

Manuscript Number:

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Article Type: Istanbul congress paper

Keywords: Tombs; Samnites; Abruzzo; Borrello; Montalto

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Abstract: The territory of the Borrello Municipality is located in the Region Abruzzo, next to the Molise Region. Samnites remains are spread all over this area, up to the Sangro river; however, precise dating of archaeological remains attributable to Samnites is hard to perform because ancient fortifications were re-handled in later periods, specifically to build up rural houses, walls to contain roads, agricultural terraces, sheep barns, etc. This work is devoted to unexplored tombs.

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# THE SAMNITE AREA BETWEEN ABRUZZO AND MOLISE (ITALY)

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## ABSTRACT:

The territory of the Borrello Municipality is located in the Region Abruzzo, next to the Molise Region. Samnites remains are spread all over this area, up to the Sangro river; however, precise dating of archaeological remains attributable to Samnites is hard to perform because ancient fortifications were re-handled in later periods, specifically to build up rural houses, walls to contain roads, agricultural terraces, sheep barns, etc. This work is devoted to unexplored tombs.

## 1. Introduction

Since the pre-Roman age period an important “*tratturo*” exists along the *Sangro river* valley. It was a big communication road that was used by shepherds to move large flocks of sheep from the Maiella mountains located in the Abruzzo Region towards the Southern Italy winter grazing lands. [1], [2].

Towards 500 BC this territory belonged to Samnite people that built several fortified centres on the uplands along the Sangro river in order to maintain the control of this important communication road. [3], [4].

The archaeological remains identified in Montalto, probably referring to the Samnite age, belong to this typology of settlement. These ancient structures, found in the territory of Borrello Municipality, have been employed and redeployed in the course of time. They had different functions, as to defend territory, to control grazing lands, to shelter sheep flocks, to support agricultural activities and at last as a funerary area. These premises make it extremely difficult the precise dating of anthropic manufactured products. [5], [6], [7].

## 2. Territory of the discovered tombs

Significant archaeological ruins were found on the territory of Borrello Municipality (Chieti) in Abruzzo Region where there are ancient settlements of different periods in Montalto area and spread on three different terraces. It seems that at least one of these settlements belongs to the Samnite period in an area inhabited by Pentri and Carricini Samnites.

The discovery is dated the end of 2011 beginning 2012 and research activities are being carried out. These activities seem significant for future projects of valorisation and fruition of this area.

The Borrello territory between the Sangro river and the Pescopennataro Municipality (IS) had a large amount of roads where sheep flocks moved up to recent days: in fact two significant roads or “*tratturi*” could be found on the Sangro valley up to the Agnone territory. [8].

The ancient structures could be related to a territory control system of the communication roads and the summer grazing lands (Fig. 1). These structures in different conservation state were used in different periods from Middle Age up to more recent periods when some of them were used as borders of agriculture fields.

The ancient structures of Montalto could belong to a series of buildings controlling the roads from the Sangro river valley where Romans built the town of Trebula, up to the Samnite Pescopennataro settlement. The roads had two branches, east and west of Montalto, so that these fortifications were in a strategic position. The area of the grazing lands used by Samnites was spread among Prato valley, San Nicola, Colle Mattone, Colle Palazzo, Capezze plateau and Verde river.

It seems that these fortifications were not destroyed by man but slowly abandoned and only in a second moment they became tomb sites and employed during Middle Age.

The whole Northern area of Montalto contains three walls built with sophisticated techniques, Fig. 2.

At lower height (805 mt) there is a small wall made of big bricks (conci) which is of about one meter high. Next, at 820 mt height, there is another wall of more than 3 mt with a sophisticated structure corresponding to a fortification wall. This wall is different because it uses the mountain rocks. Next, at 840 mt there is a Southern wall which contains some ruins, Fig. 3. The defence walls of Montalto extended towards East as far as the Vallone delle Querce Creek. There were found other tumulus structures, walls of ancient buildings and big hydraulic stone works for the protection of the banks.

### 3. Discovery of the tombs

Nowadays, all the area is covered by woods of Turkey oaks, hornbeams, white fir trees. About thirty piles or “cumuli” of big bricks or “conci” were found in this area. They may be considered ancient tombs employed for long periods of time. The sepulchral structures seem different: some the most ancient ones are made of piles of stones coming from previous collapsed manufacts, some others are made of small parallelepiped bricks. There are also more complex structures with perimetral walls and quadrangular platforms where circular plant structures are based on that seem similar to the “Nuraghe” construction techniques.

Among the observed structures two of them deserve special attention due to their state of conservation and for their specific characteristics. The tombs called A and C possess a stone structure, high 0.50 mt, large 0.60 mt and long 2.30 mt communicating with the external space through an opening at the ground level. This opening was probably closed with a big stone after burying.

The largest tomb A has a rectangular base of 3.50 mt per 3.60 mt and is located close on the Montalto slope: its Northern side is 2.90 mt and Southern side is 1.50 mt (Fig. 4 – 5).

The external walls are bent to the interior for a better stability of the structure. The top of the structure has a barrel vault.

Tomb C (Fig. 6 – 7), base of 3.30 mt per 3.80 mt is 2.05 mt high and has the opening of 1.70 mt per 0.60 mt per 0.40 mt. The sepulchral hollow of tomb A is oriented East-West and for tomb C is oriented North-South (Fig. 8).

A third construction called F probably also a tomb has a truncated pyramid base, size 8,20 mt per 6.60 mt per 1.10 mt. On this base there is a cylindrical structure 1,20 mt high and 6.00 mt diameter that seems similar to the ancient structures of Sardinia. [9]. At the sides of this tomb there are big stones indicating ancient walls for about 20.00 mt. (Fig. 9).

The observed area contains about 130 points that can be spotted by GPS, Garmin eTrex Vista HCx. All the data reported on topographic maps will be put at disposal of the Superintendence of Abruzzo in Chieti. In fact it seems important for the touristic exploitation of the area a better knowledge of this territory.

#### 4. Conclusions

The Montalto archaeological area needs further in-depth examination, elaborated studies on dating processes, land investigation through georadar technologies, other land surveys, etc.

Nevertheless, this area revealed itself of great importance. The Montalto studied area can become an important resource for an historical, cultural and social valorisation of the territory of Borrello Municipality. Moreover it can be easily integrated in touristic and natural fruition programmes already activated by Public Administrations.

#### Acknowledgements

The research has been carried out in collaboration with the Archaeological Superintendence of Chieti

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Fig. 1, Funerary area of Montalto  
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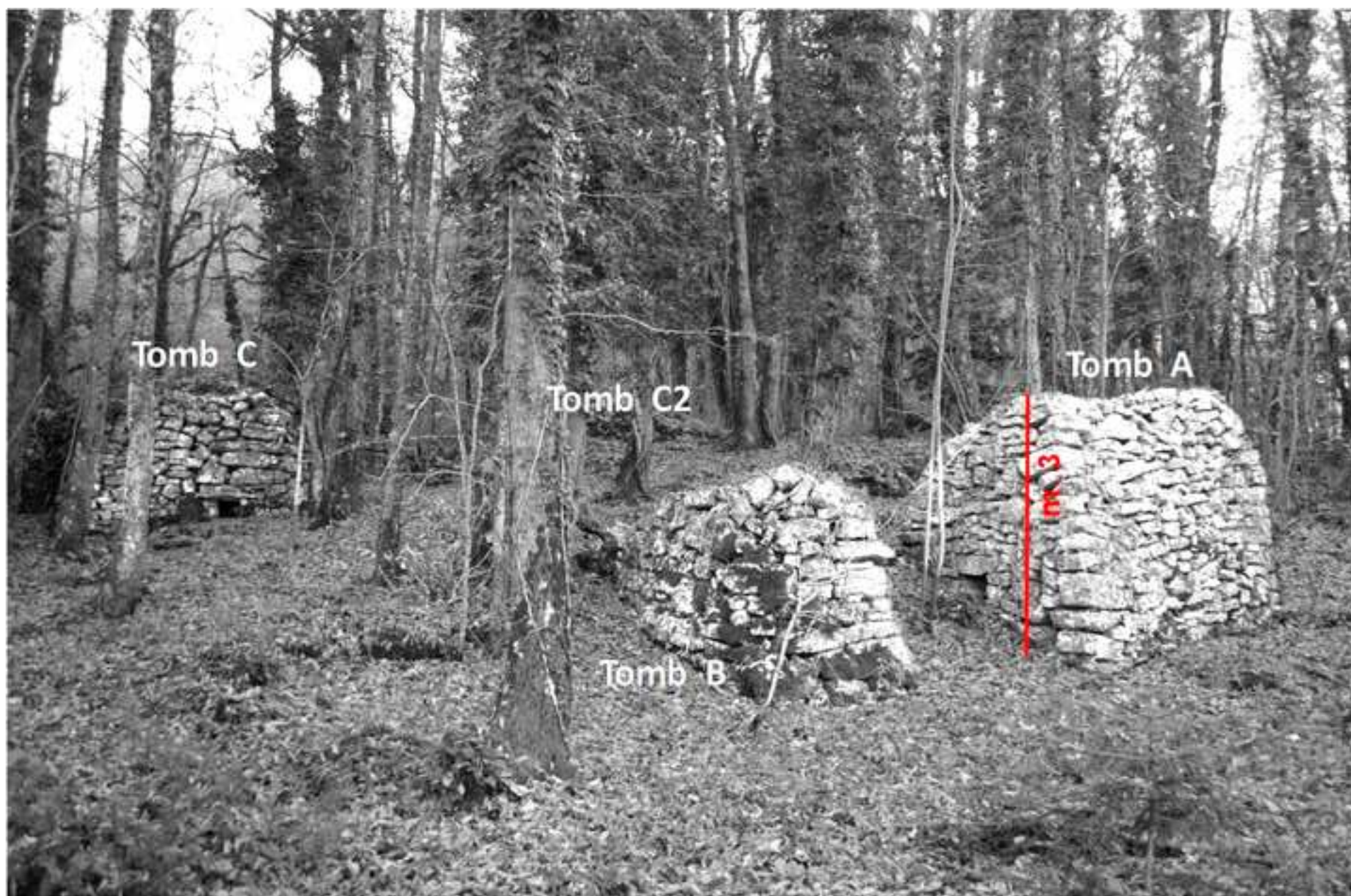




Fig. 2, Plant of Montalto settlements  
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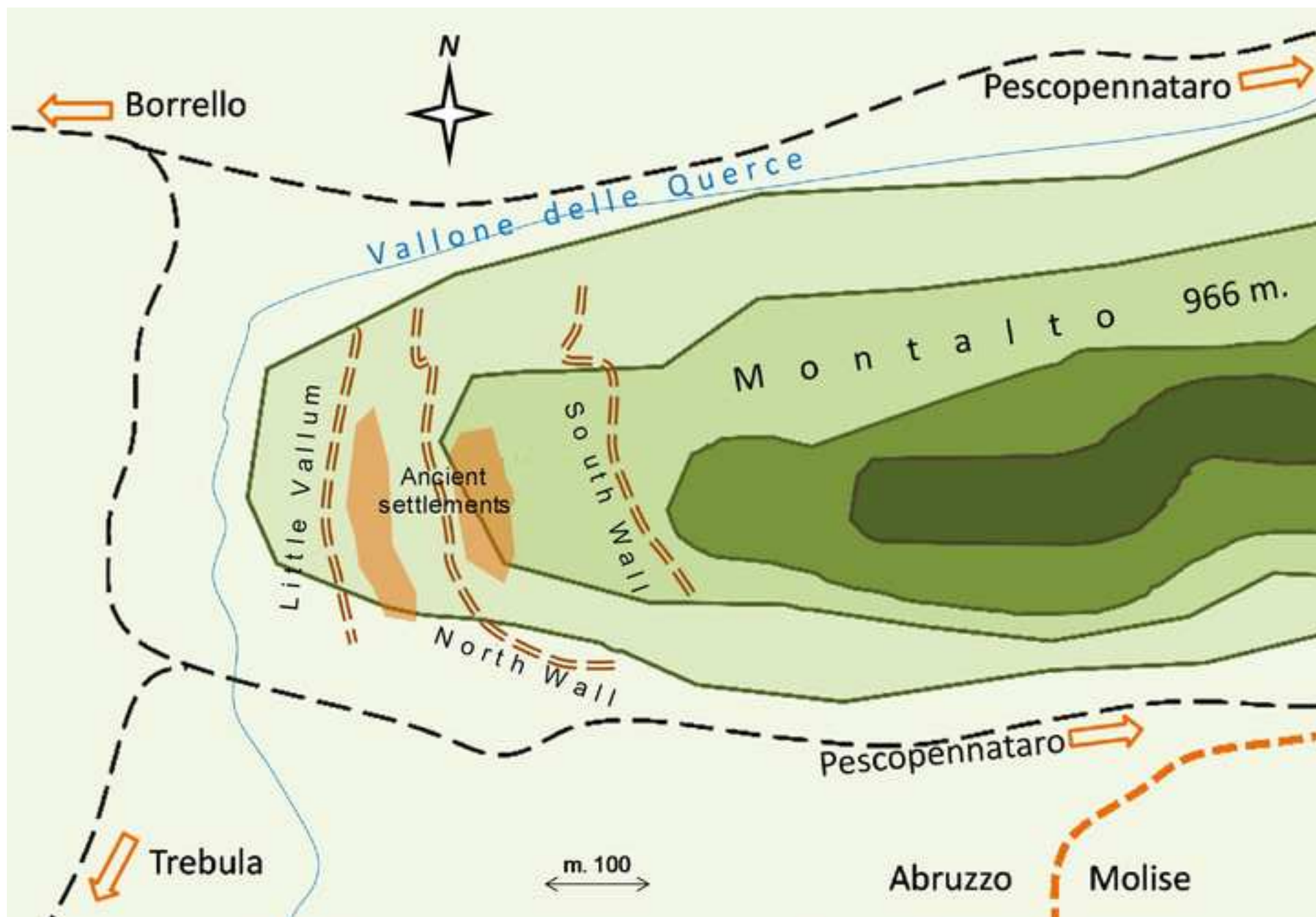


Fig. 3, Scheme of Montalto settlements arrangement with indicati  
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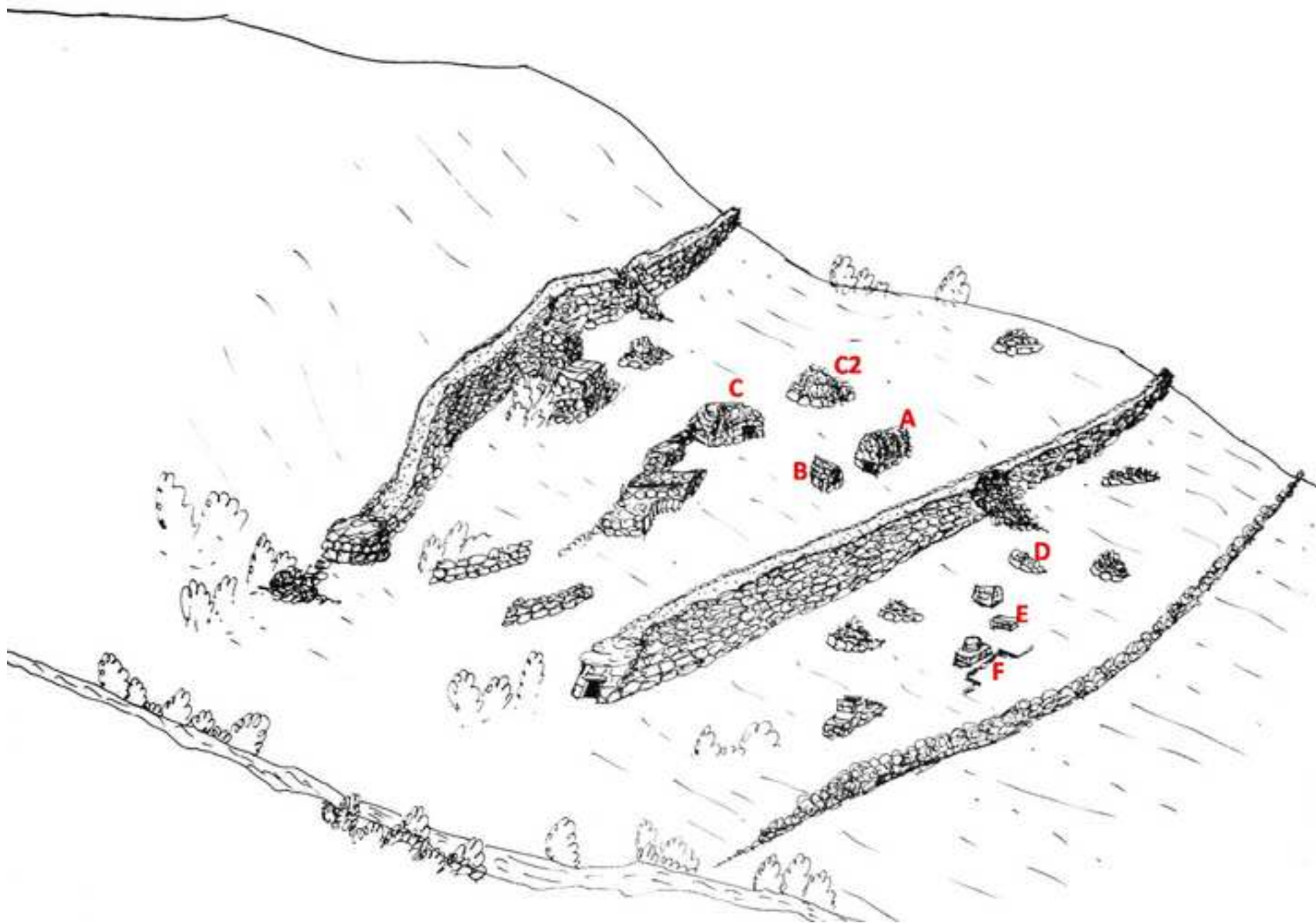


Fig. 4, Scheme and dimensions of tomb A  
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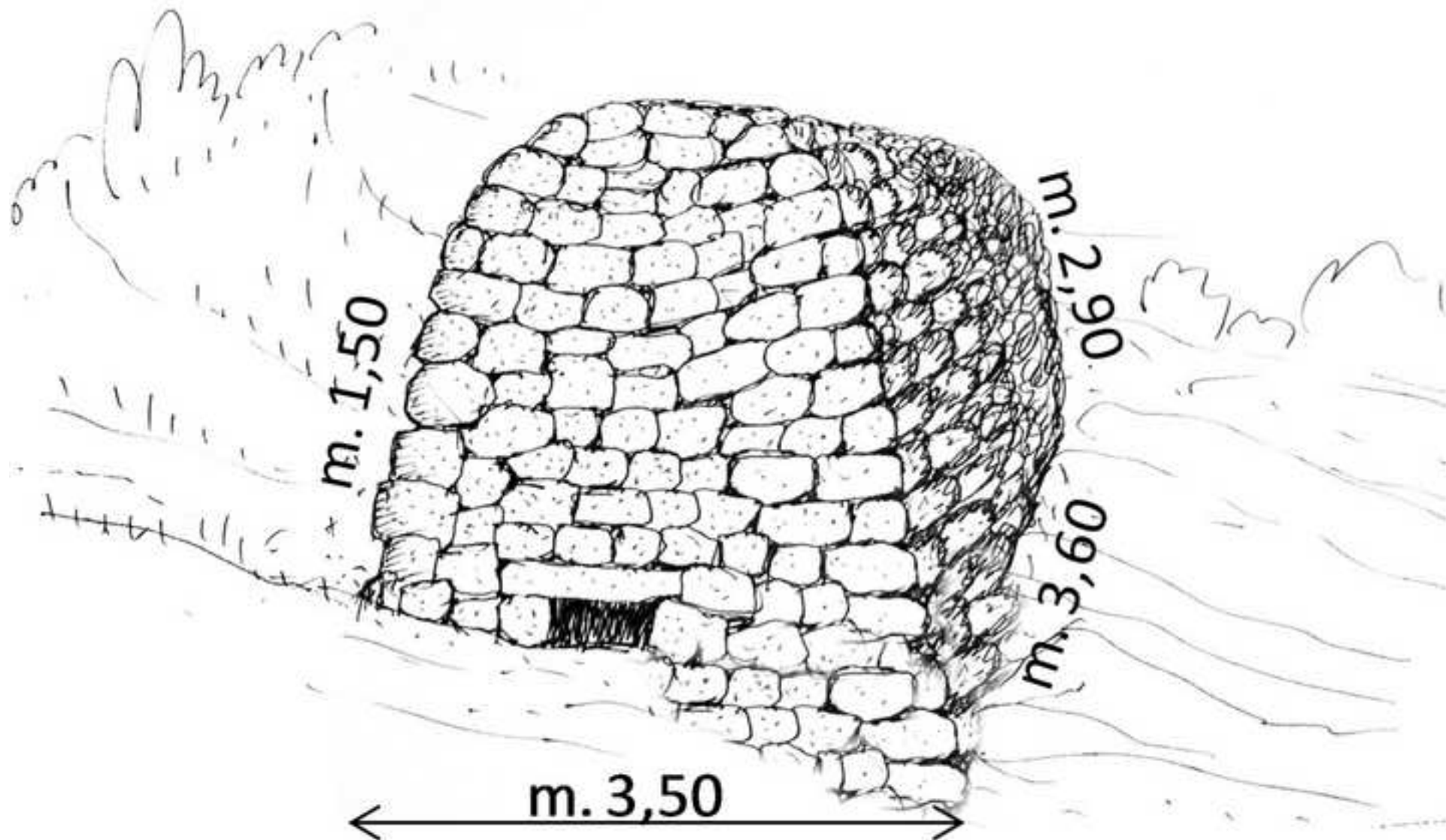




Fig. 5, Internal scheme of tomb A  
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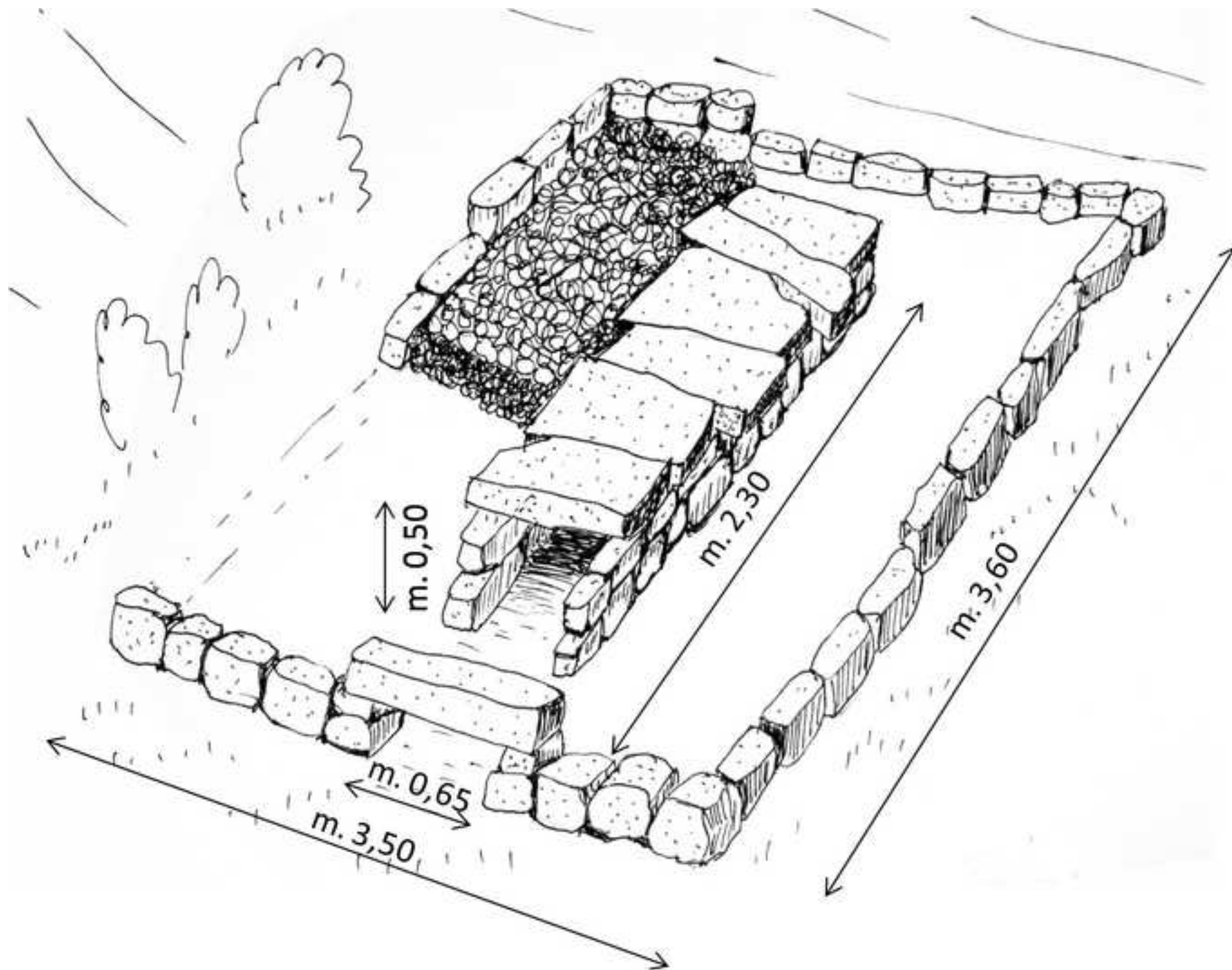


Fig. 6, Scheme and dimensions of tomb C  
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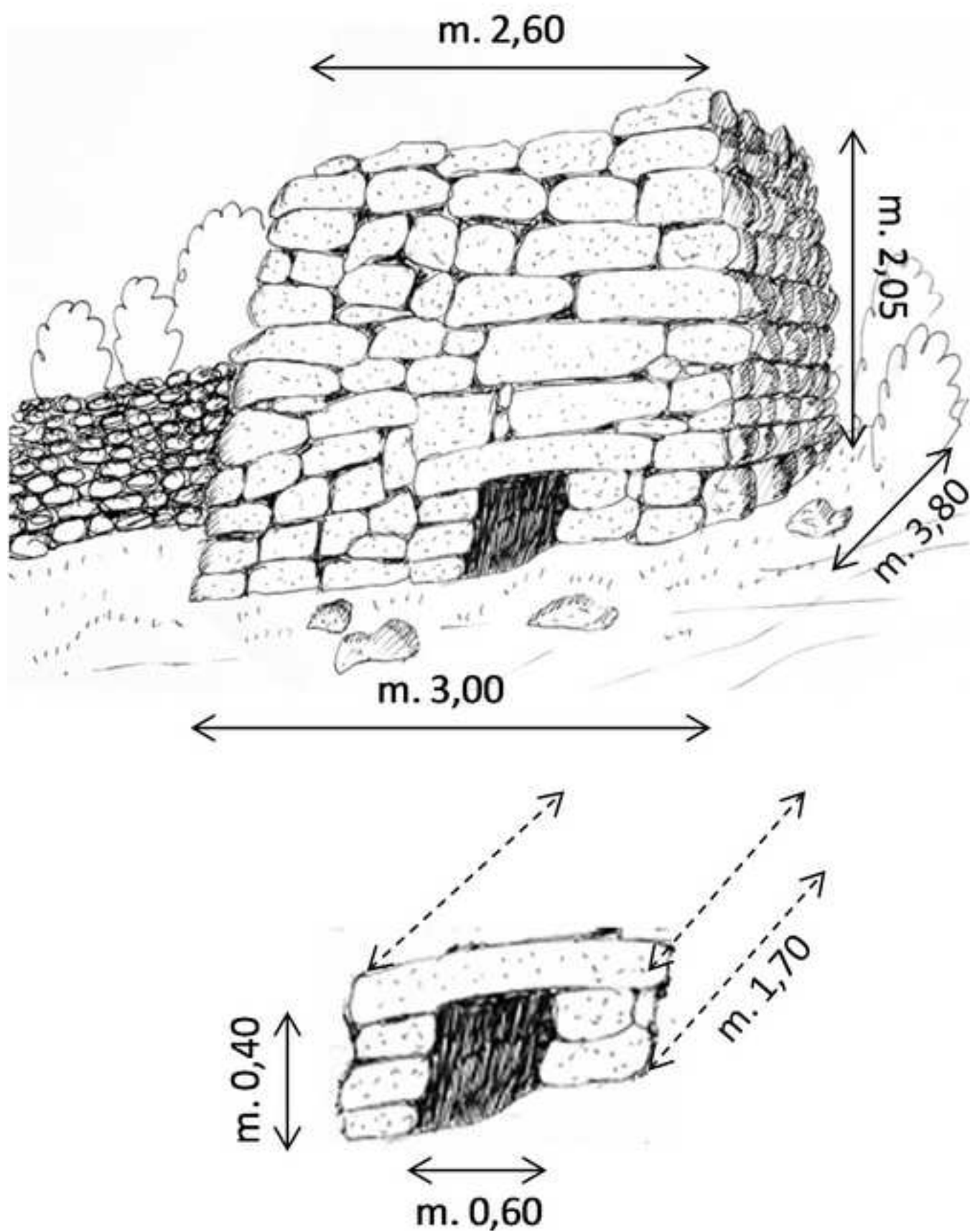




Fig. 7, Sepulchral hollow of tomb C  
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Fig. 8, East-West and North-South orientation of tomb A and C  
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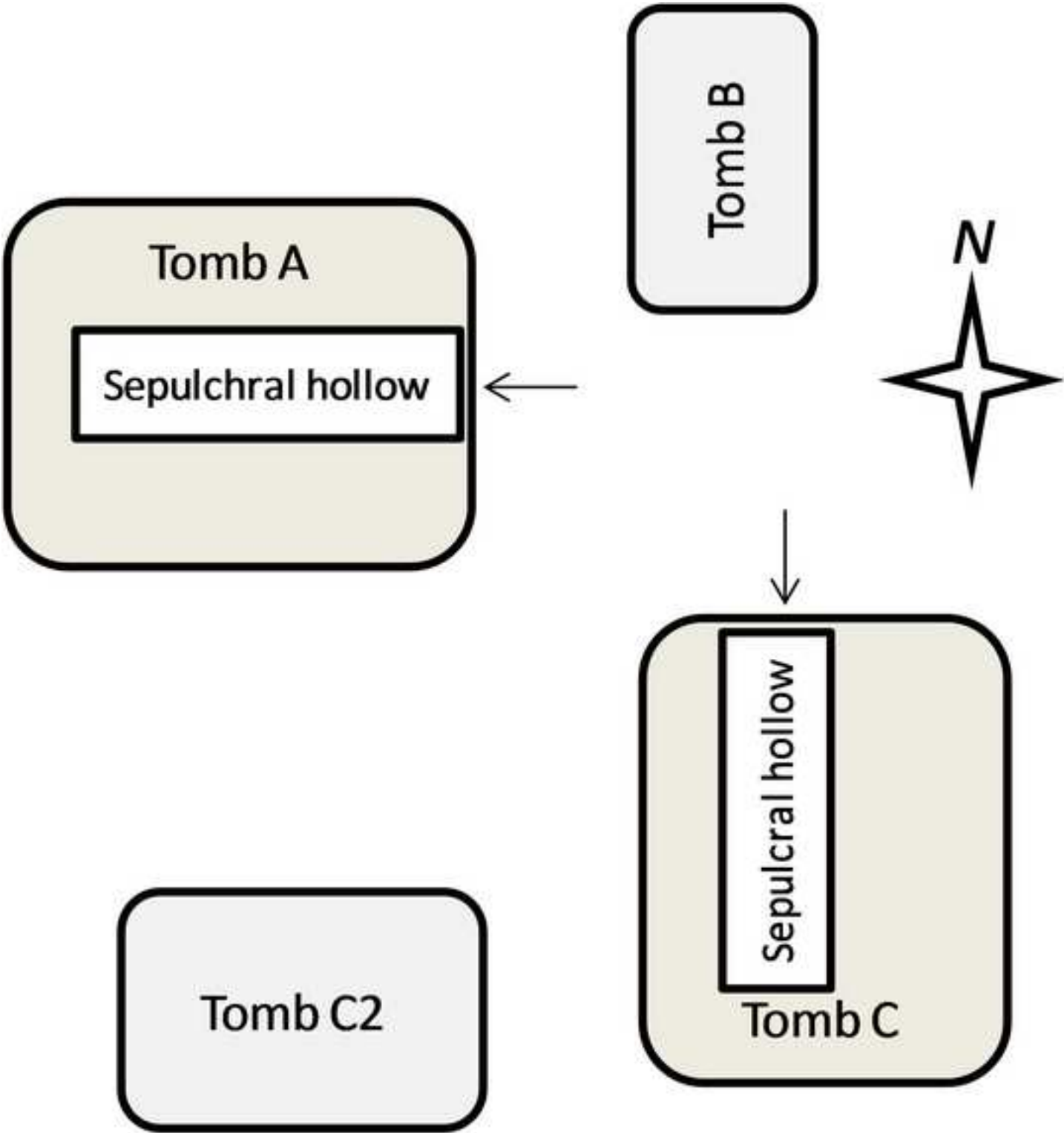




Fig. 9, Scheme and dimensions of the construction F  
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