

The Social Composition of Megaliths in Telangana and Andhra: An Artefactual Analysis

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Abstract: *This article attempts to understand certain aspects of society between 1000 BCE to 300 CE in the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. As is known the region during this period was dominated by a unique funerary culture, the megaliths. They occur in mainly three varieties: pit, chamber and urn/sarcophagus. Of these, the pit and chamber burials were the most common in these two states. Due to the paucity of excavations at habitational sites, our main clue for the study of this period are the graves. Certain inferences can be drawn from them. For instance, given the labour involved, we can argue that these were built for the elite. In this paper, we attempt to understand the social composition of the burials by studying the artefacts buried in them. These artefacts can be divided into ritualistic and personal. The personal artefacts includes things like weapons, axes, sickles, ornaments and others. It is possible through the study of the latter we may discover the occupations followed by the deceased. This may help us understand the differentiation in the society, and also reveal to us the strata for which these magnificent burials were built.*

Keywords: *Archaeology, South India, Megaliths, Society*

I. Introduction

Between 1000 BCE to 300 CE, south India saw a practice of distinct funerary culture known as the megaliths. The word can be broken down as *megas* meaning big and *lithos* meaning stone. It implies funerary architecture that was built of large stone. They broadly occur in three types: i) Pit burials ii) Cist/Chamber burials and iii) Urn/ Sarcophagus burials.¹ The aim of this paper is to understand the social composition of these burials by studying the artefacts buried in them. The artefacts buried in these monuments can be of two types: ritualistic and personal. In ritualistic artefacts, we can identify objects like pottery, in which the final offering for the deceased was kept. Similarly, the presence of animal bones in the graves could imply sacrifice. On the other hand, some artefacts may be identified as personal, for example in Maski, a pit burial of a child had stone balls. The excavator identified it as a play object of the child.² Similarly, in a couple's burial at Pochampad, an ivory comb was kept near the head of the female skeleton.³ So it is possible that a study of artefacts can reveal to us the social compositions of the burials. Since the data involved is huge, we restrict ourselves to Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. The megaliths occurring in these states are in two varieties: pit burials and chamber burials.

These further could be further sub-divided on the basis of lithic appendage occurring with them.⁴ This means presence/absence of capstone, cairn packing, passage, port-hole and single/ double stone circle. Thus, nearly eight variations of pit burials are known: 1) Pit enclosed by earthen mound, 2) pit enclosed by cairn packing, 3) Pit burial enclosed by boulder circle/s 4) pit burial enclosed by cairn packing and bound by boulder circle/s 5) Pit circle capped by a slab and enclosed by boulder circle/s 6) pit circle enclosed by boulder circle/s, having flat slabs at the centre 7) pit circle with a ramp and enclosed by cairn stone circle/s 8) pit circle with a passage and enclosed by cairn stone circle/s. Similarly, around six variations of cist burials have been recorded. 1) Chamber burial with/without cairn packing and boulder circle/s 2) Passage chamber burial with/without cairn packing and boulder circle/s 3) port-holed chamber burial with/without cairn packing and boulder circle/s 4) passage, port-holed chamber with/without cairn packing and boulder circle/s 5) chamber with a sarcophagus burial and with/without a passage/port-hole and with/without cairn packing and boulder circle/s 6) rock-cut chamber burial

II. The Society Represented By Megaliths

Before analysing the artefacts, we shall take a brief survey of the historiography on the nature of the society. On this, varied opinions from nomadic-pastoralists to rank society have been expressed. Leshnik argued that the burials belonged to nomadic pastoralists.⁵ This is because very less habitation sites were associated with

¹Moorti, U. S. (1994), *Megalithic Culture of South India: Socioeconomic Perspectives*, Ganga Kaveri Publishing House, p. 2

²Thapar, B. K. (1957). Maski 1954: a chalcolithic site of the southern Deccan. *Ancient India*, 13, pp. 32-33

³ IAR 1966-67, p. 1

⁴Moorti, (1994), *ibid.* p. 2

⁵Leshnik, L. S. (1974), *South Indian megalithic burials: the Pandukal complex*, Steiner, pp. 247-251

these burials. At sites like Brahmagiri and Maski, which have been reported as habitational, have very thin deposits. Further, the two sites gave data for sickles, arrowheads, and nail fragments which, he argues, are characteristics of seasonal camps than permanent settlements. The data of horses in the burials makes them comparable to present-day Ahir pastoralists who are known for their equestrian skill. The pastoralists, like their central Asian counterparts, might have practiced agriculture on a small scale, as the presence of sickles and occasional plough, hoe discovered in the data shows. The occurrence of carpentry tools like adze, and celts was dismissed by him and he believed that specialised division of labour did not exist.

A similar opinion on the Vidarbha megaliths was offered by S. B. Deo.⁶ He also argued the society to be nomadic pastoralist. This is seen in the dominance of cattle, sheep and goats bones in the faunal assemblage; recovery of small number of agricultural equipment like sickles and ploughs; and fewer amounts of grains at various sites. Also, these sites had wattle-and-daub structures which are characteristic of pastoral society. However, unlike Leshnik he postulated the existence of goldsmiths, ironsmiths and coppersmiths. This implies division of labour. And the graves also reflect a difference in status as the presence of horse, gold and copper/bronze lid shows. These were possibly the graves of the elite. On the other hand, presence of semi-precious stones, sacrifices of bull, pig in some graves indicates mid-level status of those buried there.

On the other hand, U.S Moorti rejected the observation of lack of habitational sites by Leshnik.⁷ According to him, since 1930's, nearly 176 habitational cum burial sites have been reported. However, deposit thickness is known for only 19 sites. The average is around 1.5m - 2.5 m which are by no standards flimsy. In B. Narasimhaiah estimation, a culture deposit of a metre indicates 400 years of occupation.⁸ This means that the groups represented by the megaliths were not nomadic. Moreover, the megalithic folks are credited with the introduction of tank-irrigation as many of the sites are located near deep valleys where water can be trapped for irrigation. So this indicates an agricultural society. Further, V. D. Misra pointed out that wattle-and-daub structures were also known with PGW (correlated with later Vedic), which by no means was a pastoral society.⁹ Also, the existence of potters, coppersmiths, ironsmiths and bead-makers meant the existence of surplus production.

A. Sundara argues that it is difficult to conclude whether the society is nomadic-pastoralist or settled agricultural.¹⁰ He believed that some of the sites were in danger of being submerged if a bund was raised in the vicinity. So instead of irrigation, the availability of raw material in the vicinity was the major criteria for location of settlements. Thus, the society could not be a settled agricultural. On the other hand, he thinks that the pastoral society paradigm is also difficult to substantiate.¹¹ Like at Brahmagiri, the lower megalithic layer overlaps with Neolithic layer and upper layers of the culture overlaps with the early historic. As a result, we cannot ascertain with certainty the kind of animals that are associated with megalithic pastoral economy. So the current state of data is inconclusive.

U.S Moorti has postulated a mixed economy based on agro-pastoral production.¹² Further, he argues the archaeological data to represent a rank-society. He followed five criteria laid by Peebles and Kus to recognise rank society from the graves: i) presence of hierarchy of settlements, ii) location of settlements in an area of subsistence sufficiency, iii) organised production activities that transcend the basic household group, iv) correlation between those elements of the cultural system's environment which are of a frequency, amplitude and duration to be dealt with but which are least predictable and evidence of society-wide organizational activity to buffer and deal with them.¹³

Moorti found the archaeological data to fulfil the criteria of a rank-society. The settlement size of about 116 sites is known, out of which 26 large settlements are above 5 hectares, and 90 are smaller settlements, less than 5 hectares. Among the smaller settlements, the size ranges from less than a hectare to 5 hectares. Moreover, most of these sites were located on agriculturally fertile zones which indicate some sort of sufficiency. The building of megaliths shows some kind of inter-community organization. However, the presence of non-kin

⁶Deo, S. B. (1985), The megaliths: their culture, ecology, economy and technology, in S B Deo and K Paddayya. *Recent Advances in Indian Archaeology*, Pune: Deccan College, pp. 89-94

⁷Moorti, (1994), *ibid.* p. 5

⁸Narasimhaiah, B. (1985), Response to S.B Deo, in S B Deo and K Paddayya, *Recent Advances in Indian Archaeology* Pune: Deccan College, p. 96

⁹Misra, V.D. 1985, Response to S.B. Deo, in S.B. Deo and K Paddayya, *Recent Advances in Indian Archaeology* Pune: Deccan College, p. 95

¹⁰Sundara, A. (1975). *Early Chamber Tombs of South India*. University Publishers, p. 155. Sundara, A. 1985. Response to S.B. Deo in S.B. Deo and K. Paddayya. *Recent Advances in Indian Archaeology* Pune: Deccan College pp. 97-98

¹¹Sundara, (1985), *ibid.*, p. 98

¹²Moorti, (1994), *op. cit.*, p. 44

¹³Moorti, (1994), *op. cit.*, p. 107

labour cannot be understood from the archaeological data. For the fourth criteria, Moorti identified warfare as the predictable disturbance that occurs with ‘frequency, amplitude and duration’ and presence of weapons means a ‘society-wide organizational activity to buffer or deal with these perturbations. ‘An additional criterion is existence of ‘non-volitional ascribed ranking of persons.’ To ascertain this, Moorti analysed the artefacts from 186 burials across the region, and found the data to conform to that of a rank society.

Thus, we still do not have an answer on the nature of society to which these burials belonged. We now focus on the artefacts found in these burials. For our purpose, we further divide these graves into skeletal and non-skeletal type. The latter category can be further divided into symbolic and dummy. If the graves had artefacts but were without skeletal remains, they could be considered as symbolic. However, if the graves were without any skeletal data and artefacts, it is likely that they were dummy, a trap for treasure hunters or forgotten and abandoned.

III. Artefactual Analysis

3.1 Artefacts in the Pit Burials:

We take a total of 34 pit burials from all the two states. The major sites are Uppalpadu,¹⁴ Upperu,¹⁵ Kadambapur,¹⁶ Pochampad (Adilabad),¹⁷ Hashmatpet,¹⁸ Kharakpala,¹⁹ Pochampad (Nizamabad)²⁰ in Telangana; and Yeleshwaram,²¹ Nagarjunakonda,²² Ramapuram,²³ Satanikota²⁴ in Andhra Pradesh. The details of the burials at the various sites and the corresponding artefacts are given in Table I.

Table I: A summary of the artefacts occurring in the pit burials of the two states

DUMMY			
<i>Site</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Skeletal Remains</i>	<i>Funerary Articles</i>
Uppalpadu, Telangana	Megalith III	none	none
Uppalpadu, Telangana	Megalith IV	none	none
PIT BURIALS WITH SKELETAL DATA BUT NO FUNERARY ARTICLES			
Upperu, Telangana	Megalith I	skeletal remains	none
PIT BURIALS WITH SKELETAL DATA AND WEAPONRY			
Upperu, Telangana	Megalith II	two skeletons	BRW, RW, Iron blades, chisels and knives
Upperu, Telangana	Megalith III	two skeletons	BRW, RW, BW, fluted core, microliths chert blade, iron knife, wick lamp, tripod, ladle, terracotta ram finial
Kadambapur, Telangana	Megalith I	one skull	RW, BW, 1.25 m javelin, copper hilted dagger
Kadambapur, Telangana	Megalith II	two skull	RW, BW, dagger, javelin
Kadambapur, Telangana	Megalith III	one skull	BRW, RW, dagger, gold earrings
Kadambapur, Telangana	Megalith V	two skeletons	BRW, BW, RW, iron javelin, tanged spearhead, arrowhead, dagger, knife
Pochampad(Adilabad) Telangana	Burial 1	two skeleton	BRW, BW, RW, Sickle, chisel, triangular object, ivory comb, horse ritually sacrificed.
Hashmatpet, Telangana	Megalith 2	fragmentary bone	polished BRW, burnished BW, bright red ware, and dull red ware, iron sickle and stirrup
Yeleshwaram, A.P.	Cairn Circle	two skeletons	BRW, RW, BW, javelins, large lance, spike, horse sacrifice
Nagarjunakonda, A.P.	Megalith II	skeletal remains	RW, iron lance, spear or lance, arrowheads, tanged daggers, wedge, knife, ploughshare
Nagarjunakonda, A.P.	Megalith V	five skeletons	BRW, iron lance and wedge
Nagarjunakonda, A.P.	Megalith VI	multi-skeletal remains	BRW, iron dagger (2), unidentified iron objects, animal bones
Nagarjunakonda, A.P.	Megalith VIII	skeletal remains	RW; lance, dagger, iron wedge, spindle whorl
Nagarjunakonda, A.P.	Megalith X	skeletal remains	RW, BRW; iron spears, lances, dagger, wedge

¹⁴ IAR 1977-78, p. 12; IAR 1978-79, pp. 65-66

¹⁵ Subrahmanyam, B. (1997). *Pre, proto and early historic cultures of Krishna Tungabhadra Valley*. Bharatiya Kala Prakashan. pp. 143-144

¹⁶ Sastry, V. K. (1983). *The Proto and Early Historical Cultures of Andhra Pradesh* (No. 58). Government of Andhra Pradesh. p. 83

¹⁷ IAR 1963-64, p. 1; IAR 1964-65, p. 1; IAR 1966-67, p. 1

¹⁸ Krishnasastry, V.V., (1983), op. cit., pp. 72-73

¹⁹ Subrahmanyam, B., (1997), op. cit., p. 130

²⁰ Krishnasastry, V.V., (1983), op. cit. pp. 82-83

²¹ Khan, M. A. W. (1963). *A Monograph On Yeleswaram Excavations*, Andhra Pradesh Government Archaeological Series No. 14), p. 6

²² Subrahmanyam, R. (1975), *Nagarjunakonda, 1954-60* (Vol. 1), Archaeological Survey of India, pp. 166-182

²³ IAR 1981-82, pp. 6-8

²⁴ Ghosh, N. C. (1986), *Excavations at Satanikota, 1977-80* (Vol. 82). Archaeological Survey of India, pp. 42-50

Nagarjunakonda, A.P.	Megalith XII	multi-skeletal	BRW, RW; iron lance, dagger, wedges bovine animal bones
Nagarjunakonda, A.P.	Megalith XIV	skeletal remains	BRW, RW; iron lance and wedge, jewellery: 35 gold beads, 18 silver beads, two spiral earring; animal bones
Nagarjunakonda, A.P.	Megalith XV	skeletal remains	<i>Primary Deposit:</i> BRW, RW; iron dagger <i>Secondary Deposit:</i> BRW, RW
PIT BURIALS WITH WEAPONRY BUT WITHOUT SKELETAL DATA			
Pochampad (Adilabad), Telangana	Burial 2	None	BRW, RW, BW; lances, javelins, daggers with copper hilts, sickles, cross shaped hatchets
Pochampad (Adilabad)	Burial 3	None	BRW, RW, BW, lances, javelins, daggers, sickles, cross-shaped hatchets
Ramapuram A.P.	Megalith I	None	BRW, RW; iron dagger, long lance
Ramapuram, A.P.	Megalith III	None	BRW; javelin, strap like iron object with crescentic ends; stone mortar; conch shells with perforations
Ramapuram, A.P.	Megalith IV	None	BRW; chisel, knives, spearheads and a tanged dagger
Nagarjunakonda, A.P.	Megalith IX	None	<i>Primary offering:</i> BRW, RW; iron dagger animal bones; <i>Secondary offering:</i> lance, knife-blades
PIT BURIALS WITH SKELETAL REMAINS BUT WITHOUT WEAPONRY			
Upperu, Telangana	Megalith IV	four skeleton	BRW, polished BW; microliths
Kharakpala, Telangana	cairn burial	fragmentary skull	BRW, BW; copper bell
Nagarjunakonda, A.P.	Megalith XI	two skeletons	BRW, RW; iron wedge or celt; spindle-whorl
Satanikota, A.P.	Megalith CI	Set 1: 2 skeletons Set 2: teenage girl(?)	Set 1: pottery, goat bones Set 2: none
Pochampad (Nizamabad), Telangana	Megalith 1	two skulls	RW, BRW
Pochampad (Nizamabad)	Megalith II	Four skulls	RW, BW, BRW
Pochampad (Nizamabad)	Megalith III	one skull	RW, BRW, BW; animal bones
PIT BURIALS WITHOUT SKELETAL DATA AND WITHOUT WEAPONRY			
Satanikota, A.P.	Megalith BI	none	RW, BW

BRW: Black and Red ware. RW: Red Ware. BW: Black Ware. A.P. :Andhra Pradesh

From the table we may identify two pit burials at Uppalpadu as dummy since these have neither any skeletal data nor any funerary goods. In addition, a burial at Upperu only had skeletal data without any grave goods. This is an exception. On excluding them, we have a total of 31 burials. Of this, 24 have skeletal data and seven were without any skeletal remains. In the artefacts, pottery is common to all. After pottery, we see that weaponry to be the recurring artefact in the burials. Thus, the graves can be divided into weaponry and non-weaponry. In the skeletal graves, about 17 were with weaponry, and seven without weaponry. In the non-skeletal graves, six are with weaponry and only one grave is without weaponry. The data is summarised in the following table II.

Table II: The number of Pit Burials divided into weaponry and non-weaponry

TYPE	TOTAL	WEAPONRY	NON-WEAPONRY
Skeletal Data	24	17	07
Non-Skeletal Data	07	06	01

3.2 Artefacts in the Chamber Burials

We take a total of 22 chamber burials from the two states. The major sites are Chinnamarur,²⁵ Uppalpadu,²⁶ Kadambapur,²⁷ Singapur,²⁸ Moula Ali²⁹ in Telangana; Nagarjunakonda,³⁰ Agripalli,³¹ Satanikota,³² Karumpundi,³³ and Yeleshwaram³⁴ in Andhra Pradesh. The details of the various burials and the artefacts are given in Table III (on the next page). In this, one burial from Chinnamarur (Subrahmanyam 1997: 123) can be identified as a dummy. A burial from Uppalpadu (IAR 1978-79: 66) had skeletal data but was without any

²⁵ Subrahmanyam, B. (1997), op. cit., pp. 121-126

²⁶ IAR 1977-78, p. 12; IAR 1978-79, p. 66

²⁷ Krishnasastry, V.V., (1983), op. cit., pp. 85-86

²⁸ Krishnasastry, V.V., (1983), op. cit., pp. 76-77

²⁹ Krishnasastry, V.V., (1983), op. cit., pp. 73-74

³⁰ Subrahmanyam, R. (1975), op. cit., pp. 166-167, 171-173

³¹ IAR 1976-77, p. 5

³² Ghosh, N. C. (1986), op. cit., pp. 46-49

³³ Rao, B. K. G. (1972). *Megalithic culture in south India*. Mysore: Prasaranga, p. 199

³⁴ Khan, M. A. W. (1963), op. cit., pp. 4-6

funerary articles. So we exclude a total of two burials, and we are left with 20. Out of 20 chamber burials, 18 are with skeletal remains, and only two were without any skeletal data. Just like the pit burials, pottery occurs in almost all the burials. The next common occurring artefact is weaponry. But they occur only in skeletal burials. These are about 10. Other than this about 08 skeletal burials are without weapons. In the non-skeletal graves, only two graves were without any weaponry. The following table IV summarises it.

Table IV: The number of Chamber Burials divided into weaponry and non-weaponry

TYPE	TOTAL	WEAPONRY	NON-WEAPONRY
Skeletal Data	18	10	08
Non-Skeletal Data	02	00	02

Table III: A summary of the artefacts occurring in the chamber burials of the two states

<i>DUMMY</i>			
Site	Name	Skeletal Remains	Funerary Articles
Chinnamarur Telangana	Cist 1	none	none
CHAMBER BURIALS WITH SKELETAL DATA BUT NO FUNERARY ARTICLES			
Uppalpadu Telangana	Megalith V	long bone and three small bones	none
CHAMBER BURIALS WITH SKELETAL DATA AND WEAPONRY			
Chinnamarur Telangana	Cist 2 (A)	Skeleton remains	BRW, RW; iron arrowhead
Chinnamarur Telangana	Cist 3 (A)	one skeleton	Four polished RW, BRW; iron dagger
Chinnamarur Telangana	Cist 4 (A)	extended skeleton	knife and flat iron celt
Chinnamarur Telangana	Cist 5 (A)	skeleton with legs drawn close	big red ware with BRW lid over it, iron battle axe, butt end of an axe, chisel
Chinnamarur Telangana	Burial 1 (B)	skeletal remains	BRW, RW iron dagger
Kadambapur Telangana	Megalith IV	two skulls crushed	BRW, RW; tanged battle axe, pointed knife; animal bones
Singapur Telangana	Cist with 19 boulders	piece of bone	potsherds; iron spear or arrowhead
Moula Ali Telangana	Cist with capstone	skeletal remains	BRW; iron knives, daggers, spears, hatchet axes, chain, lamp; copper or bronze bell
Nagarjunakonda A.P.	Megalith I	6 adults	pottery, dagger, knife-blades, iron lance stone pestle, animal bones, spindle-whorl
Satanikota A.P.	Megalith BXVII	5 adults	pottery; iron arrowhead; animal bones
CHAMBER BURIALS WITH SKELETAL DATA BUT WITHOUT WEAPONRY			
Chinnamarur Telangana	Cist 1 (C)	fragmentary bone pieces	BRW
Uppalpadu Telangana	Megalith II	five adults, one child	BW
Agripalli A.P.	Megalith 2	six skulls	BRW, pale RW
Satanikota A.P.	Megalith AIII	skeletal remains in urn	30 pots animal bones
Karumpundi A.P.	Square or oblong cist	calcined bones, funerary urns	BRW, RW, BW; ivory or bone bracelet
Yeleshwaram A.P.	Dolmenoid Cist	Three skulls, one outside the cist and two inside	BRW, RW, BW
Yeleshwaram A.P.	Cist with a porthole	splinters of charred bone	BRW, RW, BW
Nagarjunakonda A.P.	Megalith VII	one adult and fragmentary human skull	pottery; animal bone brass armlet, iron wedge
CHAMBER BURIALS WITHOUT SKELETAL DATA AND WITHOUT WEAPONRY			
Chinnamarur Telangana	Cist 2(B)	none	polished RW
Agripalli A.P.	Megalith 3	none	BRW, RW

BRW: Black and Red ware. RW: Red Ware. BW: Black Ware. A.P. :Andhra Pradesh

From the above analysis, we can see certain kinds of artefacts were deposited in the graves. The graves mainly contain pottery like black-and-red ware, black ware and red ware and iron objects. The iron objects were of various kinds. Some of these were weaponry like lances, spears, javelin, spikes, iron trident, arrowhead, iron blades, stirrup, sword, daggers, knives and battle-axe. A grave gave data for copper hilt signifying iron sword. There is also data for carpentry tools like chisels, iron axes, adzes, flat celts, wedges and iron nails. The agricultural tools from few graves include sickles, hoes or ploughs. Alternatively, one can also argue that flat celts, hatchets and axes were used for clearing forests, and so were agricultural tools. In this paper, when they occur independently, they have been classified as carpentry tools. However, when they occur with agricultural tools like sickles, as seen at some pit burials at Pochampad,³⁵ they have been classified as agricultural tools. On a minor scale, some of the graves have objects of copper, beads of different raw material, ornaments, lamp, bells and tripods. These artefacts tell us a great deal about the gender and rituals of the burials, but understanding this is beyond the scope of the current article.

³⁵ IAR 1963-64: 1, IAR 1964-65: 1

IV. Social Composition

If we look at the above data, we see that almost of 74.2 % of the pit burials (23 out of 31), 50% of chamber burials (10 out of 20) have weapons in them. The above figures show that huge percentages of megaliths were built for those who lost their lives in war. This shows that war was an important aspect of the society as noted by Moorti.³⁶ After weaponry, we see existence of carpentry tools. So we have iron axes at Moula Ali;³⁷ chisels at megalith 2 at Uppuru,³⁸ megaliths IV at Ramapuram,³⁹ cist 5 (A) at Chinnamarur,⁴⁰ wedges were discovered at megalith V, megalith X, megalith XII, megalith XIV Nagarjunakonda;⁴¹ celts are found in cist 4(A) at Chinnamarur.⁴² These are about nine burials.

On a minor scale, we get data for weavers and farmers. Agricultural implements occur only in three burials. Sickles were recovered from megalith 2 and 3 at Pochampad (Adilabad),⁴³ and megalith 2 at Hashmatpet.⁴⁴ Both the megaliths at Pochampad also had hatchet axes. A spindle-whorl was discovered in Nagarjunakonda in megalith I.⁴⁵ This means presence of weavers in the society. In some burials, we get presence of more than one occupation. Wedge and ploughshare were found in Megalith II at Nagarjunakonda.⁴⁶ Burial 1 at Pochampad (Adilabad) had sickle, chisel and a triangular object, perhaps a weapon.⁴⁷ A combination of spindle-whorl and wedge was recovered from megalith VIII at Nagarjunakonda.⁴⁸ In total, these are again three burials. There are various ways in which we can account for these burials. One theory is that these could be multi-burials as is the case with Pochampad. Second, that the deceased actually followed varied occupations in their lifetime. Third, it is also possible that these were earlier burials, when the society was still undifferentiated. However, without any thermoluminescence or radiocarbon date, we cannot come to any conclusion. One thing common in all above burials is that these tools occur with weaponry. It is rare to find burials without weaponry and just tools. In other words, we do not have much data for graves revealing only carpentry tools, or agricultural tools or spindle-whorl, along with pottery. Only two burials at Nagarjunakonda, megalithic VII and megalithic XI could be seen as belonging to this category.⁴⁹ This leads us to another inference about the megalithic society. We can think of both conscription and presence of a standing army. Weapons occur in nearly 58.9% (33 out of 56) of the graves. In these, a high number of graves around 45.4% (15 out of 33) only had weapons in them. The remaining 18 graves had carpentry, farming or weaving tools along with weaponry. These could indicate conscription, that in emergency other sections of society were expected to contribute.

V. Conclusion

Thus, in the above survey of megaliths restricted to Telangana and Andhra Pradesh we gain important insights about the society. The megaliths preferred in the region were generally pit and chamber burials. A high number of these burials were built for warriors. There is evidence for both a specialized class of soldiers and also the practice for conscription. On a minor scale, we also come to know of existence of farmers, carpenters and weavers. But the most important inference is the rituals associated with these graves. The graves as seen are roughly divided into weaponry and non-weaponry. We can assume that the graves, containing only pottery signified an ordinary death. Thus, the rituals associated with these graves were ordinary kind, and involved only interment of pottery. However, in the graves of warriors, there was a special ceremony involving interment of weapons. In other words, there was acknowledgement of violent death of the deceased, whether he was a professional soldier, or a farmer, weaver who contributed to the war effort. Thus, we see a society that highly honoured and valued her warriors.

³⁶ Moorti, (1994), op. cit., p. 108

³⁷ Krishnasastry (1983) op. cit., p. 74

³⁸ Subrahmanyam (1997) op. cit. p. 143

³⁹ IAR 1982-83, p. 6

⁴⁰ Subrahmanyam (1997) op. cit., pp. 125-126

⁴¹ Subrahmanyam (1975) op. cit., pp. 166-181

⁴² Subrahmanyam 1997 op. cit. p. 125

⁴³ IAR 1966-67, p.1

⁴⁴ Nigam, M. L., (1971), Report on the Excavation of Two Megalithic Burials at Hashmatpet, *Hyderabad-AP Hyderabad, Birla Archaeological and Cultural Research Institute* 28, p. 14

⁴⁵ Subrahmanyam (1975), op. cit. pp. 167

⁴⁶ Subrahmanyam, (1975), op. cit. p. 168

⁴⁷ IAR 1966-67: 1

⁴⁸ Subrahmanyam (1975) op. cit., pp. 173-174

⁴⁹ Subrahmanyam (1975) op. cit. pp. 171-175

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