Vembakottai (Vijayakarisalkulam) Excavation – Vaippar River, Virudhunagar, Three Phases (2022–2025), About 12,000 Finds, Glass Beads, Shell Bangles, Gold Objects & Torpedo Jar | TNPSC Notes

TNPSC Notes · https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/tnpsc-notes/vembakottai/en

The **Vembakottai excavation** is the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology's dig on a mound of about 25–30 acres called "Mettukadu" (Uchimedu) at **Vijayakarisalkulam** village, on the **northern bank of the Vaippar river** in Vembakottai taluk of Virudhunagar district, about 15 km from Sivakasi and near Sattur. In three phases – **Phase 1 in 2022**, **Phase 2 in 2023** and **Phase 3 from 18 June 2024** – 56 trenches have yielded **about 12,000 antiquities**, including about **7,000 glass beads**, more than 2,500 **shell beads and shell bangles**, semi-precious beads such as carnelian and agate, terracotta seals, figurines, gamesmen, copper coins and **gold objects**. Unfinished shell bangles and shell waste show a local **shell-bangle industry**, and in March 2026 the Government announced that sherds of **"torpedo jars"**, linked with overseas maritime trade, had been identified. With evidence of continuous occupation from the Microlithic to medieval times, the site is assessed as an **early historic (Sangam-age) craft and trading settlement** of the Vaippar valley.

தமிழில் படிக்க

These notes are written for TNPSC Group 1, 2/2A and 4 aspirants. Vembakottai belongs to **History, Culture, Heritage of Tamil Nadu** (archaeological discoveries, Sangam-age crafts), **Current Events** (yearly excavation phases and finds) and **Geography** (Vaippar, Virudhunagar). For the full list of State excavation programmes see Porunai civilisation and Tamil Nadu excavation sites; this note covers Vembakottai phase by phase.

Vembakottai at a Glance

Aspect	Details
Excavation site	Vijayakarisalkulam village (near Vembakottai), Vembakottai taluk, Virudhunagar district.
River	Vaippar – the site is on its northern bank.
Mound	Locally called "Mettukadu" / "Uchimedu"; about 25–30 acres.
Distance	About 15 km from Sivakasi; near Sattur; about 100 km from Keeladi.
Excavated by	Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology; excavation director Pon. Baskar.
Phases	Phase 1 – 2022 (from March); Phase 2 – 2023; Phase 3 – from 18 June 2024 (into 2025).
Total finds	About 12,000 antiquities; 56 trenches (as of March 2025).

Classification	Early Historic (Policy Note); evidence of continuous habitation from the Microlithic to medieval times.

Phase-wise Details

Phase	Period	Antiquities	Key finds
Phase 1	2022 (from March)	3,254	Shell bangles; glass, shell and terracotta beads; black-and-red ware sherds; terracotta objects; hopscotch pieces.
Phase 2	2023	4,660	Listed for the first two phases (Policy Note): semi-precious beads of carnelian, agate, amethyst and crystal; glass bangles; terracotta seals and figurines; iron and copper objects.
Phase 3	From 18 June 2024 (into 2025)	4,056 (till March 2025)	A woman's head carved in flint; a **gold bell** of about 0.15 g at 1.28 m depth; jasper and sard stones (raw material for ornaments); terracotta figurines, gamesmen.
Total	2022–2025	**About 12,000**	First two phases: 34 trenches and more than 7,900 objects (3,254 + 4,660 = 7,914); 56 trenches over three phases.

Finds by Type

Type	Number / details	What it shows
Glass beads	About 7,000	Large-scale bead trade/use; trade links with sites such as Arikamedu and Kodumanal.
Shell beads, ornaments, bangles	Over 2,500; bangles of three kinds – decorated, painted, plain – about 20% painted red	Unfinished bangles and shell waste – a local **shell-bangle industry**; conch probably brought from the Gulf of Mannar.
Semi-precious beads	Carnelian, agate, amethyst, crystal	Long-distance trade in raw materials.
Terracotta objects	Seals, earrings, figurines, spindle whorls, gamesmen, smoking pipes (later period), a humped-bull figurine like the one from Keeladi	Daily life, weaving, games; officials said the many terracotta seals may point to trade.
Metal objects	Iron and copper objects; 8 copper coins in the first two phases; gold beads and gold objects; iron slag	Metal working, prosperity.
Stone tools	Microlithic tools, flint, jasper, sard, chert	Human presence from very early times.
Torpedo-jar sherds	Identified while classifying the finds of all three phases (announced March 2026)	Long cylindrical transport jars used in the Roman and West Asian regions for liquids such as oil and wine – evidence, the Minister said, of overseas maritime trade reaching the Vaippar region.

Significance – What Vembakottai Tells Us

- **Craft centre:** shell bangles and bead-making – another craft site in the line of Korkai (chank), Arikamedu (beads) and Kodumanal (gems).
- **Inland–coast link:** as the Vaippar flows into the Gulf of Mannar, coastal chank resources and the inland settlement were connected.
- **Trade network:** semi-precious stones, glass beads and torpedo-jar sherds – inland and overseas trade links.
- **Continuity:** from Microlithic tools to medieval smoking pipes – a long history of settlement.
- **Vaippar basin:** like the Vaigai (Keeladi) and the Thamirabarani (Porunai), the Vaippar basin was also a centre of early historic culture.
- **Caution:** no scientific date had been announced for the site as of March 2025; samples have been sent for analysis. "At least 2,000 years old" is only an official estimate.

Geography Link: Vaippar and Virudhunagar

- **Vaippar:** rises in the Western Ghats, flows through Virudhunagar and Thoothukudi districts and joins the Gulf of Mannar near Vembar; largely a seasonal river.
- **Virudhunagar district:** Sivakasi (fireworks, matches, printing) and Sattur are today's industrial centres; Vembakottai shows that craft industry flourished here in ancient times too.

Tamil Nadu Angle and Exam Angle

- **Tamil Nadu angle:** a key site of the State's yearly excavation programme (since 2021); finds have been shown in exhibitions.
- **Prelims:** district (Virudhunagar), river (Vaippar), village (Vijayakarisalkulam), start of Phase 3 (18 June 2024), key finds (glass beads, shell bangles, gold bell).
- **Mains:** use Vembakottai as an example in "recent State excavations" or "Sangam-age crafts".
- **Way forward:** scientific dating, a full excavation report, study of the southern bank (thought to hold Microlithic remains), a site museum.

Writing Mains Answers (Group 1 / Group 2)

Significance of the Vembakottai excavation (about 150–200 words)

- **Introduction:** Virudhunagar, northern bank of the Vaippar, Mettukadu mound at Vijayakarisalkulam; State Department since 2022.
- **Phases:** 2022 (3,254), 2023 (4,660), 2024–25 (4,056+); total about 12,000; 56 trenches.
- **Finds:** about 7,000 glass beads; shell bangles; semi-precious beads; terracotta seals; gold bell; torpedo-jar sherds.
- **Meaning:** shell-bangle industry, bead trade, maritime links, long continuity of settlement.
- **Conclusion:** like the Vaigai and Porunai, the Vaippar basin was a centre of early Tamil society; scientific dating is essential.

SHANMUGAM IAS

Practice: Match the Following

Item	Match
Vembakottai	Vaippar – Virudhunagar
Keeladi	Vaigai – Sivaganga
Sivakalai	Thamirabarani – Thoothukudi
Kodumanal	Noyyal – Erode
18 June 2024	Start of Vembakottai Phase 3
Torpedo jar	Overseas transport jar (sea-trade evidence)

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Vembakottai is in **Virudhunagar** district – not Sivaganga (Keeladi); the river is the Vaippar – not the Vaigai.
- The excavation village is **Vijayakarisalkulam**; the dig is known as the "Vembakottai excavation".
- The site is on the **northern bank** of the Vaippar.
- This is a State Archaeology Department excavation – not an ASI one.
- No scientific date has been announced yet (as of March 2025); do not write a specific "BCE" year.

Key Terms – Tamil / English (for the bilingual paper)

Tamil	English
அகழ்வுக் குழி	Trench
தொல்பொருள்	Antiquity / artefact
சங்கு வளையல்	Shell (conch) bangle
அரைமதிப்புக் கல்	Semi-precious stone
தக்கிளி	Spindle whorl
சுடுமண் முத்திரை	Terracotta seal
ஆட்டக் காய்	Gamesman / hopscotch piece
தொல்லியல் மேடு	Archaeological mound

Quick Revision Table

Period / year	Event
2022 (from March)	Phase 1 – 3,254 antiquities
2023	Phase 2 – 4,660 antiquities
18 June 2024	Phase 3 begins (along with other sites)

June 2024	Flint head of a woman
November 2024	Gold bell (0.15 g, 1.28 m depth)
March 2025	Total about 12,000 antiquities, 56 trenches
March 2026	Torpedo-jar sherds identified – announcement

TNPSC Key Points (PYQ-style facts)

- Vembakottai excavation – Vijayakarisalkulam, Virudhunagar; northern bank of the Vaippar.
- Three phases: 2022, 2023, 2024–25; about 12,000 antiquities.
- About 7,000 glass beads; over 2,500 shell objects.
- Evidence of a shell-bangle industry (unfinished bangles, waste).
- Phase 3: gold bell, flint head of a woman.
- Torpedo-jar sherds – evidence of maritime trade (March 2026).

Related notes: Porunai civilisation and TN excavation sites, Keeladi, Kodumanal, Sivakalai.

Frequently Asked Questions

Where is the Vembakottai excavation?

On the "Mettukadu" mound (about 25–30 acres) at Vijayakarisalkulam village, on the northern bank of the Vaippar, in Vembakottai taluk of Virudhunagar district – about 15 km from Sivakasi.

How many phases have been carried out at Vembakottai?

Three: 2022 (3,254 antiquities), 2023 (4,660) and a third phase that began on 18 June 2024 and ran into 2025 (4,056 by March 2025). In all, about 12,000 antiquities from 56 trenches.

What are the main finds at Vembakottai?

About 7,000 glass beads, more than 2,500 shell beads and bangles, stone beads such as carnelian and agate, terracotta seals, figurines and gamesmen, copper coins, a gold bell, a woman's head carved in flint, and torpedo-jar sherds.

Why is a shell-bangle industry thought to have existed at Vembakottai?

Along with finished bangles, many unfinished bangles and pieces of cut shell (waste) were found, so the State Archaeology Department thinks shell bangles were made on the site.

Has Vembakottai been scientifically dated?

No scientific date had been announced as of March 2025; samples have been sent for analysis. The State policy note classes it as an early historic site; "at least 2,000 years old" is an official estimate.

Practise this topic with our free Tamil quizzes, follow daily current affairs (English) and Tamil current affairs, and see our TNPSC PYQ books such as the General Tamil PYQ book and the Tamil Nadu Administration PYQ book. For classroom and online TNPSC coaching at Gandhipuram, Coimbatore and

SHANMUGAM IA

Anna Nagar, Madurai, see our TNPSC course page or call 99941 46662 (Coimbatore) / 73059 47122 (Madurai).

Frequently asked questions

Where is the Vembakottai excavation?
On the "Mettukadu" mound (about 25–30 acres) at Vijayakarisalkulam village, on the northern bank of the Vaippar, in Vembakottai taluk of Virudhunagar district – about 15 km from Sivakasi.

How many phases have been carried out at Vembakottai?
Three: 2022 (3,254 antiquities), 2023 (4,660) and a third phase that began on 18 June 2024 and ran into 2025 (4,056 by March 2025). In all, about 12,000 antiquities from 56 trenches.

What are the main finds at Vembakottai?
About 7,000 glass beads, more than 2,500 shell beads and bangles, stone beads such as carnelian and agate, terracotta seals, figurines and gamesmen, copper coins, a gold bell, a woman's head carved in flint, and torpedo-jar sherds.

Why is a shell-bangle industry thought to have existed at Vembakottai?
Along with finished bangles, many unfinished bangles and pieces of cut shell (waste) were found, so the State Archaeology Department thinks shell bangles were made on the site.

Has Vembakottai been scientifically dated?
No scientific date had been announced as of March 2025; samples have been sent for analysis. The State policy note classes it as an early historic site; "at least 2,000 years old" is an official estimate.

Practice questions

1. In which district is the Vembakottai excavation?

A. Virudhunagar
B. Sivaganga
C. Thoothukudi
D. Madurai

2. The Vembakottai site is on the bank of which river?

A. Vaigai
B. Vaippar
C. Thamirabarani
D. Gundar

3. In which village is the Vembakottai dig carried out?

A. Keeladi
B. Konthagai
C. Vijayakarisalkulam
D. Thirumalapuram

SHANMUGAM IA

4. When did Phase 3 of the Vembakottai excavation begin?

A. 13 February 2021
B. 6 April 2023
C. 19 September 2025
D. 18 June 2024

5. About how many antiquities have been found at Vembakottai in three phases?

A. About 12,000
B. About 5,000
C. About 2,000
D. About 25,000

6. Which item has been found in the largest numbers at Vembakottai?

A. Gold coins
B. Glass beads
C. Iron swords
D. Burial urns

7. Vembakottai shows evidence of which industry?

A. Gold mining
B. Ship-building
C. Shell-bangle making
D. Salt making

8. How many antiquities were found in Phase 1 at Vembakottai?

A. 1,155
B. 3,254
C. 4,660
D. 7,914

9. How many antiquities were found in Phase 2 at Vembakottai?

A. 3,254
B. 4,056
C. 4,660
D. 7,000

10. Which gold object was found at 1.28 m depth in Phase 3?

A. Gold coin
B. Gold bell
C. Gold diadem
D. Gold earring

11. Which object carved in flint was found at Vembakottai in June 2024?

A. Bull figure
B. Buddha image
C. Woman's head
D. Elephant figure

SHANMUGAM IA

12. What was announced in March 2026 as identified among the Vembakottai finds?

A. Roman coin
B. Chinese coin
C. Tamil-Brahmi inscription
D. Torpedo-jar sherds

13. Which of these is NOT listed among the semi-precious beads from Vembakottai?

A. Lapis lazuli
B. Agate
C. Amethyst
D. Carnelian

14. Which body carries out the Vembakottai excavation?

A. Archaeological Survey of India
B. Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology
C. Tamil University
D. NIO, Goa

15. What is the local name of the Vembakottai mound?

A. Maligaimedu
B. Pallimedu
C. Mettukadu
D. Kottaimedu

16. Where does the Vaippar enter the sea?

A. Palk Strait
B. Pulicat Lake
C. Arabian Sea
D. Gulf of Mannar

17. How many trenches were dug in the first two phases at Vembakottai?

A. 14
B. 34
C. 56
D. 72

18. How does the State policy note classify Vembakottai?

A. Neolithic
B. Early Historic
C. Later Chola
D. Colonial

19. Statements: (1) Vembakottai is on the northern bank of the Vaippar. (2) Vembakottai has been dated to 580 BCE. Which is correct?

A. Both
B. 2 only
C. 1 only
D. Neither

SHANMUGAM IA

20. Match the rivers of Vembakottai – Keeladi – Kodumanal in order:

A. Vaippar – Thamirabarani – Bhavani

B. Vaigai – Vaippar – Kaveri

C. Thamirabarani – Vaigai – Noyyal

D. Vaippar – Vaigai – Noyyal

Answers with explanations

1. A) Virudhunagar – Virudhunagar district, Vembakottai taluk.

2. B) Vaippar – The northern bank of the Vaippar.

3. C) Vijayakarisalkulam – Vijayakarisalkulam – Mettukadu mound.

4. D) 18 June 2024 – 18 June 2024 – along with other sites.

5. A) About 12,000 – About 12,000 (March 2025).

6. B) Glass beads – About 7,000 glass beads.

7. C) Shell-bangle making – Unfinished bangles and shell waste.

8. B) 3,254 – Phase 1 – 3,254.

9. C) 4,660 – Phase 2 – 4,660.

10. B) Gold bell – A gold bell of about 0.15 g.

11. C) Woman's head – A woman's head carved in flint was found.

12. D) Torpedo-jar sherds – Sherds of overseas transport jars – evidence of sea trade.

13. A) Lapis lazuli – Carnelian, agate, amethyst and crystal are recorded.

14. B) Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology – The State Department of Archaeology.

15. C) Mettukadu – Mettukadu / Uchimedu.

16. D) Gulf of Mannar – The Gulf of Mannar near Vembar.

17. B) 34 – 34; 56 over all three phases.

18. B) Early Historic – Early Historic.

19. C) 1 only – 580 BCE is Keeladi; no scientific date has been announced for Vembakottai.

20. D) Vaippar – Vaigai – Noyyal – Vaippar, Vaigai, Noyyal.

SHANMUGAM IA

Shanmugam IAS Academy – next step

- **Classes:** TNPSC Group 1, 2 / 2A (Prelims + Mains), Group 4, UPSC / IAS, Bank, SSC, SI – Coimbatore · Madurai · Online – https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/fees
- **Books (PDF):** TNPSC PYQ books, General Tamil complete book, UPSC books – https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/study-materials
- **More free PDFs:** https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/free-pdf-download · This page: https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/tnpsc-notes/vembakottai/en

Admissions / WhatsApp: 99941 46662 · 99944 27714 · www.shanmugamiasacademy.in

SHANMUGAM IA