

**Session title: LINKS BETWEEN MEGALITHISM AND HYPOGEISM IN WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN EUROPE**

**Organizers:** Juan Antonio Cámara Serrano, Universidad de Granada, Granada, Spain  
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**Time:** Thursday morning

**Room:**

**Session abstract:**

Some formal similarities in plan designs and volumetric conception have been often noted between megalithic and hypogeic monuments of Mediterranean Late Prehistory. Other kinds of architectural features shared by megalithic and hypogeic monuments exist too. They include the use of the orthostats in hypogeic monuments as a structural element or as adornment. Moreover, most of the south Iberian Peninsula circular tombs with corridor (covered or not by a false dome) are partly dug, and the excavated part of the chamber is covered with orthostatic panels.

In spite of the recognised formal relationship between megalithism and hypogeism, the distribution maps that tried to show the areas where tombs were exclusively hypogeic (like Sardinia) or megalithic ones (like South West Iberia) have now become obsolete. Actually the unique difference between megaliths and rock-cut tombs is the emphasis on visibility or concealment of monuments.

So the links between hypogeism and megalithism go beyond formal and architectural features and they must be included in the research about how ideology is often formalized in these societies. Such links may also draw upon the interest developed recently in exploring the connections between megalithism and rock art.

These similarities between megaliths and hypogea can be also seen in the ideal reproductions of houses, which are quite complex in some Sardinian examples, and especially in the hypogeic or semi-hypogeic character of many houses, as is the case of High Guadalquivir river valley Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic settlements in Iberia.

The transposition/imitation/inversion of domestic contents in ritual shows similarities in both kinds of monuments although the primary function is often a funerary one (although there is evidence that they have a more complex role in some places like Malta). Passage rites are emphasized by different features such as corridors in both megalithic monuments and hypogea. Finally the concealment of the sacred area is also a feature of megalithic monuments, where the tumulus works both as a landmark and as a protector of its inner parts. Taking into account these data, it is clear that social differences are hidden (not exhibited) after funerals.

**SESSION OBJECTIVES**

- To show that preponderance of megalithic phenomena in certain areas are due to the greater visibility of outstanding (or partially outstanding) monuments.

- To examine that formal similarities and constructive convergences between tumuli and hypogea, and to document whether their integration in a ritual system intended for the social reproduction based on the display and concealment of certain features.
- To investigate if both kind of monuments (and partially excavated ones) are combined depending on objectives pursued in the different parts of the territory.
- To investigate the meanings that external necropolis surrounding settlements have in the evolution of megalithic and hypogeic graves and their relation with the development of the collective burial ritual.
- To study the reason why some simple hypogeic structures last till the Bronze Age as tombs dug inside settlements.

#### SESSION THEMES

- Exploration of formal and constructive similarities between megalithic and hypogeic graves from the analysis of specific case studies.
- Territorial analysis that can show if there is any kind of territorial inclusion/exclusion of both phenomena.
- Relation between both phenomena and their co-evolution with settlement pattern.
- Chronology of both phenomena.
- Theoretical analysis about the functions of both types of manifestations and their relationship with contemporary rituals.

#### **Paper abstracts:**

### **A SINGULAR CASE OF MEGALITHISM JOINT TO SOME SEMI-HYPOGEIC STRUCTURES IN LA MADDALENA ISLAND (SARDINIA)**

Tomaso di Fraia, Department of Archaeological Sciences, University of Pisa, Italy

In La Maddalena island we have identified 24 megalithic structures, that we could call “pseudo-dolmens”, most of which concentrated in a very little valley at Vena Longa. These structures are not real dolmens, because at least one side is formed by a natural rock outcrop; in three cases the structures are partially or almost entirely underground. In one case a section of a curved wall has been preserved at a higher height than the covering slab of the “dolmen”. The stones that form these structures not only have not been squared, but they are not even cut or worked in any way with tools and therefore came from natural blocks, which have been broken in smaller pieces by humans.

Two other structures are different from, but very close to, the pseudo-dolmens. These structures are trenches 45-50 cm wide, 2 m long and 50-60 cm deep, dug longitudinally on the hill following the slope downwards; for this reason the builders had to level the two sides of the trench with additional stones, constructing in this way a horizontal plane on which they could deposit the covering stones transversally; the façade resembles a very small tumulus with tunnel. One of the two trenches has an additional orthogonal section 130 cm long.

As no artefacts on the surface have been found, we must wait for coming excavations to draw a chronological and cultural outline.

### **RELATIONS BETWEEN MEGALITHISM AND HYPOGEISM IN A NORTH-WESTERN SARDINIA EXAMPLE: RUNALA AREA (ITTIRI, SS)**

Maria Giovanna De Martini, Università degli Studi di Sassari, Italia

This research tries to define the boundaries of the gathered complex megalithic phenomenon, and especially to compare Runala area to other neighbouring territories. We pretend to show the close territorial relation between the megalithic funerary elements and the hypogeic one, in this case represented by Enas de Cannua necropolis, situated less than 1 Km from Runala dolmenic necropolis and which importance is pointed by the presence of horn-shaped decorative designs. Main guiding lines in this research are the following:

- Analysis of both necropolises
- Research of traces of the built-up areas next to the necropolises and surface collection. (limitation: reclamation work)
- Analysis of cartographic data and integration with real proofs of sites reaching (distances and effective time) (limitation: arbitrariness of the choice of the paths)
- Data updating in the light of the discovery of new hypogeic graves side by side in a short distance with a dolmenic structure.

By creating a “threshold” zone, the latest discoveries can give a useful interpretation key on the close relationship between both funerary phenomena, which can be summed up in the following layout (reading sites from S to N):  
[hypogea] – [(hypogea) + (dolmen)] – [dolmen].

## **LINKS BETWEEN HYPOGEISM AND MEGALITHISM IN THE TERRITORY OF BARIGADU (SARDINIA, ITALY)**

Cinzia Lopi, Università degli Studi di Sassari, Italy

New contributions to the knowledge of Sardinian megalithic phenomenon are offered by dolmenic monuments recently discovered in some unpublished sites of Barigadu, geographical area of the central Sardinia. A study about these structures has also allowed me to make some considerations about relationships between the dolmenic monuments and the rock-cut tombs (the so called “domus de janas”), rich of architectonic elements which reproduce the structures of the prehistoric dwellings, that are located in the same geographical area. Particularly interesting in this respect are the results about the environment study. The analysis of the lithic artifacts in obsidian, “the black gold of Prehistory”, founded in the dolmenic sites, could provide useful guidance for the dating and allocation of the same cultural context.

## **TO BUILD, TO DIG: DOLMENS AND ARTIFICIAL CAVES AT THE LISBON PENINSULA (CENTRAL PORTUGAL)**

Victor S. Gonçalves, UNIARQ, Lisbon University, Portugal

At the third millennium BC the Lisbon peninsula is the heart of Portugal, a very peripheral heart of course but a very important centre for ancient peasants and

metallurgists. In the fourth and third millennia we found there a very specific situation: some local populations, indeed connected with the Alentejo, export flint and import amphibolites. The ritual practices for the dead includes the use of passage graves or, more often, natural caves. In the beginnings of the third millennium, the graves are no more build but dug in the limestone, artificial caves necropolis like Alapraia, S. Pedro do Estoril or Tojal de Vila Chã (Carenque). Of course there is HERE a new philosophy, to dig is not to build, but all the magic-religious subsystem also changes and the ideological artefacts are now completely different. Why? is a good question. New people or the old one, refreshed by some new eastern influences?

The aim of the problem is that some ritual practices known in the built monuments are similar to those found at the artificial caves. We think that in both categories of monuments is possible to see several phases, construction, first use and subsequent reuse.

Some new radiocarbon dating presented here can illuminate both sides of the question, the moments of construction and the continuity of the places.

## **HYPOGEA - CONCEALED CAVES OR CONSTRUCTED TEMPLES? THE HYPOGEAL OF MALTA AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE**

Caroline Malone, Queen's University Belfast, UK  
Simon Stoddart, University of Cambridge, UK

“Temples for the living and temples for the dead” has been casually suggested as a simple formula to distinguish between the functions and differences of these two impressive forms of Maltese monument. Recent study suggests that there are much closer structural relationships between the layout and built elements, reflecting both ritual practice and cosmology. Directional and lateral concerns appear to underlie many of the apparent structural similarities, such as the orientation of monument entry, and the position of key structures such as altars, libation holes, hearths, bowls, and symbolic objects. Old excavation records and newly studied details from the Brochtorff Xaghra Circle on Gozo begin to indicate the repetition of similar ritual action in temples and hypogeal, indicating that archaeologists need to acknowledge the wider scope of ritual and belief systems in a society, rather than extract burial data in isolation. The paper explores how a study of new material has cast new light on much old and obscure material, providing significant information on distinct funerary and habitual rituals in prehistoric island societies. Potentially the methods and theories adopted here, have implications across a much wider canvas of prehistory.

## **MEGALITHS AND ROCK CUT TOMBS IN NORTHEASTERN SARDINIA. FROM SPACE CONSECRATION TO TERRITORIAL BOUNDARIES SET OUT**

Liliana Spanedda, Universidad de Granada, Spain

Some of the most important Sardinian megalithic monuments are located in the Orosei Gulf. Numerous rock-cut tombs, *domus de janas*, have been also found and no clear chronological differences can be argued to explain the coexistence of both

kinds of funerary graves. This study tries to search if any topographical distinction can be referred to different territorial control functions, specially taking into account the underground situation of rock-cut tombs that cannot be linked to any marking functions although they are located in every exploitation area. In order to get this aim topographical variables will be used in bi-variant and multi-variant analysis (Cluster and Principal Components ones) and different comparisons will be made by including and excluding Bronze Age megalithic graves, giants' tombs. This process will allow me to show continuities and discontinuities in territorial control according to tombs formal traits. Although *domus de janas* and groups of them are located on all the geomorphologic zones, but always near river valleys, dolmens are mainly situated in plateau zones where their control over territory is emphasized. Giants' Tombs tend to be located in all the areas but some specific features can be distinguished even in the same zone and some of these differences can be referred to typological groups and, so, to chronological sequence.

## **VISIBILITY AND MONUMENTALITY IN WEST GRANADA LATE PREHISTORIC GRAVES**

Juan Antonio Cámara Serrano and José Andrés Afonso Marrero, Universidad de Granada, Granada, Spain

Antonio Manuel Montufo Martín, Delegación Provincial de Cultura de Granada Spain

Fernando Molina González, Universidad de Granada, Granada, Spain

Different kinds of late prehistoric tombs can be found in the western part of Granada province (Andalusia, Spain) although all of them include some hypogeic features. Even in the famous Las Peñas de los Gitanos (Montefrío) megalithic necropolis the semihypogeic character can be referred by deep foundations. In other cases hypogeic character is more evident as shown by Zujaira (Pinos Puente) and Sierra Martilla (Loja) cases. We can also see that visibility, to and from tombs, is never looked for, but especially hidden graves can be found in all the necropolis as has been shown by a visibility analysis in relation to environment and other tombs using GIS software. A discussion about graves true functions and monumentality has become necessary. We conclude that tombs are not located in order to territorial control, even if they are placed on exploitation areas. Funerary ritual main use can be related to avoid the risks that visible wealth differences and resources mobilization in funerals could have in a society which is fastly changing. In this way secret and masking are emphasized by funerary ritual.

## **THE BURIALS IN THE SARDINIAN BELL BEAKER CULTURE**

Claudia Pau, Universidad de Granada, Spain

Studying the main Sardinian Bell Beaker culture sites, one can see the relative strong presence of funerary deposits compared to the few settlements. In this work we will analyse the different types of burials used by Bell Beaker culture people: natural caves, cist tombs, *domus de janas*, megalithic hypogea and dolmens. With a statistical study we will determine the number of tombs as well as review their location and

distribution in the four provinces which constitute the Sardinian territory (Cagliari, Oristano, Nuoro and Sassari), whether the territorial choices were somehow related to strategic, visual issues or territorial control or presence the settlements. We will see which tombs were built from scratch and which were reuse of previous cultures, which were used in the first stages of Bell Beaker culture and which in its final period. The study of each funerary set (pottery, arms and ornamental objects) and the human remains they contain will allow us to know whether the typological choices were due to social or gender reasons.

## **CAVES, ROCK CUT TOMBS AND MEGALITHS IN THE TAGUS ESTUARY**

Isabel M. G. Lisboa

This paper looks at the significance of caves in the Tagus Estuary Chalcolithic, when it is argued, megaliths, rock cut tombs and caves were used in the same way at the same time, with the deliberate deposition of selected artefacts including human figurines.

Caves were the initial inspiration for the construction of the other types of monuments, megaliths and rock cut tombs, and by the Chalcolithic these different types of monuments were used as equivalent, with similar deposits and mixed buildings as in Praia das Maças.

For most of the 19th and 20th centuries the classification of the monuments was dominated their architecture. However, from the point of view of the Chalcolithic mind, the detail of the method of construction of the place selected for ritual deposition may be irrelevant, though not necessarily the experience those places afford. It is argued that the experience of space, in terms of spatial organisation, and the transitional experience are similar in different types of sites selected for ritual deposition, signalling the rarefied knowledge and appropriation of ancestors. The paper also examines the similarities in the deposits to conclude that the caves, like megaliths and rock-cut tombs, were used as means of controlling esoteric communication.

## **DIFERENT FORMS FOR THE SAME SYMBOL: A THEORETICAL REFLECTION ABOUT MONUMENTAL GRAVES IN IV-III MILLENIA BC THROUGH AN IDEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THEIR ARCHITECTURE**

María Aguado Molina, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Spain

Our research work about spatial relationships between funerary sites in south Iberian Peninsula showed that hypogea and megaliths were built by the same people with the same purpose: to conform “sacred-political” territories which had an internal coherence under the umbrella of the main ideology of the inequality occultation. To obtain that conclusion droved us to debate several fundamental questions:

First of all, both funerary structural models would have shaped the same ritual space, which had a similar meaning in each case. Consequently, it was that

artificial space, not the architectonic structure, which would have been the real recipient for the symbolic value.

Secondly, the builders would not have had in a meaningful consideration whether they used one constructive technique or another or different morphologies. However, it seems like they conferred a fundamental meaning to the external shape of the multiple burial pantheons, which would have been a representation of the concept of "mountain". That design of sacred symbolism mountains would have been observed as in the real mountain where the hypogea were excavated as in the artificial tumulus of megaliths.

Finally, their monumentality would have been placed both in their constructive effort and their visibility but always expressing the same concept of death, or the human's role on it and the one gave to him by the dominant ideology in that kind of societies.