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THE BURIAL AS AN HYPOGEUM 2 IN ILOI - ISPILUNCAS (SEDILO, ORISTANO)

Anna Depalmas

Iloi is in the central part of Sardinia, near the tableland area (fig. 1A) in front of the huge river-valley, nowadays taken up by the storage of the Lake Omodeo. In a versant position (180 m s.l.m), inside the tufaceous rocks underneath the basaltic blanket typical of the upper part of the tableland, there is a wide necropolis made by thirty-three hypogea¹.

The excavation

The excavations (1993-1995) concerned not only the interior of the grave 2 but also its upper part (called upper B sector) and the area before the rocky ridge (the lower B sector). The research has been done in different areas:

- In the sector before the cella m, where through a small opening on the ground, there was only a visible entrance to the grave;
- In the western part of this area, near the entrance to the anti-cella c, which was impossible to be seen from outside because completely covered by the earth that was on it;
- Inside the domos, in the nine known places;
- On the left of the *dromos*, near the sector B, where the rocky ridge appeared.

In the first of these areas, the removal of the artificial layer has permitted to see a room of quadrangular shape N, which was opened because of the ancient fall of the rocky ceiling.

The filling of this space was made by many basaltic stones, intentionally placed in the area before the entrance to the room m; next to the stones, different earth layers were alternately kept out. Near the Southern angle of the cella, there was a small lithic cist of rectangular shape (U.S. 9,10) with external dimensions of 70 x 50 cm and internal ones of about 30 x 30 cm. The internal filling of the cist (U.S. 11) was made up of earth mixed to ash and coal, which, after a radiometric analysis, have supplied the calibrated dating of 1111 - 841 BC, so a period pertinent to the Late Bronze Age².

The chemical analyses made on the earth of the filling, have excluded organic substances referable to bony remains. Therefore the cist was used to lower the remains of the burnt offers, probably, in the adjacent circular furnace dug out on the rocks.

The second zone at the beginning was as a piece of versant completely covered by some earth, which was partly detained by a modern limitative dry-wall.

After the removal of almost all the damp earth (U.S. 1), the entrance to the tomb took again its original order. It was made up of an open passage (or *dromos*) a, and a pavilion b and through them one enters the anti-cella c.

Almost all the earth layers found in the area of the *dromos* (U.S. 14, 20, 21, 25) were characterized by a very hard density, with concretionary zones difficult to remove, because of many phenomena of pedological change.

In this room, the presence of carbon elements into the U.S. 36 has permitted to obtain another dating C14, oscillating between 3088 and 2586 BC in calibrated age, and therefore pertinent to the use of a burial in the Eneolithic Ages³.

Inside the tomb 2, the excavation in the already known nine rooms has proceeded with the removal of great quantities of earth sediments and artificial accumulations of stones of different dimensions.

In the room m, large rocky tufaceous slabs taken off by the ceiling, were put in evidence (U.S. 24), under which some bony remains in secondary deposition were found. They were made by eight skulls associated to long bones, by rare elements referable to other parts of the skeleton and by few fictile fragments mainly of High Medieval Age. These remains are the only burial traces found inside the tomb.

In all the cella appeared a lot of basaltic stones (U.S. 33) put intentionally to realize a new level of frequentation.

This phenomenon is recurring in the tomb 2: it both concerns limited zones and occupies all the floor of some cellas. Probably it is referable to a re-use of the burial in periods subsequent the original establishment, probably in High Medieval Age.

The earth deposit present in the cellas was, usually, made by accumulations of mid entity; the anti-cella c and the near cella d were an exception, where the filling occupied the 75% of the volumetric space disposable.

Finally in the fourth zone, in the western limit of the area B, the excavation made in the upper and lower sectors has showed two new hypogea.

The monument

The tomb 2 is a multichamber hypogea with a planimetric scheme divided in thirteen rooms set out in two-axled which enter in a longitudinal sense in the tufaceous bank, following the obliqueness of the rocky ridge⁴.

Before the excavation, just nine cellas were visible. It was possible to enter into them through a small opening on the ground before the room m (fig. 1B).

Now on the left side of this, on the contrary, there are the *dromos* a, wide 3,10m and deep 4m and the pavilion b, through which it is possible to go directly inside the principal hypogea.

The entrance door, rectangular (m 1,20 x 0,75) and orientated SE, brings to a wide anti-cella c (wide 5,40m and long 3,40) with a semi-circular plan, whose ceiling-sloping in the entrance- shows a central truss realized in negative, while on the floor of the cella there is a small circular cupel.

The bottom wall, rectilinear, has on the angle O a pilaster strip with trails of red paint located even on the ceiling together with some trails of white and anthracite-grey plaster; a trapezoid wicket, squared by a frame, brings to the cella d, squared, through which it is possible to go to the lateral room e.

In the anti-cella c, through a small squared wicket realized in the northern curvilinear wall, it is possible to arrive to an irregular room of connection f which connects the group of spaces c-e to the rooms g-m.

These cellas, put on a longitudinal axis W/NW-E/SE and connected between them by wider wickets of subcircular shape, show irregular squared plans with straight walls, rarely curvilinear, often splitted by roots and by water infiltrations that enter inside the hypogeum, ruining the structures. The cella h presents on the floor some raised dividing heads; the room m has a rectangular plan and a big circular furnace limited by a raised frame realized on the floor. The cella n is wide, quadrangular, opened because of the fall of the ceiling and of some internally inclined walls, and it is preceded by a small anti-cella o, of subcircular shape.

By the compressive planimetric scheme of the tomb it is possible to see a first phase in which it was realized the hypogeum made by the dromos a, the pavilion b, the anti-cella c, the cellas d, e and f. Next to it there was later another burial made up of the anti-cella o, the cella n, the cella m; only later the cella f was modified and the rooms i, l, h, g were realized, and they unify the two original hypogea.

Materials

After a first analysis of the materials it is noticed the frequent mixture of the elements of different cultures and not contemporary among them, but present in the same Stratigraphical Unity.

The oldest materials found in the burial are of the culture of Ozieri (recent Neolithic), to which it is ascribed the first establishment of the hypogeum with dromos and the semicircular anti-cella.

It is a not numerous number of elements where the typical decorations with sketched side, dotted, triangles painted as backgrounds, while among the shapes there are the small basket vase, the hemispherical bowl, the neck vase and the tripod.

Big bowls, panting carinate vases and not (fig. 2, 1-2), and different fragmentary fictile elements that presented the characteristic large parallel horizontal flutes belong to the Eneolithic culture; quite famous even the red paint.

The Monte Claro materials in Iloi have the characteristics of the *facies* of Oristano, even if the absence of the leaf and schematic little branch decorum; the presence of situls and the predilection for the use of the red paint seem to show an affinity for the meridional aspects of this culture, particularly present in all the area of Cagliari⁵.

The bell-shaped cultural aspect is represented by many decorated ceramic fragments in different motives with the technique of the dentate comb and with a simple engraving.

The most famous shape is the hemispherical one, sometimes realized on foot, with a simple or flattened edge and expanded and decorated with zigzag lines and stripes.

Among the decorative motives realized with the dentate comb there are fascias of rhomboidal elements and zigzag lines in the parallel lines, the alternate painted as backgrounds triangles that creates zigzag stripes and painted as backgrounds with parallel lines sandgalsses; on the contrary, among the ones realized with a simple engraving there are decorums with painted as backgrounds triangles with parallel lines (fig. 2, 3-4).

In one of the fragments of the tomb 2, it seems impossible to find a comparison either in the insular ambit or in the extrainsular one. It is a fragment of a vase with the hemispherical body with the expanded edge and the feet of elliptical shape, made of purified clay of light brown colour with smoothed and polished surfaces; the external wall is decorated with an angular meandering motif filled with oblique hatchings into two stripes hatched too, bordered by double simple lines, all realized with deep engraved outlines (fig. 2, 5).

The originality of this fragment seems a local new elaboration of decorative elements typical of other geographical places that in this zone of Sardinia would have had fortune.

Many materials, like cups, bowls (fig. 2, 6-7), polipodes vases and vases on foot, pans and miniaturistical vases belong to the later culture of Bonnanaro.

The Nuragic Age (and more precisely the later Bronze Age) is certified only on the basis of the dating given by the coals of the U.S. 11, and by small typical fragments found inside it.

In the end the last usage of the hypogeum seem referable to the High-Medieval period; this period is testified by the presence of some metal elements in iron and by some fictile materials referable to simple shapes and of common usage.

Tomb 2 has returned a big litic industry with rare flintstone elements and many obsidian manufactured articles among which: blades, scrapers and arrows points. Moreover, it is very interesting the typological variety of the 11 peaks of excavation, fragmentary and entire, whose frequency seems to confirm the habit -testified even elsewhere in Sardinia- of put inside the tomb even the excavation instruments.

Therefore it is explainable their presence, on the floor of the cella h between the two divisor septa, as residual elements of an original putting contemporary to the realization of the hypogeum.

Footnotes

¹ Sedilo 1996, pp. 126, 183.

² Analysis made in the laboratory of the Physics Department of the University "La Sapienza" in Rome, directed by the Prof. Salvatore Improta.

³ See the preceding note.

⁴ DEPALMAS 1996, pp. 174-177, preceding bibliography, Depalmas cs a-c.

⁵ DEPALMAS 1991, pp. 50-51.

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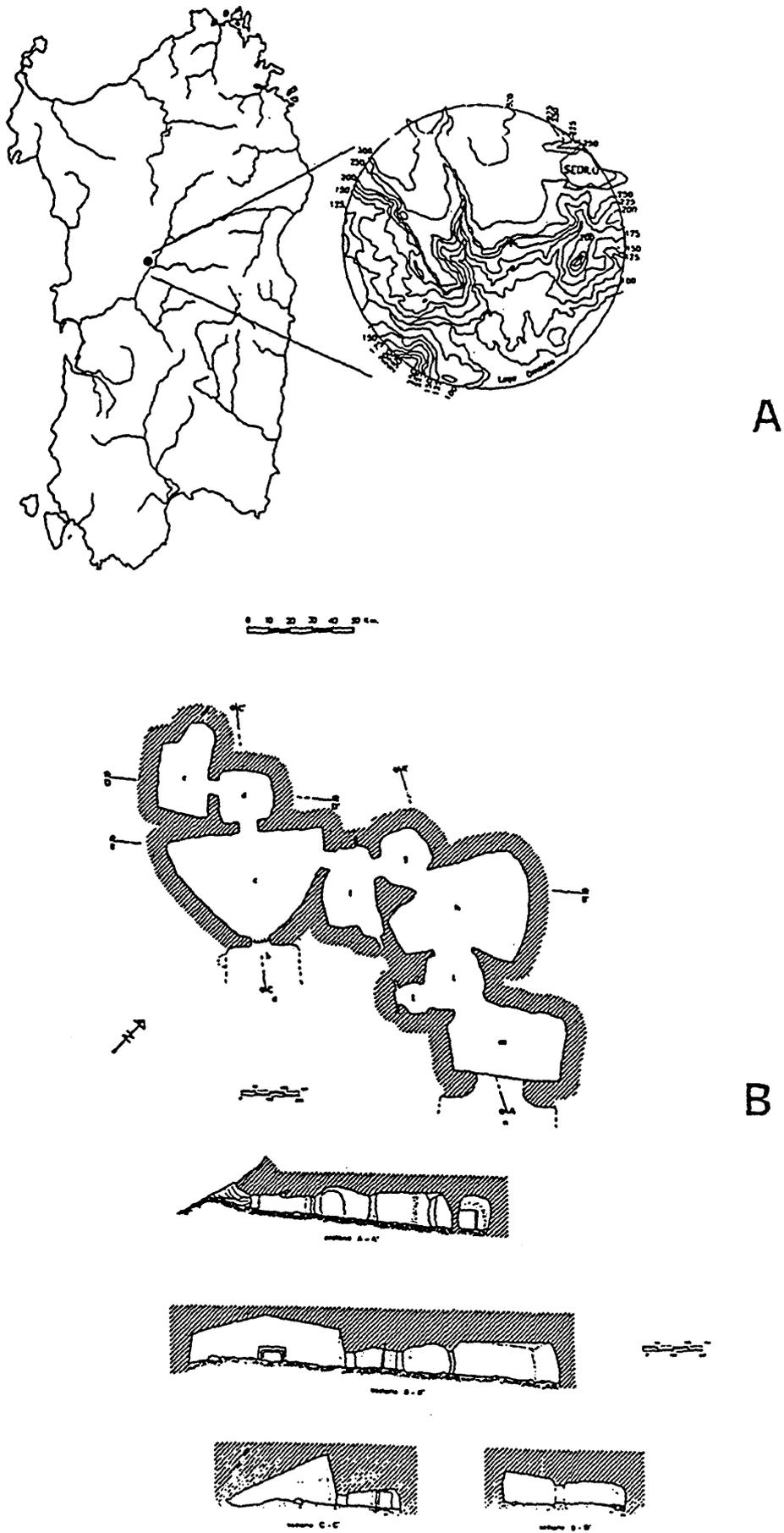


Fig.1. Sedilo (OR), Iloi-Ispiluncas: A, localization of the necropolis; B, planimetry and section of the hypogeum2.

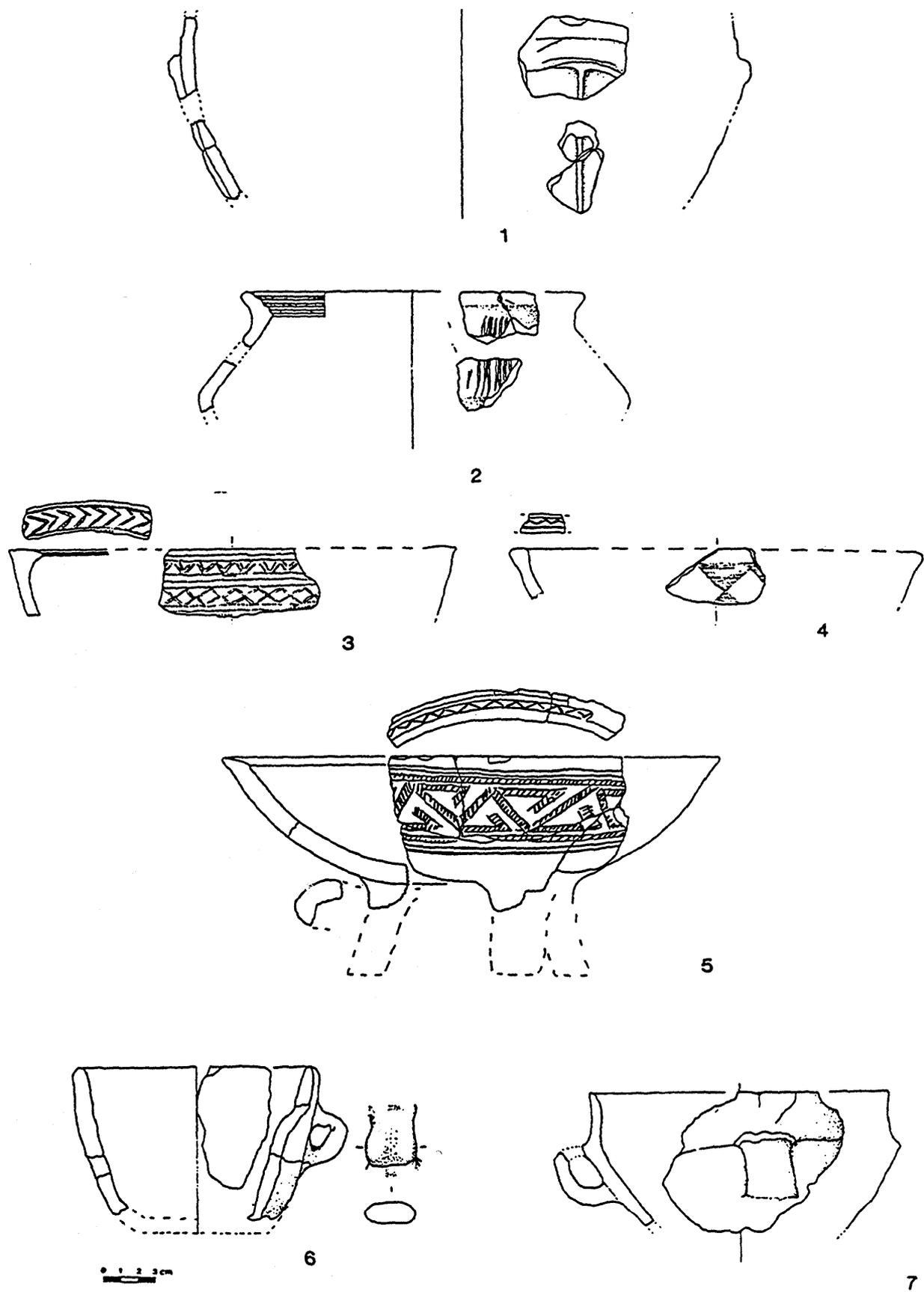


Fig. 2. Sedilo (OR), Iloi-Ispilucas, hypogeum 2: ceramic materials of Monte Claro culture (1-2), bell-shaped (3-5), Bonnannaro culture (6-7).