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Moribetta and Morikallu: Two Megalithic Burial Sites on the Edge of Western Ghats in Kodagu District, Karnataka

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Abstract: *The hilly district of Kodagu (Coorg) in Karnataka has more than forty megalithic burial clusters, occurring mostly in the eastern parts of the district adjoining the Mysore plateau. Of these, the sites of Moribetta and Morikallu are prominent not only because of the location of burials on rocky hillocks but also due to certain peculiar features like semi-arch shaped menhirs and slabs with anthropomorphic features associated with the dolmen/dolmenoid cists burials at Moribetta. Such features are rare in the context of the megaliths of Karnataka. This paper highlights the salient and common features of the burial architecture documented at these sites.*

Keywords: *Kodagu (Coorg), Moribetta, Morikallu, dolmen, dolmenoid cist, menhir, anthropomorphic slabs*

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Introduction

Archaeological discoveries in the upland district of Kodagu (Coorg) in Karnataka commenced in the middle of the 19th cent CE with the antiquarian interests of colonial officers in megalithic burials. In the 1860s, Captain Cole and his associate Mackenzie identified Megalithic burial clusters in the vicinity of the towns of Kushalnagar (Fraserpet) and Virajpet, in addition to sites at Ramaswamy Kanive, Moribetta and Morikallu and some clusters in the forests between Kushalnagar and Somwarpet. Further they excavated as many as 16 burials, mostly underground cists, a brief report of which was published highlighting the details of the architecture as well as the findings of pottery, beads, iron objects and bone fragments (Cole 1868: 184-186, 1869: 56). The major idea behind their excavations was to understand the burial architecture and purpose of these structures in addition to throwing light on the ethnic races that created them. In 1893, upon the direction of the Madras Government, Rea

compiled a list of architectural and archaeological monuments that were ‘worthy of being repaired or conserved’ in Kodagu (Rea 1995). His list includes twenty-five Megalithic burial sites, that are in the eastern parts of Kodagu characterized by lower altitudes, i.e., in the modern taluks of Virajpet and Somwarpet. He personally inspected one of these burials. However, his report does not throw light on how and when many of these sites came to be discovered. Further, there are no details of the sites documented in this ‘preliminary list’, which just mentions the number of ‘Pandava-pare/Pandavaramane’ present then at these sites. Rea notes that ‘prehistoric sepulchral remains are numerous all over the province’ (Rea 1995: viii, 13), but the number of burials at these sites had already been reduced to single digit. What is interesting is that the sites of Moribetta and Morikallu do not find mention in this report. In 1916, Longhurst compiled a revised list of antiquities in Coorg province, at the request of the Commissioner, in which he documents a few historical structures as ‘worthy of preservation’ (Longhurst 1917: 38).

As Rea observes, it is the ‘dense jungles in which the remains are mostly situated and the hilly nature of the country’ that was perhaps detrimental to further discoveries in this land. Longhurst too records a similar opinion when he writes that, ‘Coorg proper, is for the most part, covered with forest, save where it has been cleared for coffee plantation or other cultivation and to search these forests for ancient monuments would prove a very lengthy job and an expensive one and it is doubtful whether they contain any antiquities, other than a few megalithic remains, similar to those already known to exist’ (Longhurst 1917: 37). After a long lull, a resurvey of the known megalithic sites was undertaken by Subbayya as part of his doctoral research, and in the course, he discovered and excavated some burials at Heggadehalli in the 1970s (Subbayya 1972, 1990: 151-153). Some more burials at this site were opened in 1990s by the State Department of Archaeology, which revealed a set of three white painted black- and-red ware pots in a cist burial, a rarity in the megalithic burials in Karnataka, and on this basis the excavators suggested a timeframe of c. 1000-600 BCE for the Heggadehalli burials (Subbayya 1972; 1990: 151-153, Devaraju et al. 1995). After a gap of over two decades, Arjun surveyed a narrow strip on either bank of the Kaveri river, covering parts of the Somwarpet taluk, with a view of understanding the Iron Age landscape, and located a few more sites in the vicinity of Kushalnagar (Arjun et al. 2019). A few more burial sites were brought to light by Chandan Kumar in his investigation of Megalithic sites in the Kodagu districts (Chandan Kumar 2019; Chandan Kumar and Shobha 2020). So far, as many as forty burial sites are known mostly from the eastern half of the Kodagu district. Stone and cairn circles, menhirs, dolmenoid cists, dolmens, cists and pit burials have been recorded at these sites.

The sites of Moribetta and Morikallu, which are situated in the Somwarpet taluk, are alike and stand apart due to their setting and burial architecture. This paper highlights the salient features of the burials present at these sites besides providing a general account of the burial architecture.

The word ‘Mori’ appears to be reduced form of ‘Moriya-Moriya mane’, which is a colloquial term for megalithic burials in Karnataka (in the southeastern parts of State, burials are generally referred to as morikallu). However, during the period of Colonial investigations, burials in Kodagu were known by the name Pandava kallu or Pandava Pare.

Moribetta (Doddamalathe)

Moribetta (12° 37’ 27.07” N, 75° 52’ 31.5” E) is a low hillock situated in the village limits of Doddamalathe and Sulimalathe, 7 km northeast of Somwarpet town in the Somwarpet taluk of Kodagu district, Karnataka. Formed of gneissic rock, the hillock rises to a height of about 70 m (1180 amsl) from the surrounding plain. It descends gradually on all sides except towards the south, where

there is a steep cliff. The summit is mostly rocky while the slopes are covered with fairly dense scrub and deciduous vegetation except on the northern part which is now under coffee plantation. From the summit, one can have a beautiful view of the surrounding hill ranges and valleys including the town of Somwarpet. About 200m south of Moribetta is a slightly taller hillock called Gavi betta. The two hillocks saddle a narrow valley, wherein a Medieval tank known as Honnamana kere is situated. Moribetta and Gavibetta are part of a network of hill chains belonging to the N-S trending Malambi range (Malambi Reserve Forest), on the easternmost edge of the Western Ghats, adjoining the Mysore Plateau (Fig. 1 and 2).



Figure 1: Location of Moribetta and Morikallu



Figure 2: Moribetta (right) and Gavibetta

The archaeological importance of Moribetta is long known, since the discovery of the megaliths on the summit of this hillock by Bowring who was the Commissioner of Mysore and Coorg during 1868-69. He apparently collected ‘some ragi seeds, various utensils... and a few rusty implements’ from this place, where he noticed more than 50 burials, some of which had already been demolished by wuddars or stone cutters (Bowring 1869: 60). Upon Bowring’s direction, Capt Cole excavated a burial, which was found to contain miniature vessels and six carnelian beads in addition to a copper disc with gold plating (Cole 1869: 202-203, 1873: 86-88, Oldham 1869: 226-235). The details of the burial excavated by Cole are however not available. A century later, some general observations of the burials of Moribetta, known locally as Pandava Pare (i.e. hillock of the Pandavas), were made by Subbayya in the course of his doctoral research, including the presence of ‘a bird or horse-shaped granitic stone which is about eight feet high’. He further observed that ‘the stone has been cut into the shape of a mythological bird or horse. At first sight it looks like a vulture. The solitary presence of this peculiarly shaped stone in the midst of about fifty dolmens is really bewildering’ (Subbayya 1978: 65). The site is now protected by the Archaeological Survey of India under two site names, Doddamalathe and Sulimalathe, as the boundary of these villages passes right through the hillock. In the manual of the ASI, it is noted that ‘on the peak ... are more than twenty dolmens enclosed by circles of thin slabs erected vertically, some having rounded protrusion at Centre. A unique feature of the burials is the two big slabs with curved edges and conical top provided at the entrance of each dolmen, appearing like arches. Some of them resemble anthropomorphic figures’ (Arun Raj and Krishna 2015: 36).

Despite being an important site, Moribetta has not received due attention by the scholars. A detailed documentation of these megaliths was carried out in 2019, as part of a larger survey of the Megalithic burial sites in the Kodagu region (Chandan Kumar 2019). The salient features of the burials are presented below.

On the Moribetta hillock, a total of seventy burials are now preserved in three different clusters, one on the summit and the other two on narrow terraces on the southwestern slope of the hillock (Fig 3). The summit of the hillock is characterized by an undulating surface where rocky exposures are seen amidst thin soil cover. The rocky deposit on the northeastern edge of the summit has been quarried in recent years, resulting in a steep cliff with a circular pool-like depression where water gets collected in the rainy season.

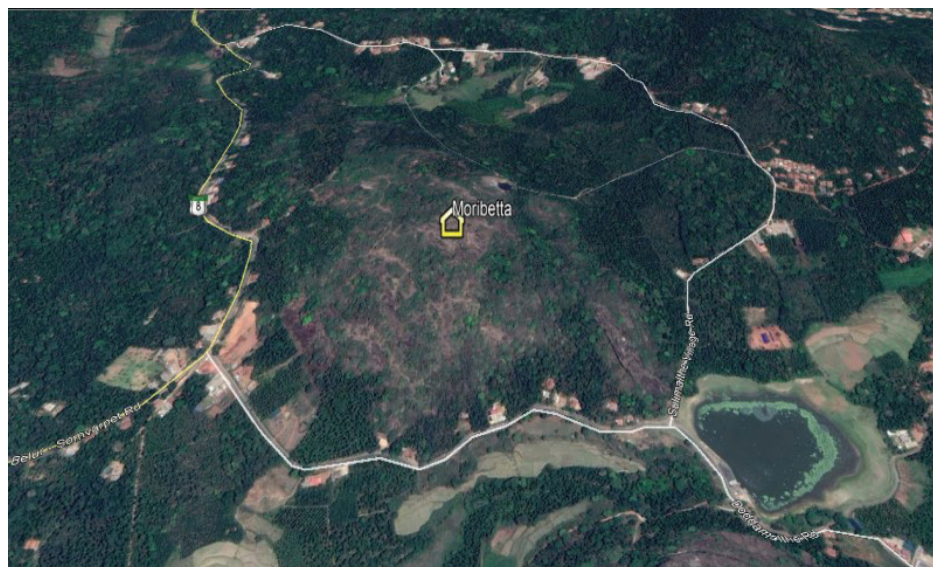


Figure 3: Moribetta

On the central and southern parts of the summit, which occupy an area of roughly 150 x 150 m, is a group of 57 burials in different stages of preservation (Fig. 4 and 5) .

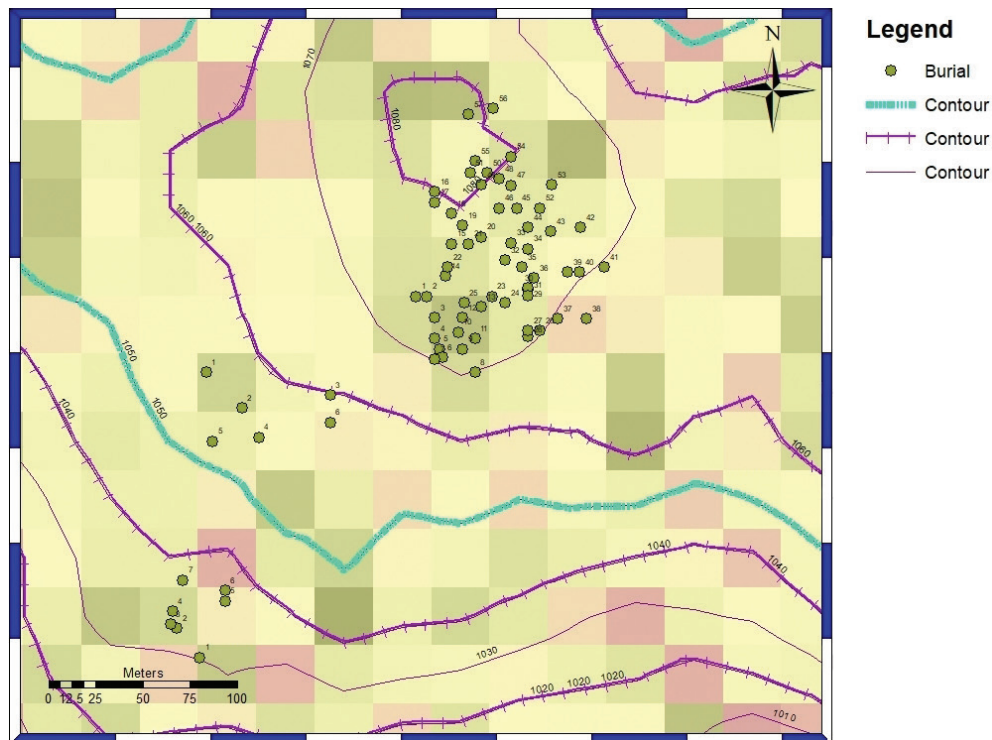


Figure 4: Distribution of burials on Moribetta



Figure 5: General view of the burials on the summit and the surrounding valley

The burials have been erected over uneven and sloping surfaces, not in any perceivable pattern or alignment. Except for four burials located on the eastern periphery of the cluster that are cists, the rest are dolmen/dolmenoid burials supported by cairn packing with a slab circle around them (Fig. 6). The largest dolmen/dolmenoid cist measures internally 2 x 2.16 m while the smallest has a dimension of 1.30 x 1.34 m. Among the intact burials, oblong form is more common than the square one. Roughly

dressed slabs with a thickness of 8-15 cm have been used for orthostats, with most having their edges worked to form a sinuous ridge. The capstones too are of roughly dressed slabs with an average thickness of 10-12 cm; the largest of them measures 3.55 X 3.9 m.



Figure 6: A typical dolmen-dolmenoid cist with cairn circle

The burials are provided with circular portholes (diameter 32-49 cm), which do not conform to any single direction, though majority of them are oriented towards east. The data available for 44 burials shows that eleven burials have portholes facing exact East (90° N with a variation of 2° - 5°), sixteen burials have their portholes facing northeast (35° - 60° N) and eleven have portholes oriented towards southeast (104° – 148° N). A single burial has porthole oriented towards southwest (200° N). It is interesting that the portholes are oriented towards cardinal North in four burials while in one burial it is facing South (180° N). Edge working is evident in all the portholes, some of which are a near perfect circle. There are two instances of a short passage attached to the porthole. It is worth mentioning here that as many as six circular slabs with a diameters of 30-39 cm and thickness of 8-10 cm were found lying around the burial cluster (Fig. 7). The dimensions of these circular slabs match well with that of the portholes suggesting that these are probably the slabs sliced off from the orthostats for creating portholes. Their presence seems to indicate that some of the orthostats were prepared around the burial area itself, which is further supported by the evidence of quarrying on the summit and the terraces of the hillock.

The slab circles surrounding the cairn are in the range of 3- 9 m. There are two examples of twin circles. In some cases, the roughly dressed slabs forming the circle are quite massive, reaching a width of up to 2.7 m. Small boulders instead of slabs were found in the circle of a burial. Four dolmens/dolmenoid cist seem to have had no circle around them. There are two instances where only slab circles are present with no traces of the burial and cairn packing. The cairn packing, of rubble and earth, rises to a height of 0.6-1 m.

Menhirs and slabs with anthropomorphic features

The occurrence of menhirs as well as slabs with anthropomorphic features are two distinct features of the Moribetta burials. Of the 57 burials on the summit, 11 have menhirs associated with them, while



Figure 7: Circular slabs on summit



Figure 8: Menhirs

on the lower terrace, two menhirs have fallen on the ground near two burials. Single menhirs are common, while three burials have twin menhirs. There are, in all, 16 menhirs of which one is survived only by its base. The menhirs have been placed as part of the slab circle, in front of the porthole, but not in exact alignment with the same. What makes these upright slabs unique is their peculiar form. They have been carved out of large gneissic/granitic slabs in the shape of semi-arch. In most cases, the base of the menhirs is straight while the upper part is curved with a pointed tip or tapering end, whereas in a few others, the gentle curvature starts right from the base, giving the slabs the semblance of a horn (Fig. 8). Longhurst refers to these as ‘large upright slabs cut to the shape of a bill-hook’ (Longhurst 1917: 37). In the case of single menhirs, there does not appear to be any norm with regard to their position. In four cases, the menhirs are planted slightly to the right of the porthole and in two, they are to the left, with their arch turning inwards in both cases. Though the menhirs share a common form, they are not alike. Some are very well executed while others are crudely shaped. An exception to this group is a menhir shaped like an elongated leaf and planted right in front of the porthole in one burial. With height varying between 1.21 m and 2.87 m, the menhirs render a special character to the burials (Table 1).

Table 1: Details of menhirs

<i>Sr. No</i>	<i>Bur. No</i>	<i>Type of burial</i>	<i>height</i>	<i>Width & thickness of the slab</i>	<i>Location with reference to dolmen/porthole</i>	<i>Direction of the semi-arch</i>
1	11	Dolmenoid cist with cairn circle	209 cm	94 cm & 17 cm	Menhir erected north of the dolmenoid cist, facing porthole.	East
2	12	Dolmenoid cist with cairn circle	132 cm 159 cm	141 cm & 12 cm 108 cm & 13 cm	Menhir erected south of dolmenoid cist, facing porthole.	One is turned towards east, the other towards west.
3	25	Dolmenoid cist with cairn circle	160 cm	100 cm & 7 cm	Menhir erected N-E of dolmenoid cist, facing porthole.	Southeast
4	29	Dolmenoid cist with cairn circle	190 cm	115 cm & 25 cm	Menhir erected N-E of dolmenoid cist, facing porthole.	Southeast
5	35	Dolmenoid cist with cairn circle	240 cm	85 cm & 17 cm	Menhir found fallen to the east of dolmenoid cist, in front of the porthole.	Fallen
6	37	Dolmenoid cist with cairn circle	287 cm	85 cm & 16 cm	Menhir found fallen to the north-east of dolmenoid cist a little to the left of porthole.	Fallen
7	39	Dolmenoid cist with cairn circle	163 cm 141 cm	100 cm & 16 cm 93 cm & 20 cm	One is placed slightly to the left of porthole in N-E direction. Another one is erected facing N-W orthostat of dolmenoid cist.	East & North
8	43	Dolmenoid cist with cairn circle	121 cm	137 cm & 8 cm	Menhir found fallen to the east of dolmenoid cist, in front of porthole (slightly to the right of the porthole).	Fallen
9	45	Dolmenoid cist with cairn circle	217 cm	145 cm & 13 cm	Menhir found fallen to the S-E of dolmenoid cist, in front of porthole orthostat.	Fallen
10	47	Dolmenoid cist with cairn circle	155 cm	205 cm & 9 cm	Menhir erected to the east of dolmenoid cist, in front of the porthole orthostat.	North
11	56	Dolmenoid cist with cairn circle	214 cm	128 cm & 4 cm	Menhir erected to the S-E of dolmenoid cist, in front of porthole.	South

The architecture of one burial, erected in the southwestern part of the complex, is unique as it has few parallels in Karnataka. In its circle, in front of the porthole, a pair of arched (horn-like) menhirs has been placed facing each other with a horizontal slab separating them, rendering a grand appearance to the burial (Fig. 9). Besides, six slabs with head-like or anthropomorphic features have been inserted in its circle. Further, it is the only burial in the complex with SW-NE orientation with the porthole facing southwest. These characteristics seem to indicate the special status of this burial. To the immediate southeast of this burial is another dolmen with twin arched menhirs, one of which is broken at the base, and the other intact. Interestingly, this burial is oriented N-S with its porthole facing cardinal North (Fig. 10). Though erected in close proximity, these burials have entirely different orientations. One of the burials located in the southeastern corner of the complex has two menhirs in the circle; one is placed facing the porthole while the other is on the north-western side of the circle.



Figure 9: burial with horn-like menhirs



Figure 10: Another burial with twin menhirs (one is broken)

Another noteworthy feature of the megaliths of Moribetta are circle slabs displaying anthropomorphic (?) features. These slabs are roughly dressed, rectangular in shape and consist of a semi-circular head-like projection in the centre. Ten slabs belonging to five burials on the summit display this feature (Fig. 11). The two largest slabs with anthropomorphic features (1.8 and 2.1 m wide) have gently curved edges instead of angular ones, resembling human arms. In the burial with horn-like twin menhirs described above, there are six slabs showing head-like projection, placed side by side on the northwestern side of the circle. These slabs seem to have been randomly placed in the circle, as they are not found adhering to a common position in the circle (Table 2).

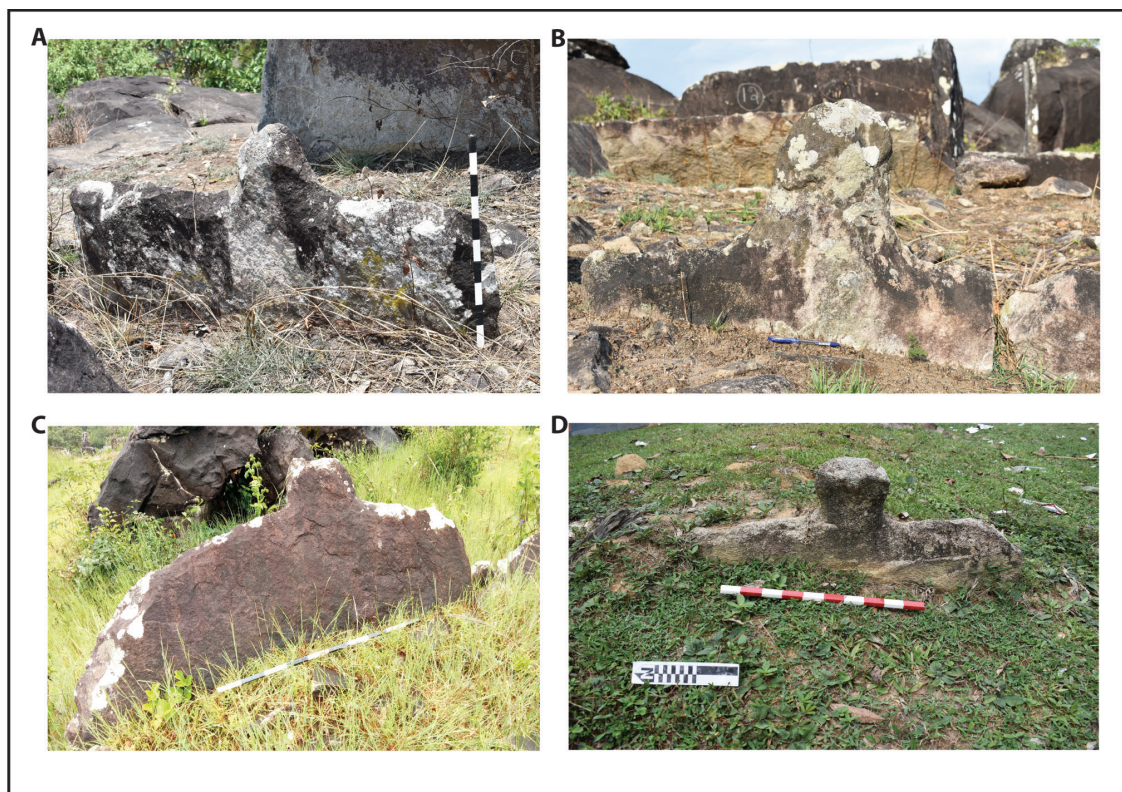


Figure 11: Circle slabs with anthropomorphic feature

Table 2: Details of the anthropomorphic slabs

<i>Bl. No</i>	<i>Burial details</i>	<i>number of anthropomorphic slabs</i>	<i>Dimension of the slab (Length- above the ground)</i>			<i>Location in the circle</i>
05	Dolmenoid cist with slab circle, much of the cairn packing in eroded. Porthole: SE	one	Total L- 54 cm W- 126 cm T- 11 cm		Head part L- 21 cm W- 16 cm	NE
12	Dolmenoid cist with slab circle, cairn eroded, has a pair of arched menhirs in front of the porthole. Porthole: SW	six	Slab-1 L- - W- 125 cm T- 15 cm	Slab-3 L- - W- 90 cm T- 15 cm	Slab-5 L- - W- 84 cm T- 7 cm	West and SW
			Slab-2 L- - W- 153 cm T- 16 cm	Slab-4 L- - W- 139 cm T- 17 cm	Slab-6 L- - W- 98 cm T- 9 cm	

Bl. No	Burial details	number of anthropomorphic slabs	Dimension of the slab (Length- above the ground)		Location in the circle
13	Dolmenoid cist with double slab circles; cairn packing visible, there is a passage attached to the porthole. Porthole: NE	One (the slab has curved edges)	W- 210 cm L- 87 cm T- 19 cm	Head part L – 23 cm W – 30 cm	SE
45	Dolmenoid cist with slab circle, cairn completely eroded. Head part of the anthropomorphic slab is half broken. Porthole: SE	One (the slab has curved edges)	L- 25 cm W- 180 cm T- 7 cm		NE
57	Dolmenoid cist/cist? Completely disturbed with vegetation grown over the burial	One	W- 90 cm (visible) Head part – L- 25 cm W – 25 cm		south

There is apparently no specific pattern in the spacing of the burials in this cluster on the summit of Moribetta. They seem to have been erected randomly, making the best use of the available space. For example, one of the dolmens is constructed right next to a low rocky ridge, over which there are no traces of cairn packing now, though on all other sides, cairn is raised and bounded by slabs. Another burial, now completely in ruins, is constructed in a restricted space bounded by rocky formation, on the extreme southern edge of the summit overlooking the valley. Besides, in a few cases, dolmens have been built on sloping surface, with no efforts to raise the ground around them by providing additional packing.

Megaliths on terraces

The hillock descends gradually in terraces on the southwestern side. About 20 m below the summit is a narrow terrace (appx. 80 m x 30 m), parts of which are under scrub vegetation (Fig. 12). Six burials are scattered over this terrace, two in elevated rocky area on the northern part and the remaining in the southern part of the terrace. The burials are dolmenoid cists with portholes; none of them are intact. Three cists are oriented north-south while the rest have an east-west alignment with some variation. They seem to have had cairn packing with slab circle, the traces of which are now preserved (Fig 12).

There is another terrace further down (90 m x 50 m) on which remains of seven burials are present. These are mostly cist burials with slab/boulder circles (Fig. 13). One of the burials is associated with two semi-arch shaped slabs similar to the menhirs found on the summit. Both have collapsed and one is broken. Traces of quarrying are visible on the southern part of this terrace.

Ceramics

A few ceramic sherds were collected from disturbed cists as well as exposed cairn packing on the summit of the hillock. The sherds belong to slipped and unslipped red ware as well as black ware. The shapes represented are bowl, basin and pots (Fig. 14).



Figure 12: A view of the middle terrace with a dolmenoid cist in the foreground



Figure 13: A disturbed burial in the lower terrace

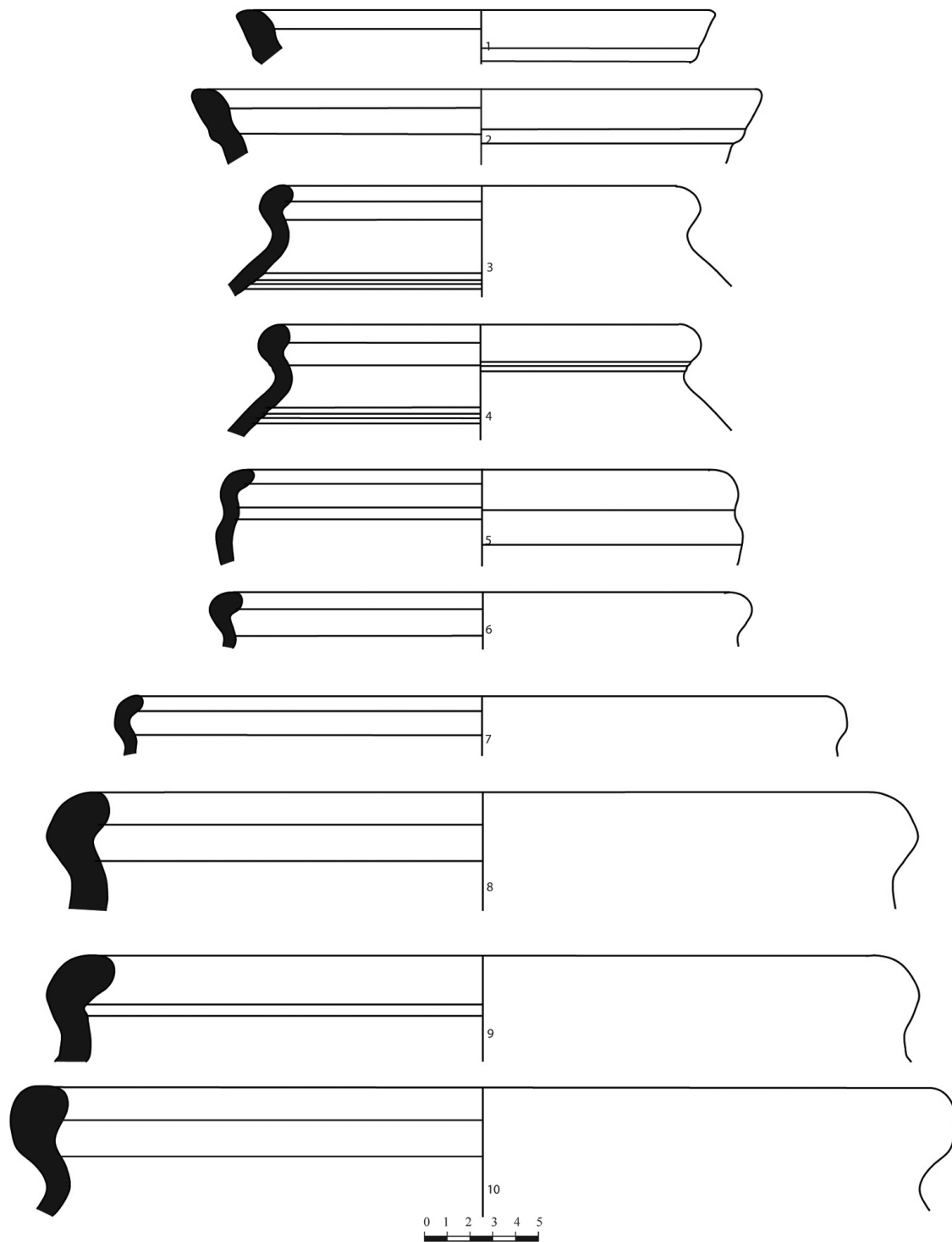


Figure 14: Ceramics from Moribetta

Morikallu (Basavanahalli)

Morikallu (Basavanahalli) ($12^{\circ} 34' 7.69''$, $75^{\circ} 54' 18.15''$ E) is a hamlet located in a narrow valley enclosed by Yedavanadu and Bhageri hill ranges. It is about 7 km to the southeast of Moribetta. The burials here are located on a low rocky hillock that commands a beautiful view of the surrounding

valley. Captain Cole discovered them in the 1860s (Cole 1868: 244, 1869: 57-58). He gives a very brief description of these burials in the context of a question raised in the Royal Asiatic Society meeting whether the burials in Coorg are kistavens or chromlechs/dolmens. With suggestion that both types are present in Coorg, he writes, “I have just discovered four of a remarkable type, situated in the middle of the forests about 13 miles from here (Kushalnagar) towards Somwarpett. They are large stone chambers erected on the top of a low hill and on the very rock from which the slabs had been quarried. They have all entrances of a shape as shown on Plate 2 of the Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for June last, or a circular hole in the centre of the slab. They stood out in high relief, each on the top of a low mound, the base of which had a circle or concentric circles of stones all round. They were perfectly empty, and looked like temples or altars...” (Cole 1868: 244). From Cole’s description, it is apparent that there was no village by name Morikallu or Basavanahalli in the neighbourhood when Cole visited these burials.

Subbayya states that Morikallu, locally known as ‘Pandava bande’ (rock of the Pandavas), was discovered by him during the course of his exploration in late 1960s (Subbayya 1972: 94). The hillock seems to have been intact at the time of his exploration. He notes that ‘Being ‘wholly rocky’ and with a few trees and bamboo clumps, the hillock had a steep slope on the east and was surrounded by paddy fields’ (Subbayya 1978: 67). Subbayya refers to the presence of six dolmens (not four as mentioned by Cole), out of which four were in ‘perfect preservation’ and all were surrounded by stone circles.

In recent years, quarrying activities have dissected the hillock into two arms, forming a pond-like depression in between (Fig. 15). A lone burial stands on one arm of the hillock, which is further segmented by quarrying, while the other three burials are on the other arm. The burials are dolmenoid cist/dolmens raised with the support of cairn packing that is further held in place by a slab circle (Fig. 16). In one burial, the slab circle is further supported by another circle of boulders/blocks laid on its outer side. The dolmenoid cist/dolmens are oblong in form, the length being almost twice the width. They are essentially oriented east-west; in one burial, the porthole is aligned to cardinal east while



Figure 15: Location of burials at Morikallu

in the other three, it is oriented north-east (in the range of 50° to 75° from North). One burial has a somewhat oval or rectangular porthole; in the other three, it is U-shaped. The burials are akin to those at Moribetta in their setting and burial architecture, except that the portholes of Moribetta are all circular in shape.



Figure 16: Burials at Morikallu

Summary and Discussion

In the eastern parts of Kodagu where the uplands merge with the Mysore Plateau, megalithic burial sites are generally located in the plains of the rivers Kaveri and Harangi, and in a few cases, they also occur on the slopes of isolated mounds or hillocks, locally known as ‘manti’. In the sites reported and excavated in this region, stone circles with cist/pit burials are the common type. The sites of Moribetta and Morikallu therefore occupy a unique place in this landscape both because of their burial form, i.e. portholed dolmen/dolmenoid cist with circle and their setting on hillocks that provide a panoramic view of the surrounding hilly landscape. The burials at these two sites are not free-standing dolmens, but invariably have cairn packing encircled by huge rectangular slabs. Another example of dolmen burial in this region comes from Chikkapet, now a suburb of Virajpet town, where an intact double-chambered dolmen with U shaped portholes and a few disturbed cist burials are present amidst coffee plantation belonging to the Palecanda family. However, these burials are not on a rocky hillock as at Moribetta and Morikallu, but in an area described by Cole as ‘bane’ (Cole 1868: 151; Chandan Kumar 2019), suggesting that this was originally an open area with small trees and shrubs.

The Megaliths of Moribetta are noteworthy because of their association with semi-arch shaped menhir slabs as well as stone slabs with ‘anthropomorphic’ features that have been inserted in the circles around the burials. There are very few parallels for semi-arch shaped menhirs in Karnataka. Similar forms have been noted at Savanadurga (Branfill 1881, fig. 4), Hire Benakal (Sundara 1975:76, plate XXI-2) and Aihole (Sundara, personal communication). At Kattirajanahalli in Tumkur district was found ‘an inverted hoe shaped menhir’ attached to a megalithic burial (Shivatarak 2000, 2004).

However, menhirs of similar shapes are known from megalithic sites in the districts of Chittor and Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh, where they have been described as ‘anthropomorphic slabs’ or ‘half anthropomorphs’ (Ramabrahmam 2019, Susarla 2018). Such menhirs in this region are typically carved out of thin granitic slabs with the upper portion resembling ‘a curved arm’, while the lower part resembles ‘a pedestal’ (Ramabrahmam 2001: 30, 80). Interestingly, these menhirs too are found associated with dolmen burials surrounded by slab circles, erected mostly on rocky surfaces. Besides, some burials have been found with more than one menhir of this type. The significance of such differently shaped menhirs can not be easily perceived at present except that they perhaps symbolise the status of the dead. Also, their existence at Moribetta is perplexing.

One of the burials at Moribetta has, in front of its porthole, two arch shaped menhirs erected face to face, resembling a pair of horns. At the site of Palem in Chittor district, a similar composition of menhirs in the form of horns, but carved out of a single slab and placed in front of a dolmen has been noticed (Ramabrahmam and Challa 2020: 620).

The other interesting feature at Moribetta is the insertion in the circle of slabs with crude head-like feature, though not all burials appear to have had such slabs originally. These resemble the upper part of anthropomorphic slabs found elsewhere. Another example comes from a megalithic burial at Bavali in Virajpet taluk of the same district (Fig. 11-d). It is an east-west oriented dolmenoid cist circle having an anthropomorphic slab inserted facing the western orthostat (Chandan Kumar and Shobha 2020).

To sum up, the peculiar features of the megalithic burials on Moribetta accord this site a prominent place in the Megalithic burial culture of Karnataka.

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Competing Interest

The authors have no competing interests to Declare.

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