

Classification of Pottery From Pinwewa Megalithic Burial Site (1997)

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Introduction

The burial site is located south east of Maho about a mail from Yapahuwa almost adjoining Kondadeniya. This burial site is also known as Gal-sohon-Kanatta. There are several small irrigation tanks in its vicinity and the nearest is the partially dried up Pin-wewa which is situated to the east of the site. A tributary of the Deduru oya flows a short distance away from this site. At present this area has both wet and dry crop cultivation.

The burial site is about 15 acres in extent and situated on an elevated area. This site was originally reported in 1957 (ASAnR 1957 : 26) and in the subsequent years several burials have been excavated. In one case the covering slab measured 4 ft, 2 ins. x 3 ft. 3 ins. (ASAdR 1964-65 :92). Some burials revealed urns containing calcined and uncalcined human bones including different varieties of pottery, iron and copper objects, BRW and flakes of mica (ASAdR 1964-65 : 62, 105 ; 1965-66 : 104 ; 1967-68 : 78; pers. comm. Raja De Silva 1976). The BRW found at Pin-wewa appear to resemble those at Pomparippu (ASAdR 1965-66 : 104) and belong to the medium paste variety (Seneviratne - 1984:258-260).

Pre researches

The existence of cists at Pinwewa close to Yapahuwa was reported in the Annual Report for 1964 - 65, and the preliminary investigation of a chambered pot burial conducted. During the year under review two such burials were excavated. Of these, burial No. 3 was a chamber similar to the cist excavated last year. A covering slab of maximum length and width 5 ft. and 4 ft. respectively was placed over the small stone built chamber which was roughly square in plan. Within were found various pots in badly broken condition. These were brought to Colombo and investigated. Within one of the pots was found parts of a skull and other fragments of bone together with parts of two iron objects resembling spear blade and a knife blade. One wide mouthed pot has so far been conserved, Burial No. 4 was not a chambered by a burial but consisted of pots buried in the ground and covered by a large slab of stone. One shallow dish with carinated edge, a smaller dish and a bowl have hither to been conserved. There is a striking resemblance both in shape and in colour of these vessels to the pottery from the Pomparippu urn burials (Godakumbura C.E. - 1968:G 104). Excavation was conducted at the megalithic type burial site of Pingweva near the Kondadeniya Vihara. Burial 10. The stone slab which indicates the site of the burial measures roughly 4 ft. 9 in * 3 ft. 9 in. and has its top surface more or less at present ground level. On removal of the slab and excavation, there were no signs of a chamber but a few sherds of pottery including a fragment of a small bowl and flakes of mica were found.

Burial 5. South of the 1966 excavation sites of burials B3 and B4 was the site of another burial marked B5 by us. The covering slab of stone, broken in two was in the shape of a semi-circle roughly 3 ft. in radius. Below this slab on the northern and eastern sides were two upright stones. No such stones

were found on the southern and western sides. The northern slab which measures 1 ft. 9 in * 1 ft. 4 in. * 3 in. separated this burial from the burial B4. At a depth of about 2 ft. from ground level was found an urn lying tilted on its side. Its mouth was covered with another pot, the top of which was 1 ft. 2 in. below ground level. Below this urn were two other pots, severely damaged, one on its side and the other upright. The vessels were wrapped with plaster of Paris bandages and brought to Colombo with their contents for excavation and conservation (Silva R. H. -1970:G 78).

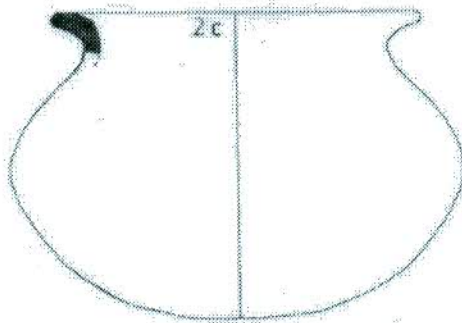
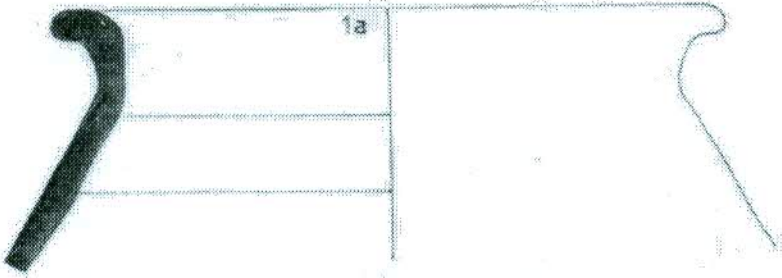
Excavation of 1997

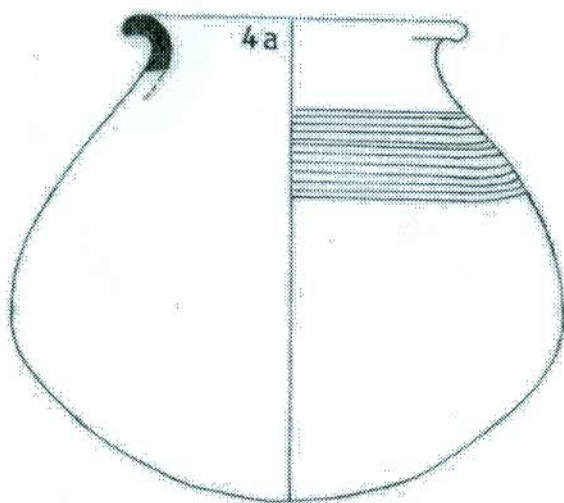
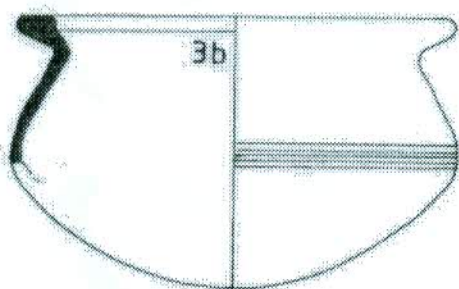
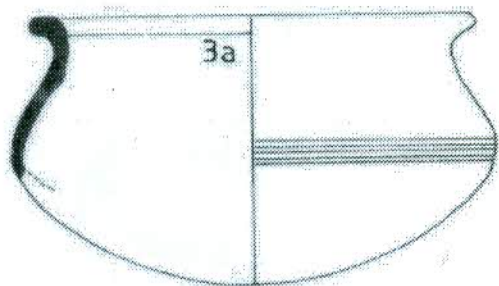
Two suitable sites were chosen for excavation, based on the findings of the intensive exploration of the site in January 1997. It was necessary to pay special attention to experimenting with excavation strategy due to the varied types of Megalithic burial/memorial discovered in Sri Lanka, and the very limited excavations at such sites in the island. A number of strategies were experimented with, in attempting to identify suitable methods for the excavation of Megalithic memorials. Removal of the fill of burial urns 'in situ', using Avery refined excavation method, took place for the first time in Sri Lanka, at Pinwewa (Jayarathne D.K. -1997:24).

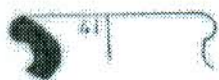
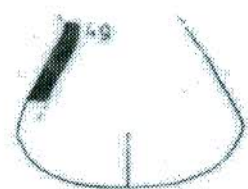
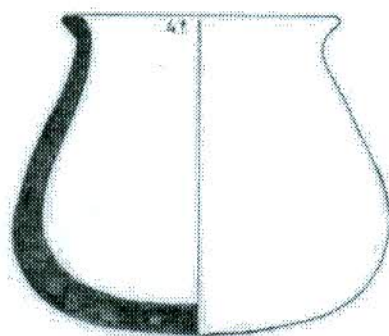
Following exploration in January 1997, two locations were chosen for excavation - PG/97/Ex-1 (site 1) and PG/97/Ex-2 (site 2). Excavation of site 1 commenced on 3rd May 1997. Situated within the grid square N1 E1, the excavated area was 6 x 5 meters. Excavation was by the Planum method and under the Context system of recording. Bedrock was reached at 140 cm depth. Three stratigraphical layers emerged, and 164 contexts were identified. Selection of Site 1 out of the 100 or so memorial monuments hinged upon a number of factors, including its relatively undisturbed state and the ability to complete its excavation within the month available. The

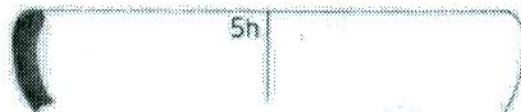
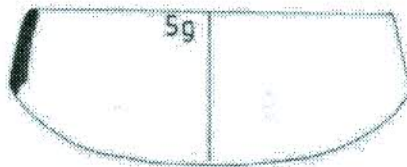
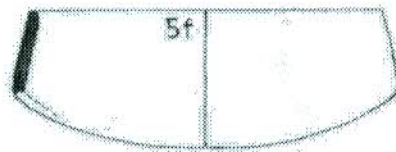
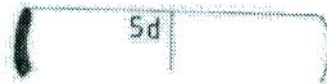
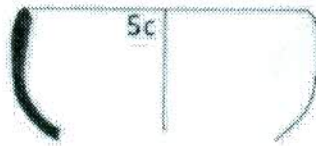
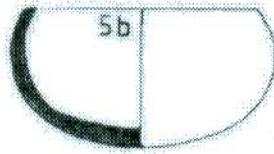
capstone of Memorial 5A was partially visible. Oval in shape, it was 237 cm long, with a maximum width of 154 cm. Excavation of a 6x2 meter area at the southern end, revealed the southern and eastern orthostats of the cist. The burial chamber was dug on removal of the capstone. The northern and western orthostats were found on their sides within the chamber. The slight dislocation of the capstone and overturning of the orthostats indicated re-opening of the burial chamber at some stage of time. The burial is housed within a square cist-type stone memorial with four orthostats and a capstone cover. The burial urn (74 cm high) was half buried, with the upper half filled in with earth. A few small pots buried in the chamber included 2 food bowls (*patra*) and a *sembuwa*. A pit had initially been dug to establish the orthostats, with a subsequent pit dug for the urn. Within the urn were fragments of bone mixed with the *solli*, as well as 6 small pots. The pots were in good condition but the surface of the urn bore crack marks. The small pots found outside the burial chamber, oriented in the four directions, may be considered to have held votive offerings made subsequently. These contained no bone; some pots bore beads. Another burial emerged to the north of burial 5A, beneath a heap of stone fragments lying in the surface. The urn appears to be of the type without a cist, a type previously recorded at Pinwewa. The emergence of two types of urn internments within the same site is of special note. There is some chance that the stone fragments above it constituted some kind of capstone. The urn surface bore crack marks, and since it was not possible to lift it from the earth, it was dug in situ. A few small pots were found within it. Also two iron objects, these being a 16 cm long adze (the first recorded from an Early Iron Age site in Sri Lanka) and a 10 cm long arrow head, were found at the bottom of the urn (Tissa Bandara Y.K. - 1997:25).

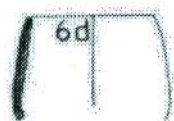
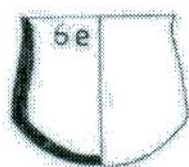
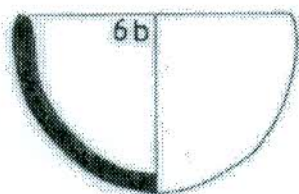
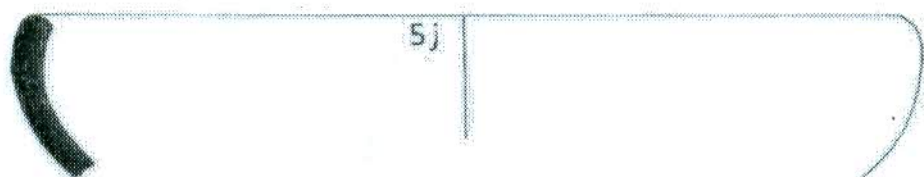
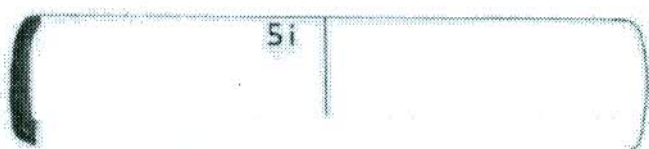
Pottery Types







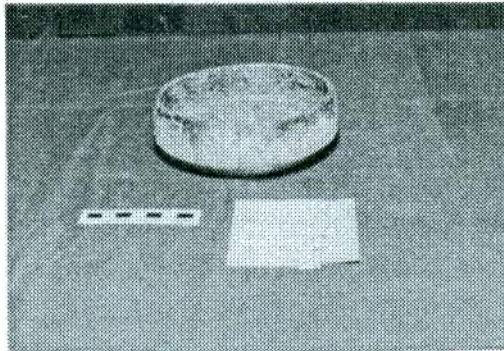
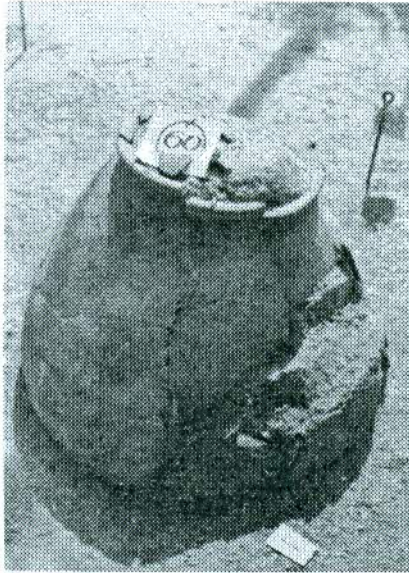




Types	Reg. No.	Ware
1a	PG/97/Ex-1/187	RW
2a	PG/97/Ex -1/14	RW
2b	PG/97/Ex-1/133	RW
2c	PG/97/Ex-1/147	RW
3a	PG/97/EX-1/145	RW
3b	PG/97/Ex-1/160	RW
4a	PG/97/EX-1/101	RW
4b	PG/97/EX-1/172	RW
4c	PG/97/EX-1/150	RW
4d	PG/97/Ex-1/153	RW
4e	PG/97/Ex-1/115	RW
4f	PG/97/Ex-1/174	RW
4g	PG/97/Ex-2/1222(1)	RW
4h	PG/97/Ex-2/1222(2)	RW
4i	PG/97/Ex-2/1164	RW
4j	PG/97/Ex-2/1660	RW
5a	PG/97/Ex-1/173	BRW
5b	PG/97/Ex-1/176	BRW
5c	PG/97/Ex-1/146	BRW
5d	PG/97/Ex-1/123	RW
5e	PG/97/Ex-170	BRW
5f	PG/97/Ex-143	BRW
5g	PG/97/Ex-155	BRW
5h	PG/97/Ex-1/183	BRW
5i	PG/97/EX-1/122	BRW
5j	PG/97/Ex-1/171	BRW
6a	PG/97/Ex-1/184	BRW
6b	PG/97/Ex-1/130	RW
6c	PG/97/Ex-1/44	RW
6d	PG/97/Ex-1-186	RW

Key.-

- PG - PINWEWA GAL SOHON KANATHTHA.
- EX - EXCAVATION
- BRW - BLACK AND RED WARE
- RW - RED WARE



Conclusion

Megalithic burials date back to various periods in history. The founders of these constructions have not yet been clearly disclosed. In terms of Megalithic culture, Asian region, particularly South Asian region takes center stage. The tradition of Megalithic culture has been prevalent in many parts in the Indian continent. Many features regarding Megalithic burial sites have been recorded in South India especially in Kerala and Tamilnadu states, and also they have been subjected to investigation. But, no one has come into a final conclusion for certain who originated and how it was developed in the world.

In Sri Lanka too, there are investigators interested in the specific field. As such, Investigations are underway in some archaeological sites in Sri Lanka too, the results of few of which have been revealed and some still under underway. As per results received, particulars concerned recovered are not available in the written sources. The number of burial sites or burial complexes available in Sri Lanka has not yet been taken into consideration. Particulars regarding burial sites have been recorded but details of them are relatively contradictory as burial sites are being disclosed from time to time. New burial sites can also be found in the future too. According to the information found by Dr. Sudharsana Seneviratne, 21 burial complexes are reported (Seneviratne, 1984: 48). Vitanarachchi has indicated about 34 burial complexes in Sri Lanka (Vitanarachchi,2012: 48).

Present writer is among the group who investigated two ancient burial sites in Rotawewa Sigiriya, and in Rajangana when they were engaging in investigation under the Post Graduate Institute of Archeology (1989-90). In addition, in 1996, at the time of excavation in Ridiyagama in Hambantota carried out by the Department of Archaeology, a megalithic burial ground

had been recorded in Mahapellessa, the adjacent village of Ridiyagama. It is clear that there may be other places related to that. Several similarities have been identified in the burial sites, i.e. the locations of burial sites, and ecological situations of the sites, the extent of grounds, characteristics in terms of architecture and artifacts found, the artifacts found are reported to be clay urns. Special considerations have been paid to the size, utility, shape, technology of manufacture of them and symbols and signs engraved on. Many clay urns found in the island are red (RW) and brown (BRW) in colour. The shapes of them vary to suit the utility. But they all indicate the similar features. Some clay urns found in Pomparippuwa Barani burial ground (Begley; 1970:86,93), those in Ibbankatuwa burial ground, Yatigalapotta (Silva and Dissanayake; 2008:48) and Kokambe burial ground (artifacts found in Archaeological research Unit of University of Rajarata) and those of Pinwewa burial ground are reportedly to be similar in size, shape, colour and in utility. Moreover, it is possible to come into a conclusion that the clay urns found in the burial sites in India and those in Sri Lanka are comparatively similar. It can be proved from the sources of S.K Ramachandran (Ramachandran, 1980, 192). The bowl shape clay urns found in Arikamedu megalithic burial site are mostly similar to those found in Sri Lanka. Further, it can be suggested that some clay urns found in burial sites in Deccan (as K.G. Rao states) resemble to urns found in burial sites in Sri Lanka (Rao, 1980: Pottery Types-3). Present writer engaged in studies regarding megalithic burial sites and its history in Tamilnadu in 1996. It was clearly revealed that the clay urns of burial grounds in Tamilnadu and those in Sri Lanka bear resembles. For instances, Pudukkottei, Sanuur, - burial sites. All things considered, there are similarities and dissimilarities in culture of clay urns found in burial sites in India and South India. As such, it is need of the hour to investigate, analyze,

and publish all the details, evidences found related to the megalithic burial grounds in Sri Lanka. For that purpose, this is only a sign.

Acknowledgements

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Reffarances

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