



# The Megalithic Burial Sites in the Upper Kala Oya Region: A case study

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### ABSTRACT

The Upper Kala Oya region is located on the exchange routes between the major eco-zones of Sri Lanka in proximity to other important river systems such as the Malwatu Oya, Yan Oya and Deduru Oya. Moreover, it is strategically located between two major physical areas such as the northern plains and also the central mountain ranges which range from 1000 to 5000 ft in height.

This study aims to date and phase the Havanevela cist burial and understand its place in the Upper Kala Oya region in relation to other burials such as Ibbankatuva and Yatigalpotta. The material recovered from the rescue excavation of the Havanevela cist burial formed the core data set of the present study and provided a small but valuable addition to the existing body of data concerning the megalithic cist burials of the island. The findings from this site complemented those of the previously excavated cist burials at Ibbankatuva and Yatigalpotta. However, limited data recovered from Havanevela and the restricted access to the data recovered from Ibbankatuva and Yatigalpotta presented a significant challenge to the study.

The present research was able to test and develop various assumptions concerning the Early Iron Age period especially those of eminent scholars such as Sudarshan Seneviratne (1987b, 1990) which suggested the correlation between burial location and physical environment and the development of eco-zone status hierarchies, as well as his theory that the Early Iron Age period was characterized by communities which inhabited small sedentary settlements, each with a megalithic cemetery, agricultural land and small tanks (Seneviratne, 1992). Moreover, the thesis also builds on Senake Bandaranayake's (2000) theory of the Protohistoric to Early Historic transition in relation to the study region.

**Keywords:** *Cist burials, Havanevela, Early Iron Age, Upper Kala Oya*