

THE EARLY IRON AGE BURIAL-CUM-HABITATION SITE AT IBBANKATUWA, DAMBULLA: AN AREA CATCHMENT STUDY

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The Early Iron Age burial-cum-habitation site (6th century BC) at Ibbankatuwa is located in Talakiriyagama (which is about 3km south – west of Dambulla) near the 90th mile post on the Kurunegala - Trincomalee road. Geographically it is situated on the upper reaches of the Kala oya basin. The main objective of the present research was to investigate some possible locational factors highlighting area catchment study of Ibbankatuwa burial-cum-habitation site during the Early Iron Age.

The Ibbankatuwa burial site covers an area of about 10 hectares and has 42 clusters of cist tombs with a rough average of about 10 tombs per cluster.

The Early Iron Age communities established their settlements in the Ibbankatuwa region because of several favourable locational factors at the macro and micro levels.

At the macro spatial level, the Early Iron Age burial-cum-habitation site at Ibbankatuwa is located on one of the strategic regions in terms of resource movement between the primary resource areas in the montane region and primary consumption centres in the north-central plains.

Physiographic location of the region and availability of water were important factors in deciding the location of the Ibbankatuwa settlement.

Arable land seems to be another important factor deciding the location of these settlements.

The Early Iron Age communities at Ibbankatuwa mainly subsisted on farming, pastoral activity and hunting.

It appears that the availability of suitable stone for making tombs and for house hold equipment was also one of the determining factors for the choice of a settlement in the area of the study.

Besides, fine sources of clay for pottery making were available in the close vicinity of the Dambulu oya.

The tentative conclusions that may be drawn from the area catchment study are; Firstly, the burial-cum-habitation site at Ibbankatuwa was located on a resource exchange route between two distinctive ecological zones, and secondly, that it provided a relatively easy subsistence basis in sustaining lineage-based simple societies of the Early Iron Age .