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AN INVESTIGAION OF KAVILORAI: A HERO STONE SITE IN THE NILGIRI
MOUNTAINS OF SOUTH INDIA

by

Jacob Landon Bach

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Masters of Arts
Department of Anthropology

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
April 2008

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis committee for all of their suggestions, guidance and support throughout this process. I would also like to thank Dr. Allen Zagarell for the years of mentorship while I attended WMU. His enthusiasm for learning while teaching at the same time has shaped and influenced many students at WMU, including myself, and I will greatly miss the conversations of ideas, current events, Tajik and Russian and the fun of exploring the world. My continued education at WMU is due to your encouragement and energy.

I would also like to thank Laurretta Eisenbach for all of the help she provided me through the years. She was there for me when I needed her and I will always appreciate the time and effort she gave. Thank you to my graduate cohort for the support in all of the classes, especially David Black and Janet Abby for all of the encouragement to finish this project.

Finally to my family, thank you for providing support to me when I needed it the most, encouraging me about the advantages of higher education and always listening to me when I needed to talk. My wife Kathleen and son Forrest, thank you for letting me have some quiet time to work, and for letting me fulfill this obligation to myself. Clair and Rusty Orner, thank you for providing me with the time off to finish the last stages of this project.

Jacob Landon Bach

AN INVESTIGATION OF KAVILORAI: A HERO STONE SITE IN THE NILGIRI MOUNTAINS OF SOUTH INDIA

Jacob Landon Bach, M.A.

Western Michigan University, 2008

This study explores the hero stones of the Nilgiri Mountains of South India. This project has focused on the site of Kavilorai for developing a stylistic base to compare other sites of the region with. After analysis it was determined that Kavilorai contained four separate, but connected stylistic expressions carved on the hero stones. The findings when compared with other upper elevation sites corresponded to a high quality/low quality theme, often incorporating the ritual suicide sati. When comparing the stylistic representation of the carved figures to the Badaga Lingayat temple of Seminatum there surfaced strong thematic and stylistic connections. The findings suggest the immigrant population of the Badaga played an integral part in carving the hero stones post-1565 AD.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This research project has examined a hero stone site called Kavilorai, located in the Nilgiri Mountains of South India. Utilizing the materials collected by Dr. Allen Zagarell from several field seasons of research in the Nilgiris, I have analyzed and synthesized a great deal of information relating Kavilorai and its hero stones to the wider Nilgiri region.

A hero stone is a bas-relief carved standing stone, similar in appearance to a “grave stone” while altogether different in function. The ‘typical’ stone illustrates three levels or tiers of scenes. The bottom level depicts the way the hero or heroine died; for example cattle raid, feline, battle or in *sati*, the ritual suicide by the widow of a hero. The next level shows the hero or heroine being transported to the heavens, the third tier shows the individual in the afterlife, sometimes with a priest or other Hindu images. Hero stones have a great deal of variability in craftsmanship and messages; some are of high quality and others are of low quality. There are many hero stones with inscriptions, but also many with none. As will be subsequently discussed, hero stones are found throughout India, with south India supporting the highest concentrations. The Nilgiri Mountains have hundreds of hero stones, and several varieties of styles are found there, (see Zagarell 2000).

Kavilorai is the largest hero stone site in the Nilgiris, with forty-two of the fifty-nine stones in the main complex exhibiting carvings, in addition to eight

dolmens(dolmens are three stones forming an open faced box supporting a capstone). These stones are arranged in a geometric like pattern and pose many anomalies when compared with other hero stone sites in the Nilgiris. Publication concerning this site is lacking and only a one author has mentioned Kavilorai (Noble 1976, 1989). Additionally, a date or dates has not been determined for them nor have the original creators of the stones been recognized. What follows, details the hero stones at Kavilorai in a search to determine what is represented at Kavilorai, whether Badagas practicing Shiva Hinduism participated in carving these hero stones, and when that may have taken place. Through this examination Kavilorai provides a regional analysis tying threads of connections among several hero stone sites in the Nilgiris.

The Region

The Nilgiri Mountains lie within a juncture of Western and Eastern Ghats where the provincial states of Kerala to the west, Karnataka to the north and Coimbatore District of Tamil Nadu to the southeast converge (Hockings v. 1989)(See Figure 1). Zagarell describes the Nilgiris as imparting an “awe-inspiring vision when viewed from the plains” as the forested slopes rise into the clouds with sheer cliffs providing images of unscalable proportions (Zagarell 1994:184). The Nilgiri Plateau encompass an area of 2400sq km., with an ultimate elevation of Dodabetta peak at 2636m, the second highest peak in all of peninsular India (Von Lengerke, Blasco 1989:21). The mountains are comprised of alternating hills, pasture and forest land.

Upper elevations receive 5000mm of rain annually which makes agriculture and pasture extremely viable (Ibid).

Surrounding the Nilgiri Mountains are rivers that stem from the mountains. The Bhavwani River surrounds the south, southeast and east. This area coincides with one of the few gaps that open up through the Western Ghats, which is a mountain spine running along the west side of peninsular India. This gap was one of India's major trade routes leading to the coast, connecting it with the rest of the world (Zagarell 1994:184). Along the northern side of the mountains runs the Moyar River within the Moyar Ditch. The Moyar flows easterly until it reaches the Bhavwani River. These rivers both exhibit a high degree of irrigation capabilities.

People of the Nilgiri Hills

The first report of the Nilgiris by a European, Father Jacomo Finicio in 1603 describes the Nilgiri inhabitants as sharing the Nilgiris in relative harmony (Mandelbaum 1989:2). Father Finicio ventured into the Nilgiris looking for an ancient community of Christians (Walker 1989:187). Although Finicio believed his expedition was a failure since he did not find any Christians, it produced an extremely valuable early account of the Nilgiri inhabitants for future research. A complex relationship exists among the people residing in Nilgiris. Anthropologists of the 19th and the majority of the 20th century have claimed that the Nilgiri inhabitants are an isolated, untainted people who were free of influence by state powers in the past (Zagarell 1995:88). Recently Zagarell 1994, 1995, 2002 has rejected isolationism and has brought forth contrary evidence suggesting state powers were present in the Nilgiris.

While a full examination of the different inhabitants is beyond the scope of this paper, a brief overview system is pertinent.

In brief, the Todas are pastoralists, the Kotas are artisans, musicians and cultivators, and the Kurumbas living in the jungle edges are committed to a hunter/gatherer economy, practice magical service, and are regarded as sorcerers. Irulas are cultivating hunter gatherers. Finally, the Badagas, who immigrated as refugees from Karnataka sometime during the 16th century, are agriculturalists (Mandelbaum, 1989:2).

The tribal groups of the Nilgiris participate in a *jajmani*-like economic and social order, (Hockings 1980:99, Zagarell 1995:90). This social system is “similar to, and yet very different from, the caste societies of the surrounding plains” (Mandelbaum, 1989 2). It ties together Badaga, Toda, Kota, Irula and Kurumba in economic and ritual activities with mutually understood and anticipated relationships. A creation belief held by the Kota, Toda and Kurumba also reinforces community ties. The stories tell of three quarreling brothers who are told by the parent creator that they are to live with different functions in life and exchange goods and services (Mandelbaum 1989:146). It is also agreed that the Badaga came later as refugees and the inhabiting tribes accommodated them with land and social obligations, i.e. incorporating them into the existing economic exchange system.

Badaga and Kota interactions are multiple and exchange a wide array of services. Due to this economic and social interaction, they have developed a closer relationship to one another than to the other tribes in the Nilgiris. The relationship leads to the Badaga family appointing a Kota family with whom services are

exchanged. The families pass this relationship on generationally between the families (Hocking 1980:100). Kotas are the craft makers of the Nilgiris, with products that include metal tools, pots, leather and pottery. Additionally, the Kotas provide music at funerals, weddings and festivals for the Badaga and Toda, along with disposing dead carcasses of cattle and buffalo which have died ritually or naturally (Hockings 1980:101,103 Mandelbaum 1989:147 Zagarell 1995:90). Todas provide milk products for the Badaga and Kota, including clarified butter for the Badaga (Hockings 1980:116) and buffalo carcasses for Kota consumption (Zagarell 1995:90). The Badaga in turn exchange grain and cloth for the various services they render. The Kurumba are more isolated from the Badaga and are not directly linked to a particular Badaga family. Rather the Badaga commune appoints a particular Kurumba to act as watchman for the village and crops, which may also include performing a rite of magical protection. For this service the Kurumba receives 3.7 liters of grain from every community member (Hockings 1980:122-123). In addition the Kurumba and the Irulas provide jungle products to nearby Badagas, such as wood for house construction, honey, bees-wax, nets (Hockings 1980:128). Kurumbas also are called upon to participate in music at Badaga and Toda ceremonies, sometimes alongside of Kota musicians (Mandelbaum 1989:151).

Badaga Immigration

There is no disagreement that the original Badaga homeland is to be found in Mysore Plain of the Karnataka state. Simply looking at linguistics alone illustrates that the Badagu language and Kannada are to the same extent mutually intelligible

and therefore historically connected. Additionally, the Kannada word *Badaga* means ‘northerner’ and Badaga settlement within the Nilgiris to the south suggests northern origins for the Badagas homeland (Hockings 1980:11). Looking at figure 2, one sees the southern migration of settlements from Karnataka to the Nilgiris (Hockings 1980:18). Furthermore, a large minority, ca.10,000, of the Badaga, are Lingayat in faith. The Lingayat faith was founded in the twelfth century in Karnataka and nearly all followers of this faith are found within Karnataka, except for the Badaga of the Nilgiri Mountains (Hockings 1980:12, 1989:222).

Dating the Badaga migration is not as straightforward to. There is no written record of Badaga migration, and the migration did not take place in one large wave. Several 19th century publications have placed the migration within the 16th century during the breakup of the Vijayanagar Empire that had controlled today’s state of Karnataka (Hockings 1980:13). Another supporting argument is that all Hindu Badagas are Shaivites, including the Lingayats, and within southern Mysore there is a large minority of Vaishnavites. This Vaishnava conversion happened in Mysore around 1610. The Badagas were unaffected by this conversion, and hence were presumably already in the Nilgiris. Supporting this conclusion is the report by Father Finicio, who in 1603 commented on the Badaga in the Nilgiris (Hockings 1980:15). The documentation of the Badaga in the Nilgiris by Father Finicio gives the earliest concrete evidence of Badaga habitation in the Nilgiris.

Wodea Badaga Lingayats are the priestly class of the Badagas and are understood to have arrived to the Nilgiris during one of the later migrations of Badaga (Hockings 1980:17). The Lingayat religion revolves around an egalitarian Hindu

faith established around 1168AD and spread throughout the Kannada-speaking world. King Vijaya Wodeyar made it the state religion in 1399 and it continued to be so until 1610 (Ibid.) One of King Vajaya descendants , Raja Wodeyar who ruled from 1578-1617, drove Wodeya chieftain Udaiya Raya into the Nilgiris in order to capture his territory in 1613(Hockings 1980:17-18). Today the Wodea Badagas claim royal descendant from this Mysore chieftain. As one of the final major migrations of Badagas, the Wodea migration establishes a likely date for the end of the migration period. It is acceptable to conclude that the migration began during the beginning of the 16th century, intensified during the collapse of the Vijayanagar Empire in 1565, and began to wane and nearly cease by the beginning of the 17th century (Hocking 1980:39).

Hette and Badaga Social Relationships

The following myth of Hette illustrates the origins and political connections of settling in the Nilgiris for the Badaga and their self-identification with the ritual of *sati*. Hette and her husband Hiriodea are the mythical founders of the many Badaga lineages and they have become minor deities for the Badagas, especially for fertility and crops. Through examining multiple versions of the myth of Hette there arise three consistent themes: Hette was the model Badaga woman; she exemplifies contradictions in the life of all Badaga women that cannot be resolved except through a ritual; her behavior represented a popular flight from enforced Vaishnavite orthodoxy in the seventeenth century (Hockings 1989:223). Hockings provided several excerpts which define why she is the ideal Badaga woman:

She was so given to the ideal of chastity that she did not want to go to the bed of an elderly husband so drowned herself instead; she selflessly did not want to become pregnant until a senior but childless co-wife had already conceived; her husband was once out guarding a heap of grain when someone started a brush fire—Hette went to look for him, thought he has perished in it, and so immolated herself in the flames; her husband was a home with a Chetti woman whom he loved when the house caught fire, and his ever faithful wife returned to throw herself into the flames; because her husband died she committed *sati* by strangulation, drowning, or self-immolation; old and devoid of any relations, she killed herself so as not to be a burden on the village; after Hette's death she possessed another woman, during which time her ghost explained that she has really been an incarnation of Parvati, the wife of Shiva, and hence a goddess who was universally the model of Hindu womanly virtue; Hette undertook to protect the Badagas, and asked for a temple to be built for her which leads to an annual festival celebrated in her honor. (Hockings 1989:223-224)

There is a common tale describing Hette.

Hette was a very young girl whom her father promised in marriage to his own sister's husband. That sister was an old and barren woman. On the day when Hette reached physical maturity she knew that her aging husband would soon sleep with her, and the idea did not appeal to her. She went out with some other girls to gather firewood, and once in the wood, left them and built a pyre. She then asked God to grant a child to the older co-wife, her father's sister, and to accept Hette's self immolation if He judged her to have been pure. When the villagers saw the column of smoke they went to investigate, and found Hette's cremation. Belatedly they preformed the funeral ceremonies; and before the final ritual which releases the soul from the village, some eleven days after death, it was found that the old co-wife was pregnant. (Hockings 1989:224-225)

The above excerpts illuminate the virtuous duties of the female Badaga in addition to the four stressful times in life in which all female figures can relate, young virgin, devoted wife, old woman without relatives and fulfilling ancestral lineage-ship (Hockings 1989:225). The connections between Hette stories and Badaga women

may help to explain why so many *sati* figures on the hero stones are found throughout the Nilgiri region. The belief supersedes a Hindu belief in honorable death, but is empowered with ancestral weight, since Hette was the mythic co-founder of Badaga lineage. Furthermore, Hette's story is compared with the story of Parvati, who vowed to only marry Shiva; when told by her father that she would marry a Vaishnava man she ran away and worshipped all night over three Lingas to Shiva. Shiva appeared was pleased and granted any wish Parvati desired, which was to marry him. Her father found her in the morning, relieved to find her and granted her marriage wishes (Hockings 1989:227). This story parallels and reinforces the flight of the Badagas in the late 16th and early 17th century. As the earliest Shaivaite Badagas were fleeing Mysore, Vaishnavism was intensifying in dominance and became a state religion in 1617. Hocking states that the "Badaga's did recognize Hette as an incarnation of Parvati. Her myth becomes a political statement about a people, the Badaga refugees, symbolized by a pure virgin, Hette, fleeing to the forest to avoid the fatherly command of the Mysore Wodeya rulers to institute the cult of Vishnu"(Hockings 1989:227). Hero stones may in fact reinforce and claim a special role for the Badagas in living out the origin and ancestral myth of Hette.

Sati and Associated Objects

With images present on nearly all 42 hero stones at Kavilorai of *sati* figures and their objects (See Fig. #1), an overview of *sati* and the significance of the objects associated with the ritual are appropriate to this investigation. *Sati* is the honorable suicide by the wife of a deceased husband or hero. The word *sati* has come into common literature as describing the act of committing suicide by the widow, but it

means 'faithful woman' and actually refers to the widow herself; nonetheless, for ease of understanding *sati* will be used as the act of suicide in this paper. (Falk per. comm.). Widows are commonly described as burning alive in the funeral pyre of their husbands. The practice of *sati* is deep rooted in Indian history with the burning and occasional burying alive of widows reported by Greek travelers in North India during the 4th century BCE (Stein 1988:466). *Sati* was outlawed by the British in 1829, but has continued illegally. The last major *sati* ritual was done in 1987, with thousands attending (Stein 1988:473).

Sati is the female equivalent of the honorable death on the battle field or by animal attack that prompts erecting a memorial stone for a husband. The origin of the word stems from the Sanskrit word *as*, "to be" which is formed into the present participle *sat*, of which the female form is *sati* (Weinberger-Thomas, 1999:20). This form of the word has gone through a series of transitions from signifying "truth," to "goodness" and "virtue," to ultimately a chaste and faithful "virtuous wife" (Ibid). Additionally, the Goddess *Sati* upholds wifely virtue and unwavering devotion to ones husband. Illustrating devotion, *Sati* burned herself to interrupt and protest at a sacrifice sponsored by her father, because her husband Shiva was not invited (Stein 1988:467). The *sati* herself is a representation of perfection and purity. No woman can become a *sati* who has been unfaithful or who is menstruating (which is regarded as a temporary state of impurity); the act of self-immolation illustrates the level of faithfulness and devotion to her husband (Ibid).

Regarding *sati* hero stones, a female *sati* usually holds one arm raised, she may also carry various objects. If the husband is present on the *sati* stone, then he is

usually depicted smaller with “his hands folded in acknowledgment of his wife’s sacrifice” (Sinopoli 2003:230). The transformation of an individual into a hero in India can be attributed to the manner of death. As stated “it is the violence of his [or her] death that transforms a victim into an object of worship” (Weinberger-Thomas, 1999:18). Not only does the manner of death play an integral part in creating a hero, but also the immortality of that valued sacrifice or death is enforced and revered by the living via hero or *sati* stones. The images found on the hero stones at Kavilorai relating to *sati* are a bulbous vessel, a mirror, a lime, lemon and the upraised hand or arm. Some common images that relate to both the hero and the *sati* heroine are the sun and moon, lingam and Nandi, with the first two relating to time and immortality. Generally, images that bear associations with time are the hourglass, sun and moon. Weinberger-Thomas presents three explanations for the interpretation of the hourglass. The first is that the hourglass represents a drum called *tuti*, mentioned in ancient Tamil poetry, which was played before entering into battle (Weinberger-Thomas, 1999:18). The second explanation offers a greater connection with both time and Shiva, but still incorporates a drum called a *damaru*, which was beat for Shiva’s rhythmic dance associated with time and the continuation of the cosmic cycles (Weinberger-Thomas, 1999:19). The third explanation pertains to the hourglass itself, illustrating time being contained and never-ending, immortal. The sun and moon images also incorporate eternity and the “traditional wish: ‘may this or that thing’ last as long as the sun or moon”(Ibid). The sun and the moon are symbols reminding worshipers to honor the heroes and heroines as long as the sun and moon are continuing to set (Noble 1976:103). The sun and moon motif frequents the upper

portion of hero stones, which represents the realm of the afterworld, often including Nandi or the Lingam in addition to priestly figures.

Another image that is often found is the lemon, or a round object often assumed to represent a lemon. Like the hourglass and the sun/moon images, the lemon also possesses intricate meanings and cultural connections. Cloth that was dyed in emulation of the lemon's color can shed light onto the meanings associated with the lemon. Two constituents of the bath are turmeric and whey. Turmeric is associated with marriage ritual, love and its offspring. Whey is one of the five products of the cow, and when all five are present they represent "complete purification and redress of sins" (Weinberger-Thomas, 1999:78). The color of the lemon also has been attributed to the color of the sacrificial fire (Ibid). Lemons and limes are appropriate explanations for the round objects held by satis as they are used for offerings to various goddesses (Falk per. comm.). In addition, the lemon shape parallels with the "sacrificial rice-balls offered to the dead in funerary rites and ancestor worship" (Ibid), which act as a debt fulfiller for the living to the dead. Placing the lemon motif specifically in the South Indian Vijayanagar political periods, Weinberger-Thomas cites an account of a *Sati* procession where the woman "would hold a mirror in her left hand, and in her right a lemon or dagger" (Weinberger-Thomas, 1999:70).

The dagger serves several different functions in Hindu society according to Weinberger-Thomas. In relation to the Charans, a caste that performs tasks that are similar to a notary, "the mark of the dagger, heavy with the threat of self-sacrifice, served as their signature (Weinberger-Thomas, 1999:60). The dagger was further

utilized to commit self-sacrifice in the event of breach of contract; throughout India there are multiple paintings and carvings showing individuals cutting their own throats. A hero stone in the Vijayanagar capital illustrates a hero decapitating himself with a dagger (Verghese 2001:47). Additionally the dagger can be used as “the instrument with which the hero or devotee wounds his body or cuts off his head in those forms of devotional, votive, or expiatory suicide that involve the “terrible” (*ugra*) image of the Goddess” (Weinberger-Thomas, 1999:73). Noble ties the lemon or lime to the still held practice in South India of giving a lime or lemon to a host in an act of respect and is represented with the *sati* as a show of respect to the deceased husband (Noble 1976:107).

The bulbous object most commonly held by *sati* figures at Kavilorai is a vessel containing oil for self immolation. Two accounts, both from the Vijayanagar Empire in the 16th century illustrate how this object was integrated into the *sati* ritual. Caesar Frederick records a *sati* event in 1567:

The *sati* on the way to the cremation ground “carrieth in her left hand a looking-glass, and in her right hand an arrow,...” On reaching the cremation ground “there is another woman that taketh a pot with oyle, and sprinkleth it over her[the *sati*’s] head, and with the same she annointeth all her [the *sati*’s] body, and afterwards throweth the pot into the furnace, and both the woman[the *sati*] and the pot goe together into the fire...” Noble 1976:106

Fernao Nuniz in 1535 gives another account where the “*sati* on the way to the cremations ground ‘carries a mirror in her hand..’ and ‘finally she takes leave of all, and puts a pot of oil on her head, and casts herself into the fire” (Noble 1976:106). These two descriptions provide explanatory details to what the vessel represents on *sati* stones.

CHAPTER II

HERO STONES

Hero Stones of South India

Hero stones, or memorial stones, give homage to an individual who died while performing a selfless and respectable deed. These “honorable deeds” have changed over the centuries from portrayals of warriors of cattle raids and battles to adding on *sati*, respectable or praised individuals who died naturally and even extending to animals and pets. A brief look at Rajan’s (Rajan 2000 Appendix A 190-213) list of hero stones in South India illustrates that hero stones are not a rare phenomena. A look at Rajan’s map, (Rajan 2000:5), shows that hero stones are not localized, but are geographically widespread. The list includes 930 stones with dates ranging from the 4th through the 19th century, with a concentration of stones from the 10th through 12th centuries. Furthermore, this list is not complete; major sites in the Nilgiris, including Kaviorai, are not mentioned. This leaves one to believe there are literally thousands of herostones in South India, a megalithic heritage which continued for many centuries, spanning ethnic, political and cultural boundaries.

The first mention of hero stones stems from the Sangam literature of Tamil Nadu during the 1st-4th centuries AD. These 2,279 poems give the first recorded history of Tamil Nadu, including the erection of hero stones for brave warriors (Sastri 1966:131) and the transitional megalithic period of memorials focusing on cattle raids (Rajan 2000:5). Rajan continues to state that the Sangam period memorials are lacking in archaeological evidence or representation as none have been found from

that period to date (Rajan 2000:23). With more than 25 poets discussing hero stones there was certainly a presence of memorial stones during that time. Looking at linguistics, Tamil-brahmi would have been the script of the Sangam age, with a transition to vatteluttu around the 4th century AD. So far no Tamil-brahmi has been found on hero stones. Vatteluttu has been found, but does not mention Sangam political figures, rather post-Sangam, Pallava period political figures (Rajan 2000:24). This indicates no pre-Pallava, 4th-5th century AD, hero stones have been discovered as of yet.

Within Tamil Nadu, 317 stones dating from the 5th through the 15th century have a concentration of 80% belonging to the Pallava Period (Rajan 2000:45). The Pallava period also saw the transformation from the vatteluttu script to the Tamil script. The first memorial stone with Tamil script dates to 743 AD, although this did not become widely used until 783 AD (Ibid). Moreover, there seems to be a lack of memorial stones found within the core area of the Pallava reign; rather they are on its outer districts. There is no mention on hero stones of major battles, but rather skirmishes between districts (Rajan 2000:48). Local activities and territorial integrity seem to be the motivation surrounding memorial stones during the Pallava period. The greatest number of references are to cattle raids, 242 of 317, while the remaining 75 stones relate to *sati* stones, animal killing and other activities (Rajan 2000:53).

Hero Stones of the Nilgiris

Hero stones in the Nilgiris were first described by Brecks in 1873. Since then there have been several different scholars who have described the hero stone culture

in the Nilgiris (See map #1 for sites). Hero stones in the Nilgiri region date to the 8th-9th century, with the majority sculpted between the 12th-17th centuries (Zagarell 2002:80-81). Zagarell has stated that there are no hero stone sites found on the extreme southern side of the Nilgiris, but there are some on the south east side (Zagarell per. comm.). These stones fall into two general categories. One type is a free standing, “gravestone” shaped stone that exhibits carving. The other is a dolmen, which consists of at least three upright standing stones with a capstone on top. Dolmen height is usually between 60-120cm above the ground surface, with some higher and lower extremes (Noble 1976:98). Dolmens give the appearance of a “temple” or worship site and are still respected today. Noble (1989) has stated that the dolmens on the Nilgiris, found to lie within valleys and on the slopes of lower elevations, were used mainly to memorialize and to worship, not to house the dead (Noble 1989:115). The most complex dolmen can be found at the site of Doddamanaihatti where there are ten standing orthostats or sides and three cap stones. At another site, Tudur Muttam, there exists a ‘round temple’ which is composed of seven sculptured and five unsculptured free standing stones. In the vicinity there are other stones; Noble suggests that the stones were moved from their original context (Noble 1989:116). Some sites, such as Banagudi Shola (*bana*-secluded *gudi* –temple *shoal* –montane forest remnant) provide ritual evidence incorporated within a hero stone context. This site includes some very large hero stones, some with stones bases and even a sculptured and supported Linga, or phallic representation of Siva. This site is used by the Badaga as a worship site (Noble 1989:117-118). Several sites illustrate commonly depicted social and gender roles. At the site of Sholur for example there is

a woman holding the customary lime and oil vessel representing her *sati* sacrifice and next to her a husband who holds a spear in one hand and a knife or dagger in the other. This type of representation is commonly found on the Nilgiris with many site specific variations.

Variations of carvings and representations speak to a complex culture of hero stones that exists on the Nilgiris; especially since there are hundreds of hero stones found both in the upper Nilgiris and the lower elevations of Nilgiris within the Moyar ditch. Zagarell (2002) has argued, based upon stylistic themes and quality of carving, that there exists a difference between the higher elevation hero stones and the lower elevation hero stones. He argues that the quality of hero stone carving participates in the claiming of centers of power, such as those found at Betlada, which are carved clearly and of high quality. Additionally, herostones are not statements or records of events *par se*, rather the hero stone is a statement of the socially ideal behaviors, reinforcing gendered roles. For example the man is honored as the warrior or protector and the woman performing *sati* is dutifully following her husband into the afterlife by ritual suicide. Zagarell argues that the upper Nilgiris were influenced less by political forces, and therefore in their emulation of centralized power distorted somewhat the socially acceptable roles, including militaristically armed women not commonly found elsewhere (Zagarell 2002:97).

Noble(1976) has made a suggestive statistical analysis of 223 Nilgiri hero stone figures. This number is far from including all of the Nilgiri dolmens and contains the sites of Chinna Coonoor, Sholur, Kagguchchee(Kaguchi), Doddamanaaihatti, Banagudi Shola, Chakatakambai, Sholurmattam and

Tudurmattam. There developed several generalizations; female figures comprise 45%, males bearing weapons 79%, 58% of those are carrying spears, five figures are killing animals, 52% of the figures are touching, while 42% are male and females; one third of the females hold nothing. *Sati* symbolization comprises 41% with the oil containing object; in 27% females hold hands above head, and 17% of the females hold a lime in hand (Noble 1976:99-100). Some of the stones clearly are related to Saivite Hinduism, because the image of Nandi, or Siva's animal vehicle, is represented at several different sites: Sholur, Banagudi Shola and Cinna Coonoor, for example, (Noble 1976:100) along with the sun and the moon which are found on many different sculptures in South India.

Noble (1976) also describes evidence for who erected, sculptured and ritually utilized the hero stones of the Nilgiris. The Badagas, as Hindus, can be related to the images presenting Hindu images such as Nandi, sun and moon and *sati*. Furthermore, hero and *sati* worship, as seen on the herostones, also connects Badagas to hero stone construction, as these qualities are upheld by Shiva followers (Noble 1976:125). According to Noble, Badagas are not the sole creators of the herostones, nor are they the only people to worship them. Noble connects dolmen construction to the Kurumbas in many sites. Noble calls the Kurumbas the "leading dolmen erectors in the Nilgiris" (Noble 1976:120), due to their physical closeness to dolmen dominated sites, the use of "memorial stones" within dolmens, and the connection with Badagas and Kurumbas participating together in rituals with dolmens.

Noble describes "Site 18" as the most revealing of the erection and use of dolmens by Kurumbas (Noble 1976:121). This site on the eastern side of the Nilgiris

holds three unsculptured dolmens in arrangement. The larger stone contains a large number of water-worn stones, memorial stones for ancestor worship, and the two smaller dolmens contain offerings for food and drink. As with other Kurumba dolmens they are unsculptured, but inside there are four carved figures placed in front of water-worn stones with a Tamil inscription saying “good Kurumba” (Noble 1976:121). Quoting Breeks (Breeks 1873:101), Noble argues for the use of water worn stones within sculptured dolmens and Breeks mentions a list of sites including: Banagudi Shola, Melkundah, Melur, Tudurmattam and Sholur (Noble 1976:121). The above-named sites do not currently have stones within them, and Noble suggests that Kurumbas may have moved the stones as a result of changing population pressures in the Nilgiris. With this information, Noble concludes that Kurumbas erected the majority of the dolmens and the Badagas came in after 1565, when fleeing from Karnataka, and used the dolmens by sculpting their hero worship images upon them, while still incorporating Kurumba respect for the stones via worship participation by the Kurumba and Badaga together (Noble 1976:124).

Background of Kavilorai

Kavilorai is the name of a large hero stone site located at an elevation of 5824ft in the Nilgiris (see Figure 3). The name Kavilorai stems from a Badagu location name, ka:vilo:re with ka:vilu meaning straight spine Bengal current and o:re meaning slope, therefore meaning the Bengal current+slope(Hockings 1980:50). Currently the site is visited by the Badagas of Kadandu once a year to worship (Zagarell 2000 field notes).

The site consists of a very complex relationship of stones arranged rather geometrically. Noble (1989) states “there are more sculptured stones here than at any other Nilgiri site, and only a few of these stones are within dolmens” (Noble 1989:116). Specifically there are fifty-nine upright stones at Kavilorai. Forty-two of these stones are carved; fourteen are arranged in a dolmen shape but do not have a capstone; eighteen carved stones are standing in a row next to each other. There are eight dolmens, six dolmens with ten carved hero stones and two unsculptured dolmens containing water worn stones. There exists a range from the most simplistic carvings of just one man and woman holding arms to ones of complexity composed of six separate scenes depicting militaristic campaigns all on one stone. Needless to say the multitude of message and images represented at Kavilorai invites investigation.

Based upon Noble’s assertion that Kurumbas were the dolmen erectors and the Badagas were the carvers, Noble states:

At Kavilorai, the only place in the upper Nilgiris with freestanding sculptured stones, there is a clear indication that the remains may represent a cultural shift through time... from a period in which only free standing memorial stones were erected, into a transitional period in which some dolmens were erected, to a period in which only sculptured dolmens honoring male heroes and *satis* and unsculptured dolmens were erected, or *vice versa*. (Noble 1989:130)

Moreover, Noble states that the Badagas used some of the existing stones at Kavilorai and carved upon that and arranged them next to one another in an anomalous pattern as compared with other Nilgiris sites (Noble 1976:114). Therefore the arrangement on the southern side of the site, with fourteen standing sculptured

stones next to each other, represents the youngest of the stones according to Noble(Ibid). Noble also suggests that Kavilorai, Chinna Coonoor and Kaguchi had a relationship due to proximity of distance and were all used by Kurumbas to hold water worn stones (Noble 1976:123).

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH

Style as an Archaeological Method of Inquiry

Focusing on stylistic examination is part and parcel of the investigation at Kavilorai. The only mediums available for analysis at Kavilorai are images and the structure of the images in relation to each other, because historical records and excavation are not available for the site. It will be necessary to first understand how style has been utilized archaeologically in the past, before showing how I examined style at Kavilorai to answer questions of origin. Style has been used to categorize artifacts for over a century, since the cultural history phase in archaeology as a field of study. Since that time there have been substantial changes in the application of style as a medium of archaeological research. Briefly, it is pertinent to examine how style has been viewed by archaeologists and what lenses there are to view stylistic research at Kavilorai.

Style first became systematically utilized for archaeological investigation during the culture-history phase of American archaeology during the early 20th century. Primarily, style did little more than demarcate homologous similarities (Conkey 1990:5). Through these typological similarities, or “types”, archaeologists could develop a chronology of “culture” based upon sequencing the types. Cultural historians believed in the conviction that “common sense” and the collection of “enough” data would lead to self-evident conclusions.

The methods used by cultural historians were based upon a series of assumptions. The first is that patterning, or homologous styles, were shared cultural units. Style therefore became a medium represented by ethnic units and each unit presumably belonged to a larger population that shared a common “culture.” Again, this type of method of stylistic analysis does not explain anything about the culture itself. Binford states “By assumptive definition, our ability to see “culture-history” directly informs us about continuities or the lack thereof in the temporal and spatial distributions of populations” (Binford 1989:212). The assumption that a given style is representative of a cultural group becomes problematic when the cultural style changes and “requires us to infer that a change in social identity (regardless of how this change was conceived by the ancients) is indicated when we are faced with patterns of punctuated change”(Ibid).

The emergence of New Archaeology in the 1960’s brought about a change in the approach to style in the archaeological record. Deviating from the “normative view” of the cultural historians’ stress upon homologous stylistic traits, New Archaeology, or Processual archaeology, strove to examine the analogous similarities among artifacts instead. Proceeding with an approach to culture as an adaptive system, New Archaeology considered the alternatives “that might account for variation in the archaeological record” (Conkey 1990:8). New Archaeology replaced chronological narratives with explanation of cultural process by placing “primacy of artifacts and of pattern recognition as central to the new objective” (Conkey 1990:9). Patterning of styles represented cultural “codes” that the archaeologist could “read.”; style has a role in social and ethnic cultural systems.

This type of analysis provided two types of interpretation. The first stated that the level of stylistic similarities within an artifact assemblage represents regional social groups, but does not directly estimate the level of interaction. On the other hand, archaeologists adhering to a cultural historical or social interaction theory “explicitly assumed that levels of stylistic similarity or agreement could be used as direct estimates of interaction intensities (Plog 1983:126).

Rubertone (1978) addresses a critical and important critique of ceramic sociology, also called cultural typology. The ceramic sociologists assume that the stylistic variability within a cultural area represents different functional parts within a cultural system. In the regional system of interaction within a cultural group, the amount of interaction can be measured by the degree of stylistic similarity but to “describe the sum of all interaction between units masks the variability in social relations that is essential to understanding complex societies e.g. the nature of class affiliations, the existence of ethnic groups and neighborhoods” (Rubertone 1978:100, quoted in Plog 1983:127). Therefore, stylistic similarities do not automatically represent the amount of social interaction among cultural groups as a whole, for interaction between cultural groups does not specify the level of social organization and to whom social interaction was available or allotted. Large groups of people can have similar styles in their material culture, but the style may in fact participate differently within the grouping based upon individual groups’ social standing, ethnic, political and religion affiliations.

Sackett addresses the assumptions that ceramic sociology takes for granted and directly details why style can be utilized profitably in archaeological research.

Sackett supports a method called isochrestic variation, which refers to the multiple ways or options of carrying out a given task, either during the manufacturing process and/or its use. Therefore, style relates to the artisan's choice among several different viable options to produce the final outcome of an artifact, but a given artisan only chooses one "of the isochrestic [options] potentially available to them" (Sackett 1990:33). Furthermore, the different choices that are available to the artisan are confined within the stylistic parameters of the particular tradition in which the artisan lives, i.e. the ethnic group.

Isochrestic variation can be found everywhere within the realm of the formal variation of an artifact, as "both in its instrumental [functional] and adjunct [decorative] components" (Sackett 1990:34) are part of the end product. The adjunct or decorative dimension of style presents a rich resource for stylistic similarities or variation within the isochrestic domain, for decoration is not constrained by the manufacturing process, at least to the degree of the instrumental or functional form. In other words, an artisan producing a ceramic cooking vessel conforms to the traditional, formal style of ceramic vessels for a given culture, i.e. constrained by both the tradition and the function of the vessel. Decoration on the other hand is not constrained by the function of the vessel, and wide ranges of possibilities are available to the artisan to choose from especially on a family, village or community level.

Wobst (1977) argues that style does have meaning inside and outside of cultural parameters. Wobst characterizes style as representing the formal variability "in material culture that can be related to the participation of artifacts in processes of

information exchange” (Wobst 1977:321). This definition implies that the dichotomy between style and function that has plagued previous research dissolves into a definition that does not separate the two, but incorporates stylistic attributes as *participating* in function, especially adaptive functions. Wobst argues that all human behaviors transmit information on one level or another and the functional attributes of style embedded within the material culture of a cultural group, transmits information on an economically cost-effective basis. First of all, communicatively loaded artifacts can be made by the emitters without the presence of the receivers and vice-versa, the receivers can obtain the message without the presence of the emitters. The process of creating artifacts that are imbedded with information to be communicated standardizes the production of manufacture, especially if the raw material is costly to produce. Standardization leads to an anticipated understanding by the receiving party of the information is being transmitted. Another advantage of utilizing artifacts as stylistic transmitters of information is the longevity of information transmission. Hero stones, for example, continue to transmit respect and reverence long after they made; even today, local villagers revisit Kavilorai yearly to pay respect to the stones, although the messages on the stones are read in today’s context and are interpreted by local villages to fulfill their current needs (Zagarell per. comm.)

The types of information that can be transmitted are limited, however. “Only simple invariate and recurrent messages will normally be transmitted stylistically” (Wobst 1977:323). Broad subjects under these constraints apply to “emotional states, identification,” [including class affinity, social group affiliation and ranked position], messages of authorship and ownership, messages of pre- and proscription, messages

of religious and political objectification, and deictic messages" (Ibid). The interaction spheres of information exchange also address what can be transmitted between individuals or groups. The receivers of information must be "intermediate in social distance to the emitter of the message" (Wobst 1977:324). If the receiver is too close socially to the emitter, then there are other ways to communicate or the message will already be known. On the other hand, if the social distance between the two is too great, then the receiver will not be able to "decode" the messages being transmitted. Additionally, "the majority of functions of stylistic behaviors should relate to processes of social integration and social differentiation" (Wobst 1977:327). Through visual representation, style transmits messages of identity, ownership and authority to those who are not in verbal contact or who "have little opportunity to observe each others' behavior patterns (to make their reciprocal behavior on encounter predictable" (Ibid). If the presence of style did not exist as recognizable by the individual during the initial encounter, then expected behaviors would not be predictable at all. Thus, the function of stylistic behavior can be applied to making social relations more predictable for both parties involved, in addition to broadcasting "the potential advantages or disadvantages to be realized from a more intimate encounter, before such an encounter has take place" (Wobst 1977:327). Furthermore, behavioral norms are regulated throughout the social system, as messages are continually transmitted and constantly evaluated to how the members of a group are subscribing to their behavioral norms. By claiming that one belongs to a social group through stylistic behavior, the individual also emits the "the ideology behind these

norms” (Wobst 1977:328) that would be otherwise difficult to continually transmit and one would have to constantly negotiate ones position in the cultural environment.

Archaeological investigations work with site specific artifacts and restraints that force the investigator to tailor the research to that site within the confines of the information available, Kavilorai is no exception. Hero stones are transmitters of information. The carved images reinforce cultural, gender, social and status roles to the community. These messages are transformed over time, but they are still respected and worshiped continually. Wobst’s stylistic theory of information exchange most directly relates to the hero stones at Kavilorai, especially since the stones are not utilitarian, but functional in social relations. The stones need only carved once and continually transmit information. The information transmitted is understood by the receivers as significant, and therefore revered. Furthermore, the images at Kavilorai reinforce gender roles and community status, with the females performing sati and the males as the warriors.

Styles demarcated in this thesis pertaining to Kavilorai are based upon a like characteristics, as represented by the carved figures on the stones. These styles draw enough homologous characteristics to categorize a grouping of hero stones as one style as compared wholly with another stylistic group.

Research Methodology

Methodological Considerations and Analysis Procedure

Due to the nature of the material being examined, some pre-analysis concerns were considered. Firstly, hero stones are blended expressions of cultural iconography and the individual expression/skill of the crafts worker. When separating the stones

at Kavilorai I needed to be confident that I was not extracting individual craft workers' skill or individual style into a hero stone category that was not based upon cultural influence. Secondly, there were an incredible number of hero stone figures at Kavilorai, each with individual characteristics, anomalies, and themes. I had to tease out the common themes found among a number of hero stones to determine a hero stone theme or style within the site. Thirdly, I have not found any other published source citing analysis or methodological procedures of a large hero stone site. Furthermore, relying upon a specific stylistic theory is not applicable to investigating Kavilorai, for there exists a complex relationship of political, social and religious forces at Kavilorai and one theory of stylistic interpretation cannot encompass all of these issues. Noble's 1976 article is the closest I have found to a site specific analysis with regional comparisons. I found the article fruitful as a resource for comparison with Kavilorai, but it was not comprehensive enough to base the internal analysis of Kavilorai upon. I therefore came to the conclusion that a subjective and objective analysis was necessary to organize and compile stylistic themes and variances at Kavilorai into stylistic categories. With these categories I could then venture out of the site in search of other sites with similar stylistic uniqueness. The subjective portion pertains to visually examining the hero stones' overall composition and execution of the figures. This enables me to look at other hero stone sites in the region for similarities to draw connections with. The objective portion demanded documenting individual characteristics of every hero stone and every figure at Kavilorai. This information was then compiled into a spread sheet detailing 28 features found on the hero stones at Kavilorai. Each hero stone was given a number

1-42 with one being at the southern part of the site. With the objective information I could both compare Kavilorai with Noble's analysis and provide support for differentiating stylistic themes found during the visual or subjective analysis.

In conclusion, I found this method practical and necessary for the analysis at Kavilorai. Many of the hero stones have a great deal of deterioration. This affects the objective data collection because certain characteristics may be erased and therefore not included in the statistical portion of the analysis. In dealing with this setback, visually examining the hero stones composition, one begins to see frequent compositions and can fill in the blanks where the statistical data fails. What follows features the objective and subjective findings at Kavilorai.

Objective Findings

There are forty-two hero stones, ten stones in eight dolmens, and 2 unsculptured dolmens at Kavilorai (See Figure 3). Of the forty-two carved stones there is an average of 2.6 tiers or levels per stones, with 27 of 42 stones having two tiers. Stone #39 had the most with five tiers and there were four single level stones. Stone #38 had the most figures with 20, while stone #28 had a single, highly deteriorated figure. 321 carved figures were found at Kavilorai. Overall there is an average of 7.6 figures per stone. Males compose 50.5%, while females compose 47%, with the 2.5% remainder praying figures or animal representations of indeterminate sex. There are 12 female figures with raised arms, or 8% of the 151 females represented at Kavilorai. There are 33 female figures that do not hold objects, while 98 hold *sati*-symbolizing bulbous objects in addition to four females holding *sati*-significant mirrors. Figures in contact compose 66% of all figures.

Thirty-nine of the hero stones have some type of weapon represented, while 56% of males and 20% of females hold spears. The next highest represented male weapon is the sword with 17%, 7% with a dagger, 4% with a bow and finally 2 % with a round topped lance or spear. There are eight cat figures represented, most likely a tiger. Additionally there is one scene of a male figure fighting a cow and calf on HS#5.

The figures' dress and attire remained relatively consistent throughout the site, but one must remember these numbers reflect the minimum of individuals with features due to erosion of the figures and loss of detail. All but three stones exhibited figures wearing a sash or belt around the waist, in all 204 individuals were positively identified wearing the belt. Thirteen stones had individuals with cuffs or bangles on the arms, but deterioration hampered many of these from being visible. There are 22 stones with figures bearing a mustache with hero stones #38, 39 illustrating some of the best examples. 27% of the figures wear a necklace, including both males and females, 85 in all. Hero stones with figures wearing lined or pleated clothing comprised 26 of the 42 stones, but I suspect most if not all the stones originally contained figures with this type of clothing. All but four stones have males wearing a large turban or domed hat on their heads. Stone #28 is too deteriorated and the figure's sex cannot be determined. The other three turbanless stones are 38, 39 and 40 part of a dolmen complex. Fingers are only visible on seven stones and five individuals bear a penis.

Visual Examination and Stylistic Variation

When determining separate styles within Kaviorai visually, I establish that I could only separate style based upon content-oriented characteristics. I originally

thought that I could group sections of the site based upon layout and content, which would separate the site into chunks or sections which could lead to chronology or ethnic differentiation. I found that this is not possible at Kavilorai, there are hero stone types that spread throughout the site, intermixing with other styles. There are concentrations of hero stone styles, such as stones 1-19, but this style is also found throughout the site in stones 28-33. Therefore I relied on content-oriented analysis by looking at the manner in which the hero stone is presented and carved, and by the appearance of the figures, including their attributes such as body shape, clothing, facial expressions, and other specific traits. This gave me an overall composition of the hero stone to be compared with other hero stones within the site and ultimately the region. The following details the visual analysis which determined four hero stone styles at Kavilorai.

Broad Body Style #1 -- Hero Stones 1-19

Details such as facial expression and body adornments have been significantly lost to deterioration (See figure #4). The level of detail is lessened but not lost: male and females are clearly recognizable, and facial structure, objects held, clothing, and adornments are visible, but faint. The bodies of these figures are broad at the shoulders, the head and the thighs. There is no neck and the waist is usually thin in both males and females with a belt or sash around the waist. The facial expressions are common for hero stones: figures are blanked faced, large nosed, round-eyed and large eared. Males wear clear head turbans or large head buns directly on top of their head. Females have side buns that usually fall to the left side of their head. The bulbous vessel is clearly defined with a large bulb on the bottom. Males and females

when holding hands have their hands connected just above the shoulder. There is no difference in size between the sexes. The style of carving is not one of high quality.

While these stone fall into the Broad Body Style #1, hereafter BBS#1, there are specific stones of interest that possess features of the BBS#1, but have individual styles worth investigating further. When looking at hero stones two, five and seven, there surfaces an undeniable theme. Each stone has two layers, with the bottom layer showing the hero battling a cat in stones two and seven and a cow and calf in stone five. There are five to six figures on the bottom levels, and six to ten figures on the top depending on the stone. These figures are paired up in male and female couples. Males have large, prominent head buns or turbans and females have large *sati* vessels with head buns resting on the side of their heads.

Hero stones ten and eleven represent the same theme. There are two levels, both with a male and female couple. These two stones illustrate the most simplistic and straightforward theme often found at Kavilorai. The male holds a spear in the right hand, while his left hand is touching his wife, who is a *sati*. The female holds a *sati* vessel in her left hand and holds onto her husband with the right hand. This scene is reproduced on both the top and bottom levels of the two stones and reflects the common male/female pose found at Kavilorai. While not complex, the stone illustrates the culturally reinforced gender roles of male as the warrior and female as the *sati*, both performing dutiful services to the community in honor. These two stones correspond to the image of stone fifteen where there is a single level, male/female representation done in the same manner.

Hero stones nine, twelve and fourteen are interesting for several reasons. These three stones are the only stones at Kavilorai with a praying/showing honor figure, but these figures still fall within BBS#1. The individual praying/showing honor is always smaller than the rest of the figures. The figure is standing up and looking forward with his hands together pointing upwards in front of his chest. This image is similar to a hero stone from the Vijaynagara center of Hampi and now is located in the Archaeological Museum Hampi, Kamalapura. The male has both hands together in *anjali* mudra and three satis with their right arm raised, clasping lemons in their left, stand beside him (Verghese 2001:42-43). I am suggesting this figure is a male, since the turban or hair bun on the head matches those of other males on the stone and the similar scene from Vijaynagara. Hero stones twelve and fourteen both do not include any female figures, which comprise two of three stones at Kavilorai without female depictions. These two stones also give the impression of violence, with all males bearing arms and stone fourteen showing male figures with upraised swords. Stone fourteen is also the last stone in the arrangement on the south side of the site.

Hero stones fifteen through nineteen form the back side of the previous stones and face north. The stones have other, non-carved stones arranged in a dolmen style but without the capstone. The figures style is strongly BBS#1 and the same themes are represented, with males bearing spears and females with *sati* vessels. Besides being separated from the first fourteen stones these stones show no significant difference in stylistic representation.

Dolmen Style – Hero Stones 20-27

Dolmen #1 Stones 20-23

Dolmen hero stones warrant special considerations, because their erection requires greater energy input and they have had less weathering because of their covering. The figures are clearly different from those previously described (See figure #5). The body structure of the figures is clearly less broad and more linear. The legs are often skinny, undulating and are disproportionate to body length being either too short or too long. A female/male/female representation repeated through several of the hero stones also is particular to this grouping.

Hero stone 20 illustrates a male on the left holding a spear while the female on the right reaches for the male with her left hand and holds a *sati* vessel with her left. This scene is reproduced on all three levels. The figures' details are the clearest of all the stones thus far. The bottom level shows the details of the male's face, including a long mustache broken in the middle, thinning at the ends. The female wears a dress her body is adorned with armlets. Bangles or armlets symbolize the married state and will continue to symbolize being married after death through the hero stone carving (Verghese 2001:41). The figures are not laid out in a clear and regimented structure as comparable with other higher quality hero stones found within dolmens.

Hero stone 21, also within the same dolmen complex as 20, is carved in a different manner, with thin short legs, heads as big as the torso and curvy arms. This stone does reproduce the same scene as that of stone 20. The bottom tier shows two couples, each holding hands, while the males hold a highly curved sword and the

females hold their *sati* vessel. The top level shows the same scene with the male on the right holding a spear and not a sword.

Hero stone 22 is a single-level hero stone with one male in the middle and one female of either side of him. There are only four single-level hero stones at Kaviorai. Stylistically the figures have broad shoulders and proportionally sized heads, but skinny undulating legs. The female to the males left is holding a *sati* vessel with clasping fingers visible; she wears a dress and is reaching for his waist with her right hand. The female to the right is standing with the right hand brought up to her waist, but the stone is too deteriorated to determine if she is holding anything. The left hand is down to her side and meets with the male's right hand on the spear. I suspect that the woman on the left holds a lime in her hand but I cannot see the details; however the overall composition relates to others with lime bearing figures. Both females lack visible breasts, but there is a clear side bun and they are wearing dresses with pleats. All figures wear necklaces and have belts on their waist.

Hero stone 23 is the last hero stone in this complex. This hero stone is the least like any of the others, as the figures are carved with less skill and precision and are arranged atypically. All of the figures have skinny waists. The males have long legs that are bent at the knees as when someone is beginning to sit down on a chair. The males turbans or head buns are not prominently on top of the head but angle to the right side of their bodies. The females have their distinctive side bun and wear heavily-pleated dresses. There are two females depicted in the same manner as the vessel-less female in stone 22. The scene at the bottom left of the stone depicts the same scene as #22 but the female figures stand on opposite sides of the male. The

three scenes on the stone appear disconnected, with the male/female couple to the right of the stone larger than the other figures. This couple together holds a spear that is crudely carved as it runs right out of the carved scene into the hero stone proper. All three males on the hero stone have similar spears. The top couple grasps hands and displays a typical hero stone male/female relationship.

Hero stone 24 is not part of a dolmen, but has characteristics in composition that tie it to the dolmen-style category. The carvings of the figures themselves are deeper and more pronounced. The shoulders are wide and legs are thick with clear execution of the carved scene. The figures' ears are large and prominent. Males do not wear as large, a head bun or turban, but they are still prominent. This herostone is between dolmen complex 20-23 and dolmen complex 25-27. It has three levels, although the bottom level is covered from the chest down. The two males in the middle tier have each a female next to them. The male to the left side of the stone appears to have either a penis or a belt knot between his legs. The female to the right of the stone has a *sati* vessel and the female to the left does not carry anything, but does hold onto the males spear. This female/male/female representation warranted inclusion of this stone with those of the dolmen style. The top level depicts a male in the middle with two females to each side. They both have their inside arms down while their outside arms are raised. There may be a lime or pomegranate in each hand, but levels of clarity do not conclude this. There are other hero stone female figures reminiscent to this type of activity with limes or pomegranates in their hands, therefore I can confidently conclude this is what is happening there.

Dolmen Structure #2 25-27

This dolmen structure consists of three carved hero stones and two blank support stones. Stone number 25's figures are carved in the same manner as stone 23. Specific details such as head turban or bun shape and leg shape are the same, along with overall appearance. The combination of female, male, female at on the bottom tier is strikingly similar to that of stones, 24, 23, and 22. The female figure on the right side is vessel-less and the female figure on the left is holding the *sati* vessel, as seen on hero stone 23. Both males on the stone appear to have either a penis or a belt knot between their legs. The male on the top exhibits this with more clarity.

Hero stone 26 exhibits a broad body shape with less pronounced head attire and more structured execution of carving. The stone has three tiers with a male/female couple at the bottom, female/male/female in the middle and a male/female combo on the top, again a similar arrangement of female/male/female to that of the previous four stones. The bottom male has a clearly defined garment covering the shoulders and showing a v-neck. The females in all three levels on the right side of the hero stone are holding their arms raised to shoulder height. The female in the middle level holds a round disk object. It appears that her thumb is in front while the other four fingers are behind the object, which I am concluding is a mirror based upon other sites with similar depictions. In the right hand of this female she holds something that looks like a bag, or possibly a *sati* vessel, but there is not enough clarity to determine. The female on the top also holds this object in her right hand, but it is not clear as to what it is.

Broad Body Style #2 -- Hero Stones 27-33

Herostones 27-33 are included in the Broad Body style with stones 1-19.

There are some differences in the presentation, such as hands held at waist height with stone 28-33 and overall differences in quality and execution of the carvings (See figure #6). The themes of the stones relate in specifics, especially stones 32, 33 and stone 30. To differentiate these two differences in style, stones 1-19 will be Broad Body Style 1 and stones 27-33 are Broad Body Style 2, BBS#2.

Hero stone 27 is carved in a definite BBS#2. There are three levels, on two of which a male is killing an animal, presumably a cat. To the left of him in each level is a female-looking figure. The bottom female figure looks questionable due to the uprightness of her hair bun and the shorter clothing she is wearing. I conclude she is a female based upon other stones at Kavilorai, where a female is standing next to the male fighting the animal in the same type of manner. The top level shows a female on the right with definitive female dress and hair and holding something in her right hand. The male next to her holds a sword upright and the far male to the left of the stone holds a spear.

Hero stone 28 is very faint and the only detail discernable is the male head turban. Hero stone 29 has some interesting features. The figures are of the broad body type, but are well proportioned. The two tiered hero stone has one male on the bottom with a very high and prominent head turban or bun. His mustache is also highlighted and prominent. He holds the hands of two females, both carrying *sati* vessels. There is a lone male on the top holding a spear and having a large head turban. Herostone 30 is two-tiered, with a large number of figures holding hands.

These figures hold hands with their arms extended down, as compared with the first set of broad-body type hero stones, which has elevated hand-holding. The males in this herostone also have a high, rounded turban or bun similar to hero stone 29. This is one of the few hero stones at Kavilorai that does not include weapons. There are six females holding *sati* vessels, suggesting a *sati*-dominated theme. This stone is very reminiscent of stones two, five, and seven, but without fighting animals and without weapons. The females' breasts are nothing more than a carved circle groove. The same follows with stone 31; females' breasts are a carved groove. The quality of stone 31 decreases. One can see that the removed, negative area of the stone has been pecked and not worn or carved smooth. The figures are not prominent and lack detail. The nature of the female/male/female composition at the bottom is similar to hero stone 29, as both females are holding the *sati* vessel. The top level shows one male holding a spear and the female holding a *sati* vessel, all carved in the broad body style. Hero stone 32 is carved in the same manner. There are two levels, both showing the same scene. The male is on the left holding a spear and the female is holding onto his waist with the right hand. On the top level the female is holding a *sati* vessel. Hero stone 33 is of a better quality and shows the same scene as herostone 32. The female on the lower right side does have a round object on a necklace on her chest. The male on the upper left has the same type of object on his chest. Figures are clearly part of the broad body style, but may be reflecting differences in crafts workers. There is a vivid similarity between stones nine and ten and stones 32 and 33. Each of the stones represents the same theme of male and female gender roles with weapons and *sati*.

Aggressive Style -- Hero Stones 34-42

The hero stones of this grouping display a violent and aggressive composition with a shift from the previous style examined thus far (See figure #7). Scenes from hero stone #38 depict a hero accompanied by defending soldiers alongside him. Many of the males are armed with weapons, sometimes one in each hand. Swords and daggers are more frequent. In addition, there are religious symbols or figures on stones 34, 35, 37 and 38, which separate these stones from the previous groupings. Although there is more variation among these stones, less stones 38, 39 and 40, the general theme and expression of the stones connect them to one another. Females are represented to a lesser degree among these stones. When present, females are commonly participating in *sati* or to a lesser degree holding onto weapons with males.

Hero stone 34 is highly deteriorated and almost all of the features are gone. The two tiered stone has couples holding arms while the males possess spears and the females grasp *sati* vessels. The females' breasts are carved as grooves. On the right side of the stone in the border between the top and lower tier there appears to be a round object, possibly a sun, but no moon is visible.

Hero stone 35 has a clearer, structured and more detailed composition. The figures are similar in style to stone 34 but quality and preservation allow more details to be seen of its more violent theme. The male figures hold spears or swords in the right hand while holding daggers or knives in the left. This has not appeared previously in the site. On the upper right side of the stone there is clear representation of sun and moon. The crescent moon is lying on its 'back', which is a common representation in the region. These features definably link Kavilorai with regional

iconography possessing the same themes and images. The females are holding onto wrists of the males holding the swords upright and have a *sati* vessel in their right hands. Males and females also wear heavy necklaces.

Hero stone 36 is a crude and disorganized hero stone. The bottom figure is a male holding a bow. The middle tier shows a male and female fighting a cat. The top tier individuals are much smaller than those below and the male has a knife raised while the female is holding onto him.

Hero stone 37, although deteriorated, has a style of carving similar to hero stone 35, including similar themes of violence and warfare. This stone has several interesting features. The bottom level shows a female with both arms raised in the air. She is holding a round disk-shaped object in each hand. This scene is similar to one found in Betlada (as will be discussed in the comparisons section). The groupings of figures are paired male/female except for one male in the top tier who has one leg crossed and one leg straight, possibly denoting a religious figure. The males either carry swords upraised or are holding onto a spear. Females are holding onto the swords at the wrist of the male. Males are wearing a small rounded turban.

Two dolmens are between the group of hero stones 34-37 and hero stones 38-42. These uncarved dolmens are very large and contain water-worn stones.

Hero stones 38, 39 and 40 are all very large, have quality carvings, and exhibit a militaristic theme. Hero stone 38 has the most figures at Kavilorai, with 20 depicted on various tiers. It also contains a Lingam and Nandi, therefore connecting this stones, and associated stones with Shaiva Hinduism. The figures are very large, with heads as big as torsos, large ears and prominent mustaches. There are four tiers on

this stone, with the bottom layer including one female and four males. The males have a small head turban, while the female still exhibits the side bun. One male is holding onto the arm of another male who has a sword, one of the few male/male contacts at the site. The swords and daggers are also broad and clearly carved with right angles at the haft. All of the figures' feet point to the right side of the hero stone, while often male and female feet have usually pointed towards each other. The second level shows a male killing a cat figure. The third level is interesting because it has one male in the center with an upraised sword, flanked on both sides by two males who hold large daggers. These men have both hands on their hips and looks straight forward; in their clinched right hands they hold the daggers. On the very top level there is the Lingam, the phallic representation of Shiva as well as Nandi, Shiva's transport. In between them there is a figure who could be a priest, or possibly the hero. The figure has both arms elevated at shoulder level, touching or nearly touching the Linga and Nandi. In many other hero stones with Shiva images the priest will be differentiated as such, which make me think this may be the hero within the realm of Shiva. There are also two females to the right side of the stone. The female on the left has both arms raised up while the female on the right has only one raised. No objects are visible in their hands.

Hero stone 39 has five levels, the most found, and has the same body style as hero stone #38. The lowest level has a half buried-bowman, done in the same style as stone 36. The next two levels show the same theme. The male is on the left side holding a spear while the female is on the right side holding onto the male. The fourth level shows two men: one on the left holds a spear and a dagger and the one on

the right holds a spear. The final tier is the male and female together. The male on the left has his left arm raised with the dagger pointing downward while holding the female's hand up with the left. The female raises her right hand up, held by the male and has her left hand down by her side. This last level is scrunched into the composition, and its figures are smaller than those of the other levels.

Hero Stone 40 is slightly less well defined than the previous two stones. There are fewer weapons and more females. The three levels of figures are still large-bodied with prominent mustaches, large ears and broad heads. The bottom level shows a male killing a very large cat with two females next to him. The next level shows two male/female couples with one male figure on the upper left of the stone, right next to the edge. The males hold daggers and it is not clear if the females are holding anything but the waists of the males. The couples' feet point towards each other. The top level shows four males holding onto spears with their right hands and placing their left hands onto their waists. All the feet of these males point to the right side of the stone.

The figures of hero stone #41 are similar in style to that of hero stones 37 and 35. Although there are two levels, the bottom level is mostly buried. The buried level shows part of a bowman whose bow is carved differently from the bows seen previously as the bow is no more than a groove in the stone. The top level shows three male/female couples with weapons. The male on the far left is holding a spear high into the air. The female next to him holds both hands palm up with a round ball in each, presumably limes or lemons. The other two couples do not show anything

significant, and are standing with males holding a weapon in the left hand and the female holding the waist of the male with her right.

Hero stone 42 is carved in the same manner as stone 41, but does not show any pomegranates or bowmen. There are two levels, and only two pairs of male/female couples. One male at the top holds an object which is either a large-headed spear or a flaming torch.

CHAPTER IV

COMPARISONS AND ANALYSIS

Kavilorai Compared with Noble's 1976 Regional Findings

Noble(1976) analyzes the high-elevation sites of Sholur, Tudurmattam Kaguchi and Chinna Coonoor and sites of Banagudi Shola, Chakatakambai, Doddamanaihatti, Sholurmattam which are of lower elevation and closer to the Bhavani River. Using the same criteria for analysis, comparisons can be made between Kavilorai and the various hero stone sites Noble investigated. Noble analyzed 223 figures found at the various sites mentioned above. His categories included percentages of males and females, males with weapons, males with spears, animal representations, figures in contact, females not holding objects, females holding bulbous objects, females with weapons, females with upright arms and religious iconography. I compared these findings with the 321 figures from Kavilorai to contrast a single large scale site against regional analysis including multiple sites from higher and lower elevations. As the largest hero stone site in the Nilgiris, Kavilorai possesses enough data for a comparative sample in thematic expression of the hero stones. The following comparison highlights the commonalities found between Noble's analysis and Kavilorai while illustrating some significant differences.

The male/female ratios for both Noble and Kavilorai are at 50 percent. The males with weapons for Noble were 71% while Kavilorai had a comparable 79%. Specifically, males possessing spears were nearly equal with 58 and 56 percent respectively. As for figures fighting animals there was a higher number and

percentage at Kavilorai, with 8 hero stones, and 10 figures in all, or three percent of all figure images at the site. Noble's analysis provided only five figures fighting animals or 2 percent of the 223 figures he examined. There are also a higher percentage of figures at Kavilorai in close contact with each other, 66 percent compared with Noble's 52 percent. Noble did not detail what is considered close contact, but I included any figures who were holding hands or arms as close contact. Noble's analysis contained a higher number of female figures who do not hold any objects, 33 percent, as compared to Kavilorai's 22 percent. This may explain why there are more females with weapons and bulbous objects at Kavilorai. Females with weapons are numerous at Kavilorai with 20 percent usually holding a spear compared, with Noble's 10 percent. *Sati*-significant bulbous objects are held by 65 percent of the female figures at Kavilorai compared with 41 percent found in the comparison sample. Noble's analysis found that more females have upraised arms, a symbol of *sati*, than Kavilorai, with 27 percent and eight percent respectively. Both comparisons have examples of Shiva iconography in the form of Nandi and at Kavilorai there exists the Lingam, which Noble did not mention finding at the eight sites he investigated.

The comparison illustrates Kavilorai's integration within a regional thematic hero stone expression. The statistical comparisons express the strong and rigid framework hero stones are engraved with. Generally, the stones communicate a strong male and female bond with respected gender roles. As one can glean from above, the males embrace honor through conflict and warfare and females are honorably represented by upholding cultural marriage duties and the ultimate

sacrifice of one's self. The variation is important to consider and examine. Zagarell has stated that hero stones are representations of the honorable deeds one should strive for and emulate in life. He also states that in the upper elevations there are more hero stones with crossed gender roles, such as females with weapons. At Kavilorai this bears true: one fifth of the females hold weapons. Many of them are jointly holding a spear with their assumed husbands. Never-the-less this is significant due to the inclusion of the wife with the husbands weapon, possibly signifying altered gender roles. Hero stones are purposefully created works of cultural iconography that were worshiped, respected and revered, not individual artistic creations created by a crafts worker. It would be a nice examination to separate Noble's sites by elevation and perform the same comparison. There could be a similar theme with female warriors in the upper reaches of the Nilgiris, like Kavilorai, and fewer female warriors in the lower elevations. Moreover, the comparison further shows that elevation has not posed a major barrier to cultural iconographic identity. Symbols such as *sati*, the sun and moon, Nandi and the Lingam tie many aspects of life together throughout the region.

Upper Elevation Site Comparisons

Several sites in the vicinity of Kavilorai have similar elevations and can be considered to be the upper-elevation-hero stone sites of the Nilgiris. These sites are Sholur, which is the closest to Kavilorai with the same elevation of just under 6000ft. The second closest site is Kaguchi, also at 6000 feet, followed by Melur, also

at 6000 ft., Tudor Muttam is at 5000 ft. and Betlada at 5000ft. A general visual examination of the stones was formed to determine any similarities between Kavilorai and these other high elevation sites.

The site of Sholur (See Figure #8) is located at approximately the same elevation as Kavilorai. The site consists of several hero stones arranged within two dolmens. There are both high quality and low quality carved hero stones at this site. There is a clear resemblance in theme and style to the Dolmen Style hero stones 20-27 at Kavilorai. While the higher-quality hero stones have large differences in presentation, males are large, females are small and some horses are found, there are some similarities. The lesser quality hero stones show the greatest similarity with the stones at Kavilorai. There is one stone in particular that resembles the two dolmen complexes containing stones 20-27 at Kavilorai. This stone found within the dolmen is noticeably different in style from the other stones at Sholur, but some characteristics are similar to stone #21 found at Kavilorai, also part of a dolmen complex (See figure #9). There are some noticeable differences between these stones, such as the spears length and males head bun size, but female and male legs are carved in a similar manner, along with an overall hero stone composition of male and females coupled together. The arrangement of male and female is similar, with comparably sized figures, females holding *sati* vessels, clothing pleated or folded, necklaces on both males and females, and males holding spears along with females. There is a very strong connection between Kavilorai and this hero stone at Sholur.

Kaguchi is a small dolmen site with three hero stones located in one dolmen and another dolmen empty of carvings (See figure #10). The carvings of these stones

can be considered crude and rough (See figure #11). Compared with Dolmen Style at Kavilorai, this hero stone shows the same type of clothing and attire, with the head turban on males and the side bun worn by females. One female on the right side of the stone holds a raised sword above a male's head. The male holds his hands together in front of him. The other female on the left side holds a spear and possibly a lemon or lime in her right hand. The above tier shows a single one female, presumably a *sati* with her right arm raised high. There is a scratched or thin groove outlining a lingam and the sun and moon. The sun and the moon are composed in the same manner as stone #37 at Kavilorai. The male figure bears a knot hanging between his legs as found on stone #25 at Kavilorai. Overall these stones do not bear definite relation in style beyond composition themes, male and female head buns, clothing, the sun and moon, lingam, waist knots, and sati. The stones carved at Kavilorai are carved in a different style than ones at Kaguchi, but composition themes are suggestive of a connection.

Melur is a site of extreme variance in quality of hero stones. Some are carved with very high relief and exceptional detail, while others have little more than grooved cut outs of figures. There hero stones do not compare directly with Kavilorai in composition or style, but there are some similarities(See figure #12). The same type of sun and moon found on Kavilorai HS37 is also represented here. Additionally, there are males with clear depictions of a penis. Also, the crude hero-stone males have a turban directly above their heads. The females have a side bun. The males on the high-quality hero stones have a small head bun towards the side of the head, similar to females on the crude stones. Head bun changes were also found at

Kavilorai when comparing the Aggressive Style hero stones with the broad body hero stones and dolmen complex hero stones. There is no strong connection with this site stylistically.

Tudor Muttam is another small hero stone site without dolmens (See figure #13). This site also has both of high and lower quality hero stones which parallel the changes in themes found at Kavilorai. One stone in particular strongly resembles Kavilorai HS 10, 11, and 15 (See figure #14). It is a single-level hero stone with a male and female couple standing next to each other. The male is holding a spear with his right hand and the female is holding a *sati* vessel with her left hand. This is a common depiction found throughout the Broad Body Style within Kavilorai.

Another hero stone at Tudor Muttam, featuring two male and female couples resembles herostone 37 at Kavilorai. The far right side of the hero stone at Tudor Muttam shows a female clasping the arm of a male holding a dagger. This same representation is presented on stone 37 at Kavilorai. The clothing, head structure and overall composition are very similar; furthermore, as on stone 37, the sun and the moon are also present, depicted in the same manner. Other hero stones at Tudor Muttam are complex in presentation, including a male riding on a horse, while a female figure holds an umbrella over his head, indicating leadership, kingliness, and is found on several Moyar valley sites (Zagarell per. comm.) This stone does not strongly resemble any of the styles found at Kavilorai, aside from swords also found on Aggressive Style. Another stone shows two levels of scrunched figures in a military procession. The military procession stones parallel with Kavilorai in changes from BBS1 and BBS2, to the Aggressive style; the figures head buns shrink,

more males, militarily dominated and high quality carving. There are also similarities between male and female depiction at Seminatum temple and Tudor Muttam militarily dominated stones. One male centered on the top of the two tiered hero stone has a very striking resemblance to a male carved on the pillars of the temple, including a 'slumped' over head bun and hands together in front of his body(See Figure #15). The females are also similar to the pillars at Seminatum as they are depicted with very large breast and hold large, noticeable sati vessels. Tudor Muttam and Kavilorai have strong similarities in thematic changes and stylistic depictions as both BBS1, 2 and Aggressive Style are represented. Tudor Muttam and Kavilorai are most closely related in theme and style of all the upper elevation sites.

The site of Betlada is part of a worship complex, including a temple and separated shrines. The site is located at an elevation of 5000ft. The four hero stones here are of very high quality and the individual figures are ornately dressed. The only similarities found between Kavilorai and Betlada are the images with males holding a spear with their right hands and a backward dagger with their left hands. This is also found on the Aggressive Style hero stones at Kavilorai. The females more often hold lemons, rather than bulbous objects. There are two females who hold both lemons in one hand and a round flat disk in the other. This was similar to Kavilorai HS26 and also HS37, whose female figure had the left hand raising upwards a flat disk with fingers visible. There is no clear indication based upon stylistic similarities to relate Kavilorai with Betlada.

Stylistic Comparison with Seminatum Temple

The Seminatum temple is a 15-16th century, (Zagarell per. comm.), Badaga Lingayat structure with multiple carving on the outside (See figure #16). Six pillars hold up the outside entranceway to the temple. Each pillar has a series of carvings depicting religious and significant figures. These pillars are clearly linked in composition based upon stylistic similarities with the Vijayanagar urban core temple Vitthal (See figure #17 for comparisons). The Vitthal temple's pillars show three groupings of carvings, with a buffer between each section. The layout and composition are difficult to dismiss as coincidence. Closer examination of the pillars individual motifs would be ideal for a more detailed comparison but I was unable to find printed documentation of the individual motifs on these pillars beyond the one I have provided in figure #17.

Many correlations can be found connecting the figures at Kavilorai and Seminatum. The quality of the carvings is much higher than that of the stones at Kavilorai, but that it to be expected of a temple. Moreover, no scenes of touching males and females are depicted and there are fewer, only one, scene of violence, most likely a result of the different functions of the two sites. The males depicted on the pillars wear a high, round turban directly upon their head (See figure #18). There is at least one male with this turban slumped over to one side of his head, but it is predominantly on top. The males also wear a clear, split, long thin mustache and have a similar forehead, nose, eyes and mouth composition. There are also males with the knot hanging between the legs, as seen from Kavilorai and various sites.

The female representations also correlate in several characteristics. The female wears a side bun as commonly seen at Kavilorai. Additionally, a thick and prominent necklace is worn, along with arm bands or bangles. One female wears a necklace with a round object on it that is similar to hero stone #33 at Kavilorai (See figure #19). There is one clear scene of a female holding a bulbous object at shoulder height, performing *sati*. This *sati* also has the same style of forehead and nose carvings as seen at Kavilorai, especially the Broad Body Style 1 and 2. The raised forehead and nose form a rounded and scrunched 'T' sometimes connected and sometimes separated where the nose meets the forehead. Images, including both males and females, are shown in prayer or *anjali* mudra with the hands in front of the chest pointing upwards. Nandi and the Lingam are present in multiple scenes on the pillars as seen on hero stone 38 at Kavilorai. The stylistic similarities clearly link Kavilorai and Seminatum together, but it is difficult to determine which style at Kavilorai is more closely related to the style at Seminatum. There are overall compositional similarities between the two sites: facial expressions, hair styles, knots on waist, lingam and Nandi, sati vessel nose and forehead, but the specific style of any of the four represented at Kavilorai can not be ascribed to match Seminaturam. This holds true when looking outside the Nilgiris for other comparisons. At the Vijayanagar site of Hampi there are a series of hero stones that have similar motifs, but are altogether different in details (See figure #20). The males wear a head bun to the side of the head and not on top; the females breasts are very large, the oil vessel is small, the pleats on the clothing are either horizontal or only in the center of the skirt, they have their right hand raised showing their fulfillment of *sati* and the eyes, eye

brow/forehead and nose are clearly differentiated. The similarities are few beyond *sati*, Lingam and Nandi, vessels, round limes or lemons, males and females together, *anjali* mudra by the males on sati-stones and female side bun. Comparisons between the styles at Kavilorai and Hampi suggest no direct relation, except for general theme of *sati* and the hero stones themselves.

Discussion and Conclusion

After examining the hero stones at Kavilorai and comparing them with other hero stone sites and the temple of Seminatum, one can confidently conclude that there exists a hero stone theme connecting the sites of Sholur, Kaguchi, and Tudor Muttam with Kavilorai (See figure #21). Additionally it can be confidently stated that the hero stones at Kavilorai are representing a Badaga heritage, given their stylistic and thematic similarities with the Badaga Lingayat temple of Seminatum. This Badaga connection can be further applied to the other Nilgiri sites examined during this project. Because Badaga immigration occurred during the 16th century, the carvings of the stones do not date any earlier than that period. Furthermore, when looking at map #1 and #2 striking similarities arise between Badaga settlement sites and hero stone sites in the Nilgiris. Lack of inscriptions and absolute dates leads to a hypothesis of relative dating based upon thematic and quality of carving changes found at Kavilorai and several of the sites. Except for the site of Betlada, hero stones of both higher and lower quality are represented at the site of Sholur, Kaguchi, Kavilorai, Melur and Tudor Muttam. The higher quality stones more than often

represent scenes of aggression, domination, hierarchy, and warfare and are male-dominated. Stones of lesser quality more often portray males and females in contact, with less violence overall. The males are usually carrying a spear and the females are often shown with the bulbous object representing *sati*.

These two themes may represent a change in social and political organization over time. This would then suggest that the hero stones were added to these sites as these changes took place. It may be reasonable to suggest that, as the original Badaga population took refuge and established themselves in the Nilgiris, integrating with other inhabitants, the Badaga were more passive and traditional, sticking with the themes Hette emphasized, including placing the female on an equal or higher honorable level than the male. This would explain why the lesser quality stones were carved in a manner giving females an equal amount of composition space. Additionally, there may not have been an organized crafts worker caste to carve the stones. All together this may explain why more female *sati* representations are present in BBS#1, BBS#2 and Dolmen Style as compared with the Aggressive Style.

As the Badaga populations increased, and became entrenched and established in the Nilgiris, hierarchy and social inequality began to surface, resulting in changes in the themes and styles of hero stones. Female representations decrease while portrayals of males in battle increase. That is no coincidence: as population pressures increased, more conflicts arose. For example, in describing the Badaga Lingayat administrative, economic and religious rule in the Moyar ditch (the lower elevations where Seminatum is located) Zagarell describes struggles and warfare between the Lingayats and others for strongholds in the region (Zagarell 1995:199). Moreover,

the quality of the carved scenes increases, which would be expected as Badaga temples and forts were erected, thus the Lingayts were connected to this elite administrative group influencing and changing the local economic and political environment. Experienced artisans and masons would be required to contribute in constructing and maintaining these forts and temples. Experienced stone masons and carvers would then be readily available to be contracted for hero stone manufacture by the deceased's family members. Sinopoli argues that temples during the Vijayanagar period figured "importantly in the process of economic expansion," as temples would often redistribute donations into water and irrigation works projects, transforming unusable land into productive fields (Sinopoli 2000:96). This process would again compound changes in the area, as new services and goods came into demand and circulation, along with population increases of the farming Badagas. Ultimately by the 19th and early 20th centuries the Badaga population eventually eclipsed the Kurumba, Toda, Kota and Irula populations by such a large ratio that the Badaga disbanded their economic relationships with these groups and formed relationships with the open market (Hockings 1989:208).

Working under the confines of stylistic comparisons, the analysis of Kavilorai has brought forth the above series of connections and propositions. This is by no means total and definite. A more definite date of Kavilorai, or its specific styles, was desirable and would be helpful in determining sequence. Through deduction of the similar styles found at Seminatum and Kavilorai, a general date of the 16th century is reasonable to consider, but more research is necessary to further support this claim. Furthermore, more resources are needed to investigate outside of the immediate

Nilgiri region to determine stylistic similarities that extend from Karnataka. If stylistic similarities could be found in both the Nilgiri region and Karnataka, then time sequencing could be established for the Nilgiri sites. Establishing Badaga heritage would become stronger if one could trace Badaga settlement sites back to Karnataka and examine the pictorial remains at these sites. Combining both time sequencing with pictorial/ stylistic similarities provides ideal circumstances for a strong argument to the origins of the Nilgiri hero stones. These were some of the setbacks of this research project, and resources proved to be beyond my availability and would necessitate travel to the region to answer more questions, which are beyond the scope of this paper and must be left for future research projects.

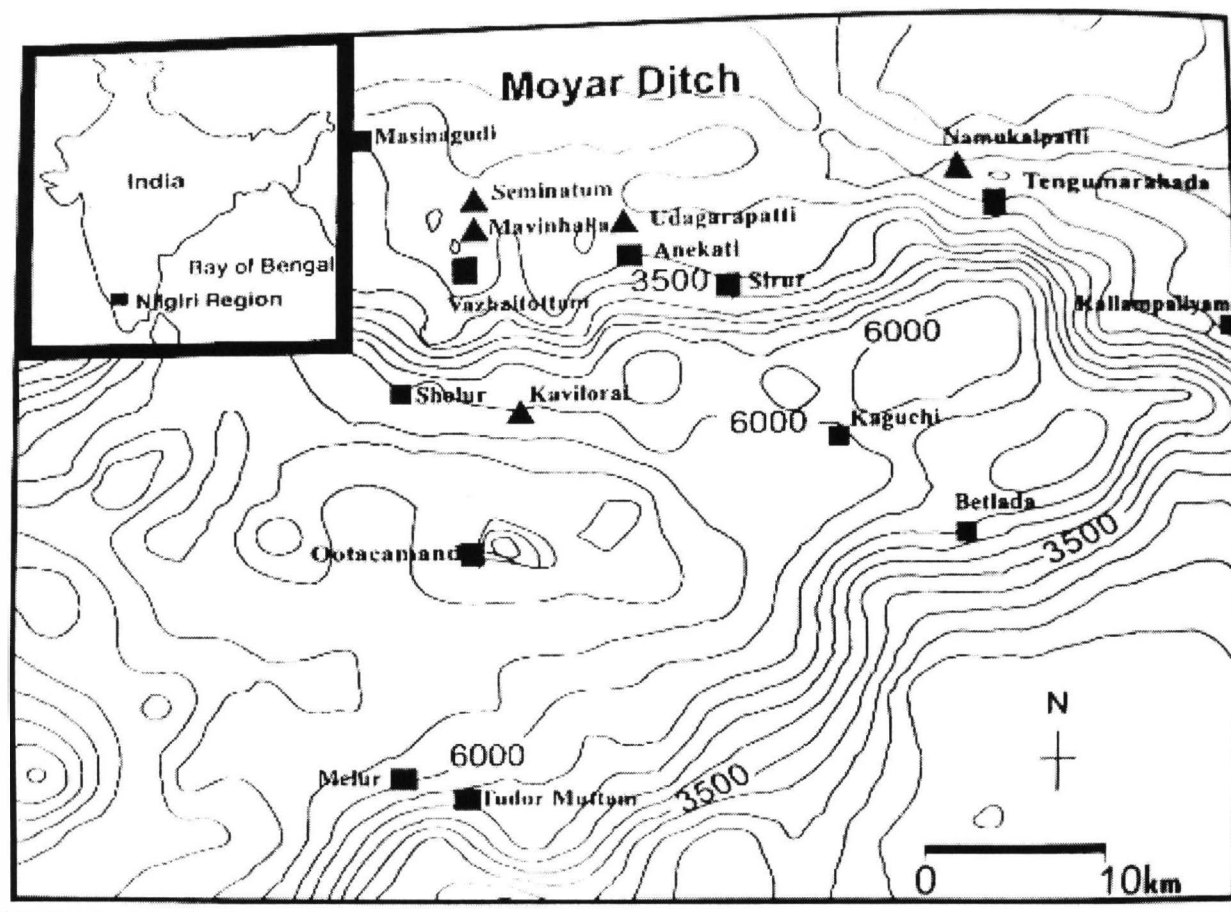


Figure 1. Map of Nilgiri Sites (Zagarell 2002:80)



Figure 2. Map of Badaga Settlement Sites (Hockings 1980:18)

Kavilorai

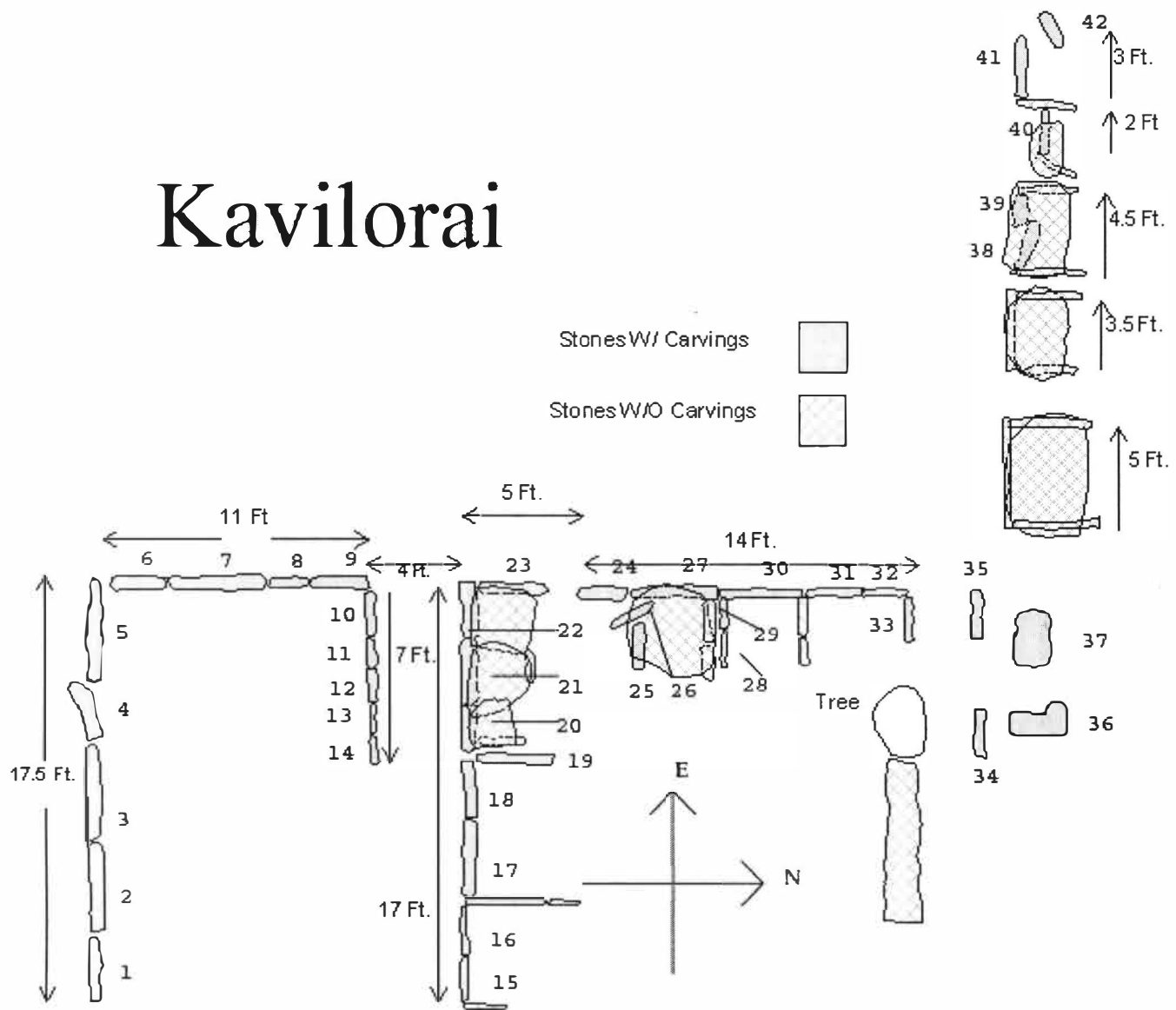


Figure 3. Map of Kavilorai



Figure 4. *Sati* Figures Dolmen Style Stone 21 and *Sati* with Mirror from Stone 37

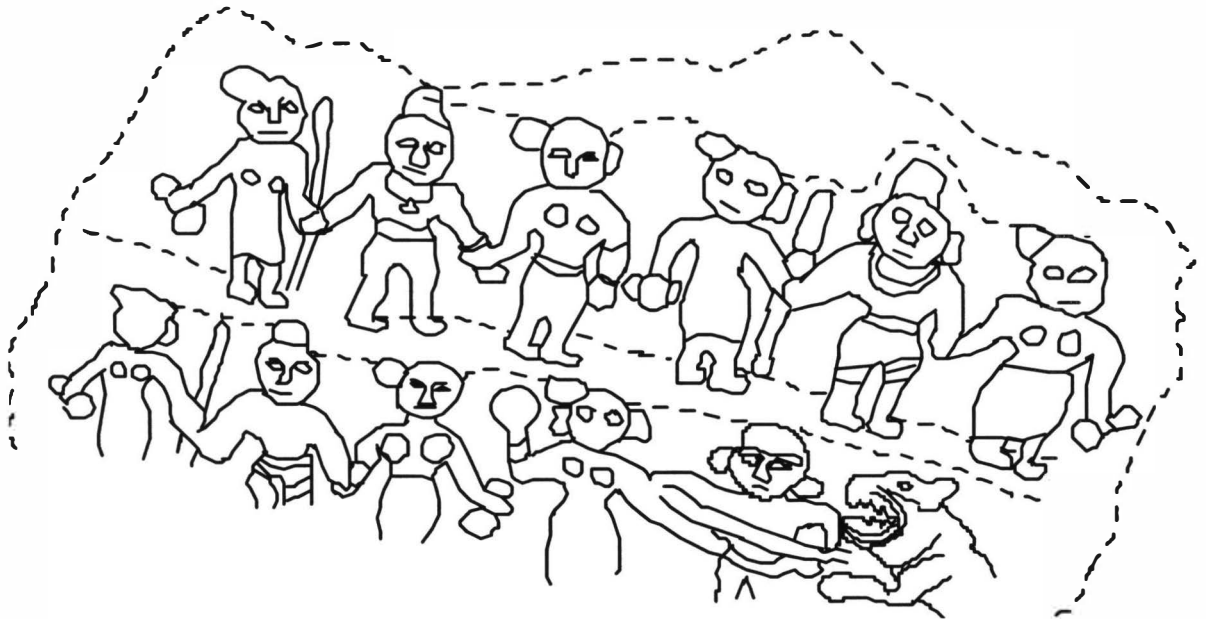


Figure 5. Stone #7 Broad Body Style #1

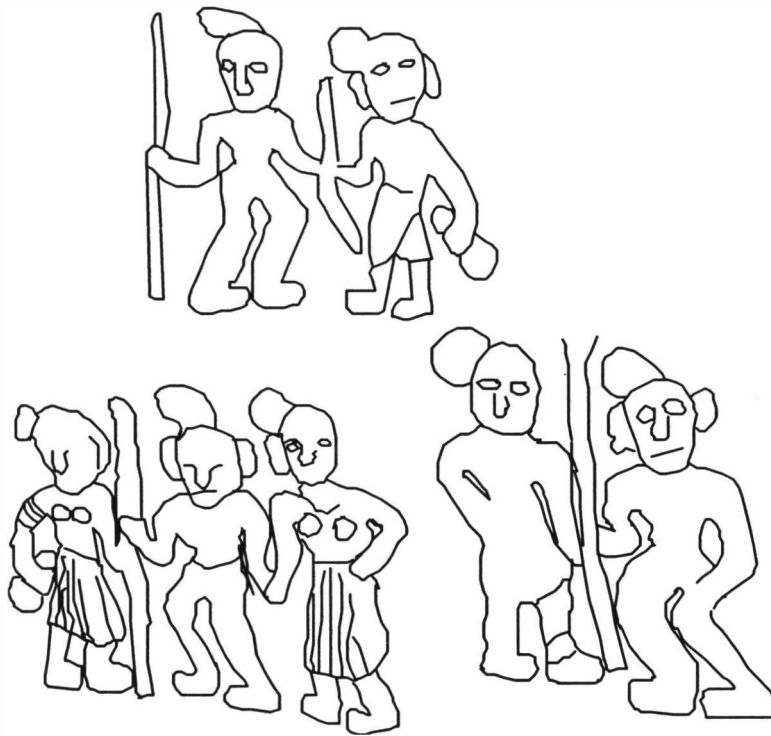


Figure 6. Stone #23 Dolmen Style



Figure 7. Stone #33 Broad Body Style #2



Figure 8. Stone #38 Aggressive Style

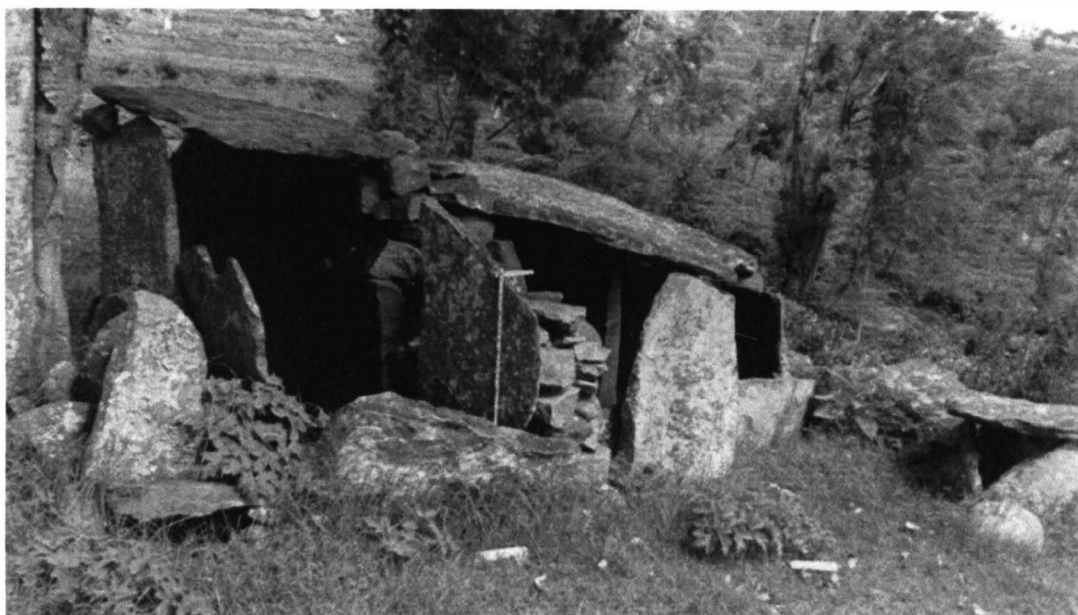


Figure 9. Sholur

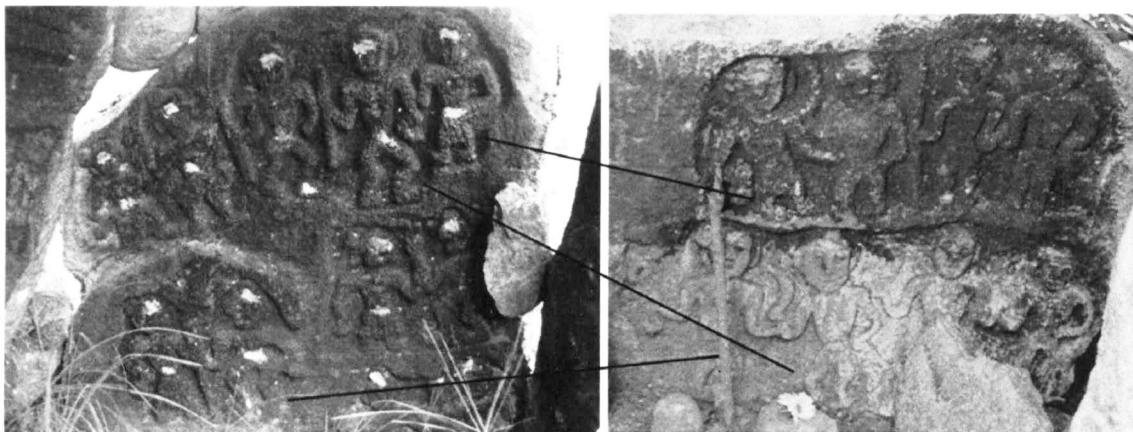


Figure 10. Sholur Hero Stone Compared with Stone #21 at Kavilorai. Notice similarities between leg depictions and presentation of female/male couples.



Figure 11. Kaguchi



Figure 12. Kaguchi Hero Stone

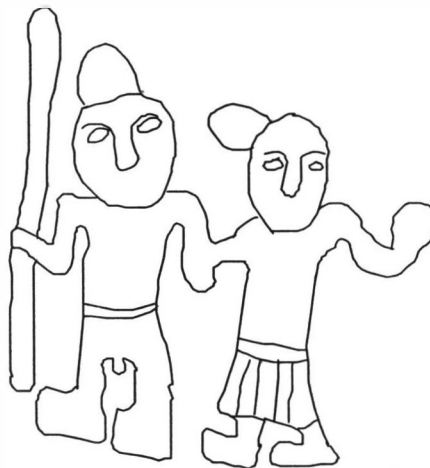
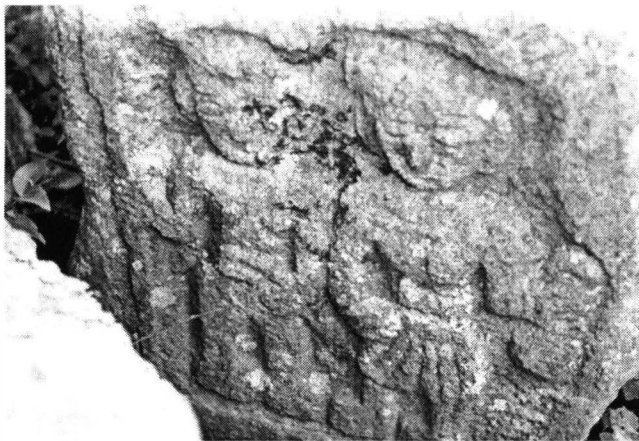


Figure 13. Melur Hero Stone



Figure 14. Tudor Muttam



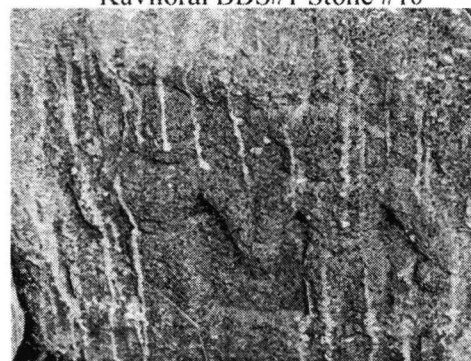
Tudor Muttam



Kavilorai BBS#1 Stone #10

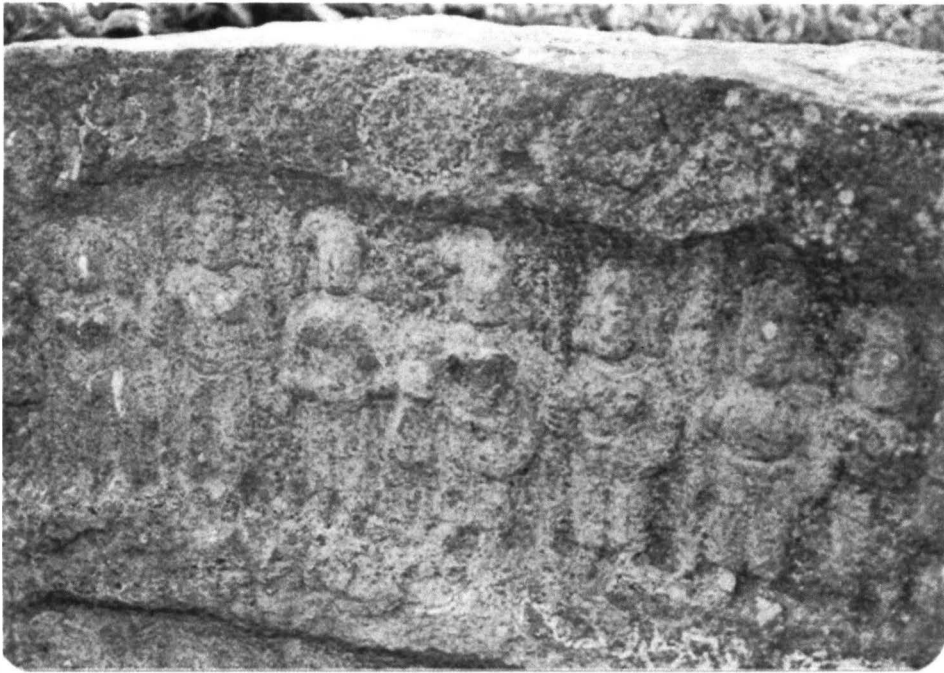


Kavilorai BBS#1 Stone #11



Kavilorai BBS#1 Stone #15

Figure 15. Tudor Muttam Hero Stone Compared with the BBS#1 from Kavilorai



Tudor Muttam



Seminatum Temple Pillar

Figure 16. Tudor Muttam Hero Stone Compared with Male at Seminatum Temple



Figure 17. Seminatum Temple

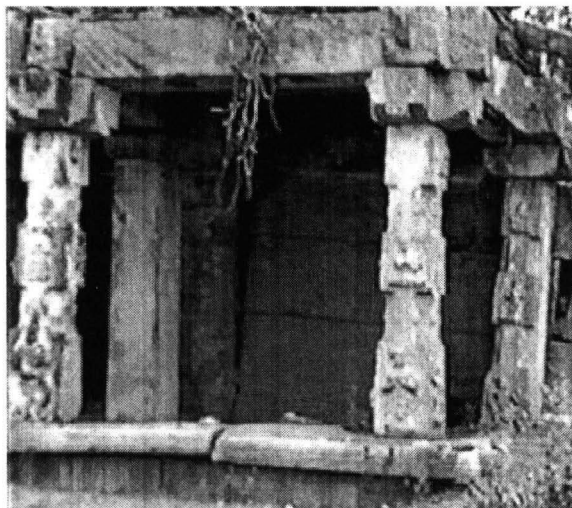
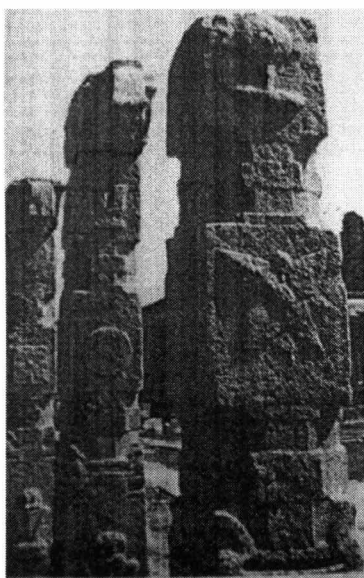


Figure 18. Vitthala Temple, Vijaynagara and Seminatum Temple Pillars

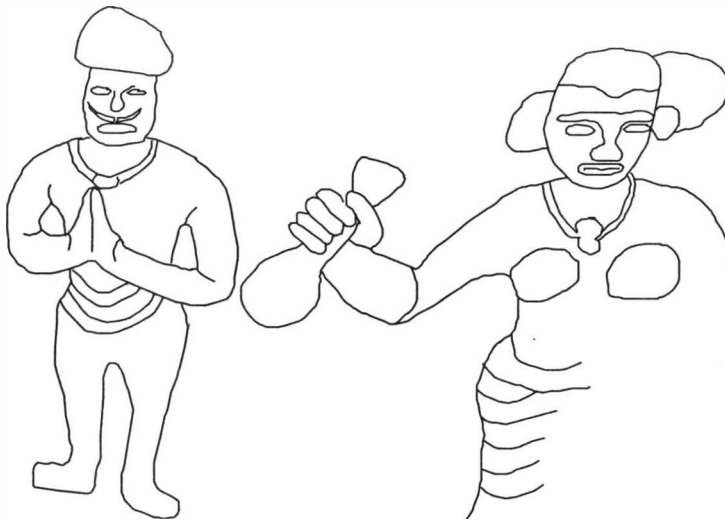


Figure 19. Figures from Seminatum



Figure 20. Hampi Sati Stone (Verghese 2001)

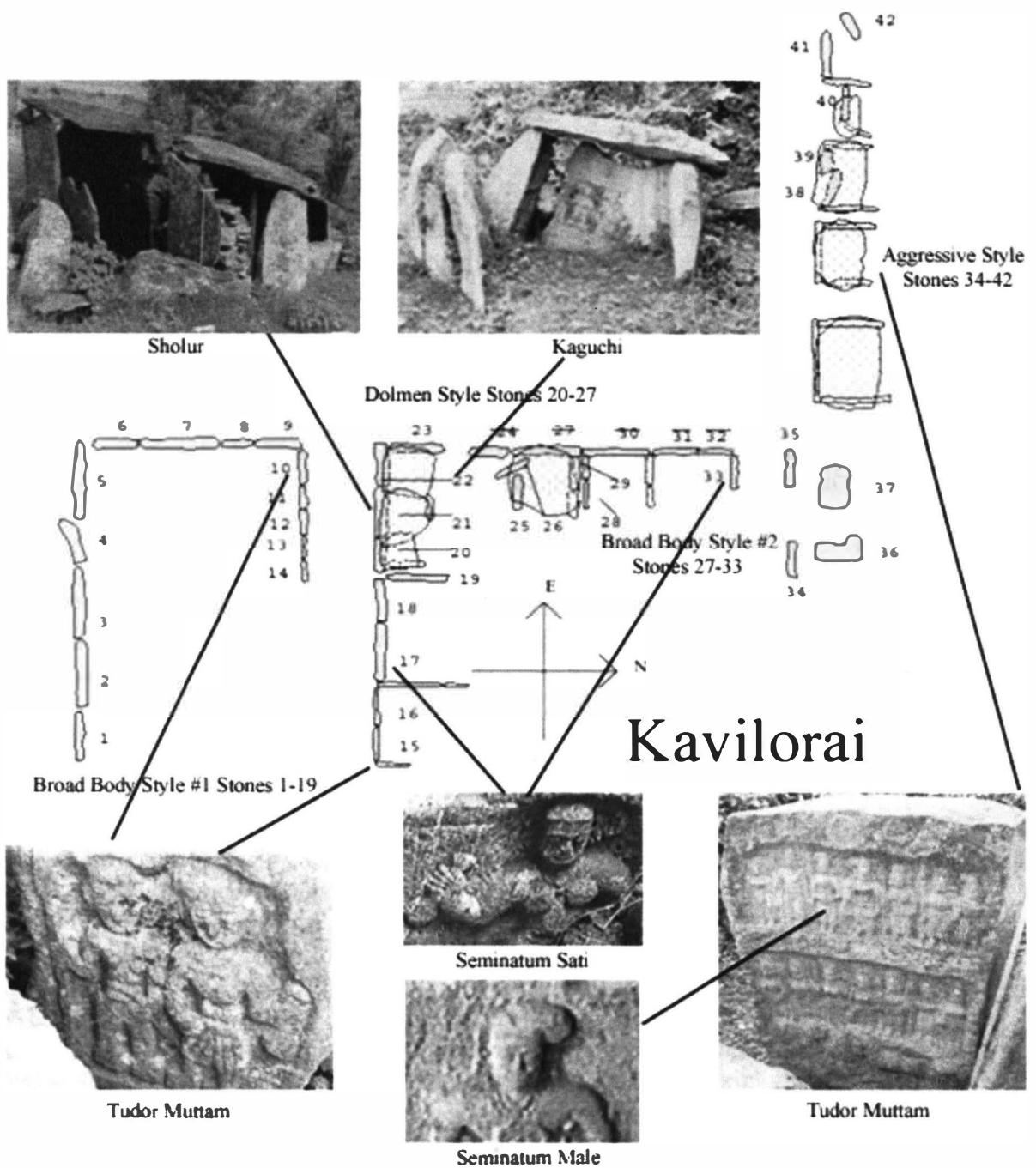


Figure 21. Kavilorai Compared with Other Sites. This figure illustrates which styles at Kavilorai are represented by individual stones from Tudor Muttam, Kaguchi, Sholur and Seminatum. The two dolmen sites of Kaguchi and Sholur correspond to the Dolmen Style at Kavilorai. Tudor Muttam has parallels with both BBS#1,2 and Aggressive Style. The *Sati* from Seminatum relates to BBS#1,2 based upon stylistic similarities. The male from Seminatum is connected to Tudor Muttam stylistically. The Tudor Muttam procession stone relates to thematic changes seen at both Tudor Muttam and Kavilorai and closely resembles themes of Aggressive Style at Kavilorai.

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