



RECENT MEGALITHIC EXPLORATIONS IN KADAPA DISTRICT, ANDHRA PRADESH

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Abstract: Apparajupalli village is situated on the way from Chintakommadenne to Polathalashiva temple in the Chintakommadenne mandal in the Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh. Towards south of the present village with a distance of one kilometre on hill slopes there is a megalithic site situated with stone circles with cairn packing measuring 5-6 meters in the diameter. In this site nearly twenty burials were encountered but most of the burials were disturbed by natural phenomena. Besides pottery and iron and stone objects, beads of different materials as well as a varied assortment of jewellery were also found. The most important among the burial furnishings is the pottery, which consisted mainly of the black and red, the black polished, and coarse red wares, etc. Moreover, cereals and animal skeletons were also noticed. It is proposed to examine these remains in the light of recent explorations in Kadapa.

Keywords: Apparajupalli, burials, coarse red wares, megalithic, pottery.

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Introduction

The Megalithic burials contained a large variety of pottery, iron objects, a few stone objects and ornaments such as beads of terracotta, semi-precious stones, gold or copper, shell, etc. Sometimes ear or nose ornaments, armlets or bracelets, and diadems are also noticed. Very often grains of paddy and other cereals were offered. Some burials also contain skeletons of domesticated animals, such as horse, etc.

The most important among the burial furnishings is the pottery, which consisted mainly of the black and red, the black polished, and red polished, coarse red wares, etc. In archaeology the term ‘megalith’ denotes a tomb built of huge stones, either dressed or undressed. These monuments have evoked the interest of both the scholars and the general public from the inception of antiquarian research from the 16th century

onwards, although it was not until the middle of 19th century that these rude and rough stone structures were grouped together under the name 'megaliths'. The megalithic structures of southern India represent a distinctive cultural phase, which succeeded the earlier Neolithic culture. The succession from the Neolithic to the Megalithic appears to be sudden and peaceful. Whether the new culture entered South India along the west coast or by sea, it spread rapidly far and wide into the Indian peninsula and became characteristic feature of the region. Much of the region, in which the monuments are discovered, is marked by granitic gneiss. These megaliths are found in groups, varying in number from place to place.

Robert Bruce Foote (1914:16-8) reported a few Megalithic habitation sites from site at Yellatur about 16 kilometres from Kadapa in Andhra Pradesh and collected considerable quantities of red painted-and-polished ware and black painted-and-polished ware, which included bowls, *lotas* and globular pots. A remarkable burial site was found at Sankhavaram, near Porumamilla. This megalithic burial includes pottery. The burial urns are mainly of two categories, the sarcophagi and the pot burials. The sarcophagi were generally made of coarse grained gritty clay and mostly hand-made. At Sankhavaram workers constructing a church accidentally recovered, at a depth of 1.8metre, a unique type of six-legged terracotta sarcophagus in the shape of a ram with an oblong chamber. Its upper side was profusely decorated with a rope design. The lid was made of two pieces. The front portion projected upwards in the shape of the animal's neck, terminating in a socket into which was fitted a detachable head of a ram-like animal with twisted horns but no ears. The sarcophagus contained unclaimed human skeletal remains (Krishna Sastri: 1983:88-9).

Wheeler reported the existence of dolmenoid cists with portholes at Palagiri, on the left bank of Mugameru Vagu in Kamalapuram Mandal and near Vontimitta, a famous pilgrim town (Krishna Sastry 1983:94-107). The Megalithic pottery was classified by Gururaja Rao (1972:257-258)

into two groups. The coarse and unpolished receptacles like the burial urns, the sarcophagi and their lids comprised the first group and the second group consisted of the well-fired finely polished smaller vessels. The burial urns are mainly of two categories, the sarcophagi and the pot burials. The sarcophagi wares were generally made of coarse grained gritty clay and are mostly hand-made. They are shaped into thick sectioned large vessels of pyriform or fusiform urns with elongated body, pointed or truncated bottom. Some sarcophagi have rows of legs at the bottom. Some aberrant types of sarcophagi are the zoomorphic type, like the ram-shaped one from Sankhavaram in Kadapa district or the cow-shaped one from Kerala or elephantoid urns from Perambar.

The cist-burials, with passage chambers at Peddamarur and the neighboring sites, Uppalapadu and Chagatur, have their passage and port-holes invariably facing south. The elliptical houses excavated at Peddabankur in Karimnagar region were possibly contemporaneous with the Megalithic period and have their doors also facing south. The typical black and red ware is invariably associated with all the megalithic sites in South India. It is characterised by uniformly fine fabric, burnished and always plain without much decoration. It is generally burnt in low temperature and hence it disintegrates if kept under wet conditions for long. The clay of the black and red ware or black ware was well levitated and does not usually have any sand particles in the paste. It was wheel-turned and the fabric ranges from medium to fine. It was fired under reducing condition, possibly by inverted method. The vessels have a glossy slip on both the sides and a few were salt-glazed by throwing salt into the fire in the later stages of firing. The crackling noticed over some pots was due to salt-glazing.

The pottery was fired on open platforms, with slots provided at equal distances. Beneath the platform apertures were provided for feeding the flames. The pots were kept with the rims inserted into these grooves and the rest of the portion exposed. The interior portion of the pot

was always filled in or pasted with combustible material. When the pots come into contact with the flames the exterior portion of the pot which is exposed turns red, and the rim portion turn black due to indirect contact with the flames. As a rule the interior portion turns black due to its concealment from the combustible material. The black-slipped ware was fired under completely reducing condition.

We find a megalithic site at **Apparajupalli** village situated on the way from Chintakommadene to Polathalashiva temple in the Chintakommadene mandal in the Kadapa district. Towards south of the present village at a distance of one kilometre on the hill slopes there is a megalithic site situated with stone circles with cairn packing measuring five to six metres in the diameter. At this site there are nearly twenty burials but most of them were disturbed by vagaries of nature.

At **Balireddygaripalli** hamlet in Rachupalli village panchayat in Ramapurammandal in Kadapa district is another site. Towards south of the present hamlet at a distance of half kilometre the site is located in a scrubby bare land with stone circles measuring six to eight metres in diameter. In this site most of the burials are multi-circled burials and we find nearly 25-30 burials.

In the hamlet **Batamadigapalli** which is situated one kilometre west of Lakkireddipalli mandal head quarters in Kadapa district. Towards south of the present hamlet, at a distance of around 500 metres there is a small seasonal stream. Located on the banks of the stream there is a megalithic site with ten stone circles with cairn packing measuring 12-15 meters in diameter. Among them some of the burials have multi circles within the burial.

At **Beedawandlapalli** hamlet in Rachapalli village panchayat in Ramapurammandal in Kadapa district, towards the south east of the village there is a seasonal stream locally known as ‘Ramarajuvanka.’ Beside the stream in the mango orchards in the fields of V. Sudharshan Reddy, three disturbed dolmens are situated. Among them one is bigger and two are smaller.

These dolmens were discovered by the local people while treasure hunting and orthostatic slabs were laid down here and there. The orthostats measure 2.20X2.20metres (The Hindu: 26.01.2020).

The hamlet of **Budidaguntapalli** is situated three kilometres south west of Lakkireddipalli mandal headquarters in Kadapa district. Towards northeast of the present hamlet within a distance of 500 metres another megalithic site is located. It also has stone circles and some of these stone circles have cairn packing measuring eight to ten metres in diameter. Here nearly 20-25 burials were encountered.

Chilamakuru is a village which is situated nine kilometres west from Yerraguntla mandal head quarters in Kadapa district. Towards east of the present village, within a distance of one kilometre, beside the main road from Chilamakuru we find a bare stretch of land. In that bare land there is a megalithic site located with ten cairns with measuring six to eight meters in diameter. These cairns were made by limestone pieces and most of the burials were disturbed by the natural phenomena.

Devandlapalli:-Devadlapalli village is situated in Rayavaram panchayat of Tsundupallimandal in Kadapa district. Here in this village a complex of 20 megalithic monuments were noticed and some of them were dolmens and remaining were dolmen encircles with slabs. All the monuments were disturbed by treasure hunters. Every burial wherever pottery pieces were encountered these were normally black and red ware etc. it was noticed. Significantly, two of the dolmens on north western orthostat were bearing carvings on the inner surface depicting tortoise, leaf-like figures, and humans with weapon, and sun like diagrams with red ochre and white pigments. Another dolmen depicted two elephants alongside each other and elephant and human figures drawn in white pigment (The Hindu: 24.06.2012).

Conclusion

Robert Bruce Foote, between 1885 and 1891 had discovered more than 50 sites, which were

geographically located in the present districts of Hyderabad, Krishna, Guntur, Nellore Kurnool, Kadapa and Ananthapuram. Recently, various archaeological explorations, including intensive survey in the northern Kadapa district was carried out. The Megalithic distribution of some sites in the Penner river basin of the Kadapa district was located and surface collections were available. In these collections at Hanumantharaopeta different pottery were discovered, while from Peddamudiam and Tanguturu animal bone tools and stone artefacts has been collected from the sites. Thus these Megalithic sites in Kadapa district of Andhra Pradesh were found to be the

best examples for the evidence of early human activities and cultural community of the region.

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