



“The role of the dead among the living, Architectures, Memories and Rituals from the end of the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age”

**4th North/South Late Prehistory Colloquium
La Rochelle (Charente-Maritime, Nouvelle-Aquitaine)
April 27–30, 2022**

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The North/South Late Prehistory Colloquium brings researchers and national institutes together to share and discuss research and ideas. Chronologically, it addresses the end of the Mesolithic, the Neolithic, and the Bronze Age. Its participants include the Association for the Promotion of Bronze Age Research (APRAB), the Association for Interregional Neolithic Research (InterNéo), and the Southern Colloquium on Late Prehistory (RMPR).

After a first colloquium (Marseille, 2012), addressing Late Prehistory field research methods (Sénépart *et al.* dir., 2014), followed by a second one (Dijon, 2015) devoted to Neolithic to Bronze Age settlement patterns in France and its margins (Lemercier *et al.* dir., 2018), and a third one (Lyon, 2018), concerning the circulation and exchange of objects and ideas during European Pre- and Protohistory (publication in progress), the 4th North/South Late Prehistory Colloquium will address the relationships between mortuary structures and their environments from the end of the Mesolithic to the Bronze Age.

In La Rochelle on April 27–30, 2022, this colloquium will explore the role of the deceased and the sacred in early societies and landscapes, the spatial organization of isolated burials and necropolises, and the integration of the latter in the landscape and world of the living. The idea is to examine broadly, from a diachronic (continuities, gaps?) perspective, the evolution of the role of the dead and the sacred in ancient societies, from the organization of mortuary structures (isolated tombs, necropolises) to their integration into the natural environment and among the living. In other words,

mortuary architecture, inhumation practices and the associated objects are seen as the emanation of social organizations and can thus inform us on the modes of functioning of these societies

We already know that some populations are not represented in the mortuary assemblages studied, but those that are can provide insights into the nature of the societies.

We will address three main themes in the form of corresponding sessions:

Death

This first session concerns **mortuary practices** and the **selection of individuals for burial**. We will explore the variability of mortuary practices during a single chronological period and through time, in terms of their evolution and continuity or hiatuses in practices in comparable territories. Polymorphism, when observed, reflects the status of the deceased in different periods and cultures. How can we thus understand role of different mortuary practices, such as the transition from incineration to inhumation (or *vice versa*), from individual burials to collective tombs, or from isolated inhumations to necropolises, in the sociopolitical organizations of a single period or region?

While the selection of individuals is essential to our understanding of social mechanisms, it is difficult to access in ancient societies. The development of new skeletal research methods, such as DNA analysis and isotopic analysis of strontium, enable us to examine family relations, sex, age, territories of origin and inhumation, diet, and population migrations during this long period.

In the tomb

After examining the deceased themselves, and the associated practices, we will focus on the **organization** and **nature of the objects that accompany them in the tombs**.

The selection of the objects deposited provides insight into the value attributed to the particular objects buried with the deceased. Among the many possible research orientations, we will focus on the presence or absence of value-attributed productions present in one or both of the spaces—mortuary or living—and the relationship between the type and typology of the grave goods. Finally, in this inquiry, we believe it is essential to introduce the functional analyses carried out on these deposits. In this manner, the confrontation and comparison of artifact analyses (ceramics, ornaments, etc.) in mortuary contexts and settlement contexts will enable us to investigate the role

of material and conceptual productions with attributed social value deposited in the tombs.

Were these objects already used, or were they produced for this specific occasion?

We can also analyze their organization in the tomb.

The dead among the living

The **spatial integration of the places dedicated to the deceased** are currently the subject of robust analyses (e.g., geophysical surveys) of the spaces devoted to the dead and the sacred and their integration within the territories. Studies of mortuary architecture enable us to evaluate the visibility of mortuary locations when they are monumental and the social investment devoted to the creation of these constructions, which we can also consider relative to the settlement.

Indirectly, we can explore the natural environments in which human communities chose to inhumate their dead.

How visible were the mortuary monuments in the landscape? Did they delimit cultural spaces?

It will be relevant to consider the use duration of mortuary spaces and necropolises.

And what about the reappropriation of ancient Neolithic burials—tumuli or caves, or example—reoccupied by different cultures? Is there a permanence associated with specific sacred spaces?

We will also address the structures with no deceased (circular enclosures, pits with specific deposits) from the perspective of taphonomy (erosion) or intentional actions.

In each of these sessions, we will focus on diachronic approaches (continuities/hiatuses) at different scales (deceased, mortuary structure, cemetery, territory) and syntheses of large territories. We will also reserve time for the presentation of posters.

This year, the colloquium is organized by InterNéo, in collaboration with the APRAB and the RMPRs, and in partnership with the Charente-Maritime Department. It is supported by the Charente-Maritime Departmental Archaeology Service, the INRAP, the CNRS, the Monumen ANR, and the Université de La Rochelle.

The official languages of the colloquium are French and English. The sessions will consist of oral presentations and posters.

There will be an excursion on Saturday, April 30 (program to be announced).

The colloquium will also be accompanied by a retrospective exhibition of major Mesolithic to Bronze Age discoveries in the Nouvelle-Aquitaine region.

Organizing committee: Vincent Ard, Françoise Bostyn, Sylvie Boulud-Gazo, Ewen Ihuel, Isabelle Kerouanton, Christophe Maitay, Gwenaëlle Marchet-Legendre, Vivien Mathé, Claude Mordant, Ivan Praud, Caroline Renard, Ingrid Sénépart, Ludovic Soler.

Scientific committee: Vincent Ard, Françoise Bostyn, Sylvie Boulud-Gazo, Jessie Cauliez, Patrice Courtaud, David Fontijn, Muriel Gandelin, Ewen Ihuel, Isabelle Kerouanton, Philippe Lefranc, Christophe Maitay, Gwenaëlle Marchet-Legendre, Vivien Mathé, Claude Mordant, Rebecca Peake, Ivan Praud, Caroline Renard, Mafalda Roscio, Stéphane Rottier, Ingrid Sénépart, Ludovic Soler, Corine Thévenet.

Presentation submissions must be sent **before November 1, 2021** to the following address: rns4-larochelle@sciencesconf.org