artifacts to the represent Tamilnadu as a tourist destination. There has been much discussion on the nature and subject of tourism images of Tamilnadu (most recently, in October 2013 at a Seminar on “Role of History and Archaeology in promoting Tourism in India”). This commentary is marked by a significant degree of consensus: that the view of Tamilnadu represented veers heavily towards the romantic, taking little cogniscence of the social and economic changes experienced in Tamilnadu in the last decades. There are few inklings of Tamilnadu with its technology - driven economy, mushrooming urban centres, and highly skilled, cosmopolitan population in few years. World-wide, tourism marketing is characterised by the identification and promotion of ‘unique selling propositions’ (USPs), by which each tourism destination seeks to differentiate its ‘product’ from that of its competitors. Aggressive promotion and marketing campaigns through print and electronic media at the domestic, national and international level, creation and upgradation of basic amenities and infrastructure initially increases the tourist arrivals to Tamilnadu.

This is particularly true for heritage tourism, which sets out to create an impression of unique cultural identity and achievements for the area or country being marketed. The Tamilnadu tourism board is concentrating in the development of rural life, culture and heritage of rural locations in village which initially benefits the local community economically. This type of promoting work undertaken by the tourism industry normally satisfies the tourist needs and attracts them to visit the destination that leads to tourism development to a great extent. This is evident from the number of tourist visited in the year 2010. In 2010 approximately 28,04,687 foreign tourist (15.7% in total share in India)) and 11,17,37,104 domestic tourists (15.1% in total share in India) visited the state. In 2012, 35.62 lakhs foreign tourist and 18,41,37.000 domestic tourist visited the state.

Notwithstanding the pretty pictures and endless blue skies, the brochure study identified a number of characteristics as to the way in which archaeology, and the Tamilnadu past through the use of archaeology, is represented. These can be summarised as follows: Limitless archaeology, Curious chronologies, Selectivity, Archaeology ‘without’ context, Pre-modern versions of Tamilnadu history.
Borderless Archaeology

Even a brief glance at the brochures demonstrates that archaeology and archaeological sites are being used to attract visitors too and create an interest for them in Tamilnadu. Many, if not the majority, of general and introductory place descriptions give the impression of a land rich in archaeological resources. The only difficulty in reinterpreting the great resources of Tamil heritage for today’s visitor lies in the embarrassment of riches. A long and turbulent history has deposited such a wealth of locations and artefacts of archaeological and cultural interest. However, closer examination of the brochures revealed only sparse mention or description of individual archaeological sites. Indeed, archaeological sites are often not mentioned or listed at all, and if they are depicted, this is very often without identification. What is offered is listing after listing of heritage or interpretative centres, and even where these do relate to nearby archaeology, the emphasis in the brochures is often on the interpretative and visitor services, and not the archaeology itself. (Fig…) Such practice may be informed by the philosophy of ‘developing the few to save the many’. It exemplifies that the primary aim is conservation and preservation of the natural and built heritage. However, through their becoming or remaining inaccessible, some seminal archaeological sites are in increased danger of being forgotten about locally, and thus being unwittingly destroyed or damaged. In addition, such predilection for prestigious and nationally significant sites does little to promote interest, appreciation or pride in lesser – known and less spectacular local heritage.

Chronologies and its Curiosity

Where descriptions of archaeological sites can be found, the terms and contexts used to position them in particular periods are often inaccurate and confusing. Whether this stems from simple carelessness or a lack of familiarity with chronological terms and/or sequence, the result is a very alternative archaeology of Tamilnadu to that which the author learned as an Research Scholar in his field survey in various sites of Tamilnadu. On the basis of the Catalogue of Archaeological Sites in Tamilnadu, Vols. I & II by Dr. K. Rajan, a visitor will be reminded of many aspects of many aspects of Tamilnadu history. The state consists of sites yielding Palaeolithic and Neolithic tools dating back to the starting phase of Holocene period. It is important to mention that, notwithstanding the fact that the stone circles and other burial monuments are generally dated back to the Iron Age or Megalithic period, not the Neolithic, the impression is that the burials constructed is 3500 years old. Chennai has a Government Museum and other museum under the control of State Department of Museums and State Department of Archaeology, in which a broad picture about the materials pertaining to the megalithic period has been housed.

Selectiveness

While a certain level of selection can be expected of tourism brochures, sites which could be perceived as being more appropriate or representative of a period or area are generally neglected or omitted in the literature. The study of Palaeolothic sites such as Gudiyam, Attirambakkam, Vadamburai etc and Mesolithic sites concentrated mostly in the Tuticorin district (though some more sites are also available in other parts of the state) elaborately in the state is mostly restricted to students and scholars of the archaeology field itself. They are not well established to the general public, which will be a great opportunity for them to know the foundation of the later civilized Tamil society. There are also difficulties in this aspect, when the general public comes to know more about these sites it may lead them to go to the site visit which initially paves way for the collection of the stone artefacts by the people that may generally be taken home for preservation. But in due course of time this tends to non-availability of stone artefacts
that makes the visiting people not to find and view the tool artefacts. So in order to solve this problem there must be co-ordination between the tourism department and archaeology department in making the above process a successful one. The later Megalithic sites which are concentrated all over the state is not preferred to be important in the tourism literature of the state. The construction of burials seems to the beginning stage to the later well structured and constructed monuments like temples, rock cut cave, etc. When the historically important temples, mosques, churches and other monuments are categorically described in the tourism brouchers the megalithic sites should also be mentioned that may be a great opportunity for the visitor to have glance at the burial sites. Sites pertaining to jaina sect like samanar malai (Keelakuyilkudi, Madurai dist), Armamalai (Ambur, Vellore dist), Seeyamangalam (Vandavasi, Thiruvannamalai dist), Cholapandiypapuram (Thirukoilur, Villupuram dist), Thingalur, Seenapuram (Erode dist), etc and many more potential sites with various forms of jaina residues is considered to be more important in the research angle as far as the Jainism study is concerned. But these sites which are more important in the archaeological context were not given importance in the tourism literature. These sites would be given special preference when the nearest important archaeological site’s history, the reason for its emergence, written records, literary evidences, and the sites which are equally valid with antiqueness etc would have been mentioned in the tourism brouchers. This process could be achieved when the tourism agencies give equal importance, weightage and balanced coverage without any bias among the archaeological sites in their promotional activities. If there is any biased view among the agencies in the archaeological discovery and recovery in the tourism literature, it appears to have much more to do with the political structures and demographies, rather than their actual presence in the landscape.

Tamil History and its Pre-Modernism

Obviously, there exists a lacking in the tourism literature of Tamilnadu were the results pertaining to the present research works and ongoing debates in the field of Tamilnadu archaeology field. Tourism brouchers concentrates mainly on the descriptions of the historical monuments like temples, mosques, churches, etc belonging to various religions, buildings belonging to later dynasties like nayaks, Marathas, mughals, britishers and not more about the pre and proto historic monuments or artefacts which are remaining as the treasure troves of ancient Tamilnadu heritage. The long standing debate as to when the Aryan people have intruded in the ancient Tamil land and mingled with the ancestors of the oldest landmass i.e., Tamils is not much concentrated with necessary description in the Tourism brouchers. Indeed the interest shown in the preservation of the ancient historical buildings which have earned popularity among the general public, various agencies like government, private and NGO’s had obliterated the purpose of exposing the pre-historic history in the tourism literature. Unlike the archaeologists who do research to prove the ancient identity of Tamils, the tourism related studies or the scholars who concentrate on historical tourism also deny to prove the ownership of the Tamil heritage to anyone not to this particular stock or identity.

Tamilnadu: Its Archaeological Resources

The tourist attraction of Tamilnadu is firmly based on the heritage. Tourists are attracted here to discover our distinctiveness – all those facets of the natural, human-made and cultural heritage which give us a unique identity. These features, reflecting character, authenticity and sense of place, all combine to create a distinctively the state’s image.

The government of Tamilnadu has allocated more than 1000 crore’s of money for the integrated tourism development projects. This budget had been spend for the development of various infrastructural activities
of the sites, monuments, etc. In the process of strengthening the infrastructural activities the state government is identifying the gaps in the infrastructure and formulating the development schemes to attract the tourists towards Tamilnadu for the purpose of providing world class services for tourists. In having a joint venture programme with Tamil Nadu Infrastructure Fund Management Corporation the Tamilnadu Tourism Development Corporation is planning in the development of cultural and heritage tourism in the state. The money for the development of tourism projects also includes Eco-Tourism Circuits linking hill stations, forests and beaches which would encourage the creation of suitable infrastructures like hotels etc under public and private partnership.

Apart from the ancient constructed monuments like temples which are considered to be the oldest structural ambience to the state and under the control of state and private agencies, many other archaeological remnants in the forms of the megalithic burials, pre and proto historic sites, etc are in the ruined condition. Some has been already destroyed by the public due to the nature of the artefacts, more particularly ancient archaic stones. If this would be the case continuing for the years to go, definitely by around 2050 A.D almost all the archaeological remains could be totally vanished from the state, which would show that there did not exist any ancient history for Tamilnadu.

This painful condition shows the baffling nature of the archaeological resources in the state. Though the term ‘cultural heritage’ is considered to be the key factor in the Tamilnadu tourism industry large scale destruction of the monuments, including the large proportion of the specifically mentioned archaeological heritage sites pertaining to pre and proto historic and megalithic sites are taking place. Moreover, the destruction of the ancient archaeological sites is taking place, though India has one of the most stringent antiquities legislation acts in the world. In order to enhance the interest of the general public to preserve the archaeological sites more particularly the pre and proto historic sites which are in the remote access to the common man, there is a need to promote public interest in knowledge about the archaeology, appreciation in the archaeological studies and protection of undisclosed and to be recognized as the national heritage sites.

To elevate the archaeological studies and to promote the archaeological sites to become the most wanted visiting tourist sites, the historians and archaeologists should traditionly do not permit politics on their work. They must acquire the tendency to view archaeological research and results published should be ‘neutral’ as per the scientific interpretations, as the study of archaeology more particularly the pre and proto history should be accepted in the view of ‘a period prior to cultural division’. Whilst having personnel experience in archaeological studies and research and communicating with academics and professionals doing Archaeological research in Tamilnadu, theoretical and socio-political issues creates the interminable failure to communicate elaborately about the excavation results which inturn creates archaeological research as an tiresome activity and exclusive pastime work in the eyes of the general public and the persons devoted to the research are considered as the henchmen who work for their superiors.

However, much as archaeological monuments and artefacts have been used by historians and archaeologists to create a notion of unified space in tourism, to emphasise the uniqueness of Tamil identity, past and heritage, the monuments and artefacts could be used today to position Tamilnadu and its archaeology in a greater context within the Indian subcontinent. This would offer the public (local and visitor alike) the opportunity to recognize and explore intriguing economic, cultural and historical links, influences and individualities of the ancient Tamil country. Notwithstanding its significant symbolic representation in both Tamil nationalistic and tourist rhetoric, the archaeological heritage faces uninterrupted increased level of
damage, which indicates, that there needs to be a proper picturization of the monuments to general public who doesn’t know how to accept and perceive the importance of archaeological importance. Many exclusive and fascinating efforts is being taken by the government agencies and the other archaeology followers who dedicate their precious time in exposing the ancient history of the Tamil country to authenticate the archaeological heritage of Tamilnadu to be the distinctive one in India. But, even till now the archaeological data’s collected and results published seems to be ungraspable and limited, for the reason why the non-archaeologists and persons fond of knowing about different socio-cultural formations, various components of life style of the people, spread of heritage and it’s consequent development among the society are not able to get the clear picture about the real facts of the ancient history of the Tamil country.

These conspicuous archaeological sites and their attraction towards the tourists has pleased archaeology discipline to a great extent due to it’s day – to – day, socio-cultural values. Various World Heritage complexes in the state prove how the archaeological disquisition itself accelerates the commoditization of archaeology and archaeological landscapes and also the world heritage sites in the state gives more attention to the local traditional uses and values. It is very important to mention here that these local cultural values and practices have preserved the archaeological sites from the ongoing process of modernization. The appraisal of culture and history by the implications of self-consciousness in connection with ownership, interpretation and construction could be coined as ‘heritage’.

**Conclusion**

The concept of this paper is to give more attention to the archaeological sites and their exposure in the tourism brochures and to have a consideration over the implications of these sites with special importance given to the Tamil identity and archaeological resource management. Though extraordinary measures and effective steps had been taken to promote the archaeological sites by the Tamilnadu Tourism department, the actual knowledge and understanding of the archaeological records should be generated in a elaborate process to reach out the general public with ease. Moreover, the representation of archaeological sites in the tourism brochures should serve the purpose to remind the greatness and to know about ancient antiquity of the ancient Tamil country. The archaeologists and heritage practitioners must create and develop public awareness of the complexities and processes of the past, and how it is, and has been, presented. Basic researches should be constituted in the archaeology and tourism studies to show in what way the Tamilnadu archaeological heritage is been consumed by the general public and more particularly the tourists who throng the sites indeed to the people about the future interpretation strategies. Finally, the heritage resources management strategies and the archaeological research should create a path to the public in Tamilnadu for engaging themselves within the wealth of archaeological resource. The archaeological academic research in correlation with tourism and political studies should be undertaken in anyway by each and every public in the daily course for the purpose of enriching the richness and diversity of Tamil country to prove in what way archaeology can fulfill the thirst of knowing the hidden treasure of the ancient land mass of the world.
End Notes:

9. Dr. A. Ekambaranathan, Thondai Naattu Samana Kovilkal, Jain Youth Forum, Chennai