



Megalithic Culture In Krishna Valley Special Reference To Krishna And Guntur Districts

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The **Krishna Valley** is one of the most important cultural regions of South India, showing continuous human occupation from **prehistoric times to the early historic period**. Among these phases, the **Megalithic culture** (Iron Age) occupies a crucial position and forms a **cultural link between the Neolithic–Chalcolithic and Early Historic (Satavahana) periods**. In the Krishna Valley, especially in **Guntur and Krishna Districts**, Megalithic remains are found widely in the form of **burial monuments, iron implements, and characteristic pottery**.

Explorations and excavations, in the Krishna valley brought to light several burial complexes with different architectural features, yet culturally homogeneous in nature. This is perhaps due to the existence of several tribal groups in the Megalithic society, who followed invariably their burial practices in accordance with their tribal practices to fulfill their eschatological belief.

The region records a very good cultural evolution from Paleolithic to the modern time. Even though man accustomed to modern technology, there are still people in few areas of this region still in the stage of hunting and gathering (Chenchus and Yanadis) in this time scale megalithic culture of this region is a field which promptly flourished in between Neolithic and early historic settlements. Megalithic people are best known for their **stone-built burial monuments**, erected in memory of the dead. The **Iron Age phase** of South India, broadly dated between **c. 1000 BCE and 300 BCE**, with some continuity into the early historic period. This culture is mainly identified through **burial practices**, iron tools, and characteristic pottery.

Megalithic Culture:-

The Megalithic culture in Krishna Valley containing number of megalithic sites, noticed at several places between the both valleys lie Right and left.

A. Lift bank of the River: Agiripalli, Tenneru, Muktyala and Kesarapalle etc...

B. Right bank of the River: Nagarjunaonda, Amaravathi, **Bathany Colony at Bapatla, Karampudi** and Mothadka etc...

Left Bank:

1. Agiripalli

This village is located in the Nuzvid taluk of Krishna district, about 30 kms. from Vijayawada. The village nestles to the south of the hill, locally known as Sobhanadri. At the western foot of the hill lies an extensive Cist burial complex. Most of the burials are devoid of boulder circles. The burial site is covered by rubble and red soil but the lower slopes of the hill and the extensive plains have a deposit of red alluvium to a thickness of 3 to 4 mts.

2. Tenner:

This village is situated about 23 kms. east of Vijayawada, in Vijayawada Machilipatnam Railway line in Krishna District. To the east of the village is a Megalithic site in which legged sarcophagi were reported in sand unes. In all the cases north-south orientation was noticed. Most of the adult burials were noticed in the sarcophagia, having 8 to 12 perforated legs. Most of the tubs are of mattered ware. The entire body of the tub was hand made. In some cases there are decorations of rope design on the exterior rim of tub and two perforations on the front side.

The excavation of the burials at Tenneru brought to light a new aspect in the method of disposal of the dead. It appears that a regular pot-making industry, turning out these earthen ware tubs, was in vogue. This was substantiated by the presence of tubs of standard size made in two halves. In case of shortage of a tub of suitable size for an abnormally tall adult, a gap is seen at the centre which is plugged by placing potsherds. The custom of depositing pottery, such as lid-cum bowls and tumbler jars, inside the tubs is also common. The associated finds include of knives, blades, two beads of carnelian, besides a bunch of shell beads.

3. Muktyala:

It is a prominent Zamindari village in the Nandigama taluk of Krishna district. About 2 km. from Muktyala, there is a dilapidated village by name Bhogalapadu near the river Krishna with an extensive historical mound close by. About 1 km. towards north of Bhogalapadu and adjacent to the Jaggayyapet-Muktyala road, is a rocky knoll, studded with a large number of Megalithic cist-burials with passage chambers. The mound is locally known as Virulabodu (mound of heroes). In the vicinity of the burials is a figure of a galloping horse, incised over a whitish shale slab.

Out of curiosity, Veturi Sankar Sastry dug out two cist burials. One cist had a Port-hole, leading to a passage chamber. The passage chamber contained skeletal remains of a horse, and the main chamber with human bones. It appears that the mandible with teeth and vertebral column of the horse, were intact. Interestingly there is an illegible Brahmi inscription engraved above the port-hole.

The letters are considerably big and probably read as LOOVISRI. There is also one more letter below, which was identified as JA. Skeletal remains of animals such as horse and ox are reported from Pochampadu in the Godavari valley and Nagarjunakonda in the Krishna Valley.

4. Kesarapalle:

It lies about 21 km east of Vijayawada town, near Gannavaram, in Krishna District. The site is a moderate-sized village situated on the left bank of the River Krishna. The ancient habitation mounds are situated on the eastern side of the village and they are locally known as bogamdibba (harlots mound) the Megalithic site as Jangaladibba (the mound of phallus) and raja dibba (King's mound). Excavation revealed a sequence of habitational deposits among which period II was Megalithic in content characterized by the use of black red ware and other characteristic wares along with iron objects. In the successive floor levels, postholes and remains of ovens were found from this period. Excavations brought to light four cultural periods. They are period-I Neolithic-Chalcolithic, Period-II megalithic and Period-III early historic.

The section at the Megalithic site reveals three layers. All these three layers were bereft of any cultural material. Megalithic were dug either in the softer bed rock or reddish gravelly layer. A partly damaged Megalithic cist noticed in the section, yielded a pit dug out into the gravelly layer. Megaliths in the form of stone-circles or cairn-heaps are noticed on the surface, since they were buried under an accumulation varying in thickness from 10 cm. to 60 cm. Traces of stone-circles, were observed in the exposed sections. Only cists came to light. Cists with capstones were seen scattered here and there. No port-hole was noticed in any of the available slabs. Cists were laid invariably in north-south orientation and often in regularly-arranged groups. A few iron objects like a wedge and a spear-head were collected from the surface near the disturbed cists.

Right Bank:

1. Nagarjunakonda:-

Nagarjunakonda is a picturesque valley in the Palnad taluk of Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh, located on the right bank of the river Krishna. The Megalithic burials were systematically investigated in the final phase of archaeological activity, primarily designed to salvage the cultural wealth in its entirety. Fifteen Megaliths out of a total number of twenty one were tackled for an assessment of the cultural traits of Megaliths in the valley. The Megalithic burials taken up for excavation in two localities in the valley. Longhurst excavated a burial in the minor cluster at site No.44, as has been already stated, Megalith-I of the present series, lies in this locality. A total of eighteen stone circles were examined during the investigation, out of which thirteen were subjected to excavation. Except Megalith VII, which is a cist burial, all other burials (Megaliths II to XV) belong to the pit burial type.

2. Amaravathi:-

It was located about 30 km. from Guntur town, the village Amaravati is located on the right bank of the river Krishna. In the excavations, come to light seventeen urn burials near the northern quadrant of a minor stupa adjacent to the main stupa. The urns were buried intentionally in the dug out pits but it is to be noted that the builders of the stupa were probably ignorant of the fact that the place on which they were building the stupa was an urn burial ground of an earlier period. Otherwise, they would not have built the stupa at the place. The urns contained earth and pottery among which were found a number of small vessels, similar to those from Perumbair in the Chengelpet district, Tamilnadu.

3. Bathany Colony at Bapatla

The habitation site lies to the west of the Bethani colony about 1 km. away from Bapatla, on the way to Chirala in Guntur District. The Megalithic cist-burials were first noticed by the local people in 1984 while leveling the land. In the course of leveling, some fragments of a sarcophagus, human skeletal remains, polished black and red ware and coarse red ware pots were reported at a depth of 2 mts. earlier, a sarcophagus was reported measuring in length 1.35 mts. 40 cm. height and 25 cm. in width containing human skulls and bones. Excavations at a place called Nadelladibba in close vicinity of Bethani colony brought to light a portion of oblong cist burial at a depth of 1.15 mts. and oriented east-west. The single southern orthostat measured 1.65 mts. in length, 12 cm, thick and 75 cm. in height. The remaining slabs on other sides are missing. Inside the cist, the floor seems to be plastered with whitish clay over the sand bed. Except for few broken pot sherds of black and red ware, black ware and bones, no grave goods were reported.

4. Karampudi:

Boswell excavated some Megalithic cists in the neighbourhood of Karampudi in Guntur district. From his description, it appears that these are swastika patterned cists with port-hole and a passage. The chamber, sometimes divided into two or four cells by inserting vertical partitions. These transeptic slabs are also provided with port-holes. Inside these cells are found burnt human bones and pottery. Iron is conspicuous by its absence. He did not mention ornaments except for an ivory or bone armlet. It is reported that earlier was found.

5. Mothadaka, Thadikonda(M)

The Megalithic culture in particular zone i.e., Krishna Valley existing on the right bank of river Krishna at a radius of 15 kms. containing number of megalithic sites, noticed at several places between Amaravathi and Mothadka which prevailed favorable conditions such as raw material, rivulets, flora and fauna. Hence, occupied and lived for about 200 years. Subsequently occupied by the Early Historic Culture.

Mothadka (Latitude: 16°.37' North and Longitude: 80°.21' East) is located 15 kms from Guntur town on the road from Guntur to Amaravati in Tadikonda (mandal) of Guntur District which is a protected monument of the Department of Archaeology and Museums.

During exploration identified about 8 Megalithic burials at the foot of hillock locally known as "Pedda Konda" (Photo –I a & b). Near by these burials noticed the Early Historic site in disturbed condition due to agricultural operations. Here, collected abundant pottery of Red ware, Black and Red ware, Dull Red ware, Terracotta objects, Lead coins of Shatavahana period. Beads of Terracotta, Chalcedony, Jasper, and Crystal of various shapes and sizes. (Photo- II a & b)

During the field season i.e., 2011-2012 selected 3 burials conducted excavations to know the nature, cultural potentiality of the site. After removal of rank vegetation the diggings were started by employing quadrangle method of excavation.

The excavation revealed wheel made pottery and observed that, the fabric of these potsherds ranges from thin, medium and thick of coarse and medium contents and devoid of any slip or wash. Designs lines, rope like and thumb impressions are found on the exterior of the potsherds. The shapes noticed circular, globular of different sizes and noticed storage Jars medium size pots, vessels, lid cum bowls.

Basing on the evidences at burials and early historic site the area might have been occupied right from megalithic to early historic period datable to 6th Century B.C to 2nd Century A.D. On typological basis, these burials are classified as cairn circles with pit devoid of packing material on top.

Within the radius of 15 kms from the site number of Megalithic and Buddhist sites were discovered and excavated such as at Maddur (1978), Vaddamanu (1982-85) Amaravati (1972) Vaikuntapuram, Endroy, Ponnekallu, Thadikonda, Lam and Anantharam. All these megalithic sites are cist burials in nature which might have been the later in habitation where as Mothadka site is classified as Primitive burials since no evidence of iron implements and beads.

Basing on the above evidence the site can be assigned to early megalithic phase of Iron age culture in A.P.

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