Relics Give Proof Of Roman Influence In Ancient India
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Thyagarajan, N. Hard on the heels of the archaeological discovery of a Roman settlement in the old Pandya country comes another: a site which was connected with Arikkamedu, the celebrated Roman "factory town," discovered in 1945 by Sir Mortimer Wheeler. The new site is a village named Mel Sattamangalam, about six kilo- meters west of Arikkamedu on the Coromandel coast of South India, adding more substance to theories of Roman influence in India some 2,000 years ago.

The discovery was made when villagers digging around a Siva Linga on the Banks of a lake came upon bricks of huge size, just like those found in the Arikkamedu excavations. Further trial excavation on the western side of the village yielded strong evidence that this village must have formed part of the Arikkamedu complex. Three types of roam imported pottery goods were unearthed which were also found at Arikkamedu - several pieces of amphora of a fine texture and rouletted and Arrentine pottery.

In the trenches around the Siva Linga, in another part of the village, were found red slipped were, a dull black ware, a storage jar rim made of coarse fabric, shallow basins, dishes and fragments of incense burners. From the post holes found in the brick in these pits it has been deduced that there was structure built around the Linga which served as a shrine. The Siva Linga has been dated to the tenth century. Elsewhere in the village there is an image of Vishnu of late Pallava time, about the ninth century.

The excavations carried out so far are preliminary in nature, but already prove that the Arikkamedu culture extended some distance into the interior. With the discovery of Azagankulam in south Tamil Nadu and now the unearthing of Sattamangalam, the evidence of Roman impress on India is becoming stronger and stronger.

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