

# Gal Messa (Dolmen) of Padavigampola



The dolmen, 'Gal Messa' at Padavigampola in Rambukkana. The two iron sticks on right side prevents the top stone slab from crumbling down

**A**mong the pre-historic sites identified in the Kegalle District, the Padavigampola site is the most prominent. The caves found in Padavigampola had provided shelter to man during pre-historic times.

The historically important Padavigampola dolmen (this dolmen is called 'Gal Messa' by the locals.) is believed to be one of the most significant historical monuments scattered over the Kegalle District, in the Sabaragamuwa Province. The dolmen is believed to be a construction prior to the arrival of Prince Vijaya circa 5th century BC.

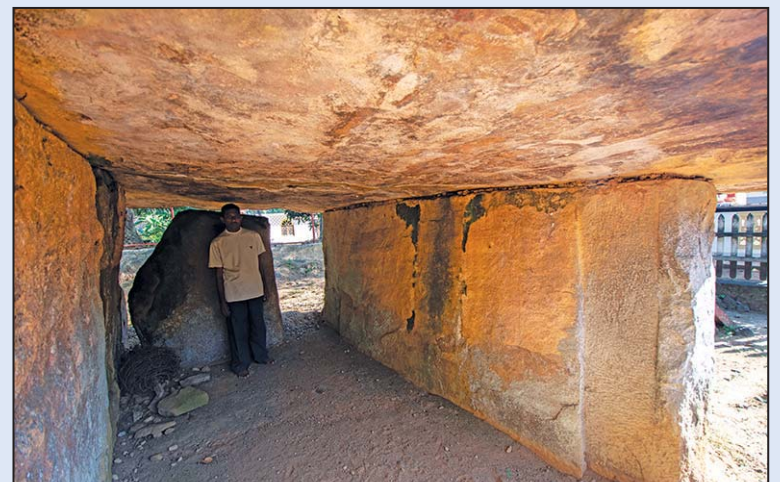
According to ancient chronicles, this period is known as the early Iron Age. Hunting was an important part of the daily life of the inhabitants and they lived in caves. They buried their dead in stone cemeteries.

Since there is no proper excavation of the Padavigampola dolmen, we are unable to ascertain its origin. It is in this context that we should view the dolmen at Padavigampola where three large slabs of stone stand upright on the ground. Over the top lies another slab over two ft in height, larger than the rest was probably a burial chamber in ancient times. The nearly, seven ft high dolmen was used to bury people of high social status such as, village chieftains, while urns were used to bury the common people. The dolmens with raised roofs, perhaps, served even as dwelling places, though no explanation is provided as to why people would have lived in these burial sites. Apparently, the first sign of building in Sri Lanka, this pre-historic dolmen in Padavigampola is the first of its kind to be discovered on the island. Inside it is 11 feet across and nearly seven ft high, a person can just stand upright. Smoothly engraved on the inside of the right hand slab is a symbol from the Megalithic Era.

The dead were interred in pits or urns and stone monuments erected over their remains. Places such as, Ibbankatuwa in Dambulla and Ranchamadama in Embilipitiya are fine examples, where the dead were cremated and their remains placed in small stone chambers fitted with capstones as cremations and urn burials were clearly a common practice at this time.

The Dolmen lies on a small patch of land behind the temple but not visible to the road. A small gate near the temple will lead you to this incredible structure belonging to the stone-age man.

Source: 'Heritage of Sabaragamuwa' Photos and Graphic: Mahil Wijesinghe



Inside view of the dolmen which is around seven ft high



The rear side of the dolmen