

[Supplementary material]

Social distinctions during the south Indian Neolithic: changing mortuary practices in a late prehistoric cemetery at Maski

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Supplementary material

Thapar's (1957) excavations at Maski documented 15 burials. Thapar classified these burials into five types (described below in Table S1 and partially illustrated in Figure S1). Thirteen of these burials were documented in excavations at the site we identify as MARP-97 in two trenches Thapar identified as MSK 9 and 10, which at the time of excavation were located in 'Sultan Muhamad's fields' in a location that remains a Centrally Protected Area. These burials were superimposed above Neolithic and below Iron Age settlement deposits at MARP-97. At the time, Thapar considered the Neolithic deposits to be Chalcolithic based on the presence of two copper objects. The remaining two burials (MSK Megs 1 and 2) were located south-west of the Durgada Gudda hill and have not been located by the MARP project. Eight of the exposed burials were described in some detail by Thapar. We do not use Thapar's grave classification in our analysis, but the table below illustrates some of the overlapping burial practices observed at MARP-79, MARP-97 (the main site of Thapar's excavations), and the two additional Thapar megaliths. Thapar's excavations do not have radiometric dates and, at the time, he associated the burials with the 'megalithic culture', given their stratigraphic associations and material culture (especially ceramics and iron). The stratigraphic position of the 13 burials at MARP-97 suggests that they date to either the Neolithic–Iron Age transition (1400–1200 BC) or the early Iron Age (after 1200 BC) (see Table 1, main article). It is possible, however, that some of these burials, particularly those without iron artifacts, date to an even earlier period. Burial practices at these sites appear to correspond well with one another across a number of material and practical dimensions (e.g. ashy coffins, slipped and polished serving vessels, stone slabs above skeletal remains) and demonstrate further variation. Since burials and habitation deposits at MARP-97

are without absolute dates, finer grained chronological comparisons are not possible at this time. The presence of greater numbers of slipped and polished serving vessels with medium sized mammal remains in two burials of the Bi and Bii types is particularly interesting, and similar to our observations of the deposits that we associate with funerary feasting in Burial 19 of MARP-79.

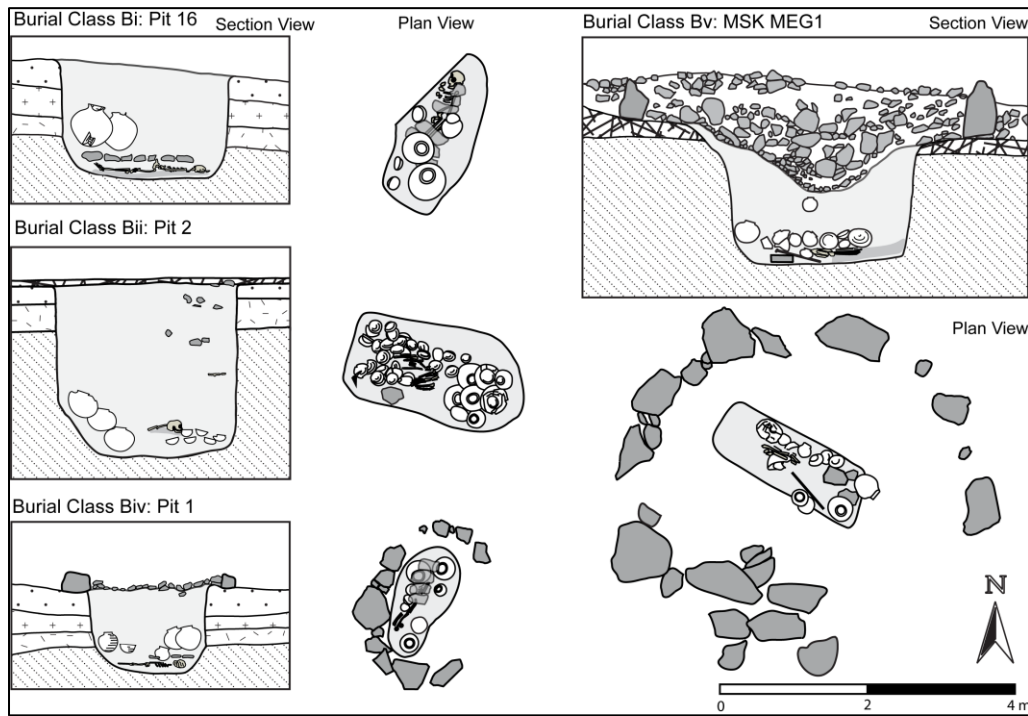


Figure S1. B.K. Thapar's illustrated burial types (figure by the authors, after Thapar 1957).
Note: Type Biii was not illustrated by Thapar.

Table S1. A comparison of B.K. Thapar's burial types from Maski with burials from MARP-79.

Thapar's burial type	Defining characteristics	Similar attributes with MARP-79 burials	MARP-79 burials with corresponding attributes
Bi	<p>Four excavated examples in MARP-97: PITS 15, 16, 28, 28A. Fragmentary (articulated or partially disarticulated) skeletons were interred in elliptical pits encased in ashy cists (combusted organic coffins), sometimes covered with stone slabs, and roughly oriented along a north-south axis. Graves contained variable quantities of slipped and polished ware serving vessels (BRW) and slipped short-necked red ware jars; one burial contained no ceramics; one burial contained 21 vessels. Some contained iron tools and objects. Skeletons appear excarnated.</p> <p>PIT 28 contained 21 ceramic vessels and included skeletal remains of a young Caprine sp. and an iron blade placed above the ceramics.</p>	Ashy bed (combusted organic coffin)	Burials 1, 6, 11, 19.
		Stone slabs above the body.	Burial 1, 2, 3, 19, 20.
		Excarnated human remains	Burials 11 and 19.
		Slipped and polished ware serving vessels	Burials 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 19.
		Medium sized mammal and iron blade placed on deposit of ceramic vessels (PIT 28).	Burial 19.
Bii	<p>One excavated example in MARP-97: PIT 2. Fragmentary, excarnated skeletal remains of at least two individuals were interred in an elliptical pit encased in an ashy cist (combusted organic coffin), and roughly oriented along an east-west axis. Grave contained 55 ceramics including slipped and polished ware serving vessels (BRW) and slipped short-necked red ware jars and iron tools. The skeletal remains of a young Caprine sp. and an iron axe were placed above the ceramics.</p>	Ashy bed (combusted organic coffin)	Burials 1, 6, 11, 19.
		Excarnated human remains	Burials 11 and 19.
		Slipped and polished ware serving vessels	Burials 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 19.
		Medium sized mammal and iron blade placed on deposit of ceramic vessels.	Burial 19.
Biii	<p>One excavated example in MARP-97: PIT 1. Urn burial in cylindrical pit with ceramic bowl for lid. Additional ceramic vessels placed inside and outside urn (not illustrated).</p>	Infant urn burial.	Burial 13 (not discussed in this article).

Biv	One excavated example in MARP-97: PIT 30. Circle of uncut stones on surface with shallow rubble packing in between, above an oblong burial pit. Fragmentary skeleton of a child lying supine in roughly north-south orientation on (or in) a bed of ash with stone slabs overlying the body. Grave contained two stone balls with the skeleton and three globular, short-necked redware jars and a BRW serving vessel placed above the body.	Stone circle of unmodified boulders on surface.	Burial 20
		Stone slabs above the body.	Burial 1, 2, 3, 19, 20
		Ashy bed (possible combusted organic coffin)	Burials 1, 6, 11, 19.
		Slipped and polished ware serving vessels	Burials 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 19.
Bv	One excavated example – site location is uncertain: MSK MEG 2. Stone circle of uncut stones on surface with a deep rubble cairn in between. Rectangular burial pit cut into saprolite. Burial pit was approximately east-west aligned. Skeleton lay on a rectilinear bed of ash. Grave included three iron lances, one additional iron object and 16 ceramic vessels placed above the body that included two large globular jars and a several slipped and polished ware (red ware and BRW) serving vessels and two ring stands.	Stone circle of unmodified boulders on surface and cairn packing above burial pit.	Burial 20
		Iron objects	Burials 2, 19.
		Ashy bed (possible combusted organic coffin)	Burials 1, 6, 11, 19.
		Slipped and polished ware serving vessels	Burials 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 19.

References

THAPAR, B.K. 1957. Maski 1954: a Chalcolithic site of the Southern Deccan. *Ancient India* 13: 4–142.