

## **AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY BASED ON METAL ARTIFACTS REPORTED FROM PROTO - HISTORIC BURIALS IN THE DRY ZONE OF SRI LANKA**

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Most of the proto-historic burials in Sri Lanka are located in the dry zone and Andarawewa-Galgamuwa, Palipbothana, Wahalkada, and Janakapura can be identified as some burials that clearly dated to the mentioned era in association with excavations. The aim of this research is to investigate the metal usage of proto-historic people in the dry zone of Sri Lanka through the findings of mentioned archaeological sites. With regards to the studies based on metal objects retrieved from these burial complexes, the metal consumption (iron, copper, and steel) of the middle basins of Malwathu Oya, Mee Oya, Yan Oya, and the upper and lower basins of Ma Oya, in 5th - 3rd century BC can be recognized significantly. According to the archaeological research based on Andarawewa megalithic burial site (conducted in 2017), it belonged to the 491 BC - 366 BC time period. A chisel was found among the metal objects recorded from this site and as stated by the analysis, it was identified as a pure steel artifact. Therefore, even though there are countless proto-historic metal objects, retrieved from various environments and contexts in Sri Lanka, the oldest steel manufacturing features can be seen in Andarawewa (500 BC); in the middle basin of Mee Oya, the north-central zone of the country. Furthermore, the megalithic burial complex in Palipbothana in Kahatagasdigiliya divisional secretariat, Anuradhapura district, also can be defined as an important context when considering the archaeo-metallurgy of Sri Lanka. Iron rods, copper rods, steel blades and many metal objects were recorded from the excavation propagated in 2020 and they belonged to the ancient people who lived in this area in 369 BC - 165 BC. An excavation based on the megalithic burial site in Wahalkada; located in the middle basin of Yan Oya - Anuradhapura district was conducted in 2018 and steel blades, and copper objects dated to 420 BC were retrieved from the field activities. Moreover, the most important details related to the proto-historic metal usage in the dry zone of Sri Lanka can be identified also through the steel chisels and objects found in the megalithic mortuary complex in Janakapura; located in the lower basin of Ma Oya, Mullaitivu.

**Keywords:** Proto-historic Period, Metal Objects, Megalithic Burials, Chisels

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