



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND EXCAVATIONS IN TELANGANA REGION: A RETROSPECTIVE STUDY

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Abstract

Excavations constitute a significant part of the activities of the Department of Archaeology and Museums. This has been one of the primary means and to this day, it continues to be a highly effective method for unearthing the treasures and wonders of history that lay buried under different layers of the ground surface and sub-surface. The process of excavation is a complex task that involves surveying and finalizing the site for excavations, which also involves extensive research and groundwork done by experts. This process has to be carried out with utmost care and precision so as to not damage the artefacts, mounds and ancient constructions while at the same time digging deeper to bring them to light.

Key Words: *Excavation, Burial, Megalithic, Paleolithic, Menhirs, Pit Burial, Etc.*

Introduction

The south, East region of Telangana, particularly the Nalgonda district, occupies a pivotal position on the archaeological map of Telangana. It attached the ancient man right from the prehistoric times, as it was endowed with hill ranges, isolated hills and traversed by rivers and rivulets. The hill ranges run through the Nalgonda, Devarakonda region extend upto the Khammam district in the north, eastern direction. The Nallapahad hill range bifurcate the above hill range after reaching the Dindi River and Peddavagu. The Rock formation in the region comprises of the peninsular granite complex with intrusion of hornblende epidiorite schist's that occupy a major portion of the district. Basic dole rites, epidiorite dyes and quartz veins occur in crowded groups in the granite terrain. The area is drained by the river Krishna, Musi, Aler, Dindi, Halia, Kangal and Peddavagu. The land covers red morrum soil interspersed by patches of black cotton soils. The flora of the area consists of Euphorbia, thorny scrubs and dry grasses and green patches of mesophytictype, while the fauna includes jungle cat, the stripped hyena and jackal seen occasionally in the forests. The region abounds in many pre, proto and early historic sites. A good number of Paleolithic, Micro Lithic and Neolithic tool-kits were reported from the banks of the river Krishna. The early historic phase in the region begins with the advent of the Satavahana as it was attested by the epigraphically, numismatic and cultural material reported at places like Vardhamanukota, Yeleswaram, Arlagaddagudem etc.

Archaeological Sites in Telangana

S.No.	Place / District	Name of the Site	Excavation/ Publication in the Annual Reports
1.	Maula Ali (Hyderabad)-	Megalithic Burial-	1915-16
2.	Raigir, Hyderabad State-	Megalithic Burial-	1915-16
3.	Janampet, Poloncha Taluq Hyderabad State-	Megalithic Burial-	1917-18, 1918-19 & 1940-41
4.	Warangal, Hyderabad State-	Warangal Fort-	1934-35
5.	Hasmatpet, Hyderabad-	Megalithic Burial-	1934-35, 2000-01
6.	Paithan (Aurangabad) Hyderabad State -	Early Historic Site-	1935-36
7.	Maski (Raichur) Hyderabad State-	Early Historic Site-	1936-37
8.	Kadkal (Raichur) Hyderabad State-	Early Historic Site-	1936-37
9.	Rajan Kallur (Raichur) Hyderabad State -	Megalithic Burial-	1939-40



10. **Kondapur** (Sangareddy) Hyderabad State - Early Historic Site- 1940-41
11. **Phangiri** (Nalgonda)- Early Historic Site - 1940-41, 2004-05, 2006-07, 2010-11
12. **Yeleshwaram** (Nalgonda)- Early Historic site- 1955-56, 1960-61, 1961-62
13. **Shaikpet**, Hyderabad- Qutub Shahi Tombs (Golkonda)- 1969, 1970-71, 1971-72, 1972-73, 1973-74, 1974-75
14. **Peddabankur** (Kareemnagar)- Early Historic Site- 1970-71, 1971-72, 1972-73, 1974-75
15. **Gollathagudi** (Mahabubnagar)- Temple Site- 1971-72, 1972-73, 1973-74, 1974-75
16. **Kadambapur** (Kareemnagar)- Megalithic Burial- 1974-75
17. **Dulikatta** (Kareemnagar)- Early Historic Site- 1974-75, 1975-76, 1976-77, 1984-85
18. **Polakonda** (Warangal)- Megalithic Burial- 1975-76, 1976-77
19. **Keesaragutta** (Ranga Reddy)- Early Historic Site- 1975-76, 1976-77, 1978-79, 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83
20. **Nelakondapally** (Khammam)- Early Historic Site - 1976-77, 1983-84, 1984-85, 1986-87, 1987-88, 1988-89, 1990-91, 1993-94, 1994-95, 1996-97
21. **Budigapalli** (Warangal)- Early Historic Site- 1976-77
22. **Uppalapadu** (Mahabubnagar)- Megalithic Burial- 1977-78, 1978-79
23. **Chagatur** (Mahabubnagar)- Megalithic Burial- 1977-78, 1978-79
24. **Pragatur** (Mahabubnagar)- Megalithic Burial- 1977-78
25. **Peddamarur** (Mahabubnagar)- Megalithic Burial- 1977-78
26. **Chinnamaruru** (Mahabubnagar)- Megalithic Burial- 1978-79, 1979-80
27. **Gummadam**, (Mahabubnagar)- Early Historic Site - 1978-79, 1979-80
28. **Vedantapuram** (Khammam)- Temple Site- 1978-79
29. **Gajulabanda** (Nalgonda)- Buddhist Site- 1978-79
30. **Kotagadda** (Nizamabad)- Early Historic Site- 1978-79
31. **Nagnuru** (Kareemnagar)- Temple Site- 1978-79, 1980-81
32. **Pagidigutta** (Mahabubnagar)- Early Historic Site- 1978-79
33. **Kotilingala** (Kareemnagar)- Early Historic Site- 1979-80, 1980-81, 1981-82, 1983-84, 2008-09, 2010-11
34. **Karapakala** (Mahabubnagar)- Early Historic Site- 1979-80
35. **Rangapuram** (Mahabubnagar)- Early Historic Site- 1979-80
36. **Kyetur** (Mahabubnagar)- Early Historic Mound- 1981-82
37. **Kandi** (Medak)- Early Historic Site- 1982-83
38. **Huzurnagar** (Nalgonda)- Megalithic Burial- 1982-83
39. **Hindur** (Medak)- Early Historic Site- 1982-83
40. **Nirzappala** (Medak)- Early Historic Site- 1982-83
41. **Ghanpur** (Adilabad)- Pre-Historic Site - 1983-84
42. **Vardhannapeta** (Warangal)- Medieval Site- 1984-85
43. **Aija** (Mahabubnagar)- Megalithic Burial- 1984-85
44. **Jainadh** (Adilabad)- Temple Site- 1984-85
45. **Nagarapadu** (Khammam)- Early Historic Site- 1985-86
46. **Lebarthy** (Warangal)- Megalithic Burial- 1985-86
47. **Erladinna** (Mahabubnagar)- Megalithic Burial- 1986-87, 1988-89
48. **Edithanur** (Medak)- Early Historic Site- 1987-88
49. **Kohir** (Medak)- Early Historic Site- 1987-88
50. **Puranahaveli** (Hyderabad)- Medieval Site- 1988-89
51. **Bodhan** (Nizamabad)- Early Historic Site- 1989-90, 1992-93
52. **Gangadhara** (Kareemnagar)- Early Historic Site- 1990-91



53. **Pulimamidi** (Ranga Reddy)- Early Historic site - 1992-93
54. **Yeleshwaram** (Nalgonda)- Early Historic site- 1955-56, 1960-61, 1961-62
55. **Burgupally** (Ranga Reddy)- Early Historic Site -1994-95
56. **Khammam Town** (Khammam)- Megalithic Burial- 1996-97
57. **Konasamudram** (Nizamabad)- Early Historic site- 1996-97
58. **Veligonda** (Nalgonda)- Megalithic Site- 1999-2000
59. **Urukonda** (Mahabubnagar)- Megalithic Site- 1999-2000
60. **Gorekunta** (Warangal)- Early Historic Site- 1999-2000
61. **Gollegudem** (Khammam)- Temple Site- 1999-2000
62. **Gundala** (Khammam)- Temple site- 1999-2000
63. **Rudramakota** (Khammam)- Medieval Site- 1999-2000
64. **Lingampally** (Rangareddy)- Megalithic Site- 1999-2000
65. **Geesukonda** (Warangal)- Early Historic Site- 2000-2001
66. **Andugula** (Mahabubnagar)- Megalithic site- 2011-2012

Salvage Archaeology

Kotilingala in Karimnagar District appears to be one among the thirty walled towns mentioned by the Megasthenes in his Indica, which had later become submerged in the Sripada Sagar project. Excavations conducted here during the years from 1979-1983 brought to light the pre-Satavahana and Satavahana cultural material.

Excavations for the field seasons 2016-17

Palamakula and Narmetta villages, Siddipet District.



The megalithic burials located in Palamakula and Narmetta villages are selected for excavation during the year 2016-17.

Megalithics are special class of monuments in Deccan, particularly in Telangana State. In Archaeology, the term 'megalith' denotes a tomb, built of huge stones either dressed or undressed. The



South Indian Megalithic Tombs represents a distinctive culture phase which succeeds the primitive Neolithic culture. This phase is also known as Iron Age Culture. Generally, the Megalithic culture is dated from 1000 B.C. to 2nd Century A.D.

These megalithic monuments are classified in to eight types i.e. 1) Dolmenoid cist 2) Cairn Circles 3) Menhir 4) Topikal 5) Pit burials 6) Dolmens 7) Avenues and 8) Alignments. This phase is characterised by black and red ware pottery with or without graffiti marks and iron implements.

Palamakula (V), Nangunoor (M), Siddipet District

The Department has taken up excavations at double circle cairn cist burial and cairn circle cist, to understand the construction pattern and cultural traditions of this region. Palamakula is a roadside village, located on Siddipet – Husnabad Road at a distance of 13 kilomtrs. from Siddipet. The site is located towards northern side of the village.

Four burials namely as Meg.I, Meg.II, Meg.III and Meg.IV are selected for excavations.

Meg-I

The cairn circle with cist devoid of capstone is located on the north side of the village, very near to the road leading to Pathadanganapalli village and laid quadrants. The cist burial is encircled with undressed boulders numbering 14. The dia of this meg is 6 mtrs.

The orthostats in swastika shape with port hole were exposed and the length of the orthostats is 2.30 mtrs and width is 1.20 mtrs.

Meg -II (Double Circle Cist Burial)

The Meg-II is located at a distance of 85 mtrs towards the south side of the Meg- I. The dia of Circle is 8 mtrs. The gap between outer circle and inner circle is 1 mtr. The outer circle has 16 boulders and inner circle contains 12 undressed boulders.

At a depth of 0.30 cms orthostats on all four sides are exposed in swastika pattern and a port hole on north side with 0.60 cms in dia. In this burial, only few bone pieces are noticed.

Meg-III

The Meg-III is located on west side, 50 mtrs to Meg-I. The dia of the burial is 4 mtrs devoid of any circle boulders. Black and Red ware bowls, red ware pots and three legged miniature pots were recorded.

Meg-IV

Meg-IV is located 55 mtrs away from the Meg-I on the northern side. At a depth of 0.30 cms, orthostats are noticed in Swastika pattern. The length of Orthostat is 1.60 mtrs and width is 1.20 mtrs. On the eastern side at the depth of 0.40 cms, pots of red ware and black and red ware and bowls are noticed in a systematic manner. At a depth of 1.25 mtrs on western side, a small cist was exposed. The length of orthostat of cist is 1.25 mtrs and width is 0.50 cms. The cist is shown as independent one. The gap of 0.50 cms on south side and 0.15 cms on western and northern sides are given. At the depth of 1.75 mtrs, a fragment of skull portion in fragile condition, long bones and ribs were exposed. Pottery of black and red ware bowls, red ware pots and iron implements i.e., axe, sickles and unidentified iron implements are recorded.



Highlights

The unique feature of this site is exposing of Cist with in a Cist, which is rare type burial so for excavated in Telangana State.

Narmetta (V), Nangunoor (M), Siddipet District

Narmeta village is located on Siddipet – Husnabad Road at distance of 16 Kms. To understand cultural and traditions of megalithic communities, particularly of this region and Telangana State in general, two Megs namely: Menhir and Cairn burial are selected for taking up excavations and named them as Meg-I and Meg-II.

Meg-I:

The excavations are conducted at this burial with Menhir is peculiar in nature having double circle boulders. The dia of the Meg-I is 14 mtrs. having 24 boulders as inner circle and 6 boulders as outer circle. The Menhir is planted on northern side and it measures 2.95 mtrs. in height and 95 cms. in width. At a depth of 45 cms., anthropomorphic shaped capstone in North - South orientation is noticed. The capstone measures 6.70 mtrs. in length, 4 mtrs. in width and 65 cms. in thickness. This capstone appears to be the largest in size so far exposed by the department in the past. When the capstone was lifted, compact black cotton soil tightly rammed appearing to be a floor/roof is noticed. The central portion of this floor / roof is disturbed by the roots of tree and noticed loose soil in circular shape. At a depth of 1 mtr. oval shaped pit measuring 6.79 mtrs. in length and 4 mtrs. in width is noticed. Two iron objects i.e. knife, knife with handle, bone ornament and iron hook were recorded at the depth of 1.95 mtrs. Fragments of skull and bone pieces were noticed on the northern side of pit along with broken red ware storage jars at a depth of 1.98 mtrs.

Meg-II

The Meg-II is located on the northern side of Meg-I. The dia of this Meg-II is 8 mtrs. without boulders. At a depth of 1.30 mtrs., exposed an oval shape pit with very loose soil. From this pit, red ware pots, black and red ware bowls, black ware, deep bowl, fire stands (4), three legged miniature red ware bowl and conches are collected.

Highlights

- Biggest cap stone (6.70 x 4.00 x 0.65 mtrs.) in anthropomorphic shape has been exposed at site is rare and unique. The cap stone is big in size in South India
- Unique red ware fire stands with perforations were recovered from this meg probably used for funeral purpose not reported in any megalithic burial except in the State.
- Graffiti marks which are common on pottery are also reported from this site.
- Three legged red ware miniature pot is also rare find from this site.
- Antiquities: Diamond shaped bone ornaments is reported for the first time in megalithic context in this region along with iron knife and iron hook.

An Early historic site in Telangana state field season 2015-2016:

Pajjuru Village, Chandanapally Mandal, Nalgonda District



Pajjuru and its environments

Pajjuru village (70 07'E 79 65'N) lies on the left bank of the rivulet Peddavagu a tributary of the river Musi. The early historic site located plain area and is about 14 kms Nalgonda district and 120 kms from Hyderabad via Nakerekal and it is just 4 kms from Chandanapally, the Mandal Headquarters in Nalgonda district. At present, the rivulet Peddavagu flows 2 kms away from the habitation in North - south direction.

The department has commenced excavation at Early Historical Site at Pajjuru (v) Tipparthy (M) Nalgonda District for the field season 2015-16. Smt.N.R.Visalatchy, IPoS, Director Department of Archaeology and Museums inaugurated excavation on 18th February 2016. The excavation at the site has been taken up with a view to study the cultural history of Nalgonda District in particular and Telangana State in general. The Excavation will be continued for period of one month.

Recent Findings from Buddhist Mahastupa

Phanigiri Village, Tirumalagiri Mandal, Nalgonda District

The Department has taken up conservation and Restoration of Mahastupa and Chaityagruhas at Phanigiri hillock. During the scientific clearance works on January 6, 2015 a valuable dull red ware earthen pot with silver container consisting of 11 miniatures beats, three silver and three thin gold flower pelts were discovered at the north eastern corner of Mahastupa, at the base of drum portion.

In view of this discovery, it can be assessed that this Maha stupa may be considered as Paribhogika stupa (containing the personal belongings of Buddhist monks) which had flourished right from Ashoka period to 4th CAD.



A Potin Coin (weighing 1.3gms dia 1.5 cms) was also collected from the surface. On the obverse of the coin, bust of the male figure (King) and on the reverse, a ship with legend of 3rd CAD characters are depicted. Preliminarily it is deciphered as Mahakshtrapa.

In Telangana State this is first such Stupa discovered with personal belongings of a Buddhist Monk and is hence considered as an auspicious one.

Excavation of Megalithic burial site

Pullur Banda Village , Siddipet Mandal , Medak District





The Archaeology Department after exploring the archaeological potentiality of the site i.e., Menhir and Megalithic Burial site at Pullur Village has submitted proposals to Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, Government of India to accord permission for conducting excavation during the field season 2014-15.

The proposal was examined by the Central Advisory Board of Archaeology and Director General, ASI has accorded the permission. After receiving the permission, the department is conducting excavations of the Megalithic Burial Site under the supervision of Departmental Officers on scientific lines. The excavations started on 9th of July 2015 and continued for another 15 to 20 days.

Megaliths are a special class of Monuments in Deccan particularly in Telangana State. Almost all types of megalithic monuments like menhirs, stone circles, dolmens and dolmonoid cists are reported in hundreds of villages in all Telangana Districts. Discovery of cruciform monoliths in male and female forms known as Statue-Menhirs on the Mallugrugutta (Warangal) Galabha, Kachanapally (Khammam) is a unique feature in the megalithic culture of the mid-Godavari valley. The Megalithic monuments located in Telangana are usually dated anywhere between 1000 B.C and 200 A.D.

At Pullur Banda village (18°10'34"N 78°48'41"E), Siddipet Mandal, Medak district, there are nearly 50 Megalithic burials located. These are classified into three types viz., Menhir, Cairns and Dolmens. With a view to understand the culture and traditions of the Megalithic communities of this region two burials are selected for excavation.

Menhir

This is a huge (nearly 5.4 mts. ht) vertical stone kept to the north of the big burial (burial No. 1). Bruising is seen on its back side in the centre. These bruising are stick type human forms with weapons in their hands. At the foundations of the Menhir, a trench is laid and excavated upto 15 cms.



Cairn (Megalithic burial No.1)

This burial is located to the southern side of Menhir. This is the biggest one having a diameter of 10 X 10 mts., with fifteen boulders in circular shape with a huge capstone (weighing nearly 7 to 8 tonnes) broken into three pieces which are arranged in triangular shape. The capstone was lifted carefully with the help of crane without damaging the deposit of the burial, as it is impossible to lift manually and excavation was continued on scientific lines. During the excavation iron implements such as Dagger, Arrowheads, iron forecep, Knife, Javelin, black and red ware, black ware and red ware pottery, a small broken ring made of clay etc. were recovered. At a depth of 1.85 mts. in the centre of the pit bones were reported in a broken pot on bedrock. Most probably these bones seem to be part of the skull.

Cairn (Megalithic burial No.2)

This burial is located 30 mts. west of Menhir. It consists of 14 boulders in a circular shape in 8X8mts.diameter. This is also a pit burial having huge capstone. After carefully lifting capstone the excavation continued. In this burial black and red ware, red ware and black ware pottery were reported. At a depth of 1.5 mts., remains of bones are also reported in a damaged pot.

Conclusion

From the above evidence i.e., recovery of bone pieces in the pots in centre of the pits, it shows that these are secondary type of burials. The excavation continued for another 10 days to know more cultural evidence of the site. The bone pieces and related material were sent to the Indian Institute Chemical Technology for K14 test to decide the dating of the material. The Government is making all efforts to retrieve and preserve the Megalithic Burials wherever it is found, apart from its regular exploration and identification.

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