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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE NILGIRI PREHISTORIC MONUMENTS AND THE MEGALITHIC CULTURE OF SOUTH OF SOUTH INDIA

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Abstract

The Nilgiri Mountains, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, are home to a fascinating array of prehistoric monuments, including stone circles, dolmens, rock art, and burial sites. These monuments offer a glimpse into the lives of the early inhabitants of the region, dating back to over 10,000 years ago.

The history, location, and significance of the prehistoric monuments in the Nilgiri region are all thoroughly covered in this page. It also goes into the several hypotheses that have been put up to explain their significance and function.

Keywords: Prehistoric, Dolmens, Art, Nilgiri

Introduction

A place of great cultural importance and natural beauty is the Nilgiri Mountains. Numerous indigenous communities live there, as well as a wide variety of flora and fauna. Several prehistoric monuments are among the region's extensive archaeological treasures.

These monuments provide valuable insights into the lives and beliefs of the early inhabitants of the Nilgiris. They are also a testament to the ingenuity and creativity of these people.

Stone Circles

Stone circles are the most common type of prehistoric monument found in the Nilgiris. These circles are made up of large stones, typically arranged in a circle or oval shape. The purpose of stone circles is still a matter of debate, but they are thought to have been used for a variety of purposes, including religious ceremonies, astronomical observations, and burial sites.

One of the most notable stone circles in the Nilgiris is the Kodanad Stone Circle. This circle is located on a hilltop overlooking the Kodanad Valley, and it is one of the largest stone circles in South India. The circle is made up of over 100 stones, some of which are over 10 feet tall.

Another significant stone circle is the Udhagamandalam Stone Circle. This circle is located in the heart of Udhagamandalam (Ooty), and it is one of the most accessible stone circles in the Nilgiris. The circle is made up of over 20 stones, and it is thought to date back to the Iron Age.

Menhirs

Menhirs are single standing stones. They are thought to have been used for a variety of purposes, including religious ceremonies, boundary markers, and memorials.

Dolmens

Dolmens are another type of prehistoric monument found in the Nilgiris. Dolmens are made up of two or more large stones that are supported by smaller stones. The purpose of dolmens is also a matter of debate, but they are thought to have been used for burial purposes.

One of the most notable dolmens in the Nilgiris is the Jackaneri Dolmen. This dolmen is located in the village of Jackaneri, and it is one of the largest dolmens in South India. The dolmen is made up of three massive stones, and it is thought to date back to the Neolithic period.

Another significant dolmen is the Kattery Dolmen. This dolmen is located in the village of Kattery, and it is one of the best-preserved dolmens in the Nilgiris. The dolmen is made up of two large stones, and it is thought to date back to the Iron Age.

Burial Chambers

Burial chambers are megalithic structures that were used to bury the dead. Burial chambers are typically made of large stones and are covered with a capstone.

One of the most important burial chambers in the Nilgiris is at Mullayanagiri. The Mullayanagiri Burial Chamber is a large chamber with a capstone that

is over 4 meters long and 3 meters wide. The burial chamber is thought to be over 2,000 years old.

Another important burial chamber is at Doddabetta. The Doddabetta Burial Chamber is a smaller chamber with a capstone that is about 3 meters long and 2 meters wide. The burial chamber is thought to be over 1,000 years old.

Rock Art

Rock art is another type of prehistoric monument found in the Nilgiris. Rock art is made up of images and symbols that are carved or painted on rocks. The purpose of rock art is still a matter of debate, but it is thought to have been used for a variety of purposes, including communication, religious ceremonies, and artistic expression.

One of the most notable rock art sites in the Nilgiris is the Parivarai Rock Art Site. This site is located in the village of Parivarai, and it is home to a large collection of rock art dating back to the Mesolithic period. The rock art depicts a variety of images, including animals, humans, and geometric patterns.

Another significant rock art site is the Melur Rock Art Site. This site is located in the village of Melur, and it is home to a collection of rock art dating back to the Iron Age. The rock art depicts a variety of images, including animals, humans, and symbols associated with fertility and agriculture.

Burial Sites

Burial sites are another type of prehistoric monument found in the Nilgiris. Burial sites can be found in a variety of locations, including caves, rock shelters, and under stone circles and dolmens. The burial sites in the Nilgiris contain a variety of artifacts, including pottery, tools, and jewelry.

One of the most notable burial sites in the Nilgiris is the Cairn Circle Site. This site is located in the village of Cairn Circle, and it is home to a collection of burial circles dating back to the Iron Age. The burial

circles are made up of large stones, and they contain a variety of artifacts, including pottery, tools, and jewelry.

Another significant burial site is the Cist Burial Site. This site is located in the village of Cist Burial, and it is home to a collection of cist burials dating back to the Iron Age. Cist burials are rectangular or square stone chambers that were used to bury the dead.

Significance of the Nilgiri Prehistoric Monuments

The Nilgiri prehistoric monuments are significant for a number of reasons. First, they provide a glimpse into the lives of the early inhabitants of the region. Second, they offer insights into the religious beliefs, social practices, and technological advancements of these early societies. Third, they are important cultural heritage sites that deserve to be preserved and protected.

Theories on the Purpose and Meaning of the Nilgiri Prehistoric Monuments

There are a number of theories that have been proposed to explain the purpose and meaning of the Nilgiri prehistoric monuments. One theory is that they were used for religious ceremonies. Another theory is that they were used as burial chambers. Still another theory is that they were used for astronomical observations.

It is likely that the Nilgiri prehistoric monuments were used for a variety of purposes.

However, the exact purpose of many of these monuments remains unknown.

Conclusion

The Nilgiri prehistoric monuments are a fascinating and important part of India's cultural heritage. These monuments provide valuable insights into the lives of the people who inhabited the Nilgiris in the past. The monuments also provide insights into the religious beliefs and practices of the people who lived there in the past.

The Nilgiri prehistoric monuments are a must-see for anyone visiting the Nilgiris. They are a reminder of the rich and diverse history of the Nilgiris, and they provide important insights into the lives of the people who lived there in the past.

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