

Session Title

Marvels in Stone: Megalithic Burials, Settlement Patterns, and Environmental Adaptation

Main Convenor:

Dr. Vinay Kumar,
Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture, and Archaeology,
Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India
vinayaihc@bhu.ac.in

Co-Convenor:

Prof. Anura Manatunga,
Department of Archaeology, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka
am@kln.ac.lk

Dr. S B Ota
Academy for Archaeological Heritage Research & Training (AAHRT)
Simadriota@gmail.com

Mr. Kasun S. Jayasuriya,
Sri Lanka Council of Archaeologists, Sri Lanka
kasunsjayasuriyaresearch@gmail.com

Ms. Sakshi Ghosh,
Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture, and Archaeology,
Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India
sakshighosh02@bhu.ac.in

Session Abstract

This session examines megalithic burials as cultural expressions that provide insights into past human settlements, environmental responses, and mortuary practices. It promotes interdisciplinary methods combining archaeology, anthropology, geoarchaeology, paleoenvironmental sciences, and ancient metallurgy to understand how ancient communities adapted to different ecological settings through building megalithic monuments and related structures. As these megaliths are located near resources their settlements indicate strategic planning and community organization. By examining regional patterns, symbolic materials, burial architecture, and settlement strategies, the session aims to reconstruct the socio-cultural and environmental forces that shaped early societies.

Although the session questions why ancient people built giant stones for their burial sites and how this cultural practice persisted across various socio-economic contexts, it's clear

that megalithic culture cannot be limited to a specific historical region or time period. Instead, this phenomenon appeared worldwide, reflecting a common human tendency to commemorate death with monumental architecture. The endurance and adaptation of megalithic traditions across different societies suggest these structures held profound symbolic significance, serving not only as tombs but also as lasting symbols of community identity, spiritual beliefs, and social unity. Examining the continuity and changes in megalithic practices across different environmental and cultural settings, it provides valuable insights into the dynamic ways in which ancient communities navigated their relationships with mortality, memory, landscape and social organization. Their widespread presence highlights shared symbolic language and technological knowledge that crossed geographical boundaries.

In advance, we welcome researchers to share their contributions, drawing on both empirical and theoretical approaches, that explore the links between death, memory, landscape use, and long-term human-environmental and cultural interactions.

Keywords

Megalithic Burials, Settlement patterns, Environmental Adaptations, Symbols, Memory

Convenors:

Dr. Vinay Kumar: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0699-8492>

Prof. Anura Manatunga: <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-4248-7975>

Dr. Simadri Bihari Ota: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2014-527X>

Mr. Kasun S. Jayasuriya: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8959-341X>

Ms. Sakshi Ghosh: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2014-527X>