



“dolmen professor,” in 1959. The kerbstones are in their place. Filling stones were added to the chamber, and half of the covering mound was restored. To realize the project, the archaeologist used several megaliths from D33, which no longer exists today. The archaeologist found it unmeaningful to leave the remaining stones in their place...

The dolmen builders first placed supporting stones, standing them upright in shallow pits. Then they filled the gaps with boulders. The whole structure was covered with sand, earth, and/or stones. The capstones were then placed on top of the supporting stones. Sometimes, kerbstones were placed around the mound to distinguish the monument from a regular sand mound. In my *self-built dolmen* in my own garden, it is clear how a megalithic burial chamber must have looked just after construction. Over the centuries, erosion and vandalism caused the sand and filling stones to disappear, leaving only the large stones that we now encounter in the Drenthe landscape.

Dolmens were originally a type of burial mounds with a stone chamber incorporated into them. They served as burial sites for the deceased. Sometimes, the chamber was closed, so you can only see that it is a dolmen when you excavate the burial mound. However, the chamber often had a passage, making the burial chamber

easily accessible. This is a significant difference compared to burial mounds. Multiple individuals, usually from the same settlement, were often interred in the chamber. Since a dolmen was in use for hundreds of years, the number of burials in a dolmen could be significant. In a burial mound, usually only one person (excluding reuse) was buried. The construction of a dolmen was also a collective endeavor. The entire village participated in building a communal tomb. The burial mound required the descendants' loyalty to the deceased. The mound was created solely for that one deceased individual.

An important distinction between a burial mound and a hunebed is that the mound of a hunebed incorporates a chamber of large stones, with or without a passage. Over the course of hundreds of years, multiple burials were often interred in these stone chambers.

The Huynebed

For centuries, hunebeds have captivated the imagination of local residents, often in a negative sense, presumably because no one understood how such large stones could be stacked on top of each other. In the 16th century, dolmens

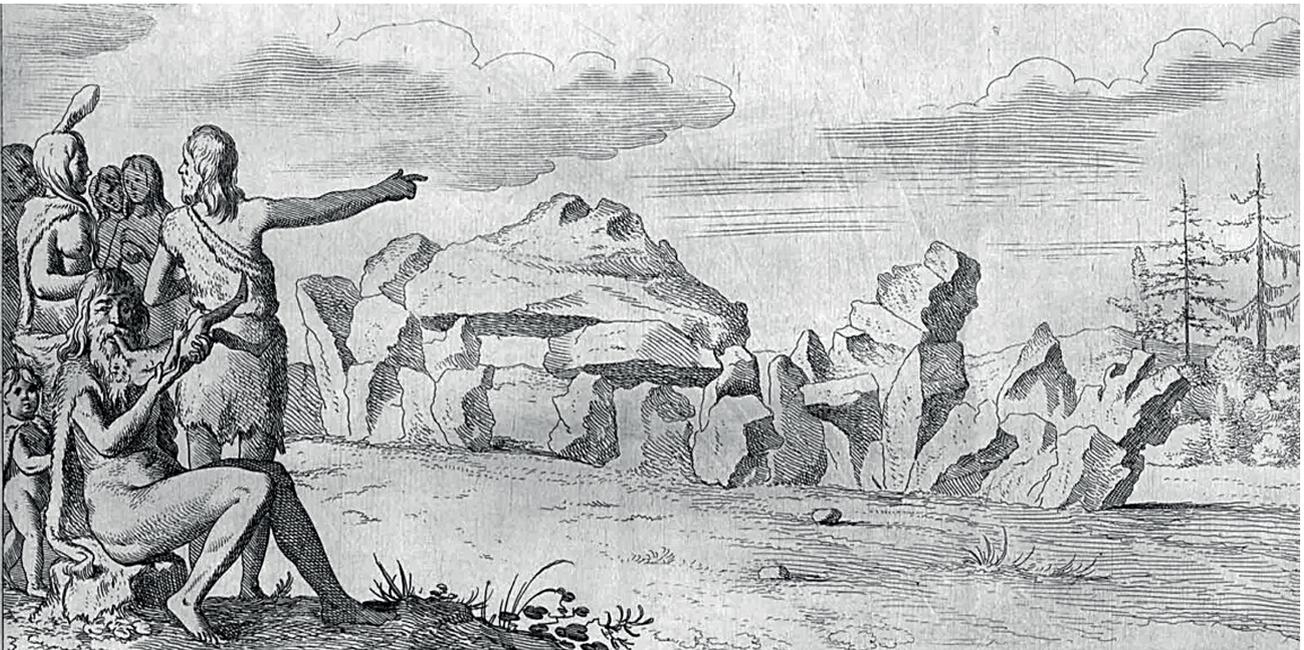


were seen as pagan structures. In Rolde, two hunebeds are located side by side, *D17 and D18*. One of them was given the nickname ‘Duvels Kut,’ as if the hunebed was the devil’s womb.

The negative perception of hunebeds originated in the time of Boniface. In 1660, Reverend Picardt from Bentheim, Germany, took it a step further. He wrote that hunebeds were created by barbaric giants with great strength and beastly cruelty. They were guilty of sodomy (homosexuality), which was considered a mortal sin in Christian doctrine and was sometimes punished by death.

Hunebeds were thus cast in an unfavorable light. It was also believed that they were haunted. It is quite remarkable that not all hunebeds were destroyed. The fact that the hunebeds of Rolde still stand may be largely attributed to their association with the devil. It’s best to stay away from the devil. In many countries, the power of the devil, giants, fairies, or witches was neutralized with a cross, a statue of Mary, a chapel, or a church. A location would then be ‘christened.’ The area around the hunebeds of Rolde was *christened with a church*.





Picardt had two drawings of the hunebed in Borger made. The artist probably never saw a hunebed himself, as the stones were mostly depicted as angular in shape. Sipke van der Zee, former board member of the Hunebedcentrum, discovered a book from the 18th century in Italy, in which these *etchings* were copied. Even at that time, scholars seriously believed that hunebeds were built by Giants. Hunebed means 'built by giants' (Huynen). Therefore, Hunnenbed is incorrect. The Huns did not invade Europe until the fifth century.

Just across the border in Germany, the same belief prevailed. The *Großsteingrab in der Kunkenvenne* once had 17 capstones and is 27 meters long, making it the longest hunebed in the Emsland region. Together with Lähden-Nord,

it is the only hunebed with a double ring of kerbstones. In 1921, this hunebed was depicted on a *one-mark banknote* with the text:

*'In unserm Wald in sandiger Düne
Liegt begraben mancher Hüne
Zum Hünengrab zum Opfertstein
Pilgert heut noch Gross und Klein.'*

*'In our forest in a sandy dune
Lies buried many a giant
To the giant's grave, to the sacrificial stone
Today, both young and old still pilgrimage.'*

Megalithic monuments often sparked the wildest folk tales and legends.





Megalithism as a European Movement

Many people believe that the megalithic structures in their own countries are unique, erected by a small group of people for burying the dead in the Late Stone Age. Borders limit their perspective. However, you can find them in many European countries. In Germany, there are dozens of Großsteingräber with the same architecture as hunebeds. The kerbstones of **Volbers Hünensteine**, for example, form a nearly complete ring around the chamber, just like in D26.

Denmark has thousands of stendysser. At **Valby Hegn**, there are seven 'langdysser' that bear a striking resemblance to the long barrow in Emmen. Danish archaeologists have even proposed the 'Out of Denmark' theory. According to this theory, the stone monuments originated in Denmark.

Ireland has its own variant. The 'Out of Ireland' theory is still heard there, suggesting that



the megaliths were erected by the Celts. This culture then spread to Great Britain and Brittany, according to the story. France is known for its menhirs, but it also has thousands of tumuli and 'allée couvertes,' burial chambers where the passage leads into the chamber without widening. Sometimes they are even aligned in a row. At **Allée Couverte Prajou-Menhir**, a trail of small stones led from the stone chamber to the menhir, confirming its association with the monument. The morning sun streamed into the chamber along the menhir.



Great Britain is known for its stone circles, with Stonehenge being the most famous. Stone chambers are also found there. **Pentre Ifan**, for example, was a long barrow with a mound measuring 30 x 17 meters and a standing-height chamber. Human bones were found beneath the long barrow.

There are countless examples throughout Europe as the stone chambers are part of an impressive movement in the Stone Age. All these monuments were not the center of the universe but represented megalithism, a movement that flooded Europe during the Neolithic period, the Late Stone Age. Megaliths captivate the imagination in every country. They are silent witnesses of advanced cultures that existed in Europe 5,500 years ago. From 3000 BC, fewer megaliths were



erected. Around that time, the last hunebed in the Netherlands was built. The construction of Stonehenge abruptly ceased around 2500 BC. The impressive monuments made of large stones, megaliths, were replaced by earth mounds.

During the Dutch television series 'Het verhaal van Nederland' (The Story of the Netherlands), archaeologist Quentin Bourgeois stated that while hunebeds are indeed interesting, burial mounds tell us more about what makes us Dutch (or European). Our language and a significant part of our DNA do not come from the megalith builders - that is the general belief - but from those who built the burial mounds. Burial mounds became the new standard in funeral rituals, a custom brought by an equally brutal and successful people from the East. The megalith builders would be no more than a footnote in European history. But can we understand European prehistory without knowing the story behind the dolmens of Europe? Wouldn't we miss the essence of the Neolithic revolution? The construction of megaliths tells us more about who we are than we might suspect. Why did people actually do that? Wasn't it a waste of their efforts? Where did they come from? And why were they eventually easily overrun?

Megalithic monuments, such as stone burial chambers, menhirs, and stone circles, were erected in many Western European countries. They were part of an extensive movement that united Europe into a cohesive entity over millennia.

To find answers to these questions, it is necessary to go back to the source of agricultural civilizations. Before delving further into the hunebeds in the Netherlands, the stendysen in Denmark, the Großsteingräber in Germany, the tombs in Ireland, the dösen in Sweden, the allée couvertes in France, or the dolmens in Spain, we need to go back to the origins of agriculture in the area between the Euphrates and the Tigris. Why did people leave that paradisiacal land of milk and honey in the first place?