



## **DISTRIBUTION PATTERN AND STUDY OF MEGALITHIC MONUMENTS IN SOUTHERN ANDHRA PRADESH**

**MARUTHI CHANDRA CHEJARLA**

Research Scholar,  
Acharya Nagarjuna University,  
Guntur (AP) INDIA

### **ABSTRACT**

*Megalithic culture in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana has its own unique characters. However there are certain similarities between megalithic culture of Andhra Pradesh and rest of the world<sup>i</sup>. Megaliths are well distributed throughout south India, and in northeast India. The monuments are found at Leh in the extreme North, Adichannalur at extreme south, Assam in East and Chota Nagapur in the West. In south India Megalithic monuments are more in number than any other region of the subcontinent.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Etymologically, the word “megalith” is composed of two Greek words ‘*megathos*’ means “huge” and ‘*lithoi*’ meaning “stone”. The etymological meaning can’t be applicable to all the structures constructed with big stones. Sometimes megalithic monuments were also built with small stones and even sometimes, without any lithic appendage. The megalithic monuments are usually constructed with large stone slabs or blocks of stone either in their natural form or roughly quarried and trimmed. Many megalithic monuments were discovered in the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century by scholars and archaeologists. More than 400 megalithic sites have been discovered all over south India<sup>ii</sup> by 1970s and now the total number of sites easily exceed 1000.

Based on their burial practices the Megalithic monuments in Andhra Pradesh, they are divided into various types as follows: Single burial, Double burial and multiple burials. The tomb, which has an interment of a single body, is known as single burial. In India majority of the megalithic burials are multiple in character. There are also reports of many double burials. These burials are represented with remains of two persons in the same grave. There are quite a good number of instances where the excavations yielding skeletal remains belonging to two individuals. In multiple burials, remains of more than two persons are buried in the same grave.



Probably megalithic people might have practiced multiple burials to save the effort, material and time of the people. Hence they might have introduced transeption (partition) in cist burials. In this method, they were able to accommodate more individuals in a single grave. That is the reason, why even the simple slab cists show multiple burial characters by the presence of the skeletal remains of different individuals.

Broadly speaking megalithic burials in Andhra Pradesh can be divided into many categories. They are, Pit burials, Cist burials, Square and rectangular cists without slab projections, Swastika patterned cists Swastika-patterned cist with or without porthole, Swastika-patterned cist with or without passageway, Swastika-patterned cist with or without transeption, Transepted cists, Urn burials, Dolmenoid cists, Dolmenoid cists without projecting orthostats, Dolmenoid cists in swastika pattern, Rock-Cut Chamber, Sarcophagus burials, Terracotta Sarcophagus, Stone Sarcophagus and Wooden Sarcophagus, Stone circles, Slab circles, Cairn burials, Dolmens, and Menhirs.

### **Material culture:**

Lot of archaeological data is available to study the megalithic culture of South India. The discarded materials, artifacts, and other objects, which are recovered from the megalithic sites, give us varied details of Megalithic culture. By studying the artifacts, we know some of the Cultural, Economic, Social and Religious aspects of the Megalithic people. The objects that are recovered from Megalithic sites are made of Iron, Copper, Bronze, Silver, and Terracotta.

Large numbers of iron artifacts are recovered from various Megalithic burials. The Megalithic people mainly used iron for fabricating tools and weapons. These artifacts are crucial to understand the megalithic culture. The iron objects of the Megalithic period includes lances, daggers, tridents, wedge shaped blades, javelins, sickles, battle axes, knives, spearheads, axe with a cross ring fastener, axes with crossed fillets, arrowheads, spearheads both docketed and tangled, swords with a single or double edged, billhooks, hoes, horse bits including stirrups, plough shares, plough coulter<sup>iii</sup>.

Megalithic sites have yielded a good number of ornaments and some other objects made of gold, silver, copper, bronze and semiprecious material. The evidence shows that human beings as well as the animals used decorative ornaments. Probably, their belief in life after the death induced them to bury the personal ornaments in graves. It provides some gleanings, facilitating the study of the material, technique, and design of the ornaments used by the megalithic people.

Megalithic people knew the art of stone working. They could detach considerable size of slabs for the orthostats, cutting them to required shapes and sizes for the door slab, covering slab and lining the passages, making round and semi-circular opening in the orthostats. To do the above work, it needed considerable knowledge of stone quarrying and working. Their knowledge of iron technology might have helped a lot in these operations.

The Megalithic people's technological dexterity could also be found in Bronze objects. Adichannalur and Maula Ali bronzes contain admixtures of tin. Technological similarity with



Western types of metal represented at Sanur (bells), they are represented with Bronze bodies but iron clappers. Thus we can say that *pandukal* metal objects have been made by artisans but they did not take part in the culture, which the *pandukal* complex represents<sup>iv</sup>. Thus, we can conclude that megalithic people achieved control over almost all the metals.

Concerned with Chronology of the Megalithic culture, there has been a lot of confusion among the scholars. Many scholars proposed different dates based on their evidence, but still plausible argument is needed on chronology of different regions of India. This kind of confusion arose from the constructional differences, funerary deposits in the monuments (some small monuments that has large amount of funerary objects, but some big monuments which have very few objects). Contamination of the materials in the monuments and lack of evidence about the origin of these monuments is also another reason for this confusion. However, there are plausible dates for some of the regions of India.

Based on the radiocarbon dates, it is said that the megalithic phase in Maharashtra was earlier than that of Andhra Pradesh. It is proved by the Radiocarbon dates of megaliths from Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. The Radiocarbon dates of Paiyampalli, Kotia and Halingli gives a central date-range- 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. for the monuments of south India.

Due to the lack of sufficient radiocarbon dates for the megalithic monuments, we have to depend more on the stratigraphical evidences. Based on the above stratigraphical evidences, we can say the megalithic culture in Vidarbha region might have began around 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and Megaliths in Andhra Pradesh might have begun around, middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C. But, considering the recent evidence from Gachibowli<sup>v</sup>, it appears that the Andhra and Telangana monuments also have very early beginning.

The elaborate slab circles from Iralabanda<sup>vi</sup> and other places in South India are assigned to the early centuries of the Christian era. The megalithic burials in the sites contained many-legged sarcophagus. Probably the Megalithic burials yielding sarcophagi belongs to a later period. The Sarcophagi are found in deep South of Andhra Pradesh, suggest a later date. Prior to dates from sites like Gachibowli, it was said that the megalithic culture in Northern Andhra Pradesh ended earlier than Southern Andhra Pradesh, but now the recent evidence discounts this line of thinking.

The Vidarbha megaliths are represented with simple form of pit burial. There was no elaboration of burial construction in this region like the passageway, stone slab circles, dolmenoid cists with slab circles, and miniaturization of burial goods. They are the characteristics of last stage of megalithic monuments. Therefore, it is said that megalithic culture in Maharashtra, flourished between 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. In Andhra Pradesh megalithic culture flourished between 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries A.D.

At Brahmagiri, post megalithic strata appeared with rouletted ware, and some Roman coins were associated with megalithic graves of Coimbatore. Based on this evidence, Wheeler concluded that the megalithic culture in South India had flourished between 300 B.C. and the middle of the first century .A.D. Based on the typological similarities of findings from the

megalithic burials, Leshnik proposed late date theory, he has proposed 200 B.C. to 200 A.D. for the megalithic complex of South India.

Thus taking about the Megalithic culture of the peninsular India as a whole, it is broadly dated them from circa 1000 B.C. to about the third Century A.D. But there was no consensus among the maximum number of Scholars and Archaeologists about megalithic chronology. However, it is necessary to do a lot of research on chronology of the megalithic culture in South India as well as Andhra Pradesh.

The Andhra Pradesh and Telangana regions have good number of megalithic sites. Comparatively, the north coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh have less number of sites while the southern Andhra Pradesh and Telangana regions have more megalithic sites. The megalithic phase witnessed considerable addition to the varieties of ceramic wares.

### Distribution pattern of megalithic monuments in Andhra Pradesh:

Megalithic sites in Guntur district are represented with Urn burials, Dolmens, Stone circles, Cairn circles and Cist burials. Megalithic burials are identified in the regions like Amaravati, Guntur, Vinukonda, Narasaraopet, Chilakaluripeta, and Tenali regions. It is identified that Megalithic cultural evidences are not identified where the hilly regions are absent in this district. Here most of the sites are recognized with Dolmenoid cists and Dolmens. Distribution pattern of megalithic monuments in Guntur District has described as follows:

Name of the site	Region	Nature of the site
Amaravati	Amaravati	Megalithic Urn Burials
Lam	Guntur	Megalithic burials
Bollapalle	Vinukonda	Dolmens
Motadaka	Tenali	Megaliths stone circles
Lemalle	GNT and AMVT	Megalithic burials
Yadlapadu	Chilakaluripeta	Megalithic burials
Nemalipuram	Nemalipuram	Megalithic burials
Mallepadu	Tenali	Megalithic burials
Peddammaddur	Peddammaddur	Megalithic cairn circles
Peddakodamagundla	Karempedi	Buddhist site, Megalithic burials
Gokanakonda	Vinukonda	Neolithic, Megalithic, EH
Chityala	Chityala	Megalithic burials
Lam	Guntur	Megalithic cist burials
Viakuntapuram	Amaravathi	Megalithic Cairn Circles
Madduru	Madduru	Megalithic Cist Burials
Nagarjunakonda	Macherla	Megalithic burials
Dharanikota	Amaravati	Megalithic stone circles
Boppudi	Narasaraopet	Dolmens
Chevapadu		Menhirs
Endroyi		Menhirs
Gandiganamala	Vinukonda	Dolmens
Kamepalle	Narasaraopet	Port-holed Cists

Kanumarlepudi	Vinukonda	Dolmens
Karempudi	Palnadu taluk	Stone Circles
Kottaluru	Vinukonda	Dolmens
Tatarlapalle	Vinukonda	Dolmens
Timmayapalem	Vinukonda	Dolmens

Megalithic sites of Krishna district are represented with various types of megalithic monuments. Cist burials, Cairn burials, Oblong cists, Urns, Sarcophagus, Stone Circles, Menhirs, Cists with Port hole, Transpetion and Passage way are basic characteristics of Megalithic burials in Krishna district. Regions like Nuziveedu, Nandigama, and Jaggayyapeta are recognized with megalithic sites. In this district the transation from Neolithic period to Megalithic period is identified at Donabanda and Agiripalli. The distribution pattern of megalithic sites of Krishna District are distributed as follows;

<b>Name of the site</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Nature of the site</b>
Donabanda	Musilipatnam-Hyd road	Neolithic and Megaliths
Agiripalli	Nuziveedu	Neolithic tools and Megaliths
Muktyala	Nandigama	Megaliths Cist burials
Anasagaram	Nandigama	Megalithic burials
Vatsavayi	Jagayyapeta	Megalithic Burials
Kesarapalli		Megalithic burials
Jaggayyapeta	Nandigama	Megalithic burials
Kokireni	Nandigama	Stone Circles
Kuchidibba	Amaravati	Stone circles
Lingala		Menhirs
Nandigama	Nandigama	Stone circles and Cairns
Peddasangallu		Megalithic Habitation site

The distribution pattern of megalithic sites of Nellore District shows with some peculiar characterstics to this particular district. Dolmenoid cists, stone circles with cairns, and Cupmarks on Circle stones are identified in this district. Cupmarks is one of the important aspect of Megalithic people. Some of the scholars concluded that they are having some astronomical importance. The distribution pattern of megalithic burials in Krishna district has described below;

<b>Name of the site</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Nature of the site</b>
Jonnawada	Kovvuru	Megalithic burials
Kummaragunta		Dolmenoid Cists
Kanlgiri		Stone circles with cairns
Akilivalasa		Cupmarks on Circle stones
Prabhagiripatnam		Cupmarks on Circle stones
Alluru	Nandikotkuru	Megalithic culture
Dachuru	Rapur	M. Paleolithic, Megaliths
Kallur	Doravarisatram	Megaliths and hand axes,

Megalithic monuments of Prakasam district are identified in the regions like Markapuram, Podili, Kandukur, Cumbum, Addanki, Darsi, Kanigiri, and Ongole. Dolmens, oblong cists

with sarcophagus, transpted cists, stone circles, and burial complexes are identified in this district. Sites like Bodireddypally, Nirimpalli are having a special feature like hundreds of burials in a single site. The distribution pattern of megalithic monuments in Prakasam district is as follows;

Name of the site	Region	Nature of the site
Markapuram	Markapuram	Megalithic burials
Vegimudugu	Podili	Dolmens
Tangutur	Kandukur	Megalithic habitation site
Timmapur		Megalithic burials
Basinepalle	Cumbum	Megalithic burials

Gajjalakonda oblong cists with sarcophagus, transepted cists

Yeguvacherlopalli		Megalithic burials
Narva	Cumbum	Dolmens
Ramkur	Addanki	Megalithic burials
Tangutur	Kandukur	Megaliths Habitation
Darmavaram	Addanki	Megalithic, Early Historic
Guntupalle	Addanki	Neolithic, Megalithic
Jengamaheswrapuram	Addanki	Megalithic burials
Manikeswaram	Addanki	Megaliths, EH, EM, IP
Bodireddipalle <sup>vii</sup>		Hundereds Of Megalithic Burials
Gurizepalle	Addanki	Early Historic and Megaliths
Naidupalem	Darsi	Megaliths
Ramathirtam	Ongole	EH, MT, Incriptions, and Megaliths.
Seethanagulavaram	Podii	Megaliths
Nagireddipalli	Kanigiri	Megalithic Cairn circles
Vaddipadu	Kanigiri	Megalithic cairn Circles
Samadulagutta	Addanki	Megalithic Burials
Manikeswaram	Addanki	Megaliths
Cumbum	Cumbum	Megalithic burials
Erragondapalem	Markapuram	Dolmens
Giddaluru		Megalithic burials
Mangalikunta		Dolmens
Nallagunta		Dolmens
Tangarapalli	Markapur	Megalithic burials
Taticherla	Cumbum	Dolmens

Megalithic sites of Chittor District are represented with cist burials, Dolmenoid cist with Port hole, Sarcophagus, dolemnoid cists with slab stone circles, port holes, Slab Circles and port holed Dolmenoid cists, Cist burials, Anthromorphic Figures, cup marks, Stone circles, Cists and stone slab circles with port hole and Megalithic art. The Anthromarphic figures, megalithic art, cup marks and stone slab circles around cists are special characteristics of

megalithic monuments of chittoor district. Sites like Ubaramadugu, and Iralabanda are represented with megalithic art. Midimalla has represented with Anthropic figures. Stone slab circles are found at Govindareddypalli, Iralabanda, Kavalagunta, Midimalla, Velukur, Tavanampalle and Peddapartikunta. Kuppam region is represented with many hero stones which are belongs to megalithic period. Punganuru, chittoor, Vayalpadu, palamaneru, madanapalli, S kota, Venkatagiri kota, and Tavanampalli regions are famous for megalithic sites in this district of Andhra Pradesh. Following table will show the distribution pattern of megalithic monuments of chittoor district.

<b>Name of the site</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Nature of the site</b>
Chirichintavaripalli	Punganuru	Cist Burials
Basinikonda		Megaliths
Chittoor	Chittoor	Dolmenoid cist with port hole And Sarcophagi
Madanakonda		Megaliths
Amilepalle	Vayalpadu	Megalithic burials
Agaram	Kuppam	Hero stones
Attinam	Kuppam	Megaliths
Ayyavarigollapalli	Kuppam	Megaliths
Bodigutta		Dolmenoid Cists
Banigattu	Sarakattu	Dolmenoid Cists
Chinadarapalem	Kuppam	Megaliths
Dasamanipalli	Kuppam	Megaliths
Gasikapalli	Kuppam	Megaliths
Govindareddipalli	Gazulapalli	slab circles dolmens with porthole
Iralabanda	S Kota	dolmenoid cists with stone
Slab circles and port holes, Sarcophagi		
Kavalagunta	Chittoor	Slab Circles and port holed
Cists		
Kalakatur	Palamaner	Dolmens
Kotturu	Venkatagirikota	Dolmens
Madanakonda		Dolmenoid Cists
Mayaturu	Venkatagirikota	Cist burials
Midimalla	Chittoor	Dolmens with port hole
		Slab Circles and
Anthromorphic Figures		
Mushtur		Dolmens
Nayakaneri	Chittoor	cist burials
Sattipeta	Punganuru	Port Holed Cists
Tadakara	Tavanampalle	Dolmens
Tavanampalle		Stone Circles and
		Dolmens; cup marks
Peddapartikunta	Kuppam	Cists and stone slab circles
Reddyyanipalli	Kuppam	Dolmens and Cists
Solisettipalli	Kuppam	Dolmens
Tippanapalli	Kuppam	Cairn burials

Ubbaramadugu  
Venkatapuram

Kuppam

Megalithic art  
dolmens

Hero stones, Port Holes with cists, Cairn circles, Stone slab circles with port hole, passage way and Dolmenoid cists are quite common types of megalithic monuments in Ananthapur district. Regions like Kalyandurg, Kadambapur, Rayadurg, and Tadipatri are recorded with megalithic monuments. Sites like Mudigallu in Kalyandurg region represented with two stone slab circles with dolmenoid cist and passage way. The distribution pattern of Megalithic sites of Ananthapur District are as follows;

Name of the site	Region	Nature of the site
Akkamma-Konda	Kalyandurg	Neolithic to Medieval Period, Megalithic burials
Kadambapur	Kadambapur	Hero stones
Kalyandurg	Kalyandurg	Hero stones
Adiguppa	Rayadurg	Dolmenoid Cists
Bastarapalli	Kalyandurg	Megalithic burials
Devadulabetta		Cairns
Enuggavisanudu		Megalithic burials
Gallapalli	Rayadurg	Dolmenoid cists
Mudheguloor	Dharmavaram	Port Holed Cists
Mudigallu	Kalyandurg	Dolmens, Double circles With Port hole cists and passage Ways
Tadipatri	Tadipatri	Cairn burials

Kurnool, Adoni, Jampancheruvu, Panyam and Nandikotkur regions are having the evidences of megalithic sites in Kurnool district. Megalithic sites of Kurnool district are represented with Cist burials with Port holes, Megalithic dolmens with Porthole, Swastika patterned cists, and stone circles. Site like Veerapuram is having the evidences of megalithic habitations. Megalithic sites of Kurnool are mostly multi cultural sites. If the excavations are taken place cultural transition can be constructed. Megalithic sites of Kurnool District are distributed as follows;

Name of the site	Region	Nature of the site
Kurnool	Kurnool	Cists with Port hole Burials
Hattibellagallu	Adoni	Neolithic, megalithic Periods
Kupagallu	Adoni	Neolithic, megalithic periods
Mallapuram	Jampanacheruvu	Dolmens
Mirapuram		Megaliths dolmens with port hole swastika pattern
Nilugondla		Stone Circles
Owk		Mesolithic, megalithic
Panyam	Panyam	Megalithic burials



Ramapuram	Middlepaleolithic, Megalithic	
Sattanikota	Nandikotkur	Megalithic pottery
Alluru	Nandikotkur	Megalithic Burials

Megalithic sites of Kadapa District are distributed in Kamalapuram, Pulivendula, Siddavattam, and Badvel regions. Megalithic sites of this district represented with Dolmens, Menhirs, Cairn circles, Dolmenoid cists, Sarcophagus, and Dolmens with port hole type of monuments. Sankavaram in Badvel region represented a Sarcophagus in Ram shape which rare type of Sarcophagus. The distribution pattern of megalithic monuments in Kadapa district is as follows;

Name of the site	Region	Nature of the site
Pandavulametta	Mesolithic to Megalithic	
Alidena	Kamalapuram	Dolmens and Menhirs
Chinnakudala	Pulivendula	Dolmens and Menhirs
Gangaperuru	Siddavattam	Stone circles
Kanyathirtham	Peddandhuru	Cairn Circles Dolmens
Sankavaram	Badvel	Sarcophagus in Ram shape
Yerraguntla	Kamalapuram	Dolmens and Menhirs

Based on the available data it can be concluded that megalithic culture of Andhra Pradesh has its own peculiar characteristics. Most of the monuments in southern part of Andhra Pradesh are constructed in elaborate manner. It shows some sort of developed megalithic culture than Telangana and Maharashtra megalithic monuments. In Southern Andhra Pradesh particularly Rayalaseema region monuments are constructed with stone slab circle, Sarcophagus, port holes, transepted way, port holes to the cists and slab circles also.

Stone slab circles are found at Govindareddypalli, Iralabanda, Kavalagunta, Midimalla, Velukur, Tavanampalle and Peddapartikunta. Kuppam region is represented with many hero stones which are belongs to megalithic period. Sites like Iralabanda in Chittoor district has represented with stone slab circles with port holes. Some of the monuments in Iralabanda had three and four stone slab circles around swastika pattered cist.

Sites like Ubaramadugu, and Iralabanda has the evidences of Megalithic art. Based on the artistic evidences it is proved that megalithic people of this region knew mathematical symbols. At Iralabanda square and round symbols and animal riders evidences are identified. Megalithic site Midimalla has represented with Anthropomorphic figures which are belongs to Megalithic period. It is one of the major sites which has represented with Anthropomorphic stone slab sculptures. Here also elaborately constructed megalithic monuments are identified.

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<sup>ii</sup> Ramachandra, K. S., *A Bibliography on Indian Megaliths*, Madras, 1971.

<sup>iii</sup> Sundara A., *The Early Chamber Tombs of South India*, Delhi, 1975. p. 221.

<sup>iv</sup> Leshnik S. Lawrence., *South Indian 'Megalithic' burials, The pandukal complex*", 1975, p. 156.

<sup>v</sup> Rao, K.P., 'Excavations at Gachibowli: A Preliminary Report', published in *Puratattva*, No.40, 2010, pp.102-111.

<sup>vi</sup> Branfill, B.R., "Old-Slab Monuments in Madras and Maisur", *IA*, Vol.X, 1881, pp.97-100.

<sup>vii</sup> *IA*, 1978-79, p.25.