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MEGALITHIC MONUMENTS IN RAYALASEEMA – A STUDY

Dr. Musugu Srinivasa Rao

Dean I/c

School of History, Culture & Archaeology

Potti Sreeramulu Telugu University

Srisailem Campus, Andhra Pradesh, India

Introduction

In this small article an attempt has been made to study of the Megalithic monuments in and around the Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh. This study based on the Archaeological Series of Andhra Pradesh. The word “Megalith” comes from the Greek word “mega”. It means “Huge” or Great. ‘Lith’ means “Stone”. In Archaeology, the term “Megalithic, is as well known. “A tomb built with ‘A big stone, in natural forms roughly dressed on even a grave marked with a prodigious rude stone or an excavation in soft rocks containing the remains of dead human beings. It also applies to erections of huge stones, memorial or religious in functions.¹ The Megalithic monuments are known as “Rakshasa Gullu”.²

Hawkins also claimed that the monument might be the representation of a Neolithic observatory, which was built not simply as other monuments, but was built for a significant purpose. The Indian megaliths are quite different from their counterparts in other parts of the world. These megalithic are more sepulchral, where more excavations, and explorations have been carried out and where a number of artifacts like pottery, bones, iron objects, grain etc. were encountered. The development of Megalithic study expanded in non-sepulchral Megalithic. Very few non-s sepulchral Megalithic monuments such as alignments and menhires are existing. The study of megaliths is not well developed in our country.

The Megalithic monuments are mainly four types

They are

1. Cists
2. Stone Circles
3. Dolmens
4. Menhirs

Basically, the Megalithic monuments are one type of structures. A structure or any structure built of large undressed or roughly dressed stones erected commonly in memory of Dead.

CISTS

These Cists are called as “Opening Cists” or “Post-hole Cists”. Cists are an underground structure and rectangular shape in plans, made of two long vertical slabs and one or two long horizontal slabs driven into the ground with a floor-slab and with or without a roof-slab. Some cists has side slabs with a circular, semi-circular or trapezoidal hole. In Brahmagiri excavations a typical port-hole cists has been exposed. Mallapuram and Gallapalli Megalithic Monuments in Chitradurga district in Karnataka State.³ (Wheeler.R.E.M: Ancient India No.4, Madras, 1948, p.180) In Rayalaseema region there are number of cists in Thimmaganipalli and Palavoy village in Ananthapur district and Kosgi, Adoni Taluka of Kurnool District. Generally, Cists are burial plans containing human bones, polished red slipped pottery, a number of iron implements such as swords, spears and axes and ornaments of gold and precious stones.⁴ (SubhaRao B: Prehistoric and Early Historic Ballary, Bombay 1949). In another cists containing bundle of bones in its centre with pottery and other things put around. The orientation of cists in always east-west. (Ram Reddy.V: A Study of the Neolithic Culture of South Western Andhra Pradesh, Archaeological Series No.51, Hyderabad, 1978, pp.32-33)

The Megalithic monuments, particularly port-hole Cists were first found in Mudigal of Kalyanadurga Taluka, Ananthapur District of Andhra Pradesh. In Mudigal, a thousand megalithic tombs were located in the cultivated and uncultivated lands and as well as in the modern grave-yard. All these monuments comprise Cistes, dolmens, stone-circles, cists surrounded by stone circles and menhirs. The south and east and foot of the Mudigal hill, thick habitational deposits containing pottery of Megalithic period over a comparatively thin Neolithic deposit. A few potsherds are also found. Locally these structures were the dwellings of a small structured people called as “Gujanis” or “Lilliputs”. And also, popular known as “Arya mauryas”. The local people believed that, they were the graves constructed in memory of the dead.⁵ (Satyanarayana. M: Sri Mudigallu Ramadevara Konda, Dani Vybhava Prasastyamulu [Telugu], Nellure, 1963, pp-18-32).



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STONE CIRCLES

The Stone Circles used by the builders for exposing the dead body after the desiccation of which a few selected bones were isolated and ritually put in the cists.⁶ (Wheeler. R.E.M : opcit p-554). Usually, the Stone Circles are circular in fashion, sometimes oval or irregular, with several flat small and big stone slabs arranged vertically all round with or without a huge pit inside the circles. They are located at all the places where cists were found. Sometimes the Stone Circles enclosed a number of cists, menhirs but in no case dolmens have been except for those reported in Raya Durga Area.⁷ (Krishna Swamy.V.D.: Megalithic types of South India, Ancient India, New Delhi, 1947, pp.35-45).

DOLMENS

The Dolmens are roughly square or quadrangular in plan, consisting of several upright orthostatic slabs erected on the natural ground level to support flat slab of stone, which covers a space or chamber below it. A port-hole may or may not be present in a Dolmen. Dolmens differ from cists, which are underground. The Dolmens has four side slabs one of which has a port hole and the top with a roof slab. The monuments is oriented north-east to south-west and there is a circular hole made at the bottom of the north-east orthostat. Dolmens unlike cists were probably built in memory of the dead but they were not the houses of a short statured tribals.⁸ (Rani reddy. V :op-cit, pp.33-34). 'Dolmens' consisting of a single capstone supported by three side slabs, one on each side, as walls-been taken away by the merchants of the Devarakonda village of Ananthapur District. In the same district Kondapuram and Mudigaluru, a village to the south-east or Dharamavaram revenue records, all the structure are dolmens similar to those found earlier. In a village called, Muthala Bonda about 2 kms north-east of Kalyana Durga, Addaguppa (a village about 6 kms South West of Raya Durga) and Kondapuram areas are also found Dolmens.

MENHIRS

The Menhirs consists of a single dressed or undressed stone with its base driven into the ground. These monuments vary in height from small too big and a frequently oriented north to south.⁹ Their occurrence at or near a burial spet shows their sepulchral character. Beside, menhirs may be commemorative also Almost all the sites in Rayadurga and Kalayna Durgama Areas in Ananthapuram District in Andhra Pradesh. These places are the main Megalithic moments in Rayalaseema especially in Ananthapuram District.

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