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Quote:

Tsunami reveals ancient temple sites

By Paddy Maguire

BBC News, Madras

An engraved pillar which belongs to the Pallava period

Shift from brickwork to granite slabs indicates different periods

Archaeologists say they have discovered the site of an ancient temple in Tamil Nadu.

It is the latest in a series of archaeological discoveries in the area struck by a tsunami which desilted large areas of the coastline.

The brick temple dates back more than 2,000 years to the late Tamil Sanjaya period, discovered on the beachfront near Saluvankuppam, just north of a famous Mahabalipuram.

The discovery lends more weight to growing evidence that a huge tsunami struck the coast during this period, obliterating large habitations along the coastline.

Two periods

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) made the discovery while looking for an ancient temple.

We are looking at the remains of a brick temple that was destroyed by a tsunami about 2,200 years ago

Badrinarayanan S, rtd director,

Geological Survey of India

"The tsunami exposed inscriptions on a huge rock that had previously been of great importance," said T Satyamurthy of the ASI.

"These inscriptions dated back to 935 AD and said that Krishna the Third of the Vijaya Dynasty in Karnataka, had given gold to a temple to pay for keeping an eternal flame.

"This led us to dig further. Near the surface we found coins, pottery, stone lamps and so we knew there must be something more. Soon we discovered a 7th century Pallava temple."

As they continued to excavate they came across the earlier Sangam temple from courses of brickwork to large granite slabs indicates the different periods.

"The Pallavas just built on the brick foundations left behind after the Sangam temple. The two periods are there, clear to see," said Dr Satyamurthy.

Tsunami deposits

But it is the question of how these two temples were destroyed rather than the interest of the teams involved.

Layers of sea shells because of tsunami activity

Layers of sea shells and debris point to previous tsunami strikes

Layers of sea shells and debris in the sand show that tsunami activity has been a complex.

"The Pallava structure was destroyed by waves some time in the 13th Century suggests that beneath it, we are looking at the remains of a brick temple destroyed by a tsunami approximately 2,200 years ago," said Badrinarayanan S, a retired geologist, Survey of India.

Another archaeologist from the ASI, G Thirumoorthy, said: "We can see the devastation in Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. We've found that devastation has affected 1,200km (750 miles) of India's eastern coastline.

"The discovery of this Sangam temple will lead us to other geological sites and tell us more about the pre-Pallavan period."

Since the tsunami on 26 December, marine archaeologists have also discovered structures on the seabed up to 1km out to sea.

They think the structures may be part of a former, legendary city of Mahabalipuram.

Myths state the city was destroyed by a flood sent by gods envious of its wealth.

Well clearly carbon dating doesn't work as it needs doubling every 20,000 years as this is why we sailed to Africa and the story you hear of Zedek or Noah is a funny reading of our history...as we make such a mess of not listening to spiritual guidance.