CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
Any historian or archaeologist interested in the study of early historical cultures of South India often meets with a peculiar situation while dealing with the source material. The burials which provide a firm basis for the reconstruction of early historical cultures and which most of the times happen to be the only source material available are found in different architectural patterns. This situation may be due to the fact that they cared more for their burial places rather than habitational ones. Hence, a great care was taken to raise these tombs.

The burial practices in Ancient India are recorded from the archaeological evidences. Several modes of the disposal of the dead have been prevalent in different sections of the humanity from time to time. They include complete inhumation in the graves, cave burial, burial in long or round burrows, preservation of tissues by some process of mummification, and cremation besides some rare methods of the disposal of the dead like throwing the body into the sea, setting it adrift in a canoe, removing the flesh from the bones, disposing it off by eating it, leaving the deadbody for the animals, exposure of the corpse on a raised platform and the subsequent burial of bones and
skulls have also been recorded. So far as India is concerned, inhumation, cremation and post-excarnation burials were the predominant modes of the disposal of the dead. The last named burial was more current in the early Iron age as it has been recorded from thousands of megalithic burials in South India. Cremation which is the prevalent mode among the Hindus of Modern India must have had it's roots in the remote past.

The pioneer attempts had revealed that South Indian megaliths, in spite of the varied structural forms, were sepulchral and generally contained,

i. post-excarnation skeletal remains of more than one individual,

ii. a typical pottery described as the black and red ware also red ware and some times the black ware and

iii. iron objects.

In South India, thousands of sites were discovered sporadically by the archaeologists or government officials or private individuals in the course of time. As far as the
published references are concerned, no other class of prehistoric remains has attracted so much attention of so many people from various walks of life as did the megaliths by virtue of their curious and bold appearance on the surface. This abundance of megaliths provides a clear picture to the historian and archaeologist how a particular region had occupied importance in socio-economic and cultural spheres in those times - a fact that attracts any researcher to take up a related study.

NEED FOR THE PRESENT STUDY AND CHOICE OF THE SUBJECT

Studies in megaliths are being done in South India for a considerable period. Many of these works are concerned either with South India or Deccan in general. There are very few works which deal with the regional archaeology. Even though many researches have gone into the study of various archaeological cultures, the comprehensive study of a particular region is not available.

Andhra Pradesh is dotted with the early historical settlements. Every village in the district has an early historical site. This habitational growth can be attributed to the enormous increase in agricultural produce and
economic stability. This situation was possible by ushering of a full fledged iron technology without which the effective cultivation of the hard black cotton soil could not have been possible. The economic prosperity coupled with the political situation was a boon to the area during the iron age or early historical period.

Anantapur district in Andhra Pradesh is one such region which is rich historically and archaeologically. Unfortunately not much work has been done in these lines by the scholars. In order to fill up the lacuna, it is felt that a comprehensive study of the megalithic sites of this region would be of immense value. The first aspect that attracted our attention towards this district is it has thousands of varied megalithic burials useful for a systematic study and a thorough survey. Secondly, the locational aspects of habitational and burial sites of megalithic communities. Thirdly, the abundant occurrence of Iron ore in South and South-Western part of Anantapur District (For details, see Chapter II, p.7). The present thesis also deals with the study of the settlement pattern, cluster of the megalithic sites and pottery types. An attempt has also been made to study the problem related to the subsistence and technological levels of those people.
AIM AND SCOPE

We provide a clear picture of the 127 megalithic sites of the district (See Map-3) out of which four groups are described in detail after a minor excavation. As the multifarious facets of megalithic culture need detailed analysis, an attempt is made to study the data collected from the 127 megalithic sites, so as to bring out a graphic picture of megalithic phenomenon in this district.

SOURCES

Village to village survey was conducted to collect and develop data about already recorded megalithic sites and to find out, fresh megalithic sites left unnoticed. Various features of a site namely environment, the location, the structural forms, modes of burials, cultural contents etc., have been recorded.

METHODOLOGY

Over the years there have been rapid changes in methodology of archaeology. Scientific techniques derived from other branches of knowledge are adopted in this dissertation for collection, analysis and interpretation of analytical data to get relevant information of past activities of man.
NATURE AND ORGANISATION OF THE PRESENT WORK

The thesis has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter deals with the location, physiography and environment of the Anantapur district. The second chapter is connected with the already studied megaliths of Andhra Pradesh. The third chapter Section-A presents the location, environment and a brief survey of the 127 megalithic sites. Section-B makes an analytical study of the settlement pattern, inter-space between the sites, site catchment area, potteries, iron objects and skeletal materials. Chapter four deals with the socio-economic life of the people, gleaned through the field study.