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PLACES AND HUMAN CULTURE

Many monuments were constructed in places that had already acquired a special significance. This lecture considers the ways in which some of these locations gained an additional importance and shows how that process was related to the development of monuments. The argument is illustrated by the changing history of cave deposits, menhirs and rock art, all of which seem to epitomise a rather similar perception of the landscape. Some of those places developed into monuments themselves. Alternatively, relics of their original use could be transferred to new locations where they played a part in the creation of other monuments.

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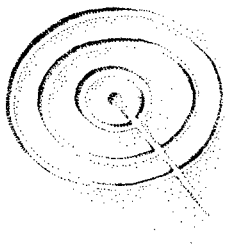
For those of us who study the past it is disturbing when the remains of quite different periods look uncannily alike. For a moment we lose our bearings, and then our confidence returns. When we reflect on the experience, it is revealing to find the underlying reason for that resemblance.

This happened to me twice during my visit to Mid Argyll. The first time was in the churchyard at Kilmartin. In this case my attention was caught by a purely visual memory. It was here that I came across a remarkable collection of West Highland gravestones (Steer & Bannerman 1977; illus 10). For a moment I saw them as part of a tremendously long series of carvings. There on the slabs, surrounded by elaborate decoration, was a brief synopsis of the career and status of the dead person, portrayed in the simplest terms through depictions of a few distinctive artefacts. Sometimes there was also an inscription with a name. But behind those carvings seemed to lie a history of similar sculptures, not necessarily memorials, extending back in time from Pictish symbol stones to Late Bronze Age stelae, and, before them, to Neolithic statues-menhirs (illus 11). All these carvings share the common characteristic that they bear a symbolic message through the depiction of identifiable objects. That is not to say that these artefacts lacked a wider meaning. We cannot tell whether they stood for particular people, or even for supernatural beings, but the form that the messages take is very much the same. It embodies some of the properties of those characters and it fixes them at a particular place in the landscape. In the case of the Kilmartin grave slabs we can read the carvings in two ways: by deciphering the inscriptions on these stones, or by interpreting the messages expressed by the objects they portray. In prehistory one of those options is closed and we have only the artefacts to guide us.



The second experience took place when I visited a prehistoric rock carving in the grounds of Poltalloch House (RCAHMS 1988, 123–4; illus 12). This lay on the edge of the garden, and like so many rock art sites in western Scotland, it was at a viewpoint. To the east it commanded a vista towards a henge monument, and to the

south it looked down a shallow valley to the sea. There was nothing unusual in this, except that the landscape around the ruined mansion utilised the same perspectives, so that the pattern of fields and woodland on its estate was laid out according to a rather similar axis. No doubt this was coincidental, but again the coincidence was revealing.

In this case the carving was wholly abstract and had been applied to a natural surface. The rock cannot be identified from any distance, and forms an integral part of the terrain. But whilst we cannot supply a literal reading of the design in the way we might read the inscription on a gravestone, we can still recognise a broader structure among the petroglyphs. For example, in this part of Argyll the carvings are larger and more complex than those in the surrounding area and include a significant number of elements shared with passage tomb art (Bradley 1991). The more complex carvings are certainly found at viewpoints but they overlook the main routes across this landscape and, in particular, those leading towards important monuments. In this case none of the symbols can be identified with a specific idea, but our reading gains in confidence as we compare different carvings with one another.

In this instance the petroglyphs are directly linked to particular places in that landscape, but the carved stones are fairly inconspicuous and can only be interpreted at close quarters. Like the archaeologist, a spectator would have to move between the rock carvings in order to understand their messages. Both the grave slabs and the petroglyphs are very different from the large constructions that I discussed in the previous lecture. It is true that all monuments

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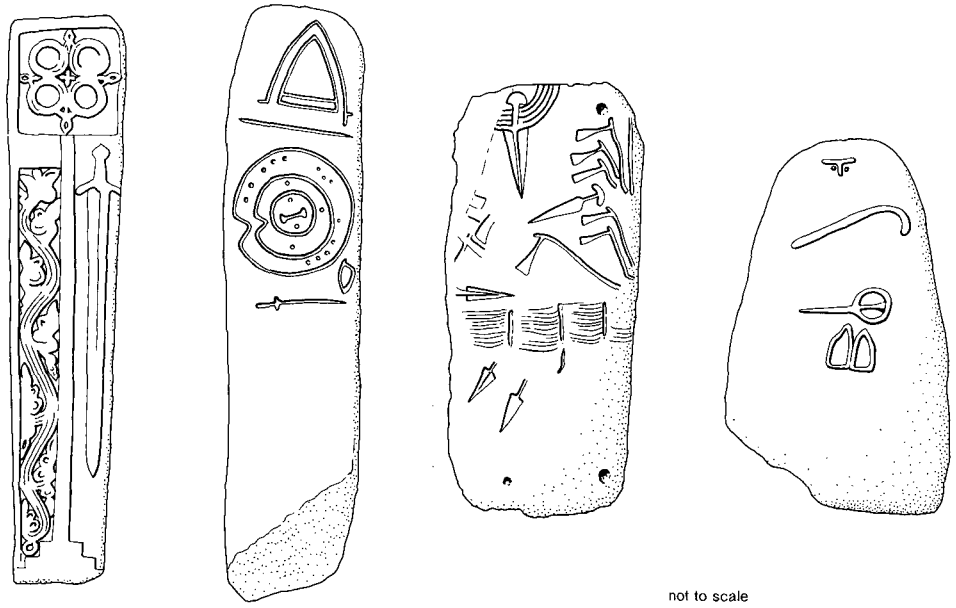
One of the West Highland grave-slabs at Kilmartin, Argyll. Photograph: RCAHMS.



11 Monumental sculptures depicting weapons and other artefacts. Left to right: Kilmartin, Argyll (Late medieval); Santa Ana de Trujillo, south-west Spain (Late Bronze Age); Santa Verena, northern Italy (Chalcolithic) and La Gayette, southern France (Late Neolithic / Chalcolithic). (After Steer & Bannerman 1977, Chenorkian 1988 and D'Anna 1977).

occupy places within a larger landscape, but normally their construction changes the character of those locations. In these examples the effect is subtly different: particular places gain a certain emphasis, and they are inscribed with messages, but their meaning is transformed without any radical change to their topography.

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A similar contrast has been recognised by social anthropologists. We have already seen how formal monuments were a Neolithic creation and how their construction mirrors an altered perception of the world. Places, on the other hand, may have a longer history. They seem to be especially important in the lives of mobile people. To quote a recent study by Peter Wilson:

> 'The hunter-gatherer pins ideas and emotions onto the world as it exists . . . A construction is put upon the landscape rather than the landscape undergoing a reconstruction, as is the case among sedentary people, who impose houses, villages and gardens on the landscape, often in the place of natural landmarks. Where nomads read or even find cosmological features in an already existing landscape, villagers tend to represent and model cosmic ideas in the structures they build' (1988, 50).

Tim Ingold (1986) has made a similar observation. Paths are important to hunter-gatherers, but farmers place more emphasis on boundaries. This has implications for their perception of the landscape. Farmers control their land through its enclosure, but hunter-gatherer territories are very different – less obvious on the ground, overlapping and more informal. Hunter-gatherers recognise their territories by

monitoring the paths running between specific places. Some of those places overlook the surrounding land, so that people may think of their territories in terms of the views seen from them.

Such ideas can be helpful, but they can also be applied too rigidly. Once again we are discussing ideal types as if the process of domestication brought an immediate change. That was not the case. In many areas agriculture was adopted only gradually and there remained a contrast between the regions that were occupied year round and other parts of the landscape that were used only intermittently. The divisions between those two zones may have been extremely important.

In the first lecture I discussed some cases in which monuments appeared as early as any elements of Neolithic material culture, but there are many other instances in which natural places retained their significance for a long time. Sometimes these places were marked in archaeologically detectable ways – by carvings, by paintings or by the provision of special offerings – but there must have been many more which left no trace behind. In this lecture I shall consider some of the ways in which places acquired added properties, and some of the processes by which the associations of those places came to influence the construction and operation of monuments.

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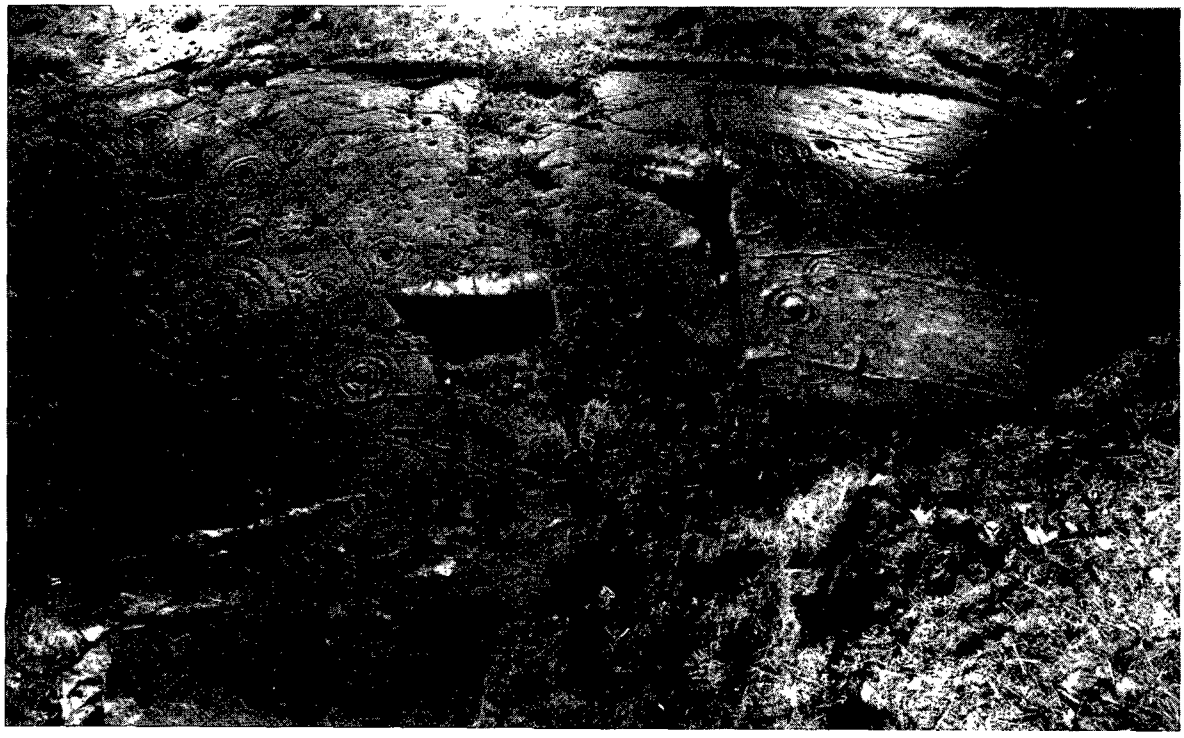
For the moment we must go back to first principles. I have already suggested that public rituals may have been undertaken on some scale before any monuments



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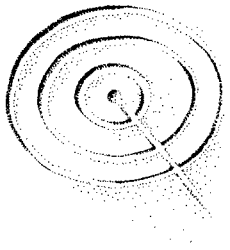
The prehistoric rock carving in the garden of Poltalloch House, Argyll. Photograph: RCAHMS.

were built, and that their creation involved a subtle change in the relationship between culture and nature. The existence of such rituals is by no means hypothetical. Quite apart from the evidence of Mesolithic cemeteries, there are a number of natural settings in which we find some of the characteristic features that identify later monuments: unusual deposits, specialised designs, restrictions of access and formal divisions of space. All of these are evident in the organisation of Upper Palaeolithic art (Leroi-Gourhan 1965), but the important point is that even if certain caves can be interpreted as some kind of sanctuary, they are not really monuments at all, for the entire system takes place within a framework provided by the natural features of the topography. That framework may have been selected, but it was not **created**. The physical features of these caves were hardly changed, and yet they allowed space to be used in a very structured manner, just like later enclosures or chambered tombs. For example, Barbara Bender has suggested that access to certain images may have been restricted as the paintings moved to more remote locations (1989, 87–92).

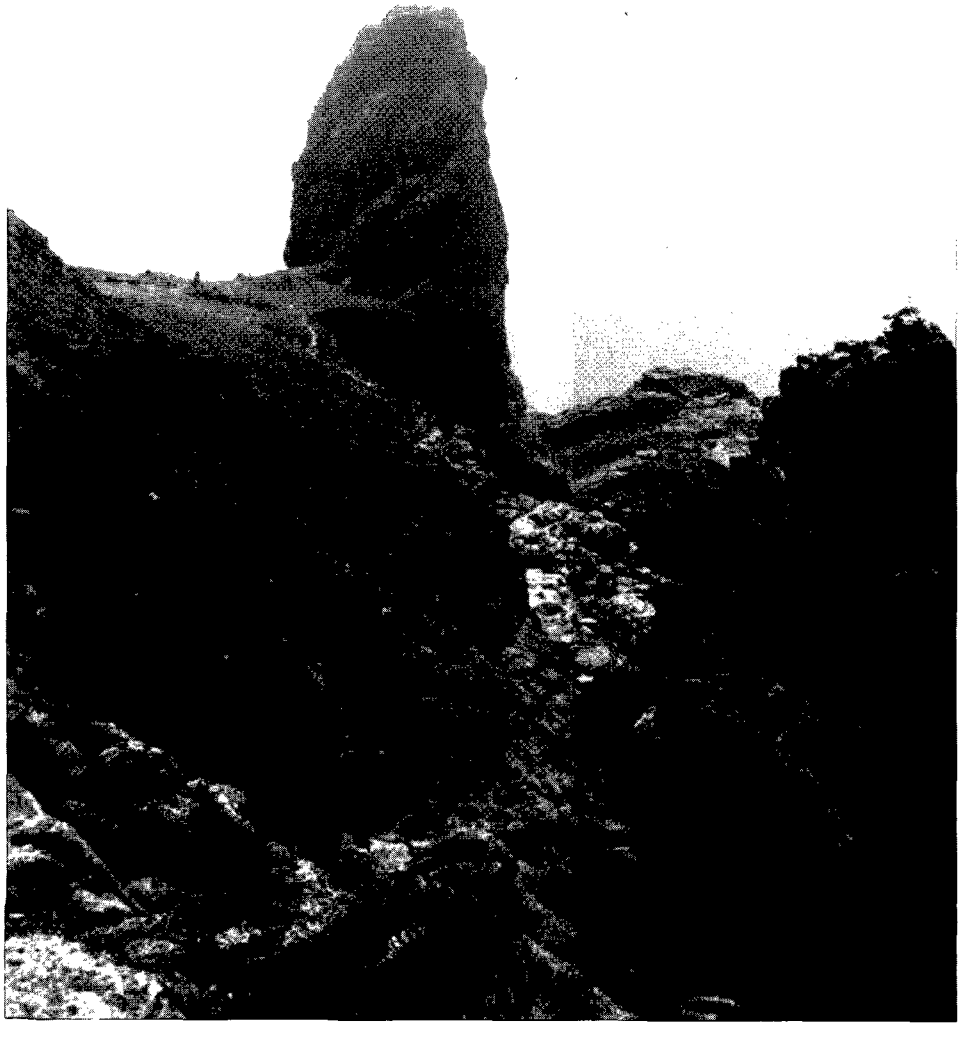
It is because so little attention has been paid to the ways in which hunter-gatherers treat elements of the natural world, singling some of them out for particular veneration, that the literature on prehistoric monuments can overlook those conceived on an informal scale, constructions that were little more than additions to striking features of the terrain. In this case the best comparison might be with the Aboriginal monuments that I described in my opening lecture. Any discussion that confines itself to the more conventional monument types – mounds, tombs, great earthwork enclosures – leaves out an entire class of archaeological evidence. Indeed, that class is hardly recognised for what it is because its elements are separated from the underlying pattern. The Neolithic and Bronze Age periods provide many instances of the special treatment of natural features. These are usually recognised, not because those features underwent any modification, but because they formed the focus for deposits of specialised kinds. Examples might include the placing of offerings in water, the accumulation of unusual artefacts at the foot of prominent rocks, or even their deposition in caves and fissures. The problem is that they are never seen as **parts of the same phenomenon.**

At this point some examples may be helpful. I shall begin with two cases in which we can follow the translation of a natural feature into the focal point of a monument. These are only instances of a much wider trend.



A particularly striking case is at Le Pinacle in the Channel Islands (illus 13). The site was originally interpreted as a settlement, but its position makes this very unlikely indeed. Like some of the places I have discussed already, it is in a remote location, and such a mundane reading of the evidence ignores its most striking feature: the extraordinary spike of rock from which it took its name. Recently Mark Patton has offered a new interpretation of the sequence, and I find this more convincing (Patton 1987, 91–2; Patton 1991). Its first use was as a stone axe quarry. Like the Neolithic quarries at Great Langdale (Bradley & Edmonds in press), its spectacular setting may have helped to establish the special importance of its products. After an interval the site was used again. Part of the promontory was cut off by a wall, and a stone platform was built against the rockface. This provided the

focus for a series of unusual deposits, including a copper axe, a quantity of fine pottery, artefacts of Grand Pressigny flint and a large number of projectile points. Such deposits are not unlike those found in the henge monument at Newgrange (O'Kelly *et al* 1983; Sweetman 1985); the difference is simply one of history. The enclosure at Newgrange was constructed against the flank of a Neolithic passage tomb, but the platform at Le Pinacle was never more than an adjunct to the natural rock, and this was always the dominant feature of the site. It owed its importance to the character of the place itself, and possibly to its earlier reputation as a stone source.



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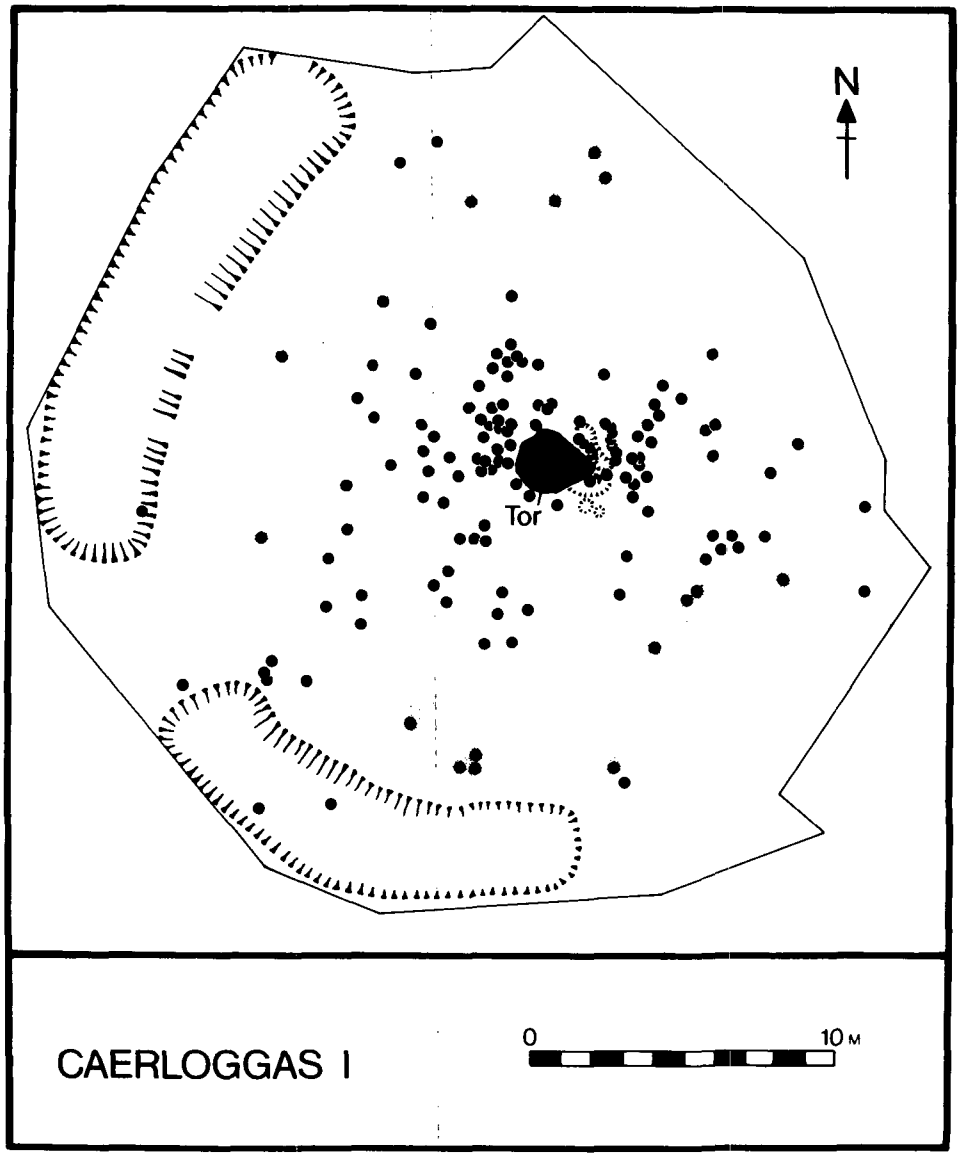
Le Pinacle, Jersey. The prehistoric deposits were found to the left of the rockface. Photograph: Margaret Mathews.

My other example is Caerloggas on the edge of Bodmin Moor (Miles 1975, 24–50; illus 14). This site occupied a prominent hilltop with evidence of intermittent activity from the Mesolithic period onwards, much of it in the form of flint projectile points. Until recently it contained two enigmatic monuments. One was a low enclosure surrounding a natural tor. That rock had already formed the focus for a concentration of artefacts of various periods, but there is nothing to suggest that all of these were specialised deposits. On the other hand, the latest material on the site had a much more distinctive character and included a bronze dagger, a stone bead and a piece of amber, all of them items that would be more usual in a grave. The neighbouring monument was also associated with a long sequence of activity. In



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Plan of the earthwork enclosure at Caerloggas Site 1, showing the distribution of artefacts around the natural tor. (Data from Miles 1975).

this case, the focus for the monument was a small upright stone, which seems to have been placed in position deliberately before the entire site was buried by a mound. In each example the existing features provided the point of origin for a conventional form of monument. In one case the natural rock, and the artefacts around it, were enclosed by an earthwork similar to a henge. On the other site, they were covered by a barrow.

Again I want to emphasise that the similarities between these phenomena far outweigh the differences. In both cases a natural feature of the topography seems to have acted as a focus for deposits of artefacts that might otherwise be found at formally constituted monuments. The sequence at Le Pinacle and Caerloggas suggests that that it was the long-standing significance of those places that led to their modification by earthworks and other features. To put it another way, this process effected their translation from the natural world to the world of human culture.

These examples illustrate my point, but they are only isolated instances. Having established what kinds of phenomena we should be studying, we must look at these issues on an altogether larger scale.

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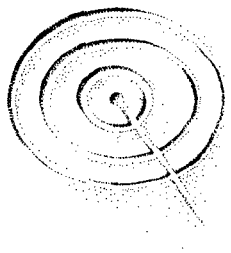
Caves provide some of the best examples of the specialised use of natural places. A number of Neolithic sites in Italy have been studied recently and contain a remarkably consistent range of deposits (Whitehouse 1990; Skeates 1991). There are stone axes (O'Hare 1990, 136–8), fine pottery (Malone 1985, 135), animal bones and human remains. These may be located well away from the entrance, and the sites themselves can be inconspicuous and difficult to find. The pottery is of exceptional quality and is sometimes associated with striking natural features such as stalactites. The stone axes are often unused and may be made from attractive and uncommon raw materials. Human remains are found on many of these sites, and there is evidence of meat and plant foods. Their locations, however, would have been entirely unsuitable for settlement. Often they were hidden at inaccessible locations. They were hot and damp and, above all, they were cut off from any natural light.

The animal bones from these sites are of particular interest because they include such a striking mixture of domesticates and wild fauna. At Grotta di Porto Badisco the cave walls had been painted. The naturalistic paintings are all of wild animals and include hunting scenes, but in other zones of the cave they assume an abstract character. The depictions of wild animals are found close to the cave mouth whilst the others are in more remote locations, leading Ruth Whitehouse to suggest that the naturalistic paintings were accessible to people who were prevented from viewing the more specialised designs (1990, 26–7). As in many formal monuments, the distinctive layout of the cave would have helped to control access to particular knowledge and experience.

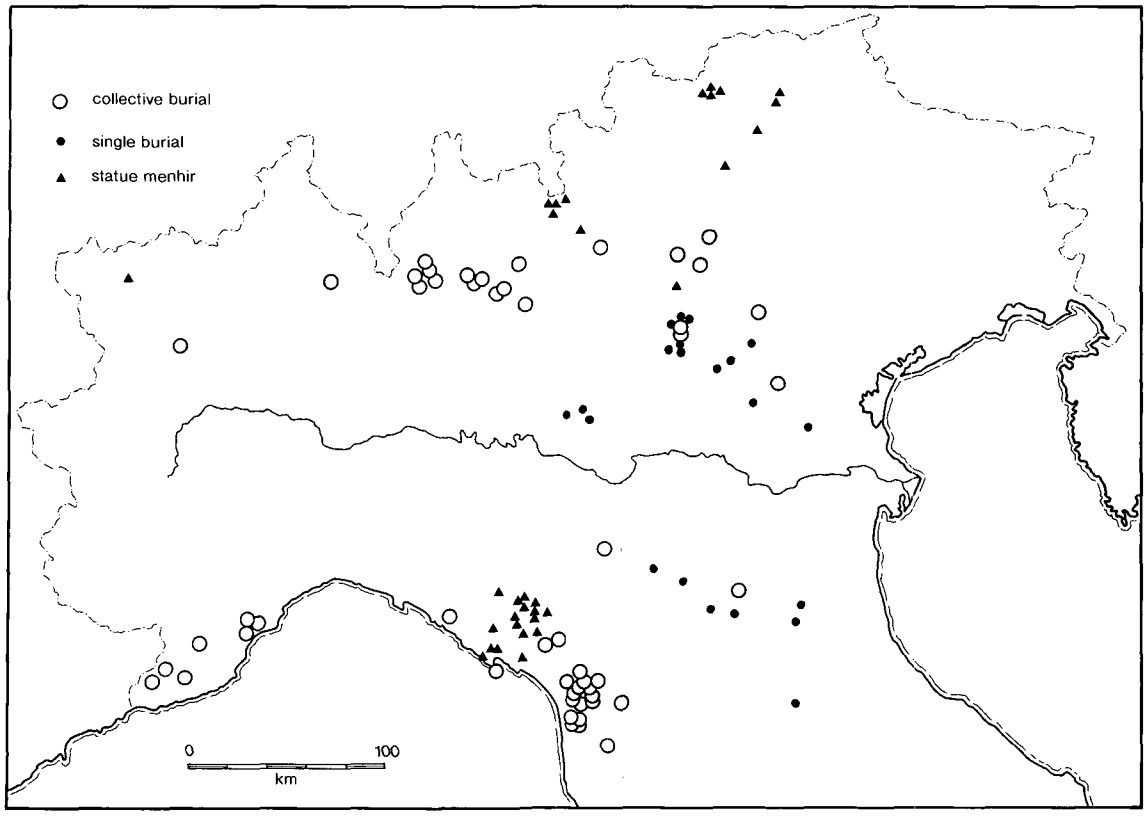


The chronological context of these sites is very revealing. They were used at a time when domesticated plants and animals had already been introduced, but their setting

was generally in upland areas towards the geographical limits of the new regime. Such regions might have been used in the course of seasonal grazing, but they were at least as significant for their wild resources. In this way they were doubly marginal: cave rituals took place beyond the limits of the settled landscape and in areas where natural resources retained their traditional importance. As Whitehouse says, these sites were ideally located for encounters between two different worlds.

Their relationship with formal monuments remains a problem. They may have influenced the development of rock-cut tombs, but the most important characteristic of the cave deposits is that they were hidden from view. That is why so many of them have been discovered only recently. They occupy entirely natural places – places of a mysterious character – but their very location means that they are not apparent to the casual observer. In this respect they contrast completely with the evidence of megalithic tombs.

During the Copper Age, this division is complicated by the existence of statues-menhirs. At this time there were two burial rites in Northern Italy (Barfield 1986). One group consists of individual graves containing articulated corpses, together with a standardised set of artefacts: the male burials, for instance, are normally accompanied by daggers. Their distribution is interesting, as it hardly overlaps with that of multiple deposits, including those found in the caves (illus 15). Here



15 Chalcolithic burial traditions in northern Italy in relation to the distribution of statues-menhirs. (After Barfield 1986).

the organisation and contents of the deposits are very different. In this case more than one individual is represented, but just as important is the fact that the bones are mixed together and may well have been placed there after they had lost their flesh. Some of these deposits were unmarked, whilst others were in megalithic tombs. The grave goods differ from those found with single burials, and the most common items are beads. Daggers, on the other hand, are rare.

So far, that evidence might seem to indicate the existence of two cultural traditions, but certain features combine to suggest a more complicated interpretation. The distribution of the multiple burials closely matches that of statues-menhirs, which are virtually absent from the areas in which single graves are found. At the same time, these stone sculptures represent individuals with daggers of just the kind that are so conspicuously absent from the burial record. It is as if individual identities were mixed in the collective burials, where the deposits were concealed. Instead, the attributes of certain people – perhaps ancestors or mythical beings – were emphasised in a local style of sculpture. Lawrence Barfield makes the point that some of the same symbols are carried over into the rock art of the central Mediterranean, and that both groups of carvings may refer to the same ideology (*ibid*). The best evidence of such a link comes from Val Camonica where statues-menhirs of this kind are found near to the well-known rock engravings.

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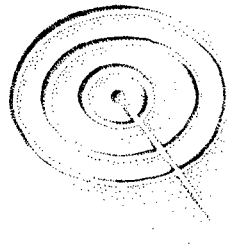
A comparable system has been identified in southern France, and here there appears to be a rather similar link between the deposition of multiple burials in megaliths and natural locations, and the erection of statues-menhirs at significant points in the terrain (D'Anna 1977). Again, it seems as if individual identities were suppressed in the burial rite, whilst the attributes of particular people might have been associated far more publicly with specific places in the landscape. In this case there is evidence of occasional rock-cut tombs, although natural caves and the fillings of abandoned flint mines were also employed for burial (Colomer 1979). At Aven Meunier in Languedoc it even seems as if two of these decorated menhirs flanked the entrance to an underground burial deposit (*ibid*, 84–7).

The decorated menhirs of southern France divide into a series of well-defined regional groups, which are found in quite different kinds of location from one another (D'Anna 1987). For the most part they occur in areas with evidence of settlements and burials, but one of these groups is actually some way outside the distribution of contemporary activity, on the higher ground of the agricultural margin. In this case there are few other finds of this date, although they have been specifically sought. There is no clear link between southern French statues-menhirs and a local tradition of **rock carving** but recent work in Provence has documented the existence of a series of contemporary **cave paintings**. In this case the locations were easily accessible and not far away from the settlements, but there was no evidence that the caves themselves had ever been occupied (Hameau 1989). They contain small groups of artefacts and dis-articulated human bones. It may be no accident that the paintings incorporate some of the characteristic imagery of sculptures in the open air.



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Sculpture of a human figure with a sword at Filitosa, Corsica.

In all these cases the anthropomorphic sculptures have wider links. They mark particular places in the landscape and may endow them with a special significance. Some of those places were in areas with settlements and burial sites, but the distribution of these sculptures also extends to the limits of contemporary land use. At the same time, they ensured the presence of the dead in a setting where traces of the mortuary ritual could be hidden from view. In this sense they represent an intermediate stage between the specialised use of natural features of the terrain and the public architecture represented by megalithic tombs.

Elsewhere in the Central Mediterranean that link is made still more explicit. In Corsica there are a very large number of statues-menhirs, and these can be associated both with natural places and with megalithic structures (illus 16). In some cases statues of warriors even appear to defend natural strongpoints. The famous group at Filitosa seem to have been constructed around a conspicuous outcrop, but at other sites these sculptures can be found in rows leading up to particular tombs (Grosjean 1966; Camps 1988, 175–82). The chronological development of the statues-menhirs is poorly understood, with the result that we do not know whether such alignments might have developed over a long period of time. That remains to be established. What is clear already is that the Corsican examples span the full range of variation from places to monuments.

In each of these examples the sculptures in the landscape seem to refer to certain attributes of the dead, sometimes their role as warriors protecting the terrain. But that is not the only way in which they might be used. In contrast to the evidence from the Mediterranean, the decorated menhirs of Atlantic Europe may be linked more directly to the exploitation of the land itself. In this case chronological problems remain to be resolved, but some rather general patterns are already well defined.

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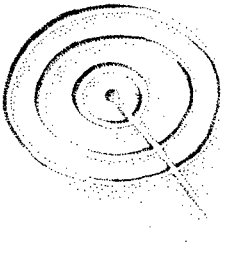
I mentioned the way in which particular places in the landscape could be used for offerings of Neolithic axes. This tendency is well illustrated in southern Brittany. The crucial period which saw the first adoption of domesticates also witnessed the erection of a series of menhirs (Giot *et al* 1979, 383–408; Patton 1990). Some of these were decorated with carvings of axes or even of domestic animals, and there are cases in which the stone itself had been shaped to resemble the form taken by an axehead (Bradley 1990, 84–5). At the same time, the landscape around these menhirs included a series of hoards, some of them containing axeheads set on end in the ground (Le Rouzic 1927). The choice of these elements for depiction can hardly be coincidental when those who carved these stones were making their first experiments with farming. Some of the menhirs may also have marked the long mounds discussed in my earlier lecture. As we shall see, these uprights came to play a formative role in the structure of megalithic tombs.



There may also be early menhirs in the British Isles, as one example on Anglesey was clearly slighted by the construction of a causewayed enclosure (Mark Edmonds & Julian Thomas pers comm). There is little way of dating these stones unless they

were decorated, and they may well have been erected over a very long period. But a limited number of menhirs, including some of those near Kilmartin, were embellished in exactly the same style as natural surfaces in the landscape (RCAHMS 1988, 126–43). In general these menhirs are located on more fertile land than the petroglyphs, and it seems possible that they were closer to settlement areas.

The distribution of Scottish menhirs can also be studied at a larger scale. Two important concentrations are found on the Rhins of Galloway and the Mull of Kintyre. Both are close to major groups of rock carvings, but their distributions complement one another. In each case this distinction seems to be related to the character of the surface geology. The rock carvings are discovered in areas with a limited mantle of glacial debris. The menhirs, on the other hand, occur where more of the surface rock was buried beneath a covering of till. In such areas it may have been simpler to mark significant places by extracting large pieces of stone and setting them on end: the standing stones in Galloway certainly include a number of glacial erratics.

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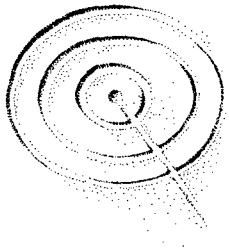
Such observations suggest that at one level menhirs and petroglyphs may have played rather similar roles in the prehistoric landscape; we saw other areas of overlap between these categories in the West Mediterranean. For this reason rock art is the other field that calls for extended discussion. It has a much longer history than the sculptures, but again the main groups of petroglyphs were created during the Late Neolithic, although the process clearly continued into the Bronze Age. Like some of the statues-menhirs, many of these carvings were at or beyond the limits of the land in year-round occupation. In the case of Scandinavian rock engravings they were often close to the sea. In all these areas we can say that they were on the edge of the domesticated landscape.

There are three main styles of carvings, and they are found in some of the regions which have already featured in this discussion: southern France, northern Italy and the Atlantic coastline. As we have seen, they are also found in Scandinavia. I shall have more to say about their subject matter, but they do share some common elements. Although there are areas in which the carvings are entirely abstract, they can also include the now familiar mixture of wild and domestic animals, as well as hunting scenes (Anati 1976a; Abélanet 1986; illus 17). There is no doubt that some of the petroglyphs also show farmers at work. This feature is found in widely separated areas, from the Central Mediterranean to Southern Scandinavia, but it seems less important when it is viewed in its local context. At Val Camonica, for example, Anati (1976b) considers that the petroglyphs exhibit a complex sequence in which hunting scenes were more important than depictions of agriculture until a very late stage, in the middle years of the Iron Age. The carvings at Mont Bégo are located well above the areas that could be used for growing crops (De Lumley *et al* 1976), whilst in Scandinavia rather similar scenes are sometimes found in regions where the soil was particularly difficult to cultivate. There are only eight depictions of ards in the whole of this region and there is no rock art at all in several of the areas that are best suited to agriculture (Malmer 1981, ch 6). These scenes no



doubt encapsulated a view of the world that is lost to us today: in no sense were they simply illustrations of daily life. On the other hand, to those who created the carvings cultivation may have been a special event.

Unlike the decorated menhirs, petroglyphs are found very widely. Although they have a long history, they are normally located in areas a little outside the limits of stable agriculture. They may be discovered in regions in which the economy was largely mobile, or, more often, they occur towards the margins where year-round settlement gave way to patterns of seasonal land use, involving hunting or transhumance. By contrast, they are rarely discovered in places with stable agricultural communities or patterns of fixed land boundaries. Their chronological distribution is interesting too, for the great majority belong to the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods, when they might be placed at or beyond the agricultural frontier. Almost without exception, they do not feature in the Iron Age, when there is evidence for a widespread intensification of farming (Barker, G 1985).

Again it is worth considering some examples in greater detail. A striking feature of the British uplands is the number of sites where Mesolithic flintwork has been discovered at the same locations as groups of later artefacts, in particular, arrowheads (Young 1989). These belong mainly to the Neolithic period and have a wide distribution. Their interpretation raises many problems, and so far there is no stratigraphic evidence to show that the ostensibly Mesolithic artefacts were in use at the same time as the other finds. It seems just as likely that they evidence the

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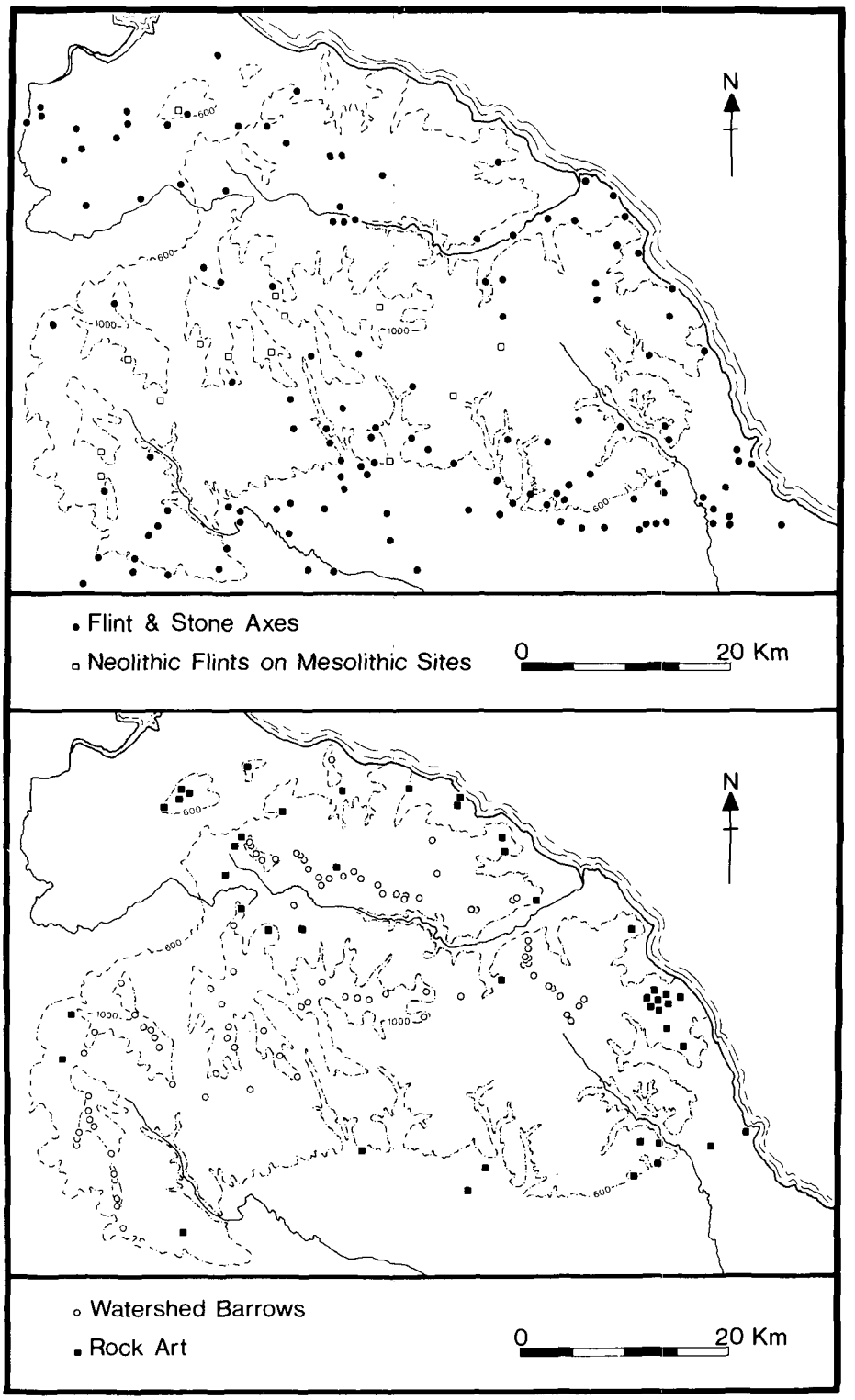
Rock carving of human figure, horse and abstract motifs, near Campo Lameiro, Galicia.



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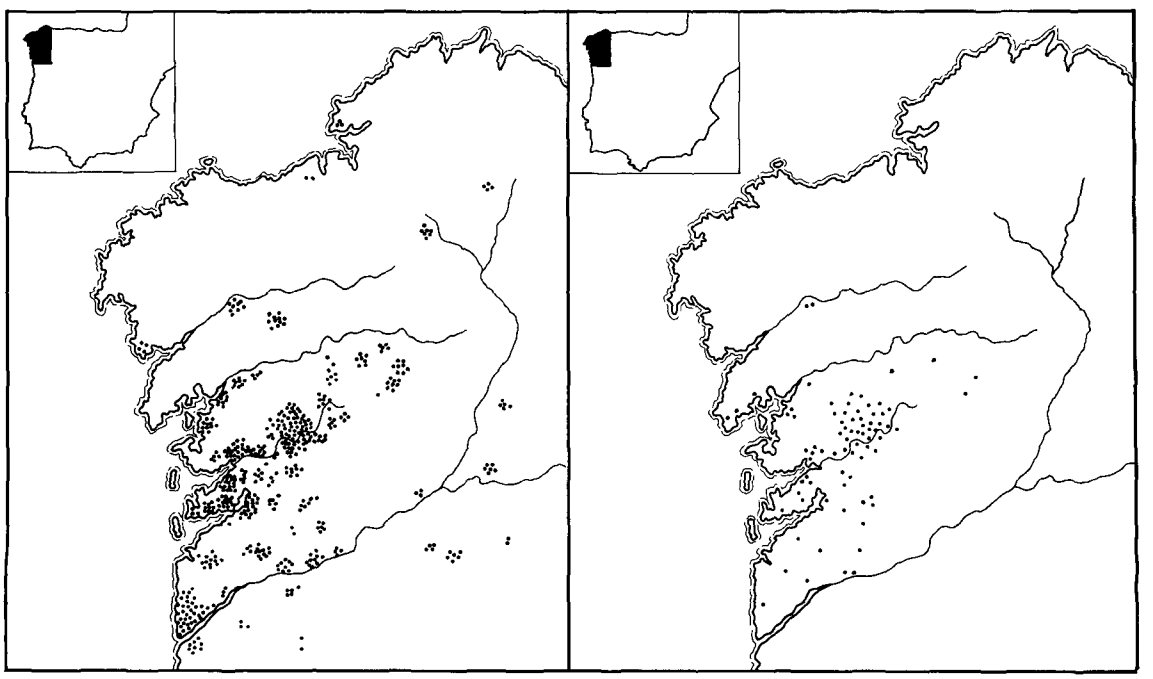
(Upper) The distribution of Neolithic axes in north-east Yorkshire in relation to finds of other Neolithic artefacts on Mesolithic sites. (Lower) The distribution of rock carvings in relation to Bronze Age round barrows built along the watershed. (Data from Spratt 1982).

continued use of certain favoured locations for their wild resources. This could even have been combined with the summer grazing of domesticates. This zone of specialised sites is usually situated well beyond the limits of settlement and clearance, as it is reflected by discoveries of polished axes. In North Yorkshire, where this evidence has been assembled by Don Spratt (1982), there is a fairly sharp boundary between the two distributions (illus 18). Perhaps this was the meeting point between the domesticated landscape and the natural world beyond. It may be no accident that it is in this very area that a series of petroglyphs is found. Their precise date is a little uncertain, but the balance of probabilities favours an origin during the Late Neolithic.

Such carvings belong to a tradition that is widely distributed along the Atlantic seaboard, and some of the characteristic motifs are shared with other areas. Perhaps the best known of these petroglyphs are found in Galicia (Peña Santos & Vázquez Varela 1979), and here again we can recognise some evidence of spatial patterning at a regional level. One group of petroglyphs is located in the lowlands, close to the major fishing grounds, whilst the other is distributed around the fringes of the uplands in a setting not unlike that of rock carvings in the British Isles (illus 19). Rather more of the images found on coastal sites are in an abstract style that has features in common with the carvings in this country, but those found in the hinterland often combine the same motifs with depictions of animals. Again the distinction between the wild and the domestic seems to have been important, and many of these carvings can be identified as deer. The detailed location of the petroglyphs needs further study, but already they appear to share several of the features I have mentioned already in this lecture. A few of them are found at viewpoints or on prominent rocks, but in the inland areas where carvings of animals are



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The distribution of rock art in Galicia. (Left) the distribution of abstract motifs and (Right) the distribution of animal carvings. (After Peña Santos & Vázquez Varela 1979).

much more frequent, it seems as if these sites clustered around basins providing well-watered pasture or the paths leading through them to the higher ground. A similar observation has also been made in the Pyrenees, where the rock carvings are closely related to the main transhumance routes (Bahn 1984, 324-31).

At a still broader scale the distribution of rock art in Europe is very revealing indeed. Nearly all the carvings are found in what I have called the agricultural margins – the West Mediterranean, the Atlantic coastline and Scandinavia. Their histories vary considerably, but with the agricultural intensification of later prehistory these styles of rock art come to an end. We can recognise more local developments within this general sequence, for the petroglyphs in Scandinavia had a much longer history than those in Britain and Ireland, where the agricultural landscape was reorganised more extensively, and probably at an earlier date, than it was in Denmark and Sweden (Barker, G 1985).

In most regions the network of special places I have been describing was overwhelmed by the creation of conventional monuments. For example, in North Yorkshire, where those rock carvings had seemed to separate the lowland landscape from an area in which hunting maintained its importance, a whole series of round barrows were eventually constructed along the watersheds (Spratt 1982, fig 17; illus 18). Some of these may have been built in locations that were already important in human perception of the landscape, but at this scale such evidence is really rather elusive. We can shed much more light on the conversion of places into monuments by considering the later history of petroglyphs and menhirs.

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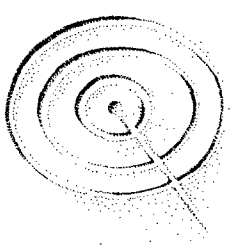
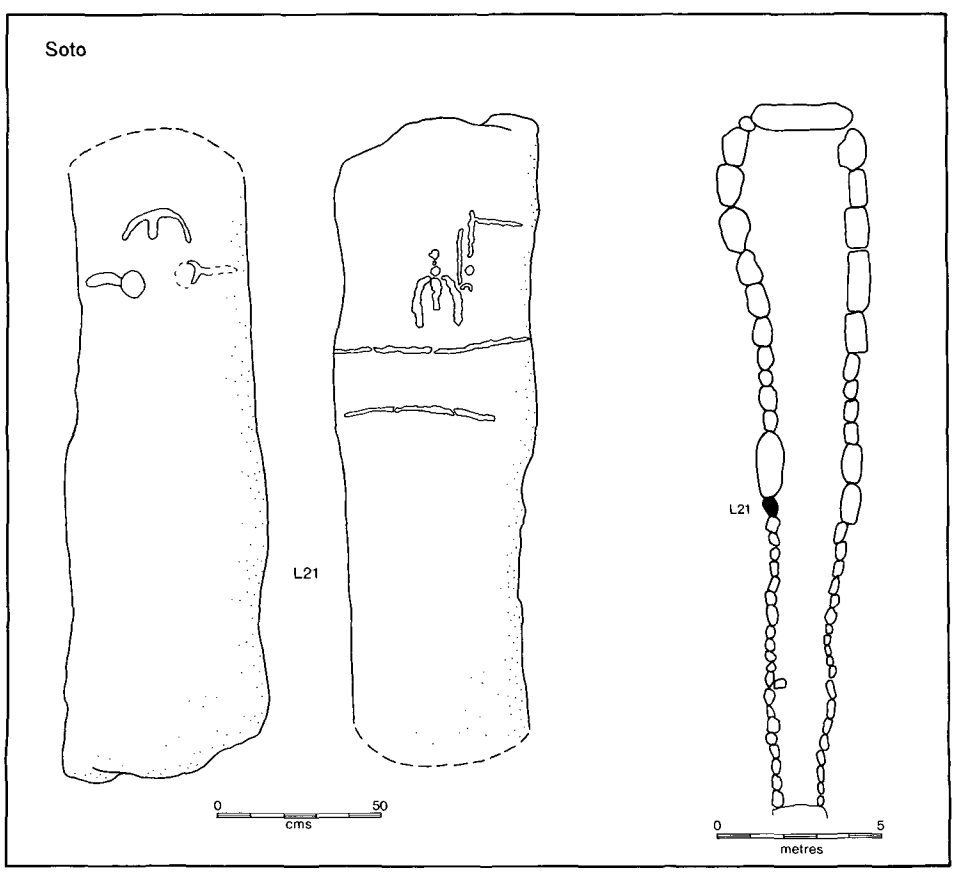
When, a few years ago, we first found out that two of the great Breton tombs, Gavrinis and Table des Marchand, incorporated fragments of the same decorated stone (Le Roux 1984), the discovery was treated as altogether exceptional. Now we are able to recognise quite a few similar cases in which existing menhirs were taken down and their fragments incorporated into the structure of chambered tombs (L'Helgouac'h 1983). Examples of this practise have multiplied, and recent excavation has shown that sometimes these menhirs had formed freestanding structures at the same locations before those monuments were built (Patton 1990). At Table des Marchand it even seems possible that the tomb was built against one of those menhirs which was left in its original position.



There are also cases in which statues-menhirs are found within the structure of Neolithic passage graves. These may be free-standing sculptures, as they are in three of the chambers at Ile Gaignog (L'Helgouac'h 1965, 87), or they may be built into the junction between the passage and the chamber, as we find at Kercado (Giot 1971, 354). In each case the sequence must have been rather the same – the statue menhir was older than the tomb – but we cannot always be sure whether the megalithic monument was built around the figure, or whether the carving was brought from another location. At Déhus in the Channel Islands, the statue of an archer was certainly reused, as it formed one of the capstones (Kinnes & Hibbs 1989), whilst on a later site at Soto in south-west Spain a statue menhir was built

into the junction between the passage and the chamber (Shee Twohig 1981, 159–60). In this case it was turned upside down, and the original design was defaced and overlain with a new set of motifs (illus 20). This may seem like the opportunistic reuse of a convenient piece of stone, but quite often they are found in equivalent positions at different sites. They are located where the passage meets the chamber, but usually on the left hand side (Kinnes & Hibbs 1989, 163). Quite simply, these patterns of reuse must be more than a coincidence.

Similar practises seem to have been widespread and can certainly be recognised outside Atlantic Europe. Earlier in this lecture I mentioned the statues-menhirs of Southern France and said a little about their distribution. But I could have added that not all of them are in their original positions, for here there is similar evidence that existing menhirs were taken down and incorporated in formal monuments, sometimes as broken fragments. Such finds are poorly recorded, but in fact they occur quite widely. Twenty five of the anthropomorphic statues in Provence and Languedoc have archaeological associations (Jallot & D'Anna 1990, 378). Two are directly connected with open settlements, whilst another two are found in a similar context but had been reused. Four of the statues were originally associated with mortuary sites – multiple burials, an oval tomb and a series of cave deposits – and four more were incorporated into similar contexts after these sculptures had



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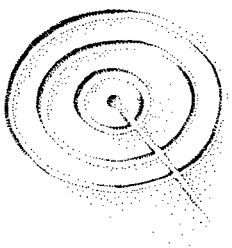
The reused carving in the passage tomb at Soto. (Left) A reconstruction of the carving as originally conceived. (Centre) The new carving created when the stone was inverted and incorporated into the megalithic structure. (Right) Plan of the monument showing the position of the reused stone. (Data from Shee Twohig 1981).

already seen an earlier period of use. They could also be incorporated into stone-built tombs and fortified settlements during a secondary phase; for instance, two of them were built into the well-known settlement at Le Lébous (Arnal 1973).

Rather similar developments are found in the southern foothills of the Alps and have been traced in considerable detail at Sion and Aosta. On deeply stratified sites like these the sequence emerges with a startling clarity. The lavishly decorated stelae at Sion were used and reused over six hundred years (Gallay 1990). The earliest examples belong to the same period as a megalithic tomb, but new statues were added during later phases which saw the deposition of a series of single and multiple burials. A significant proportion of these statues were subsequently damaged, and often their heads were removed before the fragments were incorporated in a further group of mortuary deposits. The sequence at Sion lasted for a very long time. The oldest feature is a megalithic monument which pre-dates the first of the statues by two hundred and fifty years. And after the final reuse of these sculptures the site continued in use as a barrow cemetery for another five hundred years.

The sequence at Aosta is almost as long, but in this case it has a different point of origin (Mezzena 1981). The earliest feature on the site was a series of stone-packed holes, perhaps for an alignment of menhirs. After a phase of ploughing – ritual ploughing according to the excavator – a small stone structure was built, associated with the first of the stone idols on the site and with deposits of human teeth. Later, a second series of stelae were erected. This time they were elaborately decorated, and it was only now that mortuary monuments of any size were created. In the following phase we find another series of stone sculptures, associated with depictions of weaponry. Further monuments were built, including a cist and two megalithic chambers, then the sequence was completed by the construction of a still larger cist reusing one of the statues. At Aosta these developments extended over six hundred years.

It is difficult to encapsulate such a complicated sequence of events, but the evidence from both these sites has some points in common. Again, the menhirs may have embodied the attributes of particular people and linked them with a specific point in the landscape. At Sion the first sculptures belong to the same period as a megalithic tomb, but at Aosta it was only later that the associations of those sculptures seem to have been incorporated in a formal monument. When that stage was reached, the carvings themselves could be defaced or broken. In that case the most important point is that for some time before any structures of this kind were built the place was already marked as somewhere special.



On sites like these we can read the changing relationship between sculptures and stone-built tombs in exceptional detail. They provide some indication of the real complexity of processes that in most cases are only glimpsed. But once we recognise the potential of this kind of evidence, other instances of this pattern come to mind. This is not a question of cultural affinities; these developments epitomise a similar set of principles. For some time it has been recognised that the decoration found inside the passage tombs of Loughcrew and the Boyne Valley has a lengthy history. Some of the stones at Newgrange and Knowth had been carved on more than one surface before they were employed in the monument (O'Sullivan 1986).

Those carvings that still remained visible after the tombs were built were replaced in a more ornate style. This has been treated as evidence for the evolution of megalithic art, but a wider issue may also be involved. Clearly, these pieces had not been detached from the living rock; they may have begun their career as standing stones. As we have seen in Brittany, once one example of this process is identified, others are much easier to find.

Rather later, in the Bronze Age, and in a very different area, we encounter my last example of this phenomenon. The extraordinary site at Filitosa in Corsica is perhaps the most convincing of this group of 'places as monuments' (Jehasse & Grosjean 1976, 102–4). It is set in the centre of a fertile valley near to the sea, and the local landscape is dominated by an extraordinary rock formation. This had already attracted settlement by an early stage of the Neolithic when a rock shelter was occupied. After an unknown period of time, but probably during a phase when Filitosa was no longer a domestic site, the same natural features attracted a different kind of attention. They became the focus for a veritable congregation of anthropomorphic sculptures. It is not known whether these accumulated over a long period of time, but the examples which have been assigned to the latest part of the sequence include figures with swords.

These decorated menhirs were not allowed to remain undisturbed for long. At a date which still remains controversial the rock was converted into a fortification, including at least two monumental towers. Small houses were built around their

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View towards the crag at Filitosa showing the positions of the Bronze Age towers.

base, and the entire crag was enclosed by a defensive wall (illus 21). For our purposes the most remarkable feature of the site is the fate of the existing sculptures. Some of these were taken down and used in the construction of the towers. Although the excavator saw this as an act of desecration, I wonder if this is another case in which powerful natural places were converted into cultural monuments as relics of their former use were incorporated into the new construction.

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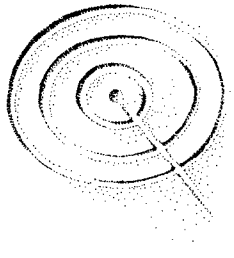
Petroglyphs were my other example of the way in which natural places might become charged with an added significance. I think we can also see several ways in which their importance influenced later generations. First of all, there is good evidence that the carvings that we think of as completed compositions in fact accumulated over a long period. There are striking contrasts in the degree of weathering shown by adjacent motifs (Johnston 1989), and there are certainly a few rare instances in which one image seems to be superimposed on another. This is found in Scotland and Ireland, and also in Galicia. The origins of Atlantic rock art are quite uncertain, although their closest well-dated parallels are found on the backs of some of the stones incorporated into the passage tombs at Loughcrew, Newgrange and Knowth. I have discussed this observation already, but even if it is treated simply as evidence of chronology its implications are profound. It suggests that some of the motifs that characterise open air rock carvings were already current before the full flowering of passage grave art in the Boyne Valley. If so, then one way of linking these great monuments to earlier conceptions of the natural world may have been by embellishing the tombs with a more ornate version of the carvings already current in the landscape. I shall return to this suggestion in my next lecture.

In northern Britain there are two kinds of evidence for the abiding significance of rock art. Several of the round cairns in Northumberland seem to have been built on top of existing carvings. Such evidence is little known and requires systematic study, but already it is clear that some of the kerbstones had been selected for their distinctive colour; for that reason it is most unlikely that these were simply clearance cairns (Stan Beckensall pers comm; illus 22). There is much stronger evidence that already carved fragments of rock were incorporated into Early Bronze Age burials, both in England and Scotland (Bradley 1992). Some of the carvings were old enough to be quite weathered, and many of the original patterns were truncated when the pieces were selected for reuse. In a few cases it seems as if they had been carved on opposite sides, suggesting that once again they may have originated as freestanding structures such as menhirs. More often they appear to have been stripped from the living rock; there may be direct evidence for this process from the outcrop at Greenland (MacKie & Davis 1989). Although Colin Burgess (1990) has argued that this happened by chance – these stones were simply convenient pieces of raw material whose decoration had lost its significance – the fact remains that these fragments are not a representative sample of the carvings found in the open air. There are too few cup-marks, and some of the more unusual motifs shared with passage grave art are over-represented. Nor were the stones used at random. Complex burials in cists were usually associated with cup-and-ring-marks, and sometimes with rarer designs. Simple urned cremations, on



the other hand, might be covered by a slab bearing nothing more elaborate than cup-marks. There may have been a protocol determining how such pieces were to be incorporated into the fabric of these monuments. At its simplest this goes against the idea that older carvings were being reused haphazardly. Quite clearly, the different designs retained at least some of their original significance.

The same point can be illustrated by the placing of the carved stones in these monuments (Bradley 1992). Their kerbstones are sometimes decorated on the inner surface, and the slabs making up the cists were also decorated on the inside. In those rare cases where both faces had been carved, the more complex decoration was located in the interior. Each of these patterns would have had the same effect, for the decorated surface was directed towards the burial rather than the outer world. The same point can be illustrated at a still more detailed level. Loose slabs might be built into the body of the monument without any burials beneath them, but once again the decoration faced downwards. On two excavated sites in north-east England this even applied to a series of cup-marked boulders found in the material of the cairn.

Again I would draw a rather similar conclusion to my discussion of menhirs. Monument building involved a careful choice of location, but in certain cases relics drawn from other places might be incorporated into the project in a highly structured manner. It is difficult for us to reverse these processes, to establish the enduring importance of natural places when they are not embellished by the creation of monuments; but if we are to understand the complex process by which a wild landscape was eventually brought into the domestic world, the matter must be broached.

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A prehistoric cairn at Lordenshaw, Northumberland, apparently superimposed on a sheet of cup-marked rock. Part of the kerb around this cairn (not shown in this photograph) is also decorated.

That is what I have tried to do in this lecture, but I am only too aware that I have covered a large amount of ground, and so I would like to end by summarising the key points in my argument. All monuments were built in places, and many of those places were selected precisely because they already enjoyed a special significance. Our problem is in illustrating this point through archaeology. In some cases this is not too difficult. We have seen instances in which entirely natural features of the landscape had formed a focus for specialised activities some time before they were embellished by the creation of earthworks. But such a straightforward sequence is rather unusual. It is perhaps more common for natural features of the landscape to provide the point of origin of monuments. A good example are the cave deposits, and we saw how the collective burials found there can overlap with the contents of megalithic tombs and other sites. But at the same time we saw how the hidden world of the cave was supplemented by statues in the open air. In this case natural features of the landscape were not replaced by artificial monuments; they were complemented by them until they achieved a richer cultural resonance.

At another level, the siting of menhirs provides evidence for a distinctive perception of the landscape. They present the public face of rituals that were largely hidden from view and yet their siting in the open air helps to associate those practices with particular places in the outer world. In this case the attributes of the dead or supernatural beings were linked to specific points in the countryside. In the case of prehistoric rock art, that link to the natural terrain is even more direct, and in this case there is evidence that some of the petroglyphs were deliberately sited at viewpoints.

We can relate that observation to the distribution of these features. Rock art is found mainly in the agricultural margin where a mobile pattern of activity was especially resilient. The depictions of hunting scenes at some of these sites also suggests that they were associated with the limits of contemporary land use. At the same time, these special places would have been very important to those living in the core areas of settlement, and we have seen how widely fragments of already carved rock – both petroglyphs and menhirs – were incorporated into the fabric of formally constituted monuments. As often as not, they were removed from their original positions for that purpose. Nothing could show more clearly how significant they had become. It hardly matters whether we can read the messages inscribed on these stones. Their translation from natural places to monuments exemplifies a development of very much wider significance.

I have considered the use of a variety of special places in the landscape and the ways in which some of them played their part in the lives of different people. I have also argued that the existing power of those places had to be carried over into the building of monuments, but I have still to consider quite how those monuments were used. I shall do this in the next lecture.