

**Physical, Social and Intellectual
Landscapes in the Neolithic**

Contextualizing Scottish and Irish Megalithic Architecture

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Abstract

The broad aim of this study is to examine the way in which people build worlds which are liveable and which make sense; to explore the means by which a social, intellectual order particular to time and place is embedded within the material universe. The phenomenon of monumentality is considered in the context of changing narratives of place and biographies of person and landscape, which are implicated in the making of the self and society and the perception of being *in* place.

Three groups of megalithic mortuary monuments of quite different formal characteristics, constructed and used predominantly during the fourth and third millennia BC, are analyzed in detail within their landscape setting: a series of Clyde tombs on the Isle of Arran in southwest Scotland; a group of cairns in the Black Isle peninsula in the northeast of the country, which belong primarily to the Orkney-Cromarty tradition; and a passage tomb complex situated in east-central Ireland, among the Loughcrew hills. Individual studies are presented for each of these distinct and diverse landscapes, which consider the ways in which natural and built form interact through the medium of the human body, how megalithic architecture operated as part of local strategies for creating a workable scheme to 'place' humanity in relation to a wider cosmos, and how the interrelation of physical, social and intellectual landscapes may have engendered particular understandings of the world.

An attempt is made to write regionalized, localized neolithics which challenge some of the traditional frameworks of the discipline -- in particular those concerned with morphological, chronological and economic classification -- and modes of representation which, removing subject and monument from a specific material context, establish a spurious objectivity. The study represents a move towards an interpretive, humanistic 'archaeology of inhabitation' that seeks not to identify and elucidate the meanings embedded in the materiality of past lifeworlds but, by necessarily partial engagement with past material conditions, to begin to draw out some of the strategies by which meanings, knowledges and authorities might be made possible, maintained or challenged.

At a larger scale, a broad thematic shift in the way people situate

Abstract

themselves with regard to metanarratives of existence is proposed to link the long-term developmental trajectories of the localized practice of agents in the three study areas, whereby a very gradual process of change, stretching back into the mesolithic and forward into the early bronze age, may be observed in the nature of the recursive relationship between people and the land. The developing culture:nature opposition implicated in this relation is conceptualized in terms of an altering articulation over time of metaphorical links between forces of the metaphysical landscape and the daily routine of human lives within the material world.

Within the work as a whole, the issue of textual representation in archaeology is approached on a series of different levels, focusing upon the modern project of writing archaeologies which create knowledges for our own time and serve to situate us in our own, contemporary worlds. A theoretical discussion considers archaeological practice and writing with regard to attempts to draw out the strands of relation between our desire to 'make sense' in our own communities and solidarities, and the potentially liveable, past or 'other' worlds we write into being in our academic texts. Some possibilities for integrating the physical experience of the archaeological residue in the field into the form of the text itself are explored in the formulation of the individual case studies.

Prologue

This text is about the way in which people construct worlds which make sense, whose coherence stretches back into the past and out into the future, and in which particular forms of social life become viable. In these created worlds, the threads of social order are woven into the fabric of the temporal, physical universe. In this study I am concerned with the implications of this process on two levels. Firstly, I want to examine the way in which worlds were built during the period we refer to, in ever-expanding and increasingly ambiguous terms, as the 'neolithic'; how megalithic architecture operated as part of local strategies for creating a workable order in which humanity was 'placed' in relation to a wider cosmos through the mediation of landscape in its broadest sense. Secondly, I want to emphasize that our modern project of writing archaeologies is one of the ways in which we create present understandings that serve to situate us in our own, contemporary worlds. So although worlds that made sense in their own time and place had a real existence in Scotland and Ireland during the fifth to third millennia BC,¹ we write separate, possible and potentially liveable neolithics into being in our academic texts by drawing on the common ground of materiality. This is not reinscribing in a different form histories which have left a direct record of their passing in our present physical universe, but engendering histories which have a material existence -- and effect -- of their/our own.

In my writing of specific histories, these two perspectives on the creation of knowledges and understandings are integrated in the field methodology, the intertextual analysis and the form of the text itself. Chapter One examines the way in which chambered cairns have been envisaged, from various perspectives within

Prologue

the archaeological discipline, to play quite different roles within the dynamics of social life: in other words, how substantially different neolithics dependent upon contemporary motivations can be written into existence. In Chapter Two a philosophical framework for the present project of writing aspects of a regionalized, localized neolithic is set out, founded upon current interests within post-processual theory in hermeneutic enquiry, followed by a discussion of the implications for engagement with the monuments in the field. Each of the following three chapters comprises a separate case study, in which an integrated approach to the analysis of monumentality, landscape and social strategies is adopted. Particular interpretive themes are introduced in the course of each chapter and are then brought forward through the rest of the text. Just as agents carry with them the implications of previous experiences to the present social encounter, so too in this text the reader pulls insights formulated through one textual engagement with a particular material assemblage forward into the next encounter. Since this is a recursive process, with interpretations of the present material/textual event in turn acting back upon and feeding into the interpretive memories of past engagements, the text concludes with an examination of the three groups of chambered cairns in the light of one another, and with a discussion of the way local, material strategies being played out in each landscape might form part of a larger-scale, extremely long-term shift in the nature of frameworks for living that communities establish through the very physicality of their world.

Within the Appendices are presented the results of specific methodological procedures, an assessment of the various landscape environments into which the chambered cairns were originally inserted, and a brief examination of a group of timber and stone circles which provide an interesting counterpoint to the chambered tombs in the first case study due to their formally and situationally contrastive nature, their temporal overlap with and their extreme spatial proximity to the cairns. In effect, each Appendix looks at the neolithic and/or the early bronze age in a different way again; each creates a different world.

Prologue

NOTE

¹Dates in the main body of the text refer to calendar years. With the exception of dates mentioned in the first chapter, these are based on the calibration of radiocarbon dates to two sigma, according to the calibration curves published in *Radiocarbon* 28 (1986): Pearson et al. 1986; Pearson & Stuiver 1986. Weighted averages of the data were calculated according to: Kromer et al. 1986; Linick, Suess & Becker 1985; Linick et al. 1986; Stuiver et al. 1986.

**Methods and desires: a history
of megalithic studies**

The old man worked with his pick, and then used his shirt and the bread-tray to shovel out the earth. All he produced were bits of bones, a shard of rough crockery, and a triangular stone cut like a flint. His hopes, to tell the truth, were not in the objects themselves, but in what I might find in them

Freya Stark
The Valleys of the Assassins

For millennia, the monumental tombs of western Europe have played a part in the construction of personal and communal biographies. The facets of this ongoing social narrative are innumerable, from the situation of human lives within a materiality of existence suffused with mythic powers and moral implications, to the establishment of government initiatives for ‘environmentally and/or culturally sensitive areas’ which, influenced by ecological movements and the reclamation of ethnic identity, encourage a holistic, world view of the natural and human ‘heritage’. In between these temporal poles -- to quote some British examples -- these monuments have been drawn into folklore (the ubiquitous Giants’ Graves; Fairy Hillock, Caithness; Bryn yr Hen Bobl or The Hill of the Old People, Anglesey), Germanic mythology (Wayland’s Smithy, Berkshire) and Norse legend (Maes Howe, Orkney, the den of the Hogboy goblin). Christian saints and holy men have met the forces of evil here. The long mound at Pimperne, Dorset served as a forum for the medieval counsels of Longbarrow Hundred, antiquity lending weight to contemporary authority. And in mid eighteenth century Gloucestershire, George Whitefield chose the long barrow which still bears his name as an

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evangelical pulpit for the fledgling Methodist faith. As material nodes in a network of practical and discursive knowledges, as tangible mnemonics for past, present and future social orders, these monuments have been active mediators in the constitution of social life and of an understanding of what it *is* to live in the contemporary world. And it is in this way that megalithic mortuary monuments have operated within twentieth century archaeological thought. Ultimately, through whatever intellectual filter these have been viewed, the methods and desires of archaeologists have focused not on the orthostats and bones and earth and sherds of pottery, but upon the understanding of human lives which might be found in them.

Cultural perspectives

Articulated against a background of the evolutionary progress of humanity and the universal linear development of Thomsen's Three Age System, nineteenth century conceptions of the megalithic monuments of western Europe held these enigmatic constructions to be the visible record of the migration and colonization of one race of people. Such views began to be undermined by recognition of the largely local nature of material culture assemblages associated with the monuments, seemingly supported by analysis of the skeletal evidence; by the turn of the century, following the propositions of writers such as Gabriel de Mortillet and Oscar Montelius, the tombs were seen as representative more of the spread of customs among various groups than of a people. However, this historical process retained a single spatial and temporal origin in what was considered to be the heart of advanced civilization, the eastern Mediterranean. The history of megalithic architecture became a history of the diffusion of ideas and ideals in addition to the movements of social groups across Europe, the mechanism for which comprised both the direct imposition of new practices and beliefs upon, and the gradual acculturation of, indigenous European populations.

Over the next decades, a framework for archaeological enquiry developed which centred upon the concept of 'culture' as the basic analytical unit. In the European context the work of Gordon Childe was of paramount importance, both at

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a general theoretical level and with specific regard to the cultural diffusion of a 'megalithic idea' (e.g. 1929, 1948, 1957). Culture was seen as a shared body of beliefs through which the existence of a given social group was articulated. The conduct of life within any such group, whether or not ethnically defined, was seen to depend on choice, more particularly on self-imposed limitations on choice; these resulted in conventional routines of behaviour which left specific material traces. Material culture was assumed to be a direct reflection of beliefs and behavioral routines, with variability in patterns of material traits representing variation in social patterning and, consequently, cultural differences. Particular material assemblages could therefore be mapped on the spatio-temporal plane, and changing patterns interpreted as the result of contact among different cultural groups and the concomitant diffusion of particular beliefs and ways of living and their material signifiers. Cultural archaeology thus considered human groups in terms of defined social entities or totalities, changes within which were effected by contact with other social totalities. The thread of humanism running through the traditional mode of archaeological thought is its concern with the developmental histories of specific cultures, and with the explanation of social change by reference to particular historical circumstance.

It could be argued that viewing social life as built up of a series of conventionalities manifested as uniformities in material patterning, the ultimate concern of cultural archaeology was with the routines of everyday life which both created and carried forward such conventions. However, although its potential was to begin to relate materiality to the way in which people constituted themselves as social beings, its practitioners tended to become entrapped within its methodologies. This is clearly apparent within traditional megalithic studies which, conceiving of the unity of a 'collective' burial tradition that contrasted with the earlier single-grave practices of western Europe, produced detailed analyses of the immense regional variations in form and material associations, constructing ever more complex and comprehensive typologies by which to identify cultural groups. The mapping of materially-signified ritual elements such as chambers, passages,

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forecourts, facades and cairns attempted to trace the physical and/or ideational spread of the 'megalith builders'. The manner in which concepts of culture were drawn upon within archaeology directed the focus upon the material consequences of human activity rather than upon the subjectivities motivating these actions; ultimately, this led to the conception of economic and technological aspects as being the primary area of enquiry, in effect as the *essence* of the social group, as opposed to its beliefs which were generally relegated to the status of cultural paraphernalia.

The work of Glyn Daniel, representing the first major attempts at regional synthesis (e.g. 1950, 1960, 1963), exemplifies the traditional approach to issues of megalithic architecture, with his interest in the identity and origins of the people involved, his concentration on the question of whether people and/or influences had spread from a single or multiple centres, and his prioritization of the formulation of standard architectural types which could be examined distributionally to plot cultural diffusion through formal changes. Building upon classificatory schemes such as those of Montelius and other nineteenth century scholars, Daniel recognized three main classes of monument within the western European context -- simple, single chambers, passage graves¹ and gallery graves -- while noting that the existence of such wide regional variation made any attempt at an all-embracing classification within this series a mere 'academic exercise' (Daniel 1963, 44). He envisaged the spread of architectural forms with a general stylistic basis, which with movement through space and time acquired local and regional diversity.

Through the medium of a series of detailed regional studies, Daniel set out a developmental scheme for the 'megalithic phenomenon' with three main elements. Firstly, he saw the roots of collective inhumation in third millennium BC non-megalithic Aegean tomb traditions (Daniel 1963, 120; 122). Secondly, this burial custom and associated beliefs were brought to the western Mediterranean, southern Iberia and southern France by eastern Mediterranean settlers before the end of the third millennium BC. In these new areas, rock-cut tombs and corbelled passage graves of dry-wall construction inspired by eastern ancestral forms began to give

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way to megalithic forms due to material constraints, eventually degenerating into single chamber types as the cultural influence moved north and west through Iberia (Daniel 1963, 71-4). Early eastern Mediterranean 'goddess figures' were seen to be reflected in the mural art of southern Iberian dry-walled tombs, with representations of this 'cult goddess' devolving as they moved farther from their source. This was regarded as evidence for 'a powerful religion of east Mediterranean origin' based on the worship of a 'Mother Goddess' which 'informed and inspired the builders of the megalithic tombs as they spread through western Europe' (Daniel 1963, 127).

This process of culture change continued into France, Britain and Ireland during the first half of the second millennium BC, by a combination of primary colonization and acculturation which developed *via* the western seaways and along inland routes. The material traces of this development were found in typological connections of architecture and pottery and links among various regional artistic traditions, both mobiliary and mural. So, for example, the morphology and the predominantly west-coastal, discrete distribution pattern of British megalithic tombs was taken to indicate a number of seaborne colonizations from France and Iberia, with the initial coastal settlement of agricultural groups followed by movement into the hinterland. Postulated settlement from western France around 2000 BC accounted for the introduction of the custom of building transepted gallery graves into the 'Severn-Cotswold' area, with the 'Clyde-Carlingford' tombs of southwest Scotland and northern Ireland representing part of the same population movement (Daniel 1963, 113). Breton and Iberian 'tomb cemeteries' were compared with Irish monumental complexes such as those in the Boyne valley, Irish and Iberian cruciform chamber forms were linked, and artistic motifs within Boyne tombs were considered to form part of the 'Mother Goddess' tradition; this 'Boyne culture', implanted in the early second millennium BC, spread along the western coasts of Britain and up into the Northern Isles during the next five hundred years (Daniel 1963 107-8).

The third element in Daniel's scheme comprised this cultural diffusion

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within the Scandinavian neolithic context, in which megalithic architecture had arisen independently in the form of simple chambers or *dösar*. He regarded the largely local context in which the northern European tombs were situated to be indicative of groups of settlers bringing with them only the knowledge of tomb construction and the possession of enough power and prestige to 'compel aborigines among whom they settled to great architectural labours' (Daniel 1963, 59).

Daniel, then, envisaged a charismatic religion with associated collective burial customs diffusing from a single origin; the concept of the use of megaliths he considered to have evolved independently in several areas including southern Iberia, southern France and Scandinavia. Daniel's scheme is not representative of some universal, mid-twentieth century view, as other scholars' concepts of megalithic cultural diffusion differed variously, particularly in terms of dating, directional detail and evolutionary developments in typology. However, it serves to elaborate in specific terms the way in which megalithic architecture was perceived within the more general trends of contemporary archaeological thought.

By the late 1950s it was becoming evident that the relatively new radiocarbon dating technology might well have important chronological implications for the European neolithic. Only five years after the publication of *The Megalith Builders of Western Europe*, Daniel had produced a second edition incorporating the latest dating evidence (1963), while Audrey Henshall had taken these implications into account in the first volume of her inventory of Scottish chambered cairns (1963, 6), much of the research for which had been conducted over the previous decade. The most important immediate consequence for the study of megaliths was the lengthening of the time scale for the neolithic in northwest Europe, the inception of which was pushed back into the second half of the fourth millennium. Dates were published which extended the chronology of Breton passage graves back to *circa* 3500 BC and that of British and Irish chambered cairns into the earlier third millennium, while mid third millennium dates were obtained for the Scandinavian passage grave tradition (Daniel 1963,

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133-4). As the increasing regionalization of cultural attributes could now take place over a much greater period of time, as could processes of convergence and standardization, it was recognized that particular material traits reflecting these attributes could display remarkable time depth.

The impact of this new chronological framework on the concept of collective burial in megalithic monuments as a largely unitary phenomenon was to be enormous, initially producing a context of tomb use stretching over a period of some two and a half thousand years (Daniel 1963, 135), of mortuary practices in which northwestern European cultures seemed to play an early formative role. The scale of its implications emerged over the 1960s and 1970s as more dates became available and as the understanding of radiocarbon technology and its applications were progressively refined. Colin Renfrew prefaced an influential analysis of megalithic monuments with a summary of these developments, underlining their profound effect on contemporary approaches to megalithic studies (1976, 200-4). He noted that, whereas the early bronze age in the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean -- the theoretical point of origin since the days of Montelius -- seemed to extend from the late fourth through the third millennium BC, late fourth/early third millennium dates were produced for Portuguese dolmens, while an advanced phase in the Millaran group of southeast Spain was dated to around 3000 BC. A good series of dates from Breton passage graves once more pushed back in time the existence of stone tombs there, into the fifth millennium, and some British and Irish groups were also seen to have emerged before 4000 BC. Thus, derivation of chambered cairns in these areas appeared to have little to do with monumental forms of the Aegean bronze age; on the contrary, a strong argument arose for independent development at various points along the Atlantic 'facade'.

The influence of revised chronologies upon megalithic studies was of necessity gradual and cumulative, but hardly uncontroversial. Unreliability of radiocarbon dating techniques was stressed, both in terms of scientific validity and archaeological application. Many archaeologists emphasized the frequent

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calibration revisions and publication of dates of unknown or uncertain contexts. Controversy with regard to the latter has been of considerable longevity and has not been entirely unwarranted as, for example, in the extended discussion of disputed dating evidence from the Carrowmore passage tomb cemetery in northwestern Ireland (Burenhult 1984). In the main, however, archaeological studies incorporated the new chronological framework, still concentrating on typologies and the question of origins, but within a much more regional and local context.

Daniel had recognized the need for the production of corpora providing detailed information and comprehensive data sets as an aid to analysis and assessment (e.g. 1960, 3); by 1969, T.G.E. Powell was able to review a host of new directions in which he saw megalithic studies developing in tandem with the increase in documentation. Although allowing for formal classification as an important analytical method, Powell advocated a move away from views of typology as representative of strictly lineal, evolutionary development and encouraged more intensive study of the environmental and social context in which the tombs were situated (1969b, v-vi). In what was in effect a reaction against the obsession for categorization evident in contemporary research, which had so far equated human groups with material attributes that it could speak of, for example, the diffusion of a 'Beaker Culture' *via* the movement of 'Beaker Folk', Powell argued that such a shift in the focus of observation was essential if anything meaningful was to be said about the prehistoric societies concerned, maintaining that archaeologists must think in terms of multi-faceted communities rather than exclusively 'tomb builders'. He called for the detailed analysis of topographic siting in terms of visibility, orientation, relation to settlement and cultivation areas and to larger scale geographical features; of the choices implied within the architecture, such as the use of certain materials, the implementation of specific constructional techniques and the incorporation of elements intended to restrict or direct movement; and of the wider surroundings, reducing the traditional emphasis on the chambers themselves (Powell 1969a, 1-10).

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The publication of Henshall's exhaustive survey of Scottish chambered cairns (1963-72) and Herity's study of Irish passage tombs (1974) can be seen to reflect the intensification of analysis at the descriptive and interpretive level. Henshall considered the Scottish tombs in terms of distinct groups -- often representing separate populations -- which might be geographically and/or chronologically separable, and contacts among whom might be reflected in constructional or morphological features. With regard to Orkney, for example, a group or groups of people constructing 'Maes Howe' type passage graves were envisaged arriving from Ireland in the mid third millennium BC, antedating the arrival -- or at least the firm establishment -- of populations building cairns of the 'Orkney-Cromarty' tradition (Henshall 1963, 131; 1972, 283). Apart from creating a detailed inventory of sites, Henshall discussed each group in more general terms. Geographical distribution was studied in terms of population movement -- monument patterns at either side of the Great Glen, for example, were considered in relation to the importance of this pass as an access route into the highlands. The relationship of monuments to their physical setting was examined with regard to the economic needs of agricultural and/or pastoral societies, while associated settlements were taken into account where possible, with features such as ground plan, constructional techniques and artefacts in the domestic context compared with evidence from the mortuary domain. Monuments were evaluated in spatial terms, as regards people's perceptions of the architecture from both within and without (e.g. Henshall 1963, 124), while chamber/cairn orientations were considered in connection with simple, seasonal astronomical events. Artistic motifs were analyzed with regard to positioning in an attempt to clarify chronological relationships; Henshall noted, for example, the presence of stones which must have been decorated before incorporation into cairns of the 'Clava' group (1963, 33).

Michael Herity's work ran along similar lines but considered a much more restricted range of monuments seen in terms of distinct cultural groups on the grounds of architectural form, orientation, situational features and associated finds assemblages (1974). He regarded Irish passage tombs as representative of a culture

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implanted initially in the Boyne valley which gradually accumulated insular aspects as it spread through Ireland -- aspects such as the clustering of 'satellite' mounds around an impressive focal tomb, or the repeated use of cruciform chambers and imposing tumuli. Artistic motifs were considered in terms of their differential visibility from both inside and outside the monument and with regard to overall placement and design. However, cultural assumptions regarding some motifs as evidence that 'an anthropomorphic god and goddess were worshipped in a religion which emphasized to the point of fetishism the principle of fertility in the house of the dead' (Herity 1974, 185) were based on the acceptance of extremely tenuous, early twentieth century claims linking Irish decorative forms with Breton and Iberian 'anthropomorphic' motifs -- claims which were ultimately analyzed and firmly rejected by Elizabeth Shee Twohig (1981). In essence this is the cult of the Mother Goddess again. The recurrence of certain themes over a long period of time has typified megalithic studies; while writers such as Andrew Fleming (1969) and Stuart Piggott (1973a) were calling for archaeologists to abandon the Mother Goddess, 'whose existence is as unsubstantiated in the chambered tombs of the west as in the figurines of east Europe' (Piggott 1973a, 14), Herity could still speak of 'cult devotees' in the early seventies (1974, 27) and, nearly twenty years later, Jean McMann's structuralist study advocated, if not a return to the warmth of the Goddess's embrace, at least consideration of symbolic themes of meaning which, she argued, linked women and death to the materiality of Irish passage tombs (1991).

Herity postulated the arrival of a cultural group represented by passage tombs and a material assemblage including highly decorated Carrowkeel ware, *petit tranchet* arrowheads and polished stone axes, into a developed primary neolithic context, ultimately of northwest French inspiration. The latter's regional unity he regarded to extend from western Scotland to northern Ireland, its material traits including court tombs, plain domestic pottery and artefacts such as flint hollow scrapers. Evidence for a certain degree of contemporaneity of and contact between the two cultural traditions was seen in finds of Carrowkeel pottery in court tombs,

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while the blend of material traits apparent from the settlement under the Townleyhall II passage tomb was considered to be the result of a primary neolithic group's acculturation (Herity 1974, 164; 166). Herity felt that strong cultural differences between the two groups of people could be sensed in the nature of their mortuary monuments, contrasting the closed-in, limited space within the passages and chambers of passage tombs with the open enclosures incorporated into court tombs; elements of this type of spatial analysis, concerned with differential access to and participation in ritual, were to be developed much more fully in the 1980s, in the changed motivational context of a discipline firmly grounded on a social theoretical base.

Traditional interest in aspects of culture diffusion is still strongly represented in much research of the sixties and early seventies, modified to a greater or lesser extent with regard to the implications of radiocarbon technology. For example, Henshall saw the earliest phase of megalithic tomb construction in Scotland as a fourth millennium indigenous development contemporaneous with the beginnings of agriculture, with passage graves the result of early third millennium migration of northwest French or Iberian impulse (1972, 277-8). Herity discussed the derivation of Irish passage tombs from the cultures of the Morbihan as the consequence of small groups of traders or 'missionaries' transmitting the major elements of their culture to indigenous Irish populations, or of full colonization, comparing Breton architectural features and material culture with Irish traditions. Admitting the lack of radiocarbon validation, he maintained the established view of Iberia as the ancestral cultural home of Breton and Irish tomb builders (1974, 198; 200).

A plethora of smaller-scale studies demonstrated continuing interest in cultural origins, but in a much more local context. John Corcoran, a major figure in contemporary megalithic studies, considered the chambered cairns of the 'Cotswold-Severn' region (1969a, 1969b); his thesis rejected simple, linear typological schemes, arguing instead for the discrete cultural and/or geographic origins of individual structural features found within the monuments. Drawing on

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earlier studies (e.g. Daniel 1950; Piggott 1962) he compared functional and morphological aspects of British earthen long barrows to those of the Cotswold-Severn cairns, postulating that long term, communal burial in mortuary houses subsequently enclosed within trapezoidal mounds provided the impetus for the mortuary practices connected with the megalithic monuments. Early radiocarbon dates for earthen long barrow construction gave weight to the argument that collective burial was integral to some cultural traditions of the initial neolithic in Britain, as opposed to being a 'later cult grafted on by missionaries' (Collins 1973, 94). The actual form of the stone cairns was taken to derive from that of the Wessex long mounds, and the forecourt element from the crescentic timber facades of earthen long barrows in eastern England. It was further suggested that the class of simple, terminal chambers in Cotswold-Severn tombs may have originated in the timber mortuary enclosures found beneath some long barrows, while northwest and southern French influences were suggested for transepted and lateral chambers respectively (Corcoran 1969b).

Corcoran viewed the lateral chambers as essentially independent passage graves which had later been incorporated into large trapezoidal cairns, citing Scottish and Welsh parallels. In his examination of the 'Carlingford' group of chambered cairns in northwest Ireland, he further developed this theme of the multi-period nature of monuments and the fusion of various cultural traits represented by components such as chamber, cairn and facade (Corcoran 1973). Here he envisaged the development of facades in association with portal dolmens occurring within Ireland; later influences, deriving from the Cotswold-Severn area *via* northern Wales, were considered to have introduced the custom of building trapezoidal mounds. Initially these may have been constructed around one or more pre-existing portal dolmens. Corcoran argued, therefore, that since different groups of people seemed to be adding trapezoidal mounds to established architectural traditions, the cultural unity often presupposed from the widespread occurrence of such mounds in Britain and Ireland might well be far less emphatic, with the form of the actual chamber within the mound perhaps more strongly 'diagnostic of cult

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and cultural variations' (Corcoran 1973, 115).

J.G. Scott reached similar conclusions in his studies of the 'Clyde' cairns of southwest Scotland (1969a, 1969b, 1973), regarding chamber rather than mound form of paramount importance and, at least in the more elaborate cairns, the main burial chamber to be the ritual focus -- thus by implication a core cultural indicator. Linking monumental typology with stylistic changes in ceramics, Scott viewed the Clyde cairns as developing largely independently during the early neolithic, only later assimilating other traditions as a result of increasing outside contacts. He argued for the inception of the megalithic tradition in southwest Scotland in simple, above-ground stone chambers he termed 'protomegaliths', which he derived tentatively from wooden prototypes. These earlier wooden structures were considered to function within practices of collective mortuary ritual brought by colonizing agricultural groups from southern and eastern England; Scott proposed parallels in the double-post, rectangular structures under the Pitnacree round barrow in Perthshire and under Wayland's Smithy chambered cairn, Berkshire (1969a, 206-7) (Later excavations at neolithic long cairns in northeast and southwest Scotland revealed similar timber mortuary structures to have been early features at the sites [Piggott 1973b, Masters 1973].) Emphasis on both functional and non-functional 'entrances' increased through time, as did the number of compartments, as part of this process Scott envisaged the gradual elaboration of existing monuments in addition to the construction of complex chambered cairns. The introduction of trapezoidal mounds from the Cotswold-Severn region was postulated for the mid to late neolithic, and of Irish constructional and morphological influences during the later neolithic -- the latter possibly the result of population movement from Ireland (Scott 1973, 117-21).

Scott also considered cultural origins from the point of view of the tomb-using groups themselves, speculating that the directionality of the long axes of Clyde cairns might be connected to perceived ancestral homelands, the tomb effectively comprising the first stage in the return journey of deceased members of the community to their actual or mythic origin (1969b, 233-6). This shift in

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perspective which begins, albeit tentatively, to situate the monuments within a context of lived experience, of the construction of an identity of the self and of community, can be placed within wider trends in archaeological theory which had been developing through the 1960s, gaining pace in the European context in the early 1970s. Although initially most strongly articulated within the theoretical stance of the processual school, it was here also, in the interest in wider issues of social life, that the humanistic strains of traditional archaeology found renewed expression. Rather than focusing upon megalithic monuments in an exclusively sepulchral context, these studies began to examine the operation of chambered cairns within prehistoric societies, not simply as receptacles for mortuary deposits and foci for a 'cult of the dead', but as media for long-term social interaction.

In a conference which specifically addressed the changing methods and desires of the discipline, Humphrey Case explicitly acknowledged the challenge of a humanistic archaeology:

... research demands ... not only mastery of taxonomies and techniques, derived from study of original material and command of secondary sources, but also the judgement appropriate to a humane discipline: ... historical sense (1973b, 35).

Case's concern with evaluating lived human experience under specific historical circumstances can be seen in his analysis of Irish court tombs, in which he shifted the emphasis away from mortuary aspects of the architecture (1973a). He saw little direct sepulchral relevance in the depositional patterning within these monuments, considering human skeletal material to have been incorporated as a 'fairly insignificant part' of matrices containing quantities of fragmentary and fractional pottery and flint implements showing signs of use (Case 1973a, 194). Drawing parallels with evidence from a 'ritual site' at Goodland, northeast Ireland, at which a series of pits were closely filled with occupational debris, he interpreted the court tombs to represent possible 'exercises in sympathetic magic' in which soil and debris from settlement sites were deposited in an attempt to ensure soil fertility; the enhanced arable potential of abandoned settlements would have been

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recognized by neolithic farmers, and the debris apparent in the soil from such sites may have become associated with ritual efforts to 'control imperfectly understood forces of nature' (Case 1973a, 195). Case suggested that material within the chambers may have been intended as foundation deposits, possibly associated with ancestral qualities, while the forecourts became foci for continuing rites -- stable centres around which relatively mobile societies moved. At the same time, he recognized the scope for diversity within the social context, contrasting the evidence from court tombs with that from Irish passage tombs with their sometimes vast quantity of individuals and general lack of chamber matrices.

Like Case, Frances Lynch was concerned with the implications of megalithic monuments for living communities (Lynch 1973). In her own words 'leaping in the dark' (1973, 161), she examined chambered cairns with regard to the relations between architecture and the ritual around which it was designed, looking at constructional features such as passage and blocking in terms of symbolic aspects rather than as purely functional elements. Considering that some chambered tombs remained social foci for over a millennium, Lynch was interested in the way in which this focus was maintained. She doubted that solely funereal rituals would have been sufficient to sustain interest over such an extended period of time. In addition, she recognized the crucial effect structural alterations would have upon the operation of such monuments, noting, for example, that the forecourt blocking associated with Irish portal dolmens and court tombs would make these theatrical, 'ceremonial' areas completely inaccessible, with consequent effects on the activities carried out. Lynch therefore assessed the monuments less in terms of containers for mortuary deposition than as material locales within, around and through which people constructed symbolic structures for living.

The work of writers like Case and Lynch is important in that it attempted to respond to calls for a more integrated approach to the study of prehistoric societies by altering the nature of the questions asked of the material. Whereas cultural archaeology had been concerned primarily with what might be termed *what* questions (e.g., what are the material traits which characterize particular cultural

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choices and beliefs?; what might these beliefs involve?; what is the chronological succession of cultural attributes, represented by typological change?; what is the result of culture contact, again as materially manifested?), here the interest was effectively in *how* various knowledges were made and maintained or transformed, *how* various ways of living were accomplished. Although at times expressed in a manner which now seems slightly ingenuous, as in Case's examination of the way in which human groups transplanted an agricultural economy from the Continent and translated it to fit the British context (1969), these concerns were firmly grounded in routine human experience as engagement with the material world. As such they prefigure issues at the centre of many post-processual archaeologies of the eighties and nineties, a similarity of outlook which is intensified by partially shared attitudes toward the relation of the archaeologist in the present to the materiality of past lives which he or she studies. Case maintained,

it is not only that our data are meaningless unless we ask selective questions of them, but that the answers to our questions are little better unless we project our own vision on them -- on experience which would be incomprehensible if we did not give it our own meaning: and it is the same vision which guides us both in collecting data (however scientifically) and in asking questions of them (1973b, 40).

This perspective is in some senses paralleled within recent arguments for an interpretive, humanistic archaeology which does not see the relation of identification and interpretation of material patterning to the archaeologist's expectations as problematic (the stance adopted within processual theory), but rather accepts that 'the making of history will always demand the commitment of our own interpretive involvement' (Barrett 1994b, 156).

That the desire for integrative methodologies which could adequately address the historicity and materiality of human experience was only partially fulfilled by particular strands of traditional archaeology in the late sixties and early seventies (many of Powell's propositions, for example, were only satisfactorily developed within megalithic studies some twenty years later) was due in part to the lack of an appropriate body of social theory with which to inform them. Certainly,

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the theoretical framework of processual archaeology failed to provide a channel for the articulation of humanistic themes, subsuming concerns with humanity and specific historical events under more general institutional processes. In a short paper of which the approach to landscape is of particular relevance to the present study (Lynch 1975), Lynch provided the closing address to a symposium which considered the relationship of human groups to their physical environment primarily in terms of a series of separate resources to be appropriated and exploited, and of economic factors -- a perspective which perhaps attained its most developed form in the systems thinking and spatial analyses of the processual school.² Turning this approach on its head, Lynch considered the impact of the natural surroundings on the intellectual structures of prehistoric communities and the way in which this might be integrated and expressed within monumentality. Thus she discussed the incorporation of distinctive rock forms within certain ring cairns, the frequent siting of the latter near springs and river sources, the regular positioning of enormous monoliths at the heads of the south Welsh valleys and the sophisticated manipulation of the individual's perception of particular monuments *via* the planned interaction of the architecture and the lie of the land. Lynch argued that as far as 'religious' monuments were concerned, it was valid to utilize 'the detail of their siting and their relationship to striking natural features to illuminate that elusive aspect of prehistoric man, his sensibility' (1975, 126). The connotations of 'sensibility' include issues of perception, impression, intellectual responsiveness and morality, themes which are now being taken forward in the context of an archaeology influenced by philosophical perspectives on modernity and post-modernity. Lynch had acknowledged the subjective and 'even emotional' slant to her thesis (1975, 124); lacking the analytical tools of relevant social theory she was unable to move beyond an emotive, undeniably evocative descriptive account of the interaction of human groups with their material conditions of existence.

Carn Meini, ... the source of the Bluestones at Stonehenge
is ... an amazing coronet of stone which dominates the
landscape for miles around It is scarcely possible to

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convey the peculiar power of that dramatic natural feature through words, ... because it has a lot to do with size and distance and the feeling for the country, ... but I would suggest it is the character of the outcrop itself which gave to the rock its magic qualities ... (Lynch 1975, 124).

Processual perspectives

The emphasis on economic and technological aspects of this interaction which had been developing within mainstream traditional archaeology was paralleled in processual approaches which, rather than regarding megalithic monuments as the material reflection of belief systems of particular, homogeneous social totalities, aimed to explain their function within seemingly 'rational' processes constituting the operation of societies within their physical environment. Human groups continued to be envisaged in terms of closed entities which could be subjected to analysis; the social formation, however, was seen as a system of interlocking institutions, each of which possessed its own integrity but which could only operate through and by the sustenance of the others. A biological analogy is common among processual definitions of social systems, in which the 'social body' is held together by the interactive functioning of the various 'organs' or social institutions. As within an organism, each component is seen to work towards the equilibrium and maximum efficiency of the whole, so that change in one institution -- or institutional process -- will be compensated for by corresponding changes in the other components of the system. The aim of processual enquiry is to elucidate the organizational properties of the system and to examine the way in which social transformation is effected through dynamic internal 'feedback' mechanisms which maintain systemic balance and external forces which put pressure on the system, both of which ultimately elicit institutional change. Society, then, is argued to be examinable as a continuing sequence of behavioural responses to stimuli originating from within and without the social totality, responses which can be detected archaeologically in the fragments of their material representation.

By focusing on the processes which gave rise to particular organizational

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strategies, among which belief systems would be included, processual archaeology saw itself moving from the specificity of particular historical circumstance to more general explanations which could be applied cross-culturally. In other words, organizational regularities were sought in the material patterning of both past and present societies, rather than formal similarities. But although processual approaches initially expressed in the self-styled 'new archaeology' of 1960s American academia constituted a conscious reaction to archaeologies informed by cultural perspectives, aspects of their theoretical stance had been articulated previously within the European context, albeit in a different form of language. I have already mentioned the like biases of economic archaeology; Childe, drawing on the functionalism of Bronislaw Malinowski and Émile Durkheim, analyzed the social formation as a working organism and envisaged a similar relationship between the general and the particular in historical process as that proposed within processual theory, arguing that 'well-known patterns of human behaviour' could be 'inferred from their archaeological results', 'specific events [being] explained as individual conjunctures of known universal factors' (Childe 1958, 74).

Certain key concepts regarding mortuary practices, defined within ethnographic and social anthropological research and developed by exponents of the American processual school, had a profound effect on megalithic studies. The form of mortuary ritual was considered to be interdependent with the organizational form of the social group concerned, so that the degree of structural complexity in burial practices observed materially in the archaeological context could be taken as correlating directly to the level of status hierarchy, or social complexity (Binford 1971).³ Archaeological elucidation of social structures as revealed through mortuary rites would involve consideration of the 'social persona', the selective recognition and representation of a deceased individual's various 'social identities'. The identities of the living, such as 'mother', 'sister', 'wife', 'family head', 'community leader', involve reciprocal rights and obligations connected to age, sex and position within various solidarities, some of which continue after the death of a group member and which may be acknowledged through material aspects of

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mortuary ritual. As expressed in the renegotiation of individual and group position in the living community on the occasion of death, the cumulative set of social personae was seen to reflect the organizing principles of the social structure in a scientifically examinable manner (Binford 1971; Saxe 1970). Such organizing principles were also considered with regard to the spatial patterning observed in mortuary practices. So, for example, where social relations were articulated around lines of descent from an ancestral community, and where corporate group rights over the use of restricted resources were legitimated through these ancestral ties, it was proposed that 'formal disposal areas' would be provided -- permanently bounded locales of specifically mortuary nature with concomitant ancestral associations (Saxe 1970; Goldstein 1976).

Whether expressed implicitly or explicitly voiced, these hypotheses informed much of the literature of the seventies and early eighties. One of the important theoretical refinements developed during this period involved the recognition that the relationship between social structure and its signification in mortuary practices was not necessarily entirely direct, with the potential for the expression in burial of inverted or otherwise altered structural states (Chapman & Randsborg 1981, 14). Whereas within processual theory this perspective was approached through wider consideration of associated settlement and subsistence patterns in an attempt to clarify the degree to which social organization was unambiguously reflected in the mortuary domain (e.g. Chapman 1981a, 1981b; Renfrew 1979a), roughly contemporary developments within post-processual analyses of chambered cairns centred on conceptions of the role of ideology in the masking and misrepresentation of social 'realities' (e.g. Shanks & Tilley 1982; Tilley 1984).

An early application of processual theory to the study of megalithic monuments can be found in two papers by Fleming (1972, 1973), in which he argued against the diffusion of cultural attributes as an explanation for morphological similarity. Fleming regarded monumental design to be of central importance, reflecting responses to the functional requirements of ritual

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organization. As widely dispersed human groups were likely to face a recurring series of organizational demands, similar formal solutions could have arisen easily, rather than being spread by ‘the loquacity of a few wandering traders and fishermen’ (Fleming 1972, 70). Fleming noted too that morphological similarities could well be produced by differing ritual requirements; conversely, monuments which display formal contrasts might be linked by similar design mechanisms. Fleming saw the design of chambered cairns in terms of problem-solving, in which the socially imposed need for components such as receptacles for ancestral remains, ceremonial areas and/or foci, and control over access was answered in local material expression, which was in turn dependent upon the availability and procurement of appropriate material resources.

In considering megalithic monuments as part of a material response to the demands of a religious/ritual subsystem, Fleming located his analyses within the context of contemporary social relations, discussing the way in which the tombs in their role as ceremonial media might additionally operate within the organization of political subsystems. Their conspicuous nature, he argued, was intended to attract and focus communal reflection, not only during periods of ritual activity but, as a constant presence within the landscape, throughout the seasonal routine. As such, chambered cairns were central to the maintenance of existing social structures: local leaders could legitimize their position by linking themselves to the ancestral community housed within the tomb, while their prestige could be further enhanced by manipulation of the ceremonial setting to focus attention upon their role in the organization and enactment of ritual procedures. In addition, Fleming noted the potential of such monuments as material foci for territorial identity. The tombs were therefore considered to operate within ‘a signalling system intended to reinforce existing leadership patterns’ (Fleming 1973, 190). This emphasis on the role of monuments in the maintenance of authority within human groups is common among processual megalithic studies and, alongside the transformation of structures of authority, is also central to many post-processual analyses. The material ramifications of the *creation* of power, however, have more rarely been

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addressed in this light, remaining elusive within considerations of the phenomenon of monumentality.

A characteristic of processual perspectives, clearly apparent in Fleming's work, is the centrality of *why* questions, the answers to which are couched in terms of behavioural reactions to demands imposed by or pressures exerted upon social structure. So Fleming asks, why are both typological variations and formal similarities evident among megalithic monuments? Why do the cairns take their particular monumental form? The solution is found in the fulfilment of the social requirements of ritual in aspects of design, which is then utilized to sustain power relations. Renfrew, whose application of processual theory to the analysis of chambered tombs and related monuments has been remarkably consistent, employs the same mode of enquiry, stating that 'to know *what* happened in the past is not sufficient: the aim is to understand *why* it happened' (1979b, 3). Renfrew sought to explain the changing patterns of monumentality he discerned in the neolithic of the Wessex region in terms of gradual social structural transformation, again avoiding diffusionist arguments (1973). The model he proposed was based on the assumption that the organization of any social system is carried forward through the organization of human action within its strictures, and that these activities may be mapped through the spatial distribution of their material effects. Thus Renfrew saw spatial analyses of contemporary monumentality within the landscape as a direct way into an understanding of the social organization of the human populations which produced it.

Renfrew classified the various Wessex monuments in a hierarchy of labour expenditure which corresponded to a hierarchy of distribution on the spatial and temporal scale. The early neolithic megalithic and non-megalithic long mounds, which required the least effort in terms of worker hours, fell into five loose geographical groups, each of which (with one exception) were 'served' by one causewayed enclosure, of which the constructional labour was of ten times greater magnitude. The dispersed distribution of the long barrows was considered to reflect the territorial arrangement of individual communities, the monuments acting

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as stable foci around which spatially extensive systems of shifting agriculture were organized. Renfrew later formally defined the social organization he saw displayed here as 'segmentary', constituted by a series of equivalent units: essentially autonomous, of similar size, lacking centralized hierarchies and commonly founded on kinship relations (1976, 205). The relationship of the long barrows to the causewayed enclosures Renfrew saw in terms of incipient social stratification, with several communities looking to a higher authority. This then became more strongly defined throughout the period, with the development of centrally coordinated 'chiefdoms' materially manifested in the five major henges of the later neolithic, whose distribution corresponded to the pre-existing regional agglomerations and which required increased manpower expenditure in their construction. Renfrew proposed further developments into the final neolithic of the region: taking into account the vast labour requirements of monuments such as Silbury Hill and late phases at Stonehenge, he postulated a coalition of the five chiefdoms.

As applied to the study of megalithic monuments, the conception that material patterns detected archaeologically can in some cases equate relatively directly to the organizational structures of society, and that material complexity acts as a guide to social complexity, has resulted in a tendency to portray them as *indicative* of particular states of social organization, or of situations in which human groups find themselves as they respond to internal and external demands. Renfrew's standpoint in his paper 'Megaliths, territories and populations', for example, was to view chambered cairns as 'representative of the societies which made them' (1976, 204). The central issue he addressed was, why do a series of stone monuments, displaying typological diversity within a broad similarity of form, emerge independently at different points along the Atlantic seaboard during the fifth, fourth and third millennia BC? His response was to view the monuments as the material expression of local behavioural adaptations to conditions particular to the time and place, conditions produced by the spread of agriculture into the coastal ecotone.

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Renfrew posited that the favourable resource availability along Atlantic coasts would have encouraged higher population densities than elsewhere in mesolithic Europe. His model for the spread of agricultural economies involved waves of population advance through space and time; once the already intensively populated coastal zone had been reached there was no further territory into which the excess populations of agricultural communities could expand, and demographic pressures would begin to be felt. Renfrew saw the reaction to this in terms of resistance to change rather than its exploitation through specializing and centralizing tendencies which increase efficiency. Concepts of group identity and territoriality, with their accompanying strict prescriptions for social behaviour and interaction (including mores existing to prevent an uncontrolled birthrate), were intensified through their symbolic expression in monumentality.

Just as the dispersed long barrow distribution of the Wessex region had been taken to indicate the existence of segmentary societies, so too the similarity of scale and the 'mutual repulsion' evident within chambered tomb distributions on, for example, the islands of Arran and Rousay, Orkney was considered to reflect the territorial arrangement of segmentary groups. Incorporating ethnographic analogies, Renfrew discussed the affirmation of group membership through rituals which gave symbolic expression to territorial divisions, noting the common focus on specific locales, often marked out in some way, which in a kinship-based structure might involve burial and ancestral rites.⁴ He saw the public nature of these territorial foci mirrored in megalithic monuments, symbolically and perhaps physically central to lived experience and 'built by the community to be visible to the community' (Renfrew 1976, 206). Later work on Orkney prompted Renfrew to suggest that a similar social structural trajectory was followed here as in Wessex, with the late neolithic development of a centralized hierarchy manifested in the vast labour requirements for the construction of Maes Howe chambered cairn and two major henges with stone circles, all within the space of two kilometres (Renfrew 1979a, 217-18). One of the implications of Renfrew's model was that since megalithic architecture was seen to operate as part of the response to pressures on

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social structure which derived ultimately from the introduction of an agricultural mode of production, increasing identification with particular landscape localities and resources, the appearance of such monumental territorial marking would occur some generations *after* the initial establishment of farming in a given region.

The links between the emergence of megalithic mortuary architecture and changes in resource strategies, population densities and the structures of social formations were also examined by Robert Chapman (1981a), who argued that since chambered cairns appeared independently at different times and in different parts of western Europe, any attempt to understand their introduction had to take into account larger-scale shifts in patterns of subsistence, settlement and social organization at the mesolithic-neolithic interface. Chapman put forward a theoretical framework grounded in Marxist anthropology for the analysis of megalithic tombs as formal disposal areas bound up with the control of crucial but restricted resources. Refining the abstract, generalized social model of Claude Meillassoux (1972, 1973) through reference to Maurice Bloch's work in Madagascar (1971, 1975), Chapman related modes of production to conceptions of the relationship of the living to territorial resources and the ancestral community. Meillassoux had emphasized the short-term nature of hunter-gatherer resource strategies, in which he considered links to the land to involve no tenurial appropriation -- in other words, no creation of property. The mode of production was considered not to depend upon the labour of earlier generations or senior members of the group; obligations to these communities were therefore lacking, so that ancestral cults and related funerary ritual remained undeveloped.⁵ This was contrasted to the existence of long-term social debts thought to characterize agricultural societies. Here, labour invested in the preparation and cultivation of particular areas of land was seen to link past, present and future populations through territorial identification; in consequence, lines of descent acquired importance, particularly with regard to the role of the ancestors and of reproduction.

Bloch's studies referred to the operation of mortuary practices within groups

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following different subsistence strategies. Where shifting agriculture formed the economic mainstay, ownership and/or control of land legitimated with reference to ancestral rights was non-existent, and descent groups were not linked to specific areas of land; rather, exogamy encouraged extra-locality kin relations. In this case, burial did not occur in formal disposal areas. Where intensive agriculture was practised and -- crucially for Chapman's thesis -- where land, the limiting factor in terms of production, was scarce, ancestral descent groups were found to control territories, with endogamous marriage systems keeping property within the group. In these communities monumental tombs provided a permanent and highly visible bond between past and present, between lineage solidarities and particular locales.

Like Renfrew, Chapman proposed that megalithic monuments emerged in western Europe as part of a response to pressures produced by increasing population associated with the take-up of agriculture, or with its intensification. When critical resources became limited, the resulting disequilibrium in the social system was addressed by the development of territorially based descent groups, with access to resources within lineage localities underwritten by long-term ancestral claims. That such claims carried weight was ensured by the physical presence within the territory of the power of the ancestors, in the form of the tombs which housed their remains. Although postulated population stress derived ultimately from agricultural practice, Chapman did not regard cultivable land to be the only critical resource to become limited. So in southern France, where he saw over-population reflected in expansion of Chassey groups onto extremely marginal transhumance areas and the appearance of enclosed settlements, megalithic monuments clustered round the most favourable pastureland. In some parts of southern Sweden tombs were found to be associated with what is today the most desirable arable land, whereas in the poorest agricultural areas a strong correlation was noted between monuments and the coastal zone, with associated neolithic settlements displaying considerable reliance on marine resources.

Chapman regarded the variability of settlement patterns and subsistence strategies to be matched by variability in the social structures within which

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megalithic monuments emerged. Whereas in some regions the tombs were constructed as the first formal disposal areas, in Chapman's view representing the initial development of corporate groups, in other cases previous imbalances between social groups and their critical resources had already led to the development of territorial identity, which he saw symbolized in late mesolithic inhumation cemeteries such as those placed within south Breton and Portuguese shell middens (Chapman 1981a, 74). In these areas, then, Chapman considered megalithic monuments to represent a degree of social organizational continuity. However, the issue of *why* such a shift in the nature of the formal disposal areas utilized by these communities should have occurred with the introduction or intensification of agricultural production was not addressed.

Questions of ecology, demography and economy clearly figure largely in these theoretical approaches to the 'megalithic phenomenon', reflecting the general orientation of much processual archaeology. A thematic preoccupation of archaeological research in the late seventies and the eighties was with large-scale transformations in the nature of social systems in the temporally and spatially transitional zone between 'mesolithic' and 'neolithic' Europe; Renfrew and Chapman's contributions to megalithic studies fit comfortably in this context. The same issues informed field projects such as Göran Burenhult's analysis of the Carrowmore passage tomb complex in northwest Ireland (1984), which aimed to elucidate long-term socio-economic patterns for an understanding of the context in which megalithic architecture emerged. In addition to excavation of the tombs themselves, therefore, Burenhult's research objectives included the identification of mesolithic and neolithic occupation sites and their associated catchments.

The early radiocarbon dates obtained for excavated passage tombs (mid fifth to early fourth millennium BC, the earliest of which has been generally rejected), the discovery of quantities of marine mollusca within the monuments, and a suggested coastal settlement context led to Burenhult's controversial hypothesis that chambered cairns in this region were constructed by indigenous 'complex forager' or 'complex hunter' populations. Coastal kitchen midden settlements with timber

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structures and substantial hearths had been occupied from the neolithic through into the early iron age; Burenhult projected a similar settlement pattern back into the sixth millennium, postulating a series of near-permanent, shoreline base camps for exploitation of the productive coastal zone. He proposed population increase resulting from the establishment of this stable, predominantly sedentary economic strategy, with suggested corollary developments being the (unexplained) intensification of social structural complexity and the need for stronger territorial identification, symbolized by the eventual construction of passage tombs. Whereas earlier authors had considered megalithic monuments to be among behavioural adaptations to material conditions of existence transformed -- even at a temporal remove -- by the incorporation or intensification of agricultural resource strategies, Burenhult placed their inception well before such strategies were adopted in northwest Ireland. He maintained that not only were the social and demographic factors ultimately requiring their construction not dependent upon a particular mode of production, but, drawing on ethnographic analogy, that formal disposal areas could be seen to develop outwith a context of resource limitation. Burenhult emphasized, therefore, the prime importance of variability and local adaptation in considerations of megalithic monuments.

Burenhult's study makes plain the fundamental difficulty in which processual archaeology found itself. For to speak in terms of local behavioural adaptations is just to speak of cultural specificity in pseudo-objective guise, and the tension between cross-cultural generalizations and the patent variability of the cultural context engendering material form had by now become strongly apparent. Within megalithic studies this was manifested in explanatory arguments which remained unsatisfyingly vague, demonstrating an inability to discuss why tombs in particular should have emerged within this vast cultural spectrum, or whether they operated in similar fashion among the various western European populations, and if so, why. By working at the level of the system and the subsystem, by regarding material culture as the largely passive reflection of behavioural stimulus:response mechanisms and by leaving the historically specific context out of detailed analysis,

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processual approaches left no room for consideration of the creative processes by which people constructed conceptual and material worlds in which to live. Within the disparate regions of the Atlantic facade, the introduction of chambered tombs and related monuments is interpreted as similar responses to similar pressures. But we gain no impression of how these worlds might then be different. What is the *difference* between the routine existence and conceptual framework of Burenhult's complex hunters moving within their traditional coastal territories, and Renfrew's small, acephalous farming communities on the Wessex chalk downland, both of which focus upon ancestral locales in the form of monumental tombs? Or the mesolithic inhumation cemeteries and neolithic chambered cairns of Brittany, which Chapman regarded as similarly symbolizing ancestral claims over particular resources: how do their cosmological implications differ? Focusing upon 'socio-cultural' totalities rather than on human groups composed of individuals with desires and motivations, with the ability to manipulate and negotiate their physical, social and intellectual surroundings, megalithic monuments seen from processual perspectives become part of a bland, uniform and abstract drive towards societal equilibrium.

Post-processual perspectives

The term 'post-processual' is not entirely satisfactory, in that it implies that such archaeologies have followed and replaced processual approaches and that they have a strictly definable thematic cohesiveness. Although neither of these implications can be sustained, the creation of detailed theoretical taxonomies is an isolationist exercise which tends to mask the broad coherence of post-processual philosophical perspectives with more general, contemporary movements within the humanities and social sciences (e.g. Renfrew & Bahn 1991, 405-34; Whittle 1988, 4-6). 'Post-processual' is here used as a blanket term to describe archaeologies of more overtly humanistic orientation which fragment considerations of the social totality, focusing on the way in which social life is constructed through the intentionality of agency, and how social knowledges might be expressed,

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maintained, challenged or transformed through the interaction of agency and materiality.

With regard to the analysis of mortuary practices, Chapman and Randsborg argued that processual, social archaeologies of the 1970s had failed to address issues of symbolism adequately, in particular its ambiguous relation to social structure (1981, 23). The anthropologist Edmund Leach had prefigured these concerns at a much more general level, in a fairly damning concluding address to a symposium dominated by considerations of processual methodologies (Leach 1973). (While acknowledging that people rather than their material accoutrements were the ultimate object of archaeological investigation, Leach stated that, unlike anthropologists, archaeologists were not in the end capable of studying people [1973, 768].) Leach predicted that the functionalist preoccupation of processual archaeology, with its economic, technological and demographic biases, would give way to concentration on the ritual symbolism of human groups evident in contemporary structuralist anthropology. Arguing against the stimulus:response model of human behaviour, he stressed the importance of consciousness and intentionality in individual and group action, drawing on the structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss and the linguistic analogy of Ferdinand de Saussure with its separation of *langue* (underlying structural rules) and *parole* (inventive practice):

... all languages which convey *human* information are necessarily structures *like* verbal languages Ritual performances, dancing, music and so forth can all be shown to possess grammatical structure which is strictly analogous to that of the grammatical structure of verbal utterance Human speech is not simply imitative, nor is it simply repetitive; it is a creative activity and infinitely original (Leach 1973, 763).

In fact, both structural and formally structuralist theory had been applied within archaeological analysis from the 1960s, proving particularly successful with regard to design composition and to the materiality of documented historical contexts (e.g. Leroi-Gourhan 1965; Glassie 1975; Deetz 1977; Conkey 1978). But the applicability of structuralist precepts concerning the existence of symbolic

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codes and sets of rules which govern material patterning to wider considerations of prehistoric human groups remained limited, in particular because the way in which symbolic structures were constructed through practice was not clearly defined (Hodder 1982b, 8). The social theoretical foundation of post-processual archaeologies has instead drawn upon structural theory refined by post-structuralist critique, in which the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1977) and Anthony Giddens (e.g. 1979) on the strategic operation of agency has been of profound influence. It is from this perspective that the traditional humanistic basis of archaeological enquiry could begin to be reasserted, and individuals be resurrected from their essentially passive role as systemic components, a perspective which 'respects the agents that created what we find and grants them the same abilities and intentions that we would credit to each other as sentient social beings' (Miller & Tilley 1984b, 2).

Central analytical concerns of post-processual studies of the 1980s were with culture as specific historical context, structure and ideology. The return to culture marked a conscious realignment with traditional, particularist emphasis on historical trajectory, in which objects had been interpreted as the material expression of a cultural framework of ideas. As such frameworks orienting individual action and its value assessment are created within unique histories, context is seen to be of paramount importance for an understanding of the way in which artefacts operated in social life (Hodder 1982b, 9; 11). The structure of these ideational frameworks is considered in terms of codes and rules through which social relations are produced and reproduced. Human groups both conceive of and construct the materiality of life with reference to these codes, so that symbolic structures are integral to material patterning. Meaning is drawn from the structured association and disassociation of artefacts and material attributes, from differences and alternatives, and from cumulative use associations of routine experience. A web of intellectual references and cross references connects the diverse materiality of living, both natural and artificial; archaeological enquiry, it is argued, must therefore examine the full spectrum of material and the detail of its form and patterning, rather than isolating formal categories.

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Activity framed by materiality and the routine use of objects entails the continual, reflexive production of meaning, whereby structural context is dialectically reproduced and transformed:

... the daily use of material items within different contexts recreates from moment to moment the framework of meaning within which people act. The individual's actions in the material world reproduce the structure of society, but there is a continual potential for change (Hodder 1982b, 10).

It is this material continuity of the structuration process, to use Giddens's terminology, which has proved particularly problematic within post-processual analysis, the implication being that with the vast time scales which perforce govern most prehistoric studies -- and with specific regard to chambered cairns, the frequent extreme longevity of use of individual monuments -- the 'blurring' and intertwining of symbolic codes may be virtually impossible to detect and disentangle.

The ideological level of analysis within post-processual approaches focuses upon the strategic, sectional manipulation of material culture, asking *how* are symbolic structures *used* to produce, maintain or transform particular social relations? How, for example, do megalithic monuments contribute to the constitution of social life? Ian Hodder has adopted a textual metaphor describing the way in which spatial and material cultural 'texts' encoding meaning operate in the ideological representation of social relations:

... the creator of any of these texts does not want to be understood in relation to an abstract code. He or she also wants to be believed, respected, distinguished, listened to the text is produced to *do* something and to have some tangible social effect (Hodder 1989, 68-9).

People actively construct a conceptually categorized natural and social world in which to live. In other words, they create their own reality. As this is patently a value-laden, moral exercise, it will frequently involve conflict and contradiction, as various groups within the social formation operate according to their own interests and motivations. Dominant solidarities will formulate conceptual categories which sustain power, authority and social asymmetries, making sectional interests seem

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part of the natural, permanent order of things (Miller & Tilley 1984b, 13). Denial of the arbitrary, ephemeral nature of the social order is embodied within material products through ideological practice; as these both reproduce and transform one another, ideologies may legitimate the position of dominant groups but may also act ultimately as a force for social change.

Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley addressed these issues in their examination of skeletal deposition within two chambered tombs and a non-megalithic long barrow in the Wessex-Cotswold region, and two southern Swedish passage graves (1982). Regarding the human body as generative of a powerfully evocative set of symbols utilized within ritual as a form of ideological practice, they hoped to arrive at an understanding of the symbolic meaning encoded within the material patterning, and through this to discern some of the structural principles around which particular social formations were articulated. These principles they considered to form part of the practical knowledge of agents, ordering their reproduction and transformation of the material and social conditions of existence through praxis, the spatially, socially and temporally specific practices by which the structuration of the social formation unfolds (Tilley 1982). Materiality is implicated in this dialectic process: action and its integral material aspects are imbued with meaning by structuring principles, while at the same time acting back upon them. Directing their attention towards the ideological production and/or manipulation of symbolic structures, Shanks and Tilley broadened consideration of the position of megalithic monuments within strategies of domination and the exercise of authority to include control over resources of social knowledge, rather than simply over material products and the means of production.

Selective and ordered deposition of human remains was identified within all the monuments studied, involving unequal representation of left and right body parts and variations in the presence absence of long bones, ribs, vertebrae, and hand and foot bones. Body parts displayed non-random physical arrangements. Most deposits were composed of disarticulated remains, but the English barrows showed some articulated disarticulated contrasts. Adult and immature remains

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received different treatment: the bones of immature individuals were predominantly excluded from certain deposits within the Swedish tombs, whereas immature body parts in the English monuments were undifferentiated, unlike those of adults, and were in some cases spatially segregated. Male/female distinctions also occurred in some of the Wessex-Cotswold barrows. Finally, an emphasis on boundaries was detected, manifested in the Swedish passage graves by architectural partitioning and in the English monuments by, for example, the physical separation of human bone deposits by pottery and animal bone, or the placement of skulls around piles of other body parts (Shanks & Tilley 1982, 143-50).

The structuring principles Shanks and Tilley envisaged ordering the skeletal deposits included the assertion of collective identity in opposition to individual integrity and the denial of social asymmetries (disarticulation; seemingly articulated skeleton composed of two individuals), the affirmation of the definition and solidarity of the local group (emphasis on bounding), and the distinction between adults and juveniles. Ordering principles which would seem to contradict the ethos expressed by the first two are those distinguishing male from female and the individual from the whole (articulated/disarticulated contrasts).

Shanks and Tilley argued that the material revelation of these principles within mortuary deposition made sense in the context of ritual activity as a form of ideological practice, representing and legitimating relations of dominance and authority. Conflicts of interest among various solidarities result in the formulation of contradictory structuring principles orienting action within the social formation; dominant groups attempt to ensure the continuation of their own constructed social realities by obscuring these contradictions, denying their existence, and by portraying their sectional interests as those of the entire community. The present social order is validated by links to orders above and beyond humanity and is thus depicted as a natural, ahistorical entity. As ritual similarly 'serves to project the social into the image and realm of ... nature' (Shanks & Tilley 1982, 133) it is an appropriate medium for the strategic manipulation of symbolic meaning, while the tangibility and longevity of material objects utilized within ritual communication

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emphasize the 'permanence' of symbolic structures.

To provide sources of social conflict generative of their observed structural principles, Shanks and Tilley situated the historically specific, ideological production of social reality manifested in the tombs within a general social model based on Marxist anthropological conceptions (e.g. Meillassoux 1972; Rey 1979). According to this, within small-scale, segmentary societies non-economic kinship relations link producers within descent groups. Lineages are often led by elders, whose position of authority derives in part from their proximity to founding ancestors in whose power the wellbeing of the community rests. By virtue of this ancestral relation, elders can control social knowledges which mediate with the ancestral community. Elder control is also exercised over the organization of production and the redistribution of labour products *via* kinship networks; as part of this process elders reserve labour surplus for themselves. The structure of these networks may also be under the control of lineage heads, as they direct marriage transactions and therefore to a certain extent control biological reproduction. Social inequalities and relations of dominance are maintained by these various means of control.

The fundamental structural contradiction in this social context is between the principle of equality within the kinship network of the local group, with direct reciprocity and exchange among lineages, and the control of lineage heads/elders over individuals and their exploitation of kin relations. Shanks and Tilley argued, therefore, that through the symbolic structures of ritual at the megalithic monuments, elders legitimated the social order which sustained their interests by reference to the timeless, ancestral, 'natural' order of things, reaffirmed the structural principles articulating that order and concealed the structural contradictions which, if recognized, might overturn it. They proposed that the cultural, conceptual ordering of the human body mystified social inequality as natural symmetry, misrepresenting social relations rather than simply reflecting their level of complexity.

Whereas traditional enquiry was concerned with *what* the tombs were,

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seeing them as representative of shared themes within social life, and processual theory framed itself around questions of *why* the monuments were built, considering their general purpose to facilitate the progression of social life, post-processual investigation into ideological structuring principles addresses the issue of *how*, specifically, social life carries on. This is a strong preoccupation within the work of Ian Hodder who, like Renfrew, has situated his studies of megalithic monuments and related long mounds in a consistent theoretical framework. In his analysis of the Dutch neolithic (Hodder 1982a), Hodder contrasted the ceramic styles and burial practices of groups making and using *Trechterbeker* pottery (TRB), beginning in the earlier third millennium BC, with those of communities producing Protruding Foot Beaker pottery (PFB) from the second half of the third millennium. TRB pottery became increasingly elaborate over time in terms of variety of form and decorative complexity, displaying considerable emphasis on contrast and opposition. In its final phases, however, both form and decoration became noticeably simpler. ‘Communal’ burial in megalithic monuments involved complex, multi-stage ritual,⁶ part of which resulted in pottery deposition; Hodder interpreted the chronological variation between ceramic assemblages at these monuments (many phases represented) and at settlement sites (one or two phases) as indicative of a pattern of shifting settlement moving around stable, monumentally embellished locales. PFB pottery carried on the trends established in late TRB assemblages, with much less morphological variety and simpler design schemes predominating. Individual burials under barrows scattered throughout the landscape were considered to express social hierarchy directly, and were seemingly accompanied by less complex ritual procedures.

With reference to Bloch’s previously quoted anthropological studies (1971, 1975), Hodder proposed that the tombs symbolized traditional claims over defined localities, bestowing ancestral validation upon the control of dominant lineages over areas of scattered and impermanent settlement. The visibly permanent nature of the monuments was taken as a material reference from collective social memory to past social order, and particularly to past stability, specifically the more

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permanent agricultural matrix centred around the long houses of the earlier neolithic in central Europe. Hodder considered the constructional detail of the megalithic long mounds to be integral to the evocation of an ethos of stability, constituting a formal reflection of the earlier long houses.

That the control of dominant groups within the context of shifting settlement harked back to their position within a different economic and social framework formed, therefore, a latent contradiction within the Dutch TRB. Hodder argued that material culture will play an active role in attempts to diffuse the tensions putting stress on social structures, as its symbolism can be used to draw attention to and legitimate traditional mores in the activities in which it is used. In this case, he saw increasing contradiction negotiated in the developing complexity of ritual associated with the tombs, and in the increasing elaboration of pottery, in which the emphases on contrast and opposition reaffirmed traditional social distinctions in the routine events of social interaction in which ceramics were utilized. Hodder regarded the resolution of structural contradiction to be evident within the groups of the following PFB tradition. Here, decorative and formal contrasts in ceramic design seemed of minor concern, and the dispersed barrow distribution appeared better aligned to a pattern of shifting settlement location. He linked these developments to the possibility that with the more intensive processing of secondary agricultural products, a greater range of habitats could be exploited and the availability of labour rather than of land would determine the level of production. According to his social model, in this situation the exclusivity of descent groups would decline, and extra-locality kinship affiliations would multiply as lineages entered into competition for labour. The gradual disappearance of regional distinctions within PFB pottery was cited as a possible reflection of an increasingly interdependent network of social relations within the Dutch neolithic.

In addition to extending its geographical remit, Hodder elaborated upon the link between fundamental social and economic change and the symbolic transformation of long houses into tombs in his paper 'Burials, houses, women and men in the European neolithic' (1984). Utilizing a similar social model as before -

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-variations upon which we have already seen to be current among both processual and post-processual studies -- he proposed a context for late fifth and early fourth millennium central and east-central Europe in which small, segmentary societies with emergent lineage differentiation competed for labour power through the control of reproductive women. The increasingly complex spatial arrangements within long houses he regarded as strategic attempts at female seclusion, with linear ordering and elaboration of the threshold and entrance area emphasizing frontspace:backspace, public:private oppositions. While on the one hand recognition of the powerful role of women as the ensurers of future labour engendered attempts at their confinement and the limitation of their social freedom, women could seek to exploit their reproductive potential as a means of negotiating their position among various descent groups. (Although men may seek to control reproduction, their success will be to a great extent dependent upon negotiation and/or authoritative manipulation within the female community itself.) Hodder regarded the increasingly complex decoration of central European ceramic assemblages in this light: in a domain he posited to be female dominated, material elaboration of food preparation and service utensils would draw attention both to women's pivotal role within the present community and to their implications for the future population.

Hodder argued that the gradual 'infilling' of the landscape in the late fourth and early third millennium BC was indicative of problems of increasing land scarcity being addressed through the use of the plough and of secondary animal products. As the availability of labour ceased to be a central social issue, lineages would develop ever more restricted rules for kin affiliation and inheritance in an attempt to maintain control over particular agricultural and pastoral locales. Women would no longer be able to mediate the interests of various lineages to whom they were linked by kinship and their role in the network of social relations would consequently decline in importance. Symbolic elaboration of the domestic context would therefore either lose its relevance or be actively suppressed in the restrictive strategies of lineage heads. Hodder noted the parallel disappearance

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from central Europe of large and complex house structures and highly decorated pottery in this period.

Part of the general movement onto less productive soils involved the spread into western and northern Europe in the late fourth and the third millennium. Hodder proposed that the initial desire would be to maximize labour power in a new environment, but that ultimately a similar social structural trajectory would have been followed as in central Europe. In the particular historical context of the Atlantic regions, however, he suggested that the ethos of control in male/female relations and the social importance of reproductive women to descent groups remained, being evoked within the earth and stone long mounds. The symbolic focus on the domestic context was here transferred to the mortuary domain. Hodder saw this materially expressed in eight points of comparison in form, construction and orientation, by which the tombs referred to the earlier neolithic long houses in central Europe. The symbolism of the house now pertained to the houses of the ancestral founders of particular lineages, whose authority legitimated the control of women and the channelling of their reproductive power into intra-group, intra-locality relations. That the *tomb* was chosen to articulate these structuring principles, a metaphorical migration which did not occur in central Europe, was rather vaguely explained with reference to the contribution of long-established western European burial practices and traditional local emphases on ritual outwith the domestic sphere.

One of the tensions within ideologically focused analyses like those of Hodder and of Shanks and Tilley was that, unlike anthropological fieldworkers, having identified regularities in the archaeological residue archaeologists could not observe directly or engage with the social relations which gave the material categories meaning. An external and relatively abstract social model was therefore drawn upon to provide a meaningful context in which particular forms of social life were carried forward. Hodder's latest development of the tombs/houses theme (1990) attempts to redress this problem by drawing a structural framework for the European neolithic directly out of its chronologically and geographically extensive

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material totality.

Hodder had pointed out that since the central European long houses were in many cases constructed well over a millennium before the monumental tombs of the northwest, the symbolic affiliation between the two was primarily indirect. He argued that the link was founded upon 'a general and continuous underlying tradition ... lasting millennia, finding surviving expression in different ways at different times in different places' (Hodder 1984, 57). Here he maintained the structuralist motif, proposing that creative practice which built reflexively upon base structural rules involved 'the transmission and transformation of an idea, a way of doing things, from east to west and from settlement to burial' (Hodder 1984, 60). It is this conception that Hodder has recently formalized as the interplay of *domus*, *foris* and *agrios* -- deep-rooted and nearly universal structuring principles generative of particular social ethics within the European neolithic (1990). These principles, or ideological representations, are extremely fluid in nature, especially as each seems definable only in terms of another (so Hodder speaks, for example, of the *domus* defined through the *domus:foris* opposition), but in essence they may be reduced thus: the *domus* is both cultural metaphor and practice of 'home'; the *foris* is the structure of liminality, an emphasis on boundaries and entrances; and the *agrios* is the concept of 'outside', of the wild. Hodder envisages that by way of the interaction of these concepts (in which the *domus* is the dominant player), symbolic, social domestication preceded or developed alongside economic domestication, and so traces their material and conceptual reproduction and transformation right across Europe, from creative roots in the Near East.

Hodder regards the critical focus of the *domus* in central, northern and western Europe to be 'the idea of creating social control through a particular "culturing" of nature' -- 'the basic idea of the creation of society through the domestication of the wild' (1990, 253; 177). In central Europe this is effected through the construction of monumental long houses which involves large-scale intervention in the natural environment, both in terms of the gathering of materials

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and the linear ordering of the internal area -- the socialization of space. As a monument which distinguishes 'cultural' from 'natural' space is brought into being by communal investment in labour and property, particular and interdependent social relations are created. Through the development of the foris with the embellishment of doorways and house fronts, Hodder claims that the distinction between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' and control of the boundary between these categories is stressed.

Hodder considers the same principles of monumentality and bounding which articulate social identities and specific definitions of 'belonging' to be manifested within the megalithic and non-megalithic long mounds. The translation of the domus and its attendant themes of foris and agrios from the domestic to the mortuary context is legitimated and further empowered because social dependencies are here engendered not only through the control of space and the visible 'culturing' of the wild (the architectural transformation of natural products; the arrangement of bones), but by their orientation towards a higher realm of existence, that of the ancestral founders of the living community. Hodder argues that this symbolic transformation enables practices of social control to be executed on a greater scale: while the domus framed around the house related to a domestic mode of production, the context in which tombs housed the domus involved production at lineage level.

The irony is that whereas Hodder's original aim for a contextual archaeology was to shift the focus of archaeological enquiry from the motivations of social totalities to the intentionality of agency (1982b, 5), his conception of domestication as a discourse of power spoken in the Indo-European dialect of domus:foris:agrios ultimately renders the agent superfluous. It is the personified domus which takes on the desires of individuals:

there is a limit to the extent to which the individual domus can extend its size and control over resources. There is a limit to the size of the feasts it can give, the number of fields it can plant, or the number of spouses it can attract (Hodder 1990, 124).

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If processual conceptions of humanity can be likened to Greek tragedy, the actors responding to the dictates of a super-human scheme, here they never make it out of the Green Room. The set -- the *domus* -- glories in itself on stage, while the actors wait disconsolately for the cue which never comes. Hodder's refracted images of humanity become just as bland and reductive as the stimulus:response models post-processual archaeology set itself against.

The *domus*, like a fugitive, can be tracked across Europe, for its traces are everywhere The presence of extant archaeological residues becomes indicative only of the adaptive success of the *domus*, an allusion to the inevitable colonization of another social locale (Squair n.d.).

It has been argued that one of the advantages of an archaeology centred on ideological critique is that it remains aloof from contemporary interpretations of social reality. In anthropological terms, this mode of enquiry requires that we listen not so much to what the informant *says* as to the resonances of what he or she *does* (Miller & Tilley 1984a, 148). But the pitfall here is plain -- that the archaeologist can claim to understand past peoples more than they knew themselves; that there is some stronger, more intense, more 'real' reality observable through the distance of time. The material image may no longer be a clear reflection as it fragments and refracts, but archaeology, like religion, seems still to claim a final truth.

... I ... having a kind of view into the other Side of time, the things of Life ... began to look with a different Aspect, and quite another Shape, than they did before ... (Daniel Defoe, *Moll Flanders*).

NOTES

¹The term 'passage grave' is used throughout the text to describe monuments in which the chamber is approached *via* a passage element; the sole exception to this terminology is with regard to the Irish monuments, as it has become customary here to refer to 'passage tombs'.

²With regard to chambered cairns see, for example, Davidson 1979; Perry & Davidson 1987.

³Both traditional and processual studies have linked the complexity of social organization to subsistence strategies, in particular regarding the development of an agricultural economy as a prerequisite for the emergence of social complexity. The refutation of these principles (e.g. Bender 1978, 1985, 1989) has had an important impact on recent work concerning the phenomenon of monumentality, especially as regards the place of chambered cairns in long-term conceptual frameworks of prehistoric communities (e.g. Barrett 1994b; Bradley 1993; Thomas 1988; Tilley 1991a, 1993, 1994).

⁴Renfrew cites an ethnographic study of a Pacific Island segmentary society in which stone burial and ceremonial monuments function as territorial markers (1976, 206-8; Fig. 3). As the actual territories could in no way be replicated by the construction of Thiessen polygons around the monuments, as Renfrew does for Arran and Rousay, doubt is immediately cast upon his argument that abstract spatial analyses can reasonably ascertain the presence or absence of 'hierarchies of place' and that they can therefore elucidate past social structures.

⁵This caricature of hunter-gatherer society owes more to nineteenth century conceptions of social evolution which informed Western encounters with hunting and collecting groups in the colonial context, than to observable reality (Miller, Rowlands & Tilley 1989; Ingold 1986, 102-29; 130-64).

⁶We have seen that since the nineteenth century, mortuary practices within megalithic monuments have been considered to reflect a communal ethic which has been contrasted with the emphasis placed on the individual in single-grave traditions. Recent studies have demonstrated the deeper complexity of this opposition, in which individual biographies are drawn into the wider biographies of past, present and future communities, and into the biography of landscape, in different ways (Barrett 1988, 1994b, 40-69).

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With words, a massive physical presence is fashioned into a meaningful human universe.

Keith Basso
'Stalking with stories'

Moving northwards across the Serengeti Plain at the start of the rainy season, two people walk slowly through a flat, bare landscape studded with occasional acacia trees, over damp volcanic ash. Somewhat later a third person follows in their wake, placing each foot precisely in the earlier imprints. Perhaps only hours later the ash of a new eruption from nearby Sadiman volcano covers their trail; today all that remains is a 30m stretch of footprints (Leakey & Hay 1979; Tuttle et al. 1990). This physical journey has an allegorical colouring: we will never know exactly where or when these three began their walk and, from our position more than three and a half million years further along their path, we cannot know over which horizon they will find their ultimate destination.

It is because the philosophical practice of archaeology is one way of thinking about our being *here*, at our particular point in this journey, that we have a responsibility towards these three past lives and the humanity they represent. Christopher Tilley, speaking from a perspective which views archaeology as a strand in the modernist endeavour 'that involves ourselves as part of the creation of meaning for our own times' (1990, 130), regards this responsibility as one of making sense of the past. The archaeological community has in his view failed to fulfil this obligation because it shrinks from the implications of recognizing the

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crucial import within archaeological practice of subjective experience which both mediates and is mediated by objectivity (Tilley 1991b, 15). Since we are making as much sense of ourselves as of the past, one of these implications is that we cannot merely open up past humanity to view -- we have to open up a part of ourselves. Here there is no dispassionate science within which to disguise our identity, as not only are we required to demonstrate why we believe certain things may have occurred in a certain way, but we have to reveal to each other *how* we believe. Our moral, ethical responsibility -- our commitment -- is to respect past lives by working through them to make some sense of who we are, to find ourselves, rather than exposing their internal order, as in an anatomical theatre, to our distanced, disinterested gaze.

Subjectivity and truth

Aspirations to the comprehensive revelation of an absolute truth have for centuries motivated rational, Western intellectual thought. With the post-modern recognition of the situated nature of academic enquiry, the desire for pure objectivity through which these 'totalizing' aspirations have been traditionally expressed in the humanities and social sciences has become a strong focus of debate within recent discussions in post-processual archaeologies and new cultural geographies, with particular regard to the status of the text (e.g. Bapty & Yates 1990; Barnes & Duncan 1992; Duncan & Ley 1993; Gregory 1978, 1989; Thomas 1990, 1993a, 1993b; Tilley 1991b). The philosopher Richard Rorty has written of this debate in terms of the opposition between the construction of understanding through self-descriptive narratives which validate themselves by objective reference to a general, supra-human reality and those which situate themselves in opinionative relation to particular human collectivities. The latter may be considered to be motivated by a desire for *solidarity*, a way in which people make sense of their world with respect to their contribution to various communities (Rorty 1991, 21; 24). Within the terms of reference of the present study we might consider the operation of megalithic monuments in just such a context, as one

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means of expressing the desire for solidarity with mythical, ancestral or contemporary living communities, an argument which is itself part of an intellectual narrative mediated by my relationship to various communities, academic included. Both the material culture of the neolithic and my academic text are communicative media for the formation of knowledges and understandings, vehicles for thought which interpret rather than define 'reality' and which become active only by virtue of the engagement of other individuals, either in terms of co-presence or distanciation. In this sense there is no Truth but a thousand truths. There is no reality existing 'out there', surrounding us. Rather, reality is articulated by the practice of agency in building knowledges and meanings; reality as exploration changes all the time.

The fragmentation of truth and reality has important consequences for archaeological theory. Firstly, it requires that we jettison traditional assumptions concerning the 'innocence' of textual and graphic representation (Cosgrove & Domosh 1993, 31; Gregory 1989, 90), admitting that description of either kind is neither neutral nor ahistorical nor acultural, but is a situated attempt to create sense from the human, material world. Secondly, it forces overt recognition that our categories, far from being the reflection of a natural order, derive from the desires of the author and the expectations of the discipline. Implicitly available in any reading of the development of archaeological thought, as in the preceding chapter, this recognition is explicitly manifested within the literature in the growing dissatisfaction with traditional frameworks of broad unities, whether these be sociological, conceptual, chronological or morphological (e.g. Barrett 1994b; Bender 1981, 1989; Hodder 1990; Kirk 1993; Richards 1993; Thomas 1988, 1991). So, for example, in a recent study of the earlier neolithic in Brittany, Trevor Kirk states:

I do not seek to develop general models which account for all [the] monuments. The material ... is unified less by its common derivation from the period 3900-3400 bc or by principles of typological similarity than by my interest in certain forms of subjectivity, event, social relation and power/knowledge (1993, 212).

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A great freedom can be found within the validation of solidarity, but it is a daunting freedom in that the demands it places upon the archaeologist and author are considerable. This archaeology *is* difficult, and within it the authorial voice becomes vulnerable. For not only can we no longer rely on the security of believing that the more data we obtain, the fuller the explanation and the more comprehensive our understanding of the past will be,¹ but in addition the contribution of the subjective experience must be constrained to operate solely in the critical rather than the personal sense (Tilley 1991b, 116).

Making space for the actor

The role of subjectivity and the nature of the construction of reality -- and of the self within it -- have begun to be discussed at some length within an archaeological literature which, deriving its impetus from strongly humanistic, interpretive elements of post-processual theory, has increasingly found a touchstone in philosophy, psychology, sociology and literary critique. With regard to megalithic studies, the most interesting recent approaches are those which, grounded in hermeneutics, draw on and modify aspects of phenomenology (e.g. Kirk 1993; Ronayne n.d.; Thomas 1990, 1992, 1993a; Tilley 1991a, 1993, 1994). Here the concern is to engage with the materiality of the archaeological residues in terms of three dimensions, the core reference being the human body. Shanks and Tilley's examination of the Swedish and English chambered cairns and non-megalithic long barrows (1982) had been conducted largely in the abstract and in two dimensions, without consideration of the way in which people would actually come into contact with the symbolic expression of social structuring principles in skeletal ordering. Thus, for example, they offered no adequate explanation as to how the ideological statements of dominant solidarities, confined within the restricted spaces of the monuments, would percolate through and constrain the community as a whole. So too in Ian Hodder's work (1982a, 1984, 1990), theorization of the physical encounter of the individual with the artificial constructions of the material world has remained relatively undeveloped. In

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contrast, Julian Thomas (1990) and Margaret Ronayne (n.d.) have approached Irish court tombs in terms of experiential space, of architecture and depositional practices (for example, the provision of semi-enclosed forecourts or fully-enclosed courtyards -- open ground within which are hearths, stone stelae and various pits, and which stands in opposition to the restricted space of the interior chambers) which by way of their effect on possibilities for physical action around and within the monument may encourage particular interpretations of the tomb's 'symbolic universe' (Thomas 1990). As individuals negotiate their way through constructed space physically and intellectually, the monumental locale acts as a medium for the transmission of social knowledges. The encounter with the tomb and its associated symbolic resources would appear to be highly regulated by architectural form and the specific loci of depositional activities; this may be regarded as one of the ways in which attempts are made to guide perception of the cosmological order and so maintain authoritative structures which must be seen to be articulated 'naturally' within it.

What these and other recent studies stress is that space -- both the natural landscape and the artificial elements placed within it -- is not a neutral arena in which social action is played out; rather, it is itself a medium for the production and reproduction, and indeed transformation, of social relations. As such, through its direction of human engagement with the material world in the context of ritual practice, the monumental locale is one means by which particular conceptions of the situation of the individual within the community and the wider social, physical and intellectual landscapes may be engendered.² The control of space, and the resultant 'stage management' or 'choreography' of interpretive experience (Thomas 1990, 175; Richards 1993), is here allied to the restricted, selective revelation of knowledges deemed essential for the continuing wellbeing of the social group in the physical and spiritual milieu, and so is in part constitutive of an identity of self and society. This is not to grant a conceptual determinacy to space or place, however, as it is the human interaction within these humanly-conceived locales which ultimately creates meaning, as well as the references which may be made

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within them to other places and activities of everyday life; Colin Richards (1993) has analyzed the sequences of impressions and the physical effects upon the body pertaining to encounters with the architecture of the domestic and the mortuary context in late neolithic Orkney, in just such cross-referential terms. In addition, the ongoing, recursive nature of the engagement of knowledgeable subjects with the materiality of existence allows for its potential reinterpretation.

Emphasis on the movement of the individual through three dimensional space as an act of self-interpretation and the concomitant prioritization of the sensual, 'internal' experience of place involves a conscious rejection of representational forms which, in their setting apart of subject and object, characterize the political masquerade of external, visual objectivity. Graphic strategies such as the site plan, photogrammetry, aerial photography, site catchment plots and the distribution map imply the removal of the subject from the immediate and fragmented world of the senses, and yet it is through this very world that both practical understandings of 'how to go on' and discursive knowledges are established. The totalizing gaze these strategies embrace may carry the resonance of orders inherent within the material, but the way these are revealed is incompatible with the understandings drawn from the inhabited locale in the course of repeated, direct physical encounters -- in other words, from *living* these places. Accompanied by text in which the authors are themselves decontextualized and depersonalized as part of the objective strategies of intellectual textual authority, this type of archaeological representation abandons the familiar modes and scale of perception through which we conduct our own lives. A return to the human scale - that of direct lived experience -- has inevitably led to growing interest in the material implications of the interplay of constructed and 'natural' space, in which contemporary interpretation of monumentality reaches out into the landscape. (The ambiguity of the term 'contemporary' is intentional, as the concern with phenomenological experience refers to hermeneutic projects creative of particular worlds both in the past and the present.)

Of paramount importance is to accept that indirect description of

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archaeological residues and 'spaces' divorced from their topographical surroundings can at best provide an impoverished understanding of the way in which meanings and knowledges might have been carried forward in the past. Meaning does not inhere in the abstract in the material itself, as Hodder seems to suggest. Rather, the symbolic significance of the monuments is overwhelmingly site specific: the meanings evoked by the architecture and the social practice articulated around it only have *relevance* by virtue of the interaction of the subject, the monument and the environmental locale -- the land, vegetational patterning, areas of settlement, the sea, the sky, the boundaries between them. This is not to deny the possibility of metanarratives, as although at a given moment in time each monumental locus encapsulates a world in itself, at the same time it does not operate within the lifeworld as an isolated or isolable entity. But such metanarratives still refer to the situation of human groups within a cosmological whole by creating metaphorical links between the daily routine of human lives within the specific, known landscape and forces of the metaphysical landscape, in whatever way the latter may be conceived.

Because the prior experiences of the agent which inform this interaction of the subject with the material universe are both diverse and closely tied in to the social relations of various solidarities, the meanings, understandings, interpretations and knowledges woven into places are polychromatic, deeply political, potentially contradictory and contestable. To search for the symbolic meaning content of the architectural configurations and depositional patterning at megalithic mortuary monuments, even allowing for polysemy, would therefore seem a fruitless exercise, yet this has been a recurrent theme within post-processual theory (Hodder 1991, 78; 163-4). For example, Thomas and Tilley's recent attempt to attach particular meanings to the artistic motifs inscribed in the Breton tombs (1993) serves to close down further interpretive readings, albeit as an unintended consequence. Such meanings do seem somewhat banal abstracted from the individuality and idiosyncrasies of the people for whom they form part of the fabric of life. This contrasts markedly with Kirk's more open-ended analysis of the same monuments

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(1993), in which the concern is with how particular forms of subjectivity may have been encouraged through engagement with the specific materiality of the tomb and the wider landscape setting.

Within ethnographic studies, where structures of signification are interpreted through the words and actions of local informants and the wider community, the anthropologist entering directly into and participating in the routine of these other lives to such a degree of intensity that he or she may be drawn into the very kinship structures of their analysis (e.g. Gow 1995, 46-7; Povinelli 1993, 688-91), a much more detailed, multilayered, more 'thickly' interwoven exploration of symbolic meaning is possible. But even here the specific meaning content of symbolic codes is of lesser interest than what people actually *do* with their knowledge structures, how they are drawn upon and reinterpreted in the passage of everyday life, and what their implications are for individual lives. Such information is often implicit in the anecdotal narratives within formal anthropological discourse. So, for example, as an aside within the structured format of a seminar presentation describing the operation of stone tombs within Merina communities of central Madagascar, the archaeologist and anthropologist Susan Kus described the aftermath of a ritual in which candies had been left out for the community's ancestors. Once the ritual had ended and the participants and onlookers had begun to disperse, the children of the village, giggling and running about, started eating the candies. Startled, the anthropologists asked the elders why no-one seemed to mind the children consuming the ancestral offerings. Smiling, the elders replied that it was good for children to *be* children, that it was a good sign.

To return to the neolithic, then, megalithic monuments as media for thought in an encultured, socialized landscape are in part creative of the biographies of communities and of individuals. What is of interest are not the specific images of this social contemplation, but the way in which narratives of place and biographies of landscape itself are implicated in the making of the self and the perception of being *in* place (cf. Barrett 1987, 1994b). As Thomas himself notes, 'we cannot put

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ourselves back into the minds of past people, but we must put the people back into the spaces of the past' (1993a, 74).

Structure and expression: metaphors of reading, writing and talking

The more active engagement with material remains, whether of upstanding monuments or subsurface features, forming the basis for many recent interpretive archaeological studies, is paralleled by a more reflective style of writing or stance adopted in the interpretation of the material and the creation of the text. Envisaged in terms of the sensation of the body, of movement through real environments, of reflexive acts of interpretation and the dialectic of past and present experience, the materiality of the past is utilized as a creative medium for reflection upon what it is to *be* human, how people invent themselves and find a way of going on. In this sense, these modern studies embrace rather than shy away from the 'fourfold hermeneutic' Shanks and Tilley have discussed as integral to the practice of archaeology: the hermeneutics of working within the contemporary discipline as active agents drawing forward contemporary social relations, seeking to understand different lifeworlds from one's own across the distance of time (Shanks & Tilley 1992, 108). Although individuals are discussed within this writing, it is not the *individual* who lies at the heart of the enquiry. Rather, the focus is on the creativity and competence of agency in the formation of frameworks for living. It is in this aspect that the extremely regionalized, localized nature of many of these studies may be defended against the charge of irrelevant historical particularism: just as the practical implications of unique symbolic structures are of more interest than their temporally and culturally specific meanings, so too a progressive humanistic archaeology concentrates not on particular forms of social life but on the way in which social strategies carried expectations through into practice in a world of specific materiality, and how certain desires may have been transformed into possibilities and then realities.

One of the most influential metaphors for the representation of these strategies within post-processual analysis has been the analogy of the written text to

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the institutionalized practices of society, including their material aspects. Originating in the work of authors writing within post-modern social and literary theory and philosophy, such as Roland Barthes and Paul Ricoeur, the concept of material texts which, rather than being passively consumed are continually reworked and reconstituted even as they are read, has been discussed extensively within the humanities and social sciences, and I shall do no more here than to rehearse the points of primary relevance in the present context.³

Portable objects, the material fabric and architectural spaces of monuments, the landscape which is partially creative of and partially created by such monuments, and the ritual practices which link these together may all be likened to texts which, through the interpretive mediation of the human body and the mind, are simultaneously written and read, rewritten and reread. Meaning is thus 'read into' the material (Thomas 1990, 169) rather than inscribed upon it. The greater ambiguity of the material in relation to the written text results in more fluid interpretive possibilities, in which there is greater potential for divergence from or development beyond the original intentions of the author/s. Indeed, as Trevor Barnes and James Duncan have pointed out, the latter are of less consequence than the social and material impact of diverse interpretive readings, so that the significance of texts of material culture, socialized landscape and ritual extends far beyond the initial creative act of writing (1992, 6). The textual metaphor therefore embraces the multiplicity and ambiguity of meaning, the fragmentation of images of universality, the aspirations for authorial control and the conflict and contradiction of interpretation. It is in effect an open metaphor which allows for the sound of many voices. It is far from unproblematic, however, as regards the status of our own, polyvocal interpretations of past readings which were once regarded as 'workable' and which permitted past human lives to be articulated in meaningful, relevant terms.

This question of the complex and interweaving relationship between our own interpretations and those of the human groups we study has received somewhat less attention in the archaeological literature. I want to argue that

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although the textual metaphor is a valuable one, this interpretive relation should not be viewed in the *structural* terms of linguistics -- terms which frame Hodder's argument that archaeologists have been successful in their reading of material texts thanks to the existence of an underlying 'universal grammar' by which '*homo sapiens sapiens* [has] at all times and in all places [given] meaning to things', of 'universal principles of meaning' which are 'followed routinely by all of us as social actors, and by archaeologists in interpreting the past' (Hodder 1991, 126; 127). Maintaining that the structures of thought by which people conceptualize their lives do not follow the logical, cumulative patterns of linear sequences found in the structures of language, but rather operate *via* a series of integrated and multilayered networks, Maurice Bloch has made the important point that

anthropologists ... are worried by the fact that the acceptable ethnographies they produce with such effort have somehow lost 'what it was really like'. This is something which they sometimes wrongly attribute to the difficulty of rendering one text into another, while what they should be thinking about is the problem of rendering into a text something which is not a text (1992, 129).

So although the textual metaphor may be a useful device for the theorization of *how* symbolic structures expressed through materiality mean -- as opposed to *what* they mean (Tilley 1991b, 142) -- the grammatical 'subtext' tends to get in the way of transforming experience in the field, with its fragmented and fragmentary impressions, into a coherent academic narrative which does it justice. What Bloch is talking about are the difficulties Frances Lynch experienced in adequately representing in words her direct physical engagement with the landscape, in trying to translate her 'feeling for the country' into an archaeological text (Lynch 1975, 124; see above p. 21). Tellingly, prescient as it now seems, her attempt was not regarded as unconditionally 'acceptable' by the contemporary academic community.

Comparing Bloch's latest work on the Zafimaniry of Madagascar (1992, 1995) with his earlier, traditionally-framed ethnography of the same populations (1975), it is clear that he has produced something which has quite a different feel to it. So too recent geographical writings have begun to challenge traditional

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expectations of what geography should read like, what it should *feel* like, resulting in a creative eclecticism of representation ranging from, for example, the esoteric textual abstractions of Gunnar Olsson's 'cartography of thought' (1992) to Stephen Daniels and Denis Cosgrove's explicitly intertextual analysis of landscape metaphors composed around Venetian Renaissance painting and an Austen novel (1993). As archaeologists we have to be prepared to do the same. We must be prepared to conceptualize the interpretive relation between past and present realities in what may seem academically unfamiliar terms, and in so doing experiment with the writing of history.

Feeling: impression, sensation, understanding, appreciation. A feeling for the country ... a different feel ... what should it feel like? I would suggest that our desire should be not so much to *read* the material cultural and spatial text as to 'get a feeling for it'. This is to situate our present, interpretive knowledges of past, interpreted worlds firmly in the domain of discourse, in the sense of 'language in the world', where the relationship between *langue* and *parole* is worked through (Tilley 1990, 137). Given that 'the "meaning" of what is said does not reside in the means of "saying" but is suspended between the act of "speech" and the range of potential interpretations of what that speech is saying' (Barrett 1991, 1), it is appropriate to supplement our textual metaphors with those of spoken language. This is less the structural concept of *parole*, more the metaphors of expression: phrasing, mood, choice of words, accents, pronunciation, tone.

To get a feel for a language other than your own is to begin to learn intuitively how to understand and say things you have not heard said before. This does not require exhaustive prior knowledge of syntax and vocabulary so much as the *practice* of language in context, and is therefore closely allied to the way children build up competence in spoken language. Archaeological interpretations will of necessity be developed at the level of acquiring a feel for tone rather than precise meaning; in many lived situations you may not understand what the words all mean, but the way they are spoken, the gestures which accompany them and the immediate context convey a strong impression of mood and intention. Rather than

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reading the past and deciphering its symbolic codes in an attempt to share the preoccupations of past people, by engaging with the materiality of narratives through which people understood past worlds and thereby getting a feeling for these stories we can begin to explore the ways in which we draw together past human experience and contemporary understandings of our own world within the professional/amateur/academic/political/intellectual strategies of the archaeological discipline. As has so often been said, both the past and the present are implicated in the practice of archaeology; from a slightly different angle, in the words of the playwright Arthur Miller, 'the present is just a part of the past that we're living in at the moment'.

Narrative

Narrative is the hermeneutic description and representation of the world, in which the creative practices of the 'text' (written, ideational, material, spatial etc.), the 'extratextual' referential field (direct observation and experience) and the 'intertextual' field (experiential and theoretical perspectives drawn from other 'texts') are integrated at the level of the lived experience of the author. Latin *narrāre* derives from *gnārus*, 'knowing', of Indo-European root *gnō-*, 'to know'. Speaking specifically of academic production but in terms applicable to all forms of narrative, Duncan and Ley make the crucial point that the extratextual world is not directly reflected in the text but 're-presented' (1993, 9). In other words, the practice of narrative transmutes, to a greater or lesser extent, what existed before. In the telling and retelling, the ways of knowing gradually change.

The consideration of narrative, drawing past encounters into present engagement with the physical and social world in the formulation of perhaps provisional understandings, is thus an ideal frame for both theory and practice of archaeology. For this text/narrative, concerned with the construction of lived narratives in the neolithic, I want to adopt a very broad definition of the term. Accepting the point that narrative is not a neutral art since it embodies aspirations for coherence and closure, for 'making sense' (Gregory 1989, 90), I envisage

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narratives as embracing the interaction of people and their material world to such an intensive degree, and as being so stretched over space and time, that they can in some cases be effectively open-ended.

Narrative is one means by which humanity becomes implicated in the landscape and individuals permeated by the land. By moving about within the landscape, by leaving the marks of your existence in it, by becoming intimate with particular people and places and their relations with other people and other places, an ongoing story of being is put together. The landscape becomes an allegory for humanity and *vice versa*.⁴ Narratives may place a moral construction on the materiality of existence; they may evaluate, validate or condemn individual or group action. Narratives may involve the internalized processes of memory which link the routines of everyday life with the familiar contours of the landscape in the evocation of a meaningful universe. Formalized narrative may comprise histories, parables, mythologies, genealogies: stories in which places, people and supra-human forces and beings have *names*. These narratives order the social, the physical and the spiritual world. So, for example, when the Fijian Lands Commission of 1916 recorded the land claims of various ancestrally-founded house clusters on the island of Gau, it in effect set down on paper oral recitations of the progress of specific ancestors among places named according to their qualities (e.g. Nukubolo: 'sand strewn with coconut leaves') or for mythic events which took place there, where they established houses and horticultural gardens (Toren 1995, 163; 179 n. 2).

The contemporary islanders also engage in what I shall term 'casual narrative', in which routine events and specific features of the landscape (artificial or natural) are constantly remarked upon during the passage of each day, a sort of parlance of dwelling which carries implicit within it a 'sense of belonging to those places and that round of events' (Toren 1995, 163). Similarly, the casual narratives of the Western Apache in central Arizona, in which individuals tell each other in minute detail the routes of their frequent journeys through the country, serve to intensify the bonds of belonging (Basso 1984, 26). Casual narrative is also

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mentioned by Bloch, when he notes that the ubiquitous appreciation for ‘good views’ among the Zafimaniry is invariably expressed by listing the names of mountains visible from a particular viewpoint, along with those of the villages currently or formerly at their summits (1995, 65). In this way ancestral and contemporary communities are linked, through narrative, by the visual qualities of the landscape. But people change and landscapes change. Narrative, entwining the past in the present and the land in the people, carries intimations for the future.

Methodologies of inhabiting: interpretation, evaluation and validation

Over the years, as my knowledge of the place called Santa Clara and its people has deepened, I have realized that this is not just a natural landscape in which people live and to which they give meaning. I have realized that their lives are intimately bound up in it. I learned about this landscape by moving around in it, but also through hearing it being described in a thousand different narratives ... (Gow 1995, 47).

The knowledges distilled from living within the social and intellectual frames of reference of another human community enable the anthropologist to create a legitimate narrative of social life within the terms of his or her own solidarities. The philosophical perspectives I have been working through here, which premise the mutual implication of actor, words and space in the construction of frameworks for living, imply similar potential for an archaeology of inhabitation. ‘Dwelling’ is a term utilized by Martin Heidegger (e.g. Heidegger 1971, 1977), discussed in recent archaeological and anthropological literature (Thomas 1993b, 28-9; Tilley 1994, 11-14; Ingold 1991, 1993), which aptly conveys this integration of the lifeworld. Dwelling implies the recursive process of knowing and using the world. The familiar aspects of material existence are drawn upon to give meaning to deeper, less tangible aspects in order to situate humanity in a wider cosmos.

If on one level engagement with archaeological materiality is framed around such a conception of *being* in the landscape, at another level archaeology is itself a strand of dwelling (Ingold 1993, 152), its practice generating interpretive

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statements that cannot be set free from our contemporary experience of the material. For me to inhabit the contemporary landscape in which megalithic monuments are found is not to wrap myself up in some neolithic *Zeitgeist*, because for archaeology to have any relevance at all it must be centred firmly in the spirit of its own age. The methodologies of inhabiting are more about how we make the neolithic in our own time. But just 'any old past' will *not* do: from a real engagement with real material conditions, some of which will have remained the same -- the interaction of the tomb with local topography and artificial features, the creation of spatialities of various qualities, the constraining or enabling aspects which act upon the body -- the construction of a neolithic that will 'work' must not only remain rigorously internally consistent, but must acknowledge the constraints of past structural and material conditions.⁵

By dwelling in the 'archaeological landscape', building an intense familiarity with its physical ramifications, we may begin to recognize some of the historically specific ways in which meanings, knowledges and power might be made possible, sustained or challenged; to recognize not what materiality once said, but the conditions which permitted some things to be voiced and maintained other silences. Moving within the classic palimpsest, we have to confront the reality of the accumulated landscapes of generations. So, for example, the bronze age inhabitants of a particular locale will weave their recent mortuary monuments into the daily and seasonal rhythms of life, but in addition they will have a place for the inherited landscapes and monuments of the past. Patently, the distributions of exclusively 'bronze age' dots on a map which accompany so many discussions of the period bear no relation to any material past that once existed; they are snapshots of an impossible landscape.

What then does a methodology of inhabitation involve? Firstly, the concept of landscape as something from which the subject can be detached and distanced, a way of seeing and controlling the world which, rooted in the European Renaissance (Cosgrove 1984), has so strongly influenced textual and graphic archaeological representation, is not appropriate here. Rather, landscape is viewed as an integral

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and interactive part of the practice by which worlds are built. My conception of this practice is one in which physical, social and intellectual ‘landscapes’ dialectically produce and reproduce one another. Here, the physical landscape is the materiality of existence, not simply the prior, ‘given’ landscape but the physical action of people upon it (e.g. architecture, ecological strategies, tool making). The intellectual landscape involves the theorization of existence -- the mental positioning of the animate and the inanimate into a wider scheme of things. The social landscape comprises the lived experience of existence, mediating between and yet at the same time constituted by the physical and intellectual landscapes. The social landscape is therefore sensually and cognitively mapped through space and time; it is both communal and individual.

As Tilley has remarked (1994, 11), the outline of a universally applicable methodology cannot arise from these conceptualizations of space, place and landscape as socially produced, both the means of knowledgeable action and its antiphon, their meanings dependent upon their situation within relations of authority. With regard to this study, given that bodily disposition is central to knowledgeable action and that the monuments are devoid of significance if displaced from their surroundings, interpretations must be drawn *from* the specific interaction of architecture and landscape through the medium of bodily engagement, rather than being placed *upon* the material in the abstract and in general.

The practical implications are that in many cases, extremely detailed, localized, small-scale analyses of monumental locales require a statement of the (seemingly) obvious: things that in retrospect many people have registered but that no-one has ever really thought about analytically. I have in mind in particular those moments when architectural elements merge almost seamlessly into features of topography, in often repetitive qualitative, but not necessarily formal, patterns. The importance of the ‘obvious’ is that by its very nature its subtlety and sophistication may be missed, its existence merely taken for granted and its potential significance ignored. But what appears obvious may in fact be of

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immense import. Tim Ingold argues that for the anthropologist, a dwelling perspective requires 'privileging the understandings that people derive from their lived, everyday involvement in the world' (1993, 152). This is precisely the approach Bloch takes in the proposition of a series of 'mental models' around which the Zafimaniry build their lives (1992). When he writes down these principles of their particular conceptualization of society, and the Zafimaniry read them, they wonder why he bothered to talk at all about something so obvious. Clearly, in stating the obvious Bloch has not let go of 'what it was really like'.⁶

What Bloch does abandon is the traditional method of founding the argument of the text on the direct statements of informants; here he raises the important question of validation, which is equally applicable to an archaeology of inhabitation. What, Bloch asks, is the origin of the data and how is the reader to be convinced that such data have a valid bearing on the point in question? He argues that by spending so much time within another community, becoming bound up in its lives, the anthropologist of necessity internalizes a great deal of the fundamental knowledges of how to go on within that society; as a result, plausible accounts of informants' intellectual conceptions of the world should arise in part from the introspection of the anthropologist.

... readers who are convinced that anthropologists have carried out the kind of fieldwork necessary for this kind of understanding should be willing to give them the benefit of the doubt (Bloch 1992, 131).

So too a methodology of inhabiting requires that the archaeologist spends considerable time in the field, becoming immersed in a landscape of deepening familiarity. This is as much a reflective as an active process -- a process of internalization. That he or she has put this serious commitment into the fieldwork should be manifested within the textual narrative. Given a positive assessment on the part of the reader, validation then arises from the reader's respect for this internalized feeling for the country, which accepts the archaeologist's ability to say, for example, this is why this works *here*, and why it would not work *there*, and that this is very unlikely to be a chance relation. There is no need to provide some

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sort of control sample against which to judge the legitimacy of such statements.

In discussion, Richard Bradley has argued that without this type of 'objective' benchmark, validation is only possible by the reader's going out into the field and 're-doing the experiment'. He effectively denies the reader the competence to judge *the communicative medium of the text*, selective, subjective and multilayered as it is. The reader can only cope with the apparently objective validation of the statistics table.

In this regard, a brief glance at a study published by Bradley, Harding and Mathews (1993) on the siting of prehistoric rock art in southwest Scotland is instructive. Their analysis does not attempt to elucidate the meaning content of the petroglyphs but rather to situate them, as communicative symbolic media, within a landscape in which various groups of people move in differing seasonal and annual patterns. The authors wanted to assess the claim that southwest Scottish rock art is regularly found in locations with long distance views (a proposition put forward by Ronald Morris, who has published a corpus of the material [1979]), and to discover whether any consistent correlations could be identified between the nature of individual carved surfaces and their placement in the landscape. To this end they recorded the extent of views possible from the rock art sites, using the method established by David Fraser (1983) to measure around the compass according to a series of view width and distance bands. The same procedure was carried out at a random sample of locations within the study area. In addition, they produced a written description of each landscape setting and the views it afforded of the surrounding country.

Two important points emerge from this study. Firstly, a clear preference for the siting of petroglyphs at viewpoints was confirmed. But this should come as no surprise, since surely Morris's extensive field surveys will have allowed him to build up such a deep familiarity with and competence in the landscape of southwest Scotland that his claims of difference are made with reasonable authority and security? Secondly, the authors' ability to identify three distinct locational categories in which decorated rock surfaces are situated is engendered essentially

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by the detailed, subjective impressions of place recorded in the written descriptions, and simply reiterated by their 'stricter' (and relatively indigestible) analytical measurements which result in only extremely generalized, abstract images (Bradley, Harding & Mathews 1993, 278; 280).⁷ In any case, these latter forms of analysis do not embody neutrality, being interpretive and not necessarily universally shared statements about how we believe the world can be broken down into separate, 'objective' constituents:

... one [cannot] express the real world in its own terms, but only in theoretical ones. Thus, *it [makes] no sense to check theory against some neutral outside world*, because the outside world itself [is] apprehended only through theory (Barnes & Duncan 1992, 10; emphasis mine).

Writing the text

I have chosen three quite different groups of neolithic mortuary monuments, situated in distinctively different landscapes (Fig. 2.1), through which I want to look at possible ways in which knowledges of being in the world, of being 'placed', were created and carried forward; in other words, at some of the strategies by which human lives were made conceivable and liveable within their own particular materiality.

Separating the Firth of Clyde from the Kilbrannan Sound off the coast of southwest Scotland, the Isle of Arran is a small island composed of a central highland massif fringed by a narrow coastal strip of undulating lowland. The chambered cairns on the island belong, with one exception, to the Clyde tradition, common features of which are a rectangular or trapezoidal cairn surrounding a megalithic chamber of several, separate compartments, which often opens onto a forecourt defined by a flat or crescentic orthostatic facade. At the micro-level, however, the Clyde cairns are characterized by a remarkable degree of diversity which extends to their individual location. On the whole discrete rather than clustered monuments, the Arran tombs avoid the rugged mountain landscape of the northern half of the island; their siting ranges from the gently undulating fields of

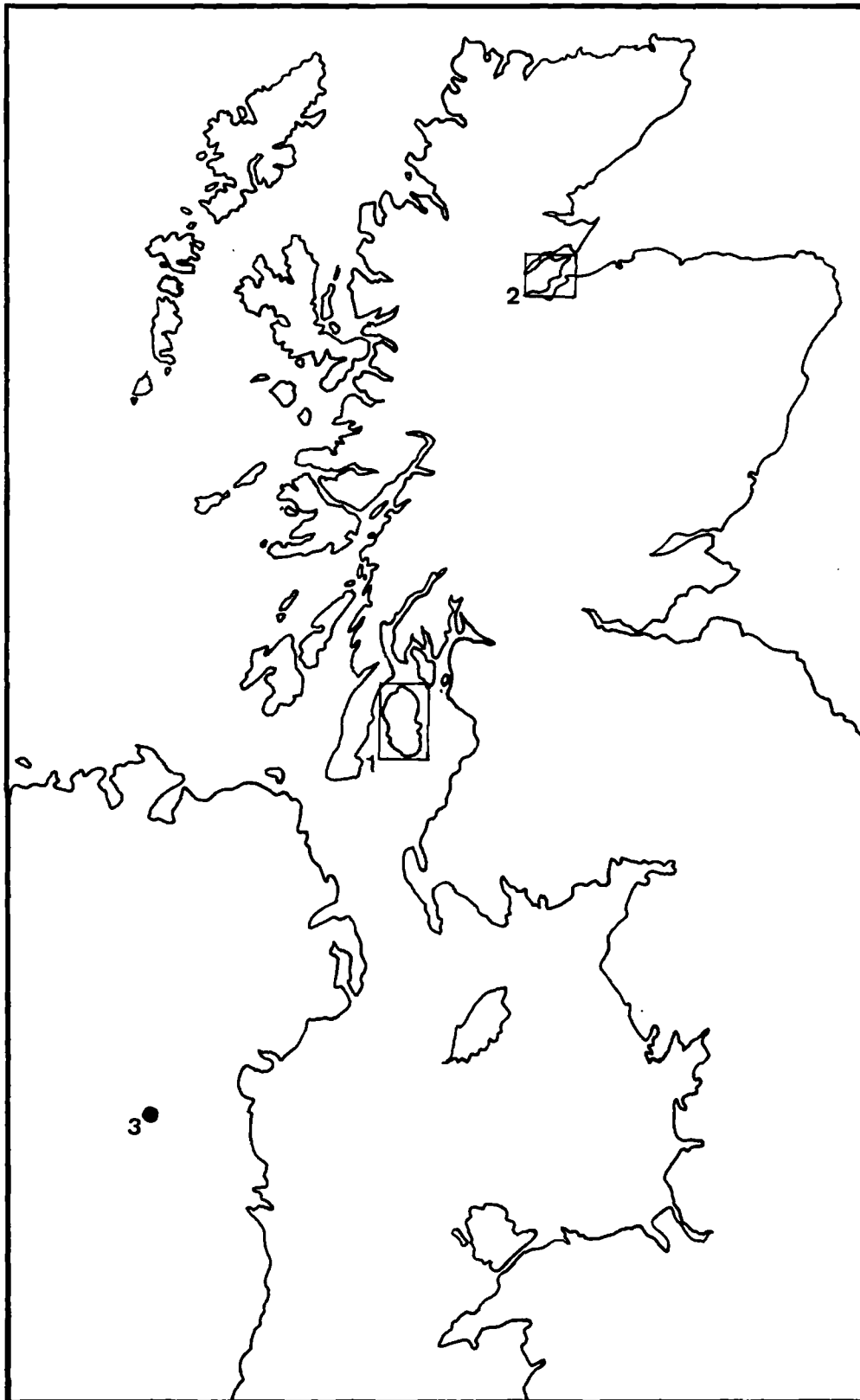


Figure 2.1 Location of the case studies. 1: Arran; 2: The Black Isle; 3: Loughcrew

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the raised beaches of Late Glacial shorelines, to broad, flat expanses of lowland moor, to the upper slopes of steep-sided highland glens.⁸

The Black Isle peninsula lies between the Cromarty and Moray Firths in the northeast of Scotland; during the neolithic it would have been joined to the mainland by a strip of land 6km wide. Neolithic cairns are found on either side of the central ridge running the length of the peninsula, often with an expansive view over undulating firthlands and the water. The monuments are predominantly round cairns enclosing Orkney-Cromarty chambers, in which 'passage' and 'compartment' elements are separated by opposing pairs of transverse sectional slabs which project partway into the body of the chamber. Non-megalithic long cairns are found in the northern half of the peninsula, while certain and possible Clava passage graves lie towards the south. The monuments occur singly and in groups, and occupy a wide variety of landscape locales.⁹

The Loughcrew hills comprise a short stretch of upland in the predominantly flat plains of County Meath, east-central Ireland. The range is a distinctive landmark from distances of several kilometres, while the view from the hills themselves is panoramic and of considerable depth. Thirty passage tombs occur in clusters among the summits. Of differing internal complexity, the monuments are of regular and repetitive exterior appearance: a round cairn of fairly conical profile, bounded by a substantial slab or boulder kerb.¹⁰

Writing about the implication of the senses in any bodily encounter with the physical environment, Paul Rodaway has written of a particular, contemporary experience:

Richard Long ..., the sculptor, artist and walker ..., builds his art from walking across the landscape, from an intimate sensual experience with space and the materials of his environment and forms his 'sculptures' in pattern with the landscape, its structure and material substance ... (Rodaway 1994, 3).

An interpretive archaeology of inhabitation involves a similarly sensual engagement with artificial and natural materiality, a sequence of encounters of which the quality is particular to place. I am working from the premise that within the three study

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areas, the monuments and the landscape in and with which they operate should provide, through the interaction of the body, the framework for textual interpretation, rather than being fitted into a standardized matrix of 'site', 'setting', 'resource catchment', 'economic background', 'stages' or 'phases' of use, and so on. The challenge is to write around and through the monumental locale: just as the qualities of place differ, so should the character of the textual narrative. The text should emerge 'in pattern' with physical form and arrangement; its own structure should in some way, however partial, embody the actual, lived experience of place. Because if we work on the basis that understandings are accumulatively and reflexively produced and reproduced through active engagement with the material conditions of existence, and that these monuments and their specific locales are material vehicles for thoughtful narratives both in the past and in the present, then the link between my academic narrative and the construction of past narratives lies in the common ground of specific materiality. And as I have argued, if readers are not to recreate the field experience for themselves, my text must allow them to assess the nature of my own engagement.

I have attempted, therefore, to recreate to some extent my own cumulative, experiential process of building certain understandings and so to let the reader some way into my intellectual, textual construction of a workable neolithic. Firstly, the case studies are not ordered according to a retrospective framework, but appear in the sequence in which the fieldwork was carried out. Secondly, rather than forming an introductory précis which is somehow 'proved' or 'ratified' by the archaeological residues, specific interpretive issues are raised as an integral part of the discussion of the monuments in their landscapes. This is because although certain principles are generally applicable, others become apparent or have relevance only in particular contexts. The same things are not important everywhere. Additionally, certain aspects have different nuances in different places. Material themes are highlighted within the text when they become too insistent to ignore, and the interpretive issues they introduce are carried forward through the narrative, at greater or lesser intensity as appropriate, as it moves from

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one archaeological encounter with the landscape to another. Thirdly, I have not tried to standardize the format of each study, but have let the nature of the interplay among subject, architecture and environment dictate the quality of the text. Literally, I have to use the same language to talk about these different places, whereas what I really need is to be able to speak in different dialects. Ideally, I need the ability to move between the conservative forms and old-fashioned images of North American and the deep, resonant, make-it-up-as-you-go-along of Caribbean English; from the awkward phrasing of *anglais québécois* to the chiaroscuro of Irish English. But even so, each chapter retains a distinct identity in which the language and organization are moulded by the dynamic, physical experience. From the diversity of the Arran tombs, consistencies and correlations are built up steadily, as particular patterns and material issues gradually acquire increasingly strong definition. The Black Isle chapter, in contrast, is constructed through intercutting sequences of difference and opposition: as a particular material theme solidifies a coherence emerges, only to fragment once more. Textual engagement with the Loughcrew cemetery is different again, as one interpretive layer wraps over and around another; various themes simultaneously interweave, sediment and accrete in concentric circles like the ripples from a pebble in a pond.

This is still much more of a 'consumer' than a 'producer' text (Tilley 1990, 1991b) -- within each chapter, for example, I still decide what comes first, second and last. I would argue, however, that it is a much more open form of discourse to say, 'take my hand; let me show you what I see', while at the same time, through the very *form* of representation, attempting to involve the reader in an understanding of *how* I see, and therefore how and why my particular interpretations develop, than to entirely mask the structures and construction of the text, the transformation from field to paper, and to present selective interpretation as objective reality. The latter approach attempts to remove every element of vulnerability from the narrative, whereas the former poses an uneasy challenge: to present certain aspects over which the author does not regard him or herself as having positive control. Not to write about these aspects, not to allow other

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workers in the discipline access to partial, coarse-grained understandings which are, nevertheless, the product of familiarity with the material is, after all, complete closure.

In this regard it is worth noting an important element of physical engagement with the material world which does not appear in the present study. Each field analysis has an unavoidable bias towards vision and the kinetics of the body. But apart from the visual elements which we have lost -- the colour and movement of organic objects, for example, or vegetational patterning -- olfactory and acoustic senses will also have been of importance. The monuments may have been associated with many strong smells: the burning of aromatics, the acrid odour of the ash of old fires, the scent of prepared foods and of the decayed or decaying remains within the tomb. So too these locales may have resonated with a multitude of sounds: dancing feet on hard ground, singing, musical instruments, formalized speech -- noises which might be clear or muffled depending on individual roles within the ritual. All of these sensual elements would have been actively drawn upon in power strategies, combining with the visual and kinetic encounter with the architecture to encourage particular ways of conceptualizing society, to articulate specific biographies of self and of place.

Making sense in the past and the present

The object of this study is not to present some grand narrative for the neolithic, some all-encompassing explanatory framework which can only operate at the level of deep abstraction. Rather, it attempts to come to terms with local strategies by which past communities built narratives to make some sense of being *there*, in their own time and place. But I would argue that each local narrative makes the world comprehensible in terms that are not entirely exclusive. After all, despite their diversity chambered cairns can be identified through much of western Europe, and they are regularly followed on in the late neolithic and early bronze age by mortuary practices whose point of departure is the deposition of an individual person, and which in Britain and Ireland may form the focus for

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considerable elaboration through time. Here I would see evidence for a more general and long-term shift in the way human communities situate themselves with regard to the powers of a wider cosmos -- a gradual process of 're-placing' humanity which stretches from the mesolithic right through into the bronze age.

Often situated at qualitatively transitional points within the landscape, the Arran monuments draw upon elements latent within the local topography to set in motion a dialectic of architecture and landscape which defines an active, dramatic monumental locus. This dialectic creates a small-scale world around the chambered cairn which, abstracted from the larger landscape, controls bodily engagement with the tomb and intellectual perception of the wider world beyond it. Having been drawn into the monument's active sphere of influence, the subject's references to other places and events of life can be made only through the medium of the tomb. The monuments are inscribed into and elaborate upon a pre-existing web of pathways -- both physical and metaphorical -- which link people, land, sky and sea in a closely-knit physical and spiritual universe. Such monumental embellishment of landscape foci already redolent with meaning may be seen as part of a lengthy process of humanization of the landscape, by which 'place' itself acquires significance more in its own right than by its relation to other places linked by formalized physical and intellectual movement. This may be expressed eventually, and more unambiguously, by the bronze age round cairns which emerge in quite different, separate localities on the island.

Rather than operating upon small-scale dramatic areas withdrawn from the wider landscape, the neolithic cairns in the Black Isle mark out liminal areas between much larger-scale locales. The passage of everyday life would here seem to be mapped by movement among a series of discrete worlds. The cairns act both as landmarks of transition which emphasize moments of arrival and departure in this progression and, situated at the upper reaches of particular locales as the cairns often are, as ever-present reference points by which to place the daily and seasonal round in relation to a social and cosmological order. The tombs themselves may make overt reference to this landscape of daily life -- areas of woodland,

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settlement, pasture and cultivation, transhumance routes and pathways among communities -- and to the celestial phenomena which mark the passing of the days and seasons, rather than to enduring features of topography. The construction of chambered cairns at these transitional points between locales may be just one element in the long-term elaboration of spatialities with roots reaching back into the mesolithic, in which significant boundaries see an accretion of monumentality that may begin with the erection of standing stones, and which continues well into the bronze age.

The Loughcrew hills are also likely to have been accorded deep significance within the formation of personal biographies several millennia prior to the first megalithic constructions being placed upon them. The development of the passage tomb cemetery plays upon the opposition between the interior worlds of the individual summits and the range of hills as a whole, and the broad expanse of country stretching away on all sides. Here, architectural form draws on the pattern of landforms to create a series of interweaving, large- and small-scale focal areas. Over time these spaces acquire increasing architectural definition, while the movement of the subject among them becomes ever more directed and constrained. In tandem with this is the appropriative transformation of the range of hills from a meaningful locus which conceals within it the human efforts of monumental construction, to a landscape that derives its significance from the massive cairns which, sitting atop the summits, may be identified from considerable distances. This may be a particular material strategy through which, as on Arran and the Black Isle, the discourse between human groups and metaphysical forces is articulated at an increasingly human scale. From an integrated, cultural whole in which people and landscape are embedded in each other, individual and place may become increasingly self-contained, and mediation between the physical and metaphysical elements of existence controlled with reference to distinct lines of descent rather than to a more generalized ancestral community. The construction in the bronze age of round mounds and cairns over individual, deceased members of the living community at the foot of the Loughcrew hills may be seen as one way

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in which this type of human, historical order could be drawn into a landscape redolent with the narratives of other, older ways of 'making sense'.

Conclusion

In a methodological character sketch, the anthropologist Mary Douglas once painted a rather sorry picture of the archaeologist's contemporary engagement with the socialized spaces and landscapes of the past, concluding by saying:

... the organization of thought and of social relations is imprinted on the landscape. But if only the physical aspect is susceptible of study, how to interpret this pattern would seem to pose an insoluble problem (1972, 521).

Twenty years later, Olsson writes,

perhaps I enter this social space of silence by living in the world as I found it (1992, 96).

Well. Let's see what we can do.

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NOTES

¹This pervasive tenet within processual theory also figures in some post-processual studies (e.g. Hodder 1990, 220).

²The nature of the social, physical and intellectual landscapes is discussed on p. 63.

³For discussions in the archaeological literature see, for example: Barrett 1991, 1994b, 78-9; Hodder 1991, 121-55; Kirk 1993, 185-7; Thomas 1990, 169-70; Tilley (ed.) 1990, 1991b.

⁴This type of analogic thinking has informed the theory of medicine for the greater part of its history in the West, and can still be found in many non-Western, 'traditional' medicines. The physical, metaphysical and social orders are considered to infuse each other, so that a change in the wellbeing of one is manifested by corresponding changes in the others (Cosgrove 1984, 60).

⁵The argument that interpretive archaeologies necessarily grant all constructed pasts equal status is perhaps one of the most widespread criticisms within the discipline, to the extent that it forms part of textbook discussion (e.g. Renfrew & Bahn 1991, 430). It mistakenly equates admitting a role for subjective experience and denial of the possibility of somehow finding 'true' prehistory with acceptance of personal, individual pasts.

⁶See above, p. 57.

⁷Independently, I put Fraser's techniques into practice in the present study. Here too the results merely confirmed in graphic form the spatial qualities of the monumental locale which had *already* emerged from the much freer expressive practice of textual description and reflection in the field. The results are illustrated in Appendix A.

⁸Of 21 certain chambered cairns on the island, 12 (57%) were examined in detail.

⁹10 of the 13 certain chambered cairns on the Black Isle were examined in detail (77%) and 1 of the 4 non-megalithic long cairns (25%).

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¹⁰26 (87%) of the Loughcrew cairns were studied in the field, 22 in detail and 4 in more general terms.

Metaphorical journeys: the Isle of Arran

The land which happened inside us no one can take from us again, not even ourselves.

André Brink
An Instant in the Wind

Introduction

Human life is carried forward through the establishment of a dynamic balance between exterior discovery and interior exploration. The nature of this link between physical and intellectual experience has been discussed extensively within human geography and, more recently, social anthropology, with particular regard to concepts of place, landscape and temporality. For example, Yi-Fu Tuan has indicated the necessity of ordering space (within which he distinguishes the easily accessible space of everyday life and 'space at large') if it is to become livable, and that this ordering is

... primarily an effort to find value and meaning in the world and to locate them at definite places. The process of creating a cosmos is one in which elusive time is anchored in space, and space is anchored in the still more tangible reality of place (1978, 10).

Mikhail Bakhtin has formalized this within dialogic theory, with his definition of 'chronotopes' as

... points in the geography of a community where time and space intersect and fuse. Time takes on flesh and becomes visible for human contemplation; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time and history and the enduring character of a people ... (1981, 7; quoted in

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Basso 1984, 44-5).

It is precisely because the issue of 'landscape' is a meeting place at which the material and the intellectual enter into a dialogue that it is bound into the formation of knowledges about the world and our situation within it. We both work in and live through the landscape: we are firmly embedded within it and yet in many senses, the shades of which are both culturally and contextually specific, it inhabits *us*. This recursive, mutual inhabitation results not in the imposition of meaning *upon* the physical world but in the drawing of meaning *from* it.¹

The formulation of understandings of 'how things are' and 'how things should be' within the cosmological whole is in part engendered through sequences of spatial, temporal and metaphorical movement. We are held in place by the rhythms of coming and going: the daily routine, the seasonal cycle, the passing of generations, movement between physical and spiritual domains. Within these sequences, material and conceptual reference points acquire deep significance through their operation as goals for which to aim, both intermediate and final, and as mechanisms for drawing social knowledges forward through time, anchoring origins in the past and projecting concomitant commitments and obligations into the future. To each biographical event we carry with us the memory of other places, actions and events, so that present activities occur through a constant referral to another time and place. Tuan notes the link between the spatially defined 'here' and 'there' and the temporality of 'now' and 'then' (1978, 11-12): 'there' becomes 'then', a time in past or future, because we relate a place from which we are absent to the experiences we will have or have had at that place, or indeed which we might have or might have had. 'Here' and 'now' are therefore experienced in relation to 'there' and 'then'; by virtue of this intermingling of temporality and spatiality we are able to move conceptually from the concrete to the abstract, and the perception of the landscape (both the natural terrain and the artificial constructions upon it) may be regarded as an act of remembrance (Ingold 1993, 153) and of intention.

That we build ordered worlds for living through our engagement with the

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landscape and, the basis for perception being an ambient and ambulatory perspective (Gibson 1979), that this engagement occurs through bodily movement, would be justification in itself for a concern with movement in the context of archaeological enquiry. But with regard to the specific case study discussed here, concentration upon movement in terms of the potential of the spatial structuring of the architecture and of the larger scale operation of the monument as a goal or reference point may also be validated by the ethnographically observed importance attached to directional and spatial qualities for the 'effective' performance of ritual. David Parkin (1992) has noted the primacy of physical action within the enactment of rituals, the linguistic component being structured by spatially defined sequences. As it is with reference to the steps and movements of a ritual that its efficacy is ensured, Parkin argues that through these sequences of bodily movement and positioning actors make their principal statements about the world. Rituals do not merely articulate metaphysical ideals, but have practical effects. Thus, movement within the ritual has enormous significance, as the participants are entrusted with the 'power to make or break life depending on the directions and literal steps [the ritual] takes' (Parkin 1992, 17).

A clear illustration of this can be found in Günther Schlee's study of the *Jila* journeys of the Gabbra camel-herders of east Africa (1992). The Gabbra make communal pilgrimages to their mythic origin, a series of sites on a distinctive mountain chain which forms the border between Kenya and Ethiopia. The timing of these journeys depends on solar and lunar cycles, while age set promotions are in turn timed to coincide with the *Jila*. Once the 'ceremonial country' has been attained, a strictly ordered sequence of events must be carried out, movement between loci of ritual activity following formal routes and adhering to a prescribed timetable.

If one does not take the proper route, then it waits to be taken. In addition to the claim the Gabbra have on their holy grounds ... the holy sites and the routes connecting them have a claim on the Gabbra. The way cannot be kept waiting, you have to walk it (Schlee 1992, 119).

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Thus, movement through the landscape in a specified way is of central importance to the maintenance of the relationship the Gabbra have with their environment, as the reaffirmation of metaphorical bonds between people and landscape situate the individual within a cosmic order. Power relations of age and gender are also played out in this context, as the 'appropriate' members of the community ensure -- or attempt to ensure -- that the correct procedures are carried out at the proper time and location.

From this perspective the landscape, far from being a mere backdrop for social negotiation, is inextricably linked to social practice; it is the material medium through which standards for living are constructed. The historically specific possibilities for such communal frameworks of moralities are vast, both in terms of structure and belief. For example, in two elegant and articulate ethnographic studies (Basso 1984, 1988), Keith Basso discusses the way in which obligations the Western Apache of central Arizona hold with respect to each other, and their responsibilities for the maintenance of communal and personal social identity, are expressed with reference to the relationship between the ancestral community and localities within the landscapes of everyday life. These places acquired their individual significance and qualities during the time of myth, when the ancestors moved among them and bestowed names upon them. Within the Apache tradition of moral narrative, stories associated with particular places are recounted in order to draw attention to present transgressions of the social code. The individual at whom the narrative is directed thereby forms an intensely personal link with the location in question: the place, encountered in the daily or seasonal routine, becomes a mnemonic both for correct behaviour and for the person (normally a close relation) who displayed their caring concern by formally voicing their criticism. Here the landscape is viewed

... as a repository of distilled wisdom, a stern but benevolent keeper of tradition, an ever-vigilant ally in the efforts of individuals and whole communities to put into practice a set of standards for social living that are uniquely and distinctively their own (Basso 1984, 45).

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Similarly, the landscape is utilized as a medium for the attainment of specific social goals within the formalized discourse of ‘speaking with names’, through which help and advice is offered to an individual in distress by simple references to particular places. The spoken placenames enable the listener to make a mental journey through the landscape, to stand in the footprints of the ancestors looking upon certain localities and to hear in his or her mind the collective voice of the ancestral community offering a way forward. In the words of Basso’s friend and informant Lola Machuse, speaking with names provides a pathway towards ‘reknowing the wisdom of [the] ancestors’ (Basso 1988, 108).

Elsewhere, physical, social and intellectual landscapes are integrated in quite different ways. Among the Lake Superior Ojibwa, for example, responsible membership of society entails not only the maintenance of relationships with other members of the human community, but with natural features of the landscape which, conceptualized as ‘living’, are accorded the status of persons (Nabokov 1986, 486). The Hopi, on the other hand, conceive of the distinctive San Francisco mountains in northeast Arizona not as people, but as the locale in which their *kachinas*, or rain-giving spirits, demonstrate acceptable social behaviour (Nabokov 1986, 485).

It is worth pointing out that the inappropriate use of ethnographic studies within archaeology has been often and rightly criticized, in particular the drawing of exact analogies between societies separated by a vast expanse of space and time. As an archaeologist, my concern here is not to elucidate or define the unique social frameworks which both enabled and constrained the desires, intentions and practice of past agents, but to acknowledge the possibilities of a material existence structured by past commitment, present obligation and future intention and, by partial, contemporary engagement with this materiality, to explore some of the means by which particular ways of knowing the world might have been obtained. The value of ethnographic and anthropological studies here resides not in revealing specific cosmologies but in demonstrating that such indissoluble, metaphorical links between physical and intellectual worlds exist and are indeed widespread, and that

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the quality of these links displays profound variability. In the present instance, the general perspective from which I want to embark upon a textual engagement with the chambered cairns on Arran acknowledges the potential for an intensely socialized, encultured landscape that involves

... reciprocal appropriation ... in which man invests himself in the landscape, and at the same time incorporates the landscape into his own most fundamental experience This appropriation is primarily a matter of imagination which is moral in kind And it is ... that moral act of imagination which constitutes his understanding of the physical world (Momaday 1974, 80; quoted in Basso 1984, 46-7).

I would argue that the megalithic cairns which emerge on this small island (just over 400 square km in area), sometime during the later fifth to earlier fourth millennium BC, are part of an ongoing interpretation of the place of humanity within a cosmos, which in some way expresses a similar mutual implication of people and the land.² The remainder of this chapter is concerned with the particular way in which monumental architecture was inscribed, as a medium for social contemplation and a focus for metaphorical and actual journeys through the landscape, into individual, unique locales on the island which were almost undoubtedly already redolent with the significance of past events and the claims of past, present and future communities.

Architecture and landscape; possibility and desire

East Bennan ARN 14³

East Bennan is a trapezoidal long cairn with a five-compartment axial chamber opening onto a deep, crescentic forecourt, in addition to one certain and two possible lateral chambers. Centrally placed on the south coast of the island (Fig. 3.1; Table 3.1), it is situated on a flat spur which projects into the wide, shallow basin of the Struey Water, just to the north of the point at which the burn flows into the sea. This level outcrop, while not a prominent feature of the landscape, is certainly very distinctive in that it is recognizable from over a

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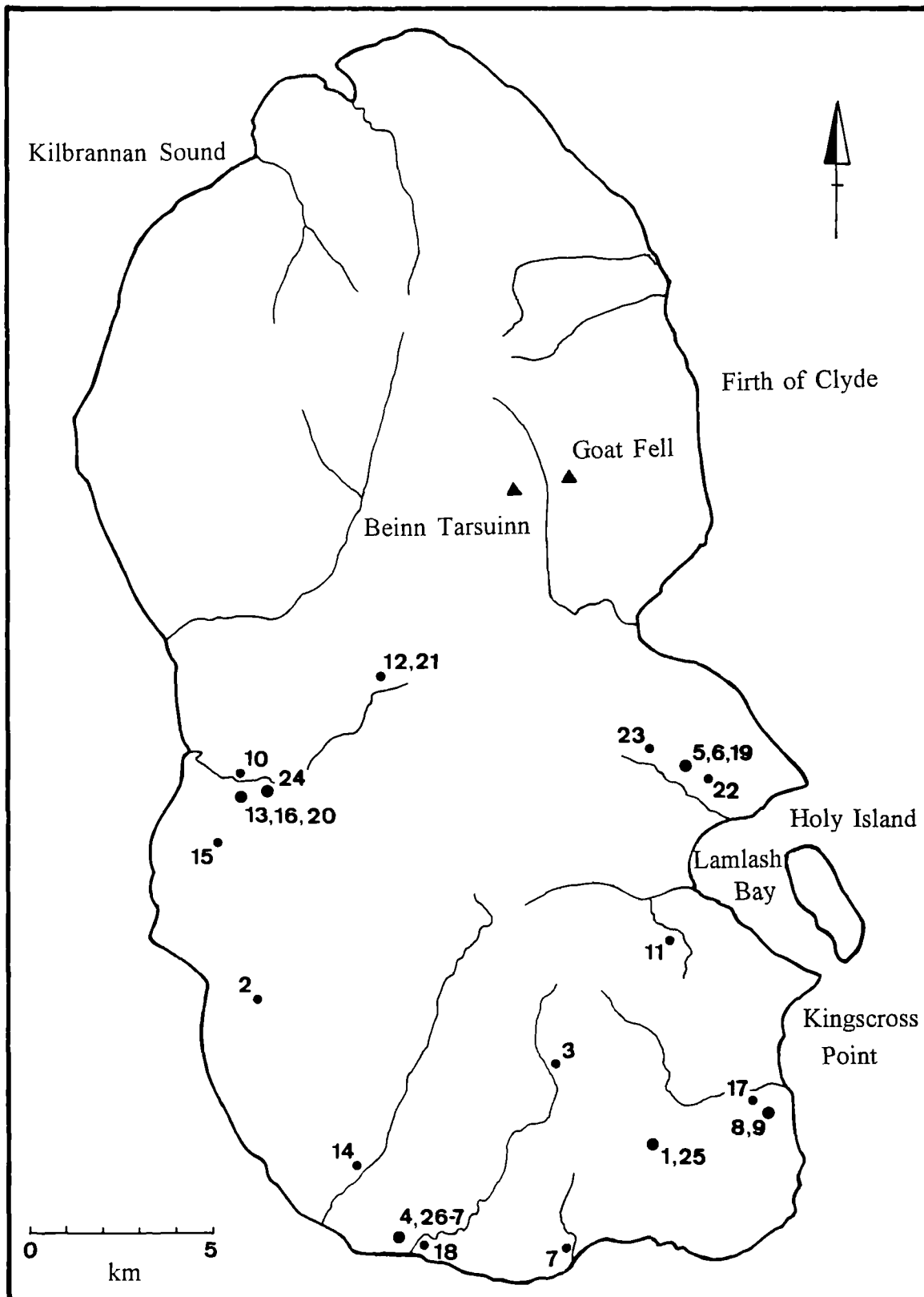


Figure 3.1 Sites mentioned in Chapter Three; numbers correlate to Table 3.1

Table 3.1

Sites mentioned in Chapter Three

Site		Code	Grid Reference
Chambered cairns			
1	Baile Meadonach	ARN 13	NS 019 235
2	Carmahome	ARN 18	NR 915 268
3	Carn Ban	ARN 10	NR 990 261
4	Clachaig	ARN 16	NR 949 211
5	Dunan Beag	ARN 7	NS 026 330
6	Dunan Mor	ARN 8	NS 028 331
7	East Bennan	ARN 14	NR 993 207
8	Giants' Graves	ARN 11	NS 043 246
9	Giants' Graves South	ARN 19	NS 043 246
10	Machrie Water		NR 903 329
11	Monamore	ARN 9	NS 017 289
12	Monyquil	ARN 2	NR 940 352
13	Moss Farm	ARN 21	NR 905 323
14	Sliderry Water	ARN 17	NR 942 237
15	Tormore I	ARN 4	NR 903 310
16	Tormore II	ARN 5	NR 906 322
17	Torr an Loisgte		NS 040 248
18	Torrylin	ARN 15	NR 955 210
Standing stones			
19	Dunan Beag		NS 026 330
20	Machrie Moor		NR 906 325
21	Monyquil		NR 940 352
22	North Blairmore		NS 029 327
Stone circles			
23	Blairmore Glen		NS 018 334
24	Machrie Moor		centred on NR 910 324
Non-megalithic round cairns and barrows			
25	Baile Meadonach II		NS 020 234
26	Ossian's Mound		NR 950 214
27	Torrylin Water		NR 952 211

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kilometre away to the north. The cairn is aligned east southeast-west northwest with the forecourt at the western end. At the eastern end the spur falls away sharply to the burn, the slope becoming increasingly gentle to the north and south. The facade faces onto a substantial area of level ground which extends *circa* 35m westwards from the portal stones, at which point the land breaks sharply uphill.

One of the most striking features of the situation of the monument is the way in which a bounded area is created within a relatively open landscape -- the site is, after all, a raised plateau with extensive views over gently undulating land to the north and over the sea to the south.⁴ A number of factors contribute to this spatial delimitation, the most obvious being the steep drop behind the cairn and the wall-like rise of the hillside facing the forecourt, both of which restrict movement and access and pull the focus towards the western end. To the east the land rises again rapidly beyond the burn, creating a close horizon which repeats and reiterates the breadth of the facade; together they act as a double backdrop to the forecourt and level area in front of the tomb, increasing the sense of bounded space. At the same time, the prominence of the cairn is enhanced by the fact that it rises up against clear space, set as it is at the edge of a precipitous drop (Fig. 3.2a).

Although the northern and southern aspects are much more open, the land slopes away in these directions, so that the level ground is restricted to the area directly in front of the tomb. The facade itself serves to emphasize the sense of enclosure, in that the horns extend right out to the point at which the ground begins to fall away on either side. In effect, the level area becomes bound into the architecture. A part of the landscape becomes demarcated through the domination of the monument over it, and yet this dominance is achieved through the sophisticated use of natural terrain. A theatrical analogy has often been used to describe the effect of the facades of similar tombs, whether of crescentic or flat form, in that a backdrop is established in front of which rituals may be acted out. However, it is really only the immediate forecourt area which has been considered in this light. At East Bennan it is apparent that this strongly-defined, 'dramatic' focal space extends well beyond the forecourt.

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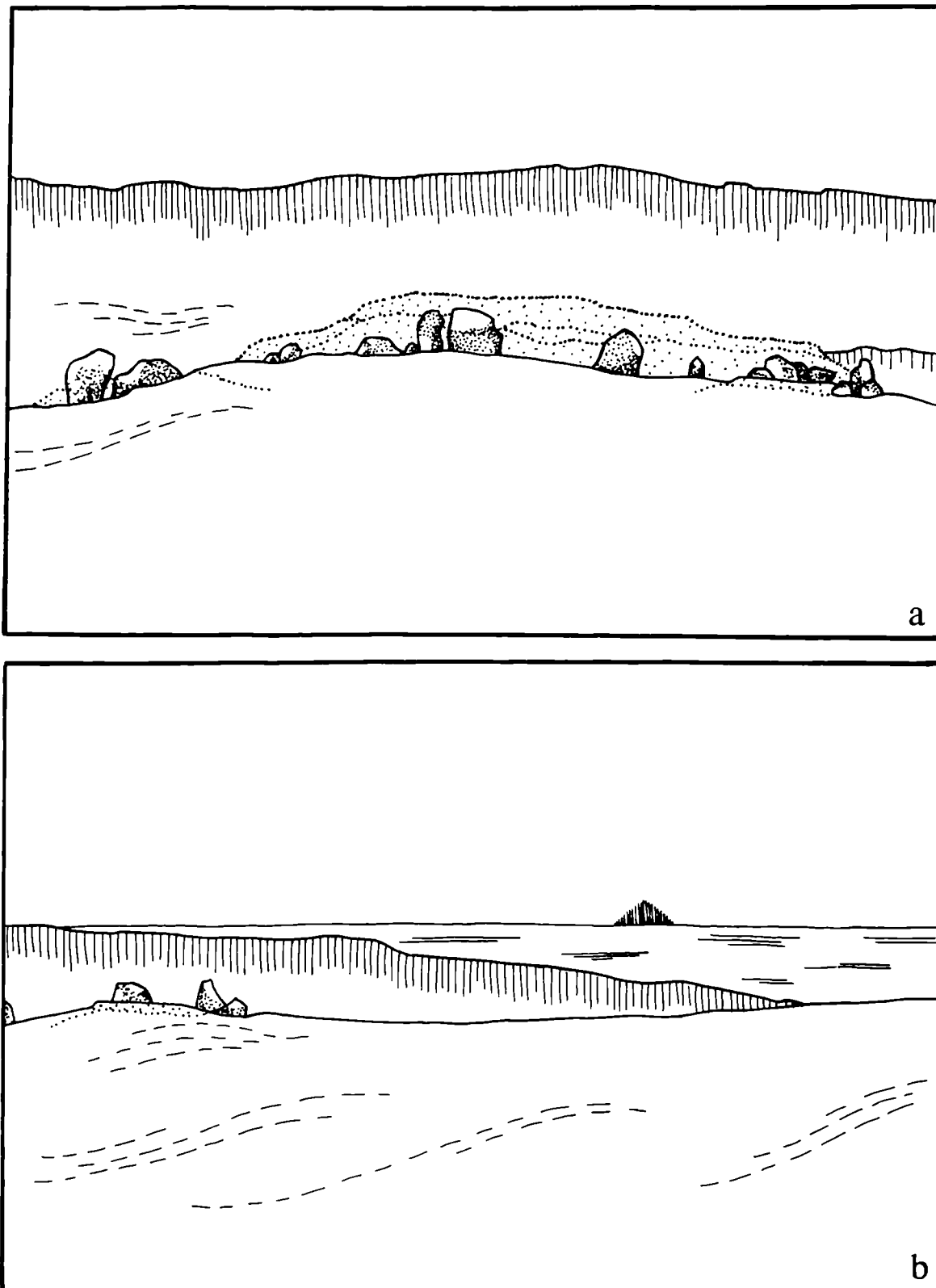


Figure 3.2 a: View of East Bennan to the ESE, across the level, bounded area. b: Looking towards Ailsa Craig across the dramatic area, with the tip of the southern arm of the facade to the left.

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To stand in front of the chambered cairn, 'enclosed' within an open landscape, is to be acted upon by the monument as it establishes a presence. But this is not a static process, nor does the triple interaction of landscape, monument and individual operate solely within the bounded area. Movement is an important element in this interaction, and it is through the subtle control of movement that certain types of engagement with the monument become possible while others are discouraged.

There are really only two directions from which to approach East Bennan -- from the north and south. An eastern approach is unlikely as it would involve an extremely hard climb up from the burn, while the approach from the west, although by no means impossible, is a steep and difficult descent from the crest of the hill. These two sharp breaks in the landscape frame the more accessible northern and southern approaches and direct movement towards the level area and forecourt. From the south the cairn is approached up a relatively steep slope and appears prominent on the horizon from a fair distance. Once the hills to the north become visible behind the cairn it becomes a slightly less insistent feature for some distance, until its sheer mass at close range reimposes its dominance upon the observer. The impact of the tomb's mass is fully appreciated from both northern and southern aspects since the entire length of the cairn is visible as the individual approaches perpendicular to the long axis.

From the north the approach is again steadily uphill, but on a gentler gradient. This creates a more open approach in which the cairn is a prominent horizon feature for longer, standing out between two hills on its well-defined plateau. Its mass is enhanced by the rock outcrop upon which it is placed, as from this aspect the ground falls away steeply from the eastern end and northeastern edge of the cairn. From the north the cairn remains on the horizon until one has almost arrived at the tomb itself. It is at this point that the view to the sea opens up and the distinctive, pyramidal profile of Ailsa Craig -- a remarkable peak of granite which emerges from the water 20km to the south of Arran -- appears almost directly ahead, with the Scottish mainland beyond. Progressing towards the

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level ground in front of the tomb, Ailsa Craig becomes a focal point framed by the rise of the valley sides, viewed obliquely across the plateau (Fig. 3.2b).

A distinct transformation of scale is involved in this progression towards the monument. The prominence of the long cairn itself, extending from the rock outcrop into the area of flat ground, operates upon the individual from a distance -- its mass creates a horizon focus and its linearity tends to direct movement towards the accessible western end. It is only much closer to the monument that the orientational control of the subject switches to a smaller scale, with the tomb facade becoming dominant. Having come on to a level with either horn of the facade the entire 'theatre of play' simultaneously opens up to and encloses the individual in a rapid moment of transformation, rather than by a gradual process of transition. Importantly, it is only at this point that the tomb portals can at last be approached head-on, involving a distinct change of direction, as the interaction of the enclosing arms of the crescentic facade and the sharp break of the hill to the west almost funnel the observer in towards the forecourt and chamber entrance. The tomb at East Bennan thus draws upon the landscape to control bodily movement and orientation over a considerable distance: through architectural embellishment a specific area of land becomes enclosed within and by the surrounding landscape.

Before the chambered cairn as we see it existed at East Bennan, before the possibly lengthy and complex sequence of construction was begun, the place itself had become invested with a particular significance. If we regard the routines of life as being structured through movement in which one is always coming from somewhere and going to somewhere else, it is pertinent to ask why *this* particular part of the landscape became integrated into the appropriation of spiritual resources. Why not the prominent crest of the nearby hill, or the deep, enclosed space within the glen beneath? In this context it is as important to consider the way in which the land -- the world -- appears *from* a particular place as it is to regard that locale situated within the surrounding landscape.

A reconsideration of the observations already stated may bring us some way

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forward in this direction. The positioning of the cairn serves to enhance features that are latent within the landscape rather than imposing a series of potentialities upon it. As I have noted, the level outcrop presents a distinctive if not prominent contour from a substantial distance, cradled as it is within a shallow basin. The uphill approaches and the sharp gradient shifts associated with the plateau create a defined area which acts as a natural hiatus in terms of movement through the landscape. Having reached a limited area of level terrain, continued progression involves further uphill or downhill movement; consequently, the sense of arrival and departure is intensified. Finally, the framing of the striking silhouette of Ailsa Craig rising up from the sea on the southern horizon emphasizes links with other places, an affirmation of the 'here' and 'there' opposition which defines and at the same time integrates specific loci within the landscape.

Torrylin ARN 15

The chambered tomb at Torrylin has been quarried extensively on the one hand and added to during field clearance on the other, so that the original form of the cairn is at present indeterminable. Four compartments of a chamber remain, aligned north northwest-south southeast; there may have been further compartments and/or a facade to the north northwest. The monument is situated at the southern end of the wide, gently sloping fields associated with a Late Glacial shoreline at 20m OD, with the cliffs of the south coast falling away directly behind the cairn and the tomb entrance facing out onto a substantial area of flat ground to the north.

Torrylin sits within an extremely open landscape. And yet, as at East Bennan, the monument creates the impression of bounded space in relation to the surrounding locale. To the south and southwest the limits are strongly defined by the cliffs of the raised beach, while to the west and northwest the land continues to drop sharply down to the Torrylin Water. The landscape stretches out expansively to the north and east; however, as the slope travels northeast-southwest, the break of land to level ground some 50m away from the cairn runs parallel to the long axis of the chamber, acting as a subtle but perceptible boundary. A defined level

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area is thus closely associated with the monument. This small scale interrelationship is apparent notwithstanding the present denuded state of the cairn, which even now is an imposing feature in the landscape as it rises up against the sea and sky and dominates the immediate locale. The increased mass and potentially greater linearity of the original cairn would tend to direct the focus more strongly upon a central area in front of the tomb, and a facade, if at any stage incorporated into the monument, would serve to enhance the definition of bounded space. Torrylin, like East Bennan, demonstrates the way in which the subtleties of landscape may be intensified through the concrete physicality of monumental architecture.

The interplay between natural terrain and artificial construction places certain demands upon the observer -- it in effect manipulates the subject. This works at various scales. With regard to Torrylin, we can consider the operation of the monument from a broader geographical perspective. The situation of the cairn at the edge of the raised beach makes it a prominent feature on the horizon, visible for a great distance from the inland approaches as the land slopes gently but continuously down towards the sea. It draws the eye, and where the eye is directed the body often follows. The avenues of approach are restricted, however, by the physical barriers of the old shoreline cliffs to the south and the steep cut of the burn to the west.

Approaching from the north, then, the monument appears silhouetted obliquely against the flat expanse of the sea (Fig. 3.3a). From a distance the northeast-southwest slope tends to draw the individual in towards the level ground which stretches out in front of the cairn; nearer the monument the subject moves towards the tomb entrance as he or she avoids the drop down to Torrylin Water, which in fact renders it impossible to approach the entrance on alignment with the long axis of the chamber for more than about 100m. As at East Bennan the interaction of monument, landscape and subject involves the control of movement in which directional and orientational change are important factors.

It is at this point that the significance of natural features in relation to the

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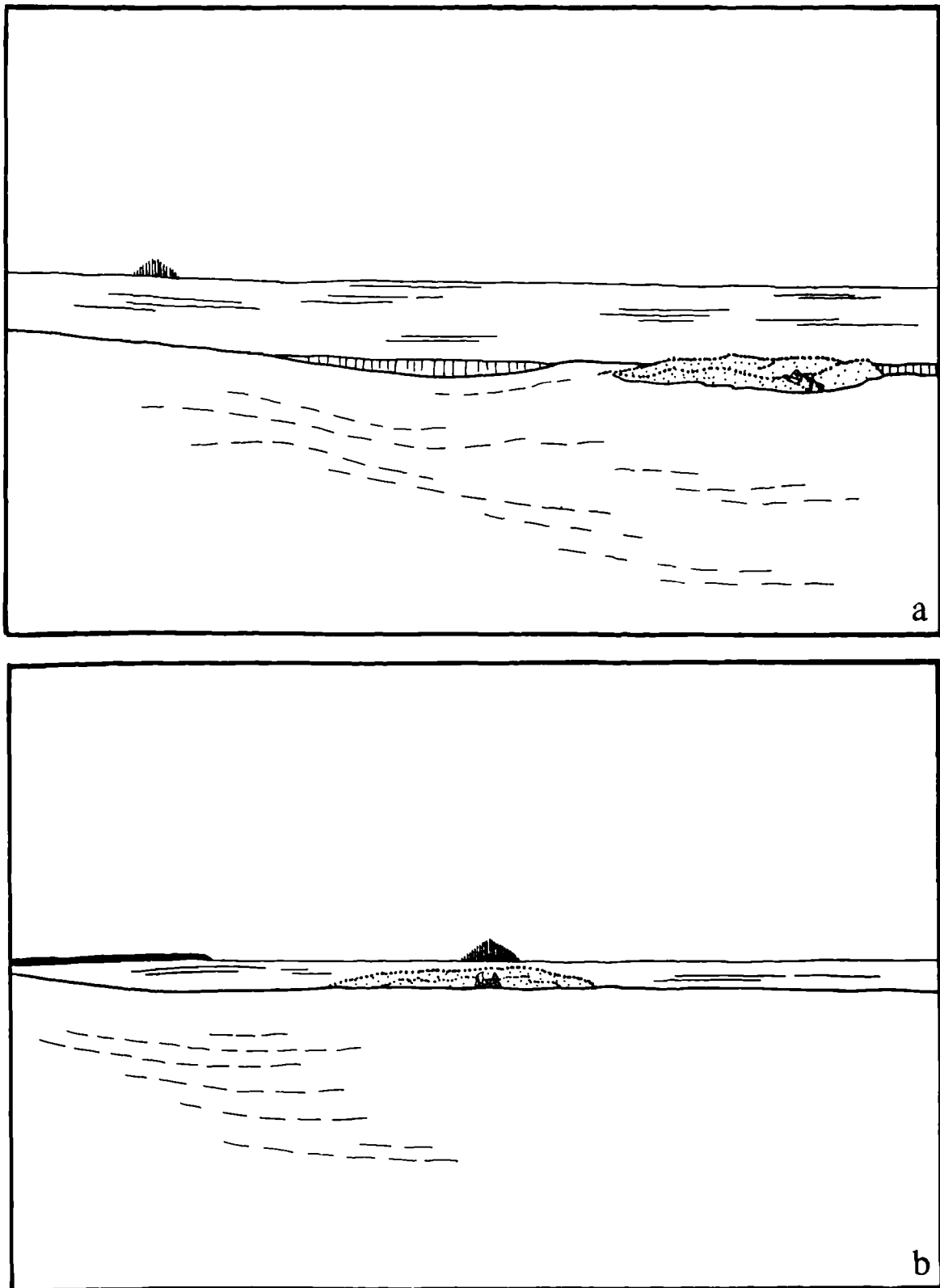


Figure 3.3 a: Looking S to Torrylin, with Ailsa Craig on the horizon. b: Looking SSE towards Torrylin and Ailsa Craig, c. 100m from the remains of the northernmost chamber compartment.

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monument becomes even more apparent. Having aligned oneself with the chamber's long axis, Ailsa Craig rises up directly behind the entrance (Fig. 3.3b). A striking double horizon results as the cairn stands up against the sea from a wide expanse of level ground with Ailsa Craig immediately above it, emerging from the boundary between sea and sky. The island remains visible above the chamber until a distance of about 20m from the orthostats of the northernmost chamber compartment (Fig 3.4a). Even accounting for the possibility of further compartments to the north and greater cairn depth, the monument would not completely obstruct a view of Ailsa Craig until one was almost upon it. The relationship between the natural feature and the monument changes as the subject moves through the landscape -- at first a distinctive landmark on the distant horizon, the island snaps into focus from within the 'enclosed' area linked to the cairn, reifying the presence of the tomb and exerting a pull on the individual until the tomb itself eventually becomes the sole focal point.

Making the gradual descent to Torrylin from the gentle hills to the northeast, perpendicular to the chamber's long axis, the cairn again stands out against the sea on the cliff edge, while on the horizon above it Sanda Island repeats the rise of the cairn mound. Once again the subject is channelled in towards the tomb entrance by the alignment of the downward slope on the one hand and the precipitous drop of the cliff edge on the other.

From the east, the cairn is visible for a great distance, occasionally dipping out of view as one descends through a rolling landscape. Kintyre forms a distant backdrop to the west, while Island Davaar reiterates the cairn profile above and beyond it. In this direction, the chambered cairn at Clachaig is visible as a mound rising up on the cliff edge just over half a kilometre away (see below p. 94).

Considering the significance of place at Torrylin, it would seem to constitute another natural hiatus in terms of movement, in that the steep drop of the land to the south and west makes it impossible to merely pass by or through this particular place. Rather, a distinct change of register must occur here. One can approach along the flat expanse of the raised beach and, once arrived, return the

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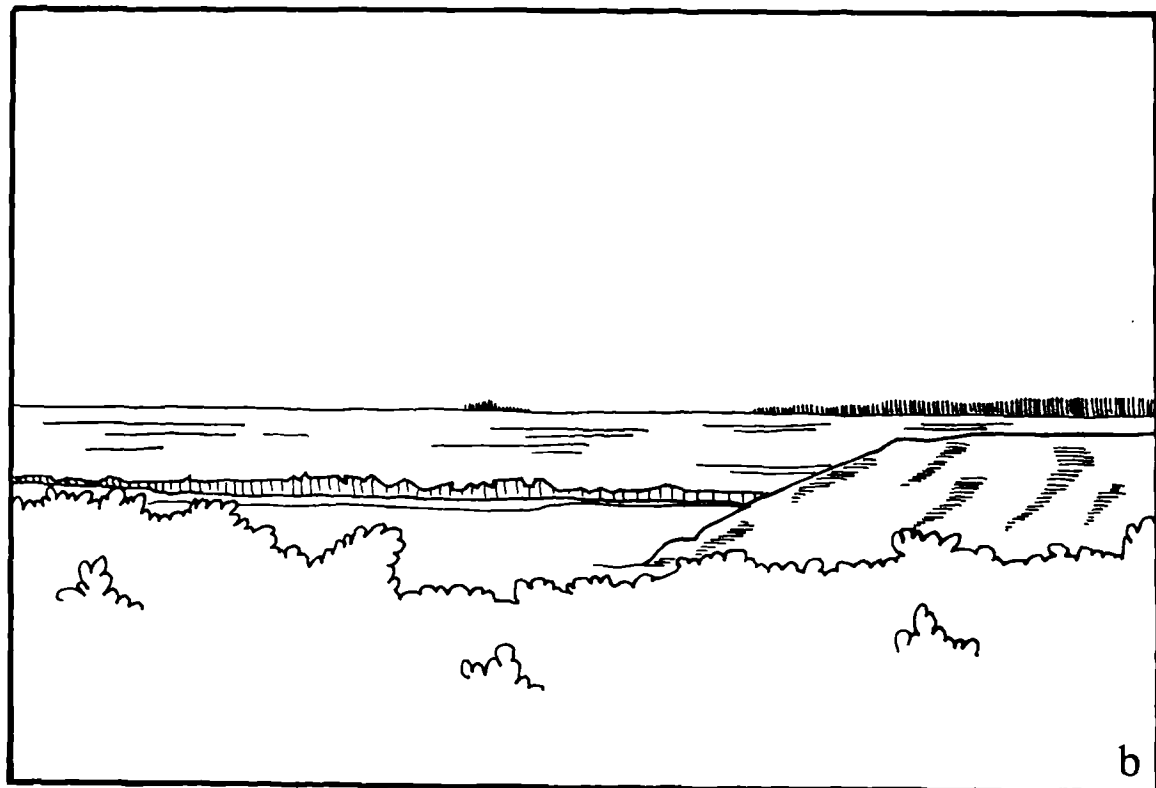
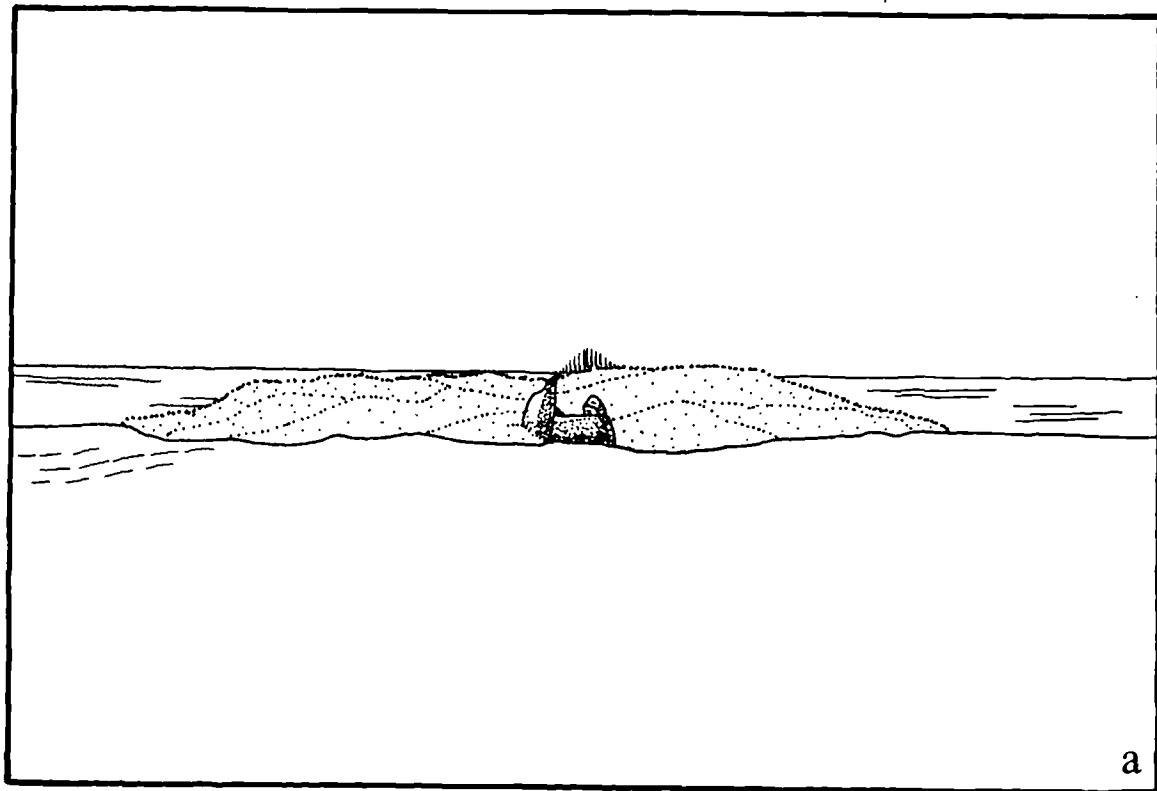


Figure 3.4 a: Fusion of Torrylin cairn and Ailsa Craig. b: Looking SW from the dramatic area at Clachaig to Sanda Island, with distinctive cliff formation of the 35m Late Glacial shoreline to the right.

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same way or proceed in a markedly different direction. On the other hand, to move from Torrylin down the cliffs to the sea or *vice versa* involves a change in the nature of progression. Either way, the place itself is a focus for change in movement and orientation -- it is not somewhere accessible equally from all directions or in the same way, and as such arrival and departure acquire a certain definition. Additionally, it is surely significant that the distinctive reference points of Ailsa Craig, Sanda and Island Davaar are visible from this point in the landscape, along with Kintyre and the mainland -- distant if familiar places which, seen from this particular perspective, could be drawn into narratives linking their qualities and the mythic and historical events associated with them to those of Torrylin, and to the lived experience of the communities who were intimately involved with the latter locale. The infusion of monumentality into this landscape seems to articulate these links more solidly, its specific material aspects encouraging a particular way of seeing and interpreting the world.

Clachaig ARN 16

The cairn at Clachaig is today a roughly oval mound with the remains of a two-compartment chamber and a possible portal stone just visible; Henshall notes that a facade may exist beneath the cairn material which extends, at a good depth, about 5m in front of the postulated entrance (1972, 390). Situated 500m west of Torrylin, the monument is similarly sited at the 20m Late Glacial shoreline, a conspicuous feature visible, for example, from over half a kilometre away to the north and east. Its long axis is aligned roughly northwest-southeast, with the land dropping away swiftly behind the cairn to the south, southeast and southwest. The entrance faces onto an area of relatively flat ground cut by a modern drainage channel at a distance of about 25m. Beyond this, to the northwest, the land begins to rise very gradually and, some 60m from the cairn, breaks sharply upwards into a steep hillside which is in fact another, higher Late Glacial shoreline formation at *circa* 35m OD. To the north and east the landscape is much more open, sloping down gently towards the sea.

As at the previous cairns, the siting of the monument within the landscape

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establishes an area which interacts closely with the tomb and creates a sense of demarcation and delimitation. Although the aspect to the southwest is very open in that one has a distant view out over the sea, the cliff edge behind the cairn represents a very real physical boundary in this direction; this and the hillside opposing the chamber entrance place restrictions on movement and draw the focus in towards the level ground in front of the tomb. From the perspective of this level area the mass of the cairn assumes considerable prominence, rising up against the sky. Its dominance over the observer extends right out to the foot of the northwestern hillside, an effect which would be further enhanced by the elements of linearity and enclosure a potential facade would introduce. From the opposite perspective, from the chamber entrance, the subject is confronted by the wall-like face of the hill -- a closed view and a close horizon. Again it seems not inappropriate to regard the reciprocal influence of cairn and hillside acting upon the space between them as allied to the creation of dramatic space.

On three sides, then, this space is strongly bounded. To the northeast the area is much more vaguely defined but the landscape, although expansive, does slope down towards and bring the focus onto the cairn. Due to the restrictions imposed by the lambing season it was not possible to walk the northeastern approach to Clachaig; however, the following conclusions would seem reasonable. As noted above, the cairn is a prominent feature for a good distance to the northeast. This, the downhill approach, and the effective narrowing of the land area as the northwestern slope of the 35m shoreline runs down towards and blends into the edge of the lower raised beach, all combine to draw the individual in towards the monument. In addition, the outline of Ailsa Craig on the southern horizon operates from a greater distance as an additional focus beyond the cairn, intensifying the pull on the observer. From the northeast one approaches perpendicular to the long axis of the cairn; on drawing near, the cliff edge on which the cairn sits encourages movement towards the entrance; finally, one must be deep within the enclosed, 'dramatic' area before the tomb can be approached on the chamber alignment, and only after a distinct change of direction. Yet even now

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movement can continue in a southwesterly direction, in the sense that the eye is drawn towards the silhouette of Sanda Island on the horizon (Fig. 3.4b). Once again the situation of the monument can be seen to manipulate both the potentialities of the landscape and the action of the subject -- movement is directed, channelled, funnelled; certain options seem more possible, more desirable than others; references to other places are invited.

These elements operate at a larger scale too, in that certain approaches would seem to take priority over others. Coming from the north, for example, many of the same demands are made upon the individual. Movement is quite strongly channelled down towards the tomb by the southwards slope of land running down towards the sea and the sharper gradient of the higher ground to the west, to the individual's right; significantly, the cart track that today gives access to Clachaig cairn hugs the foot of this western rise as it progresses almost due south. Again the linear nature of the cairn and the 'closing-in' of landforms towards the monument control the movement and orientation of the subject at close range. The northern and northeastern approaches seem more likely -- more 'thinkable', perhaps -- than, for example, an approach from the south or southwest which would involve a hard climb up from the narrow strip of flat coastal land below, only to arrive behind and practically on top of the cairn. This configuration mimics the eastern and southern approaches to East Bennan and Torrylin respectively.

Approaching from the east Clachaig appears as a distinctive feature in the landscape from a substantial distance. Certainly visible today as a gorse-covered mound from the chambered tomb at Torrylin, it would have been even more prominent as a grey stone cairn free of vegetation. Progressing along the flat ground of the raised beach edge the individual is again impelled towards the chamber entrance by the drop behind the cairn, and at the same time drawn in towards the bounded, theatrical space by the oblique linearity of the monument.

To situate a monument on this southern stretch of raised beach is to create a feature of immediate prominence and long distance visibility, since any interruption of a continuum of open, relatively level ground is bound to stand out, especially

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when seen against a flat background of sea and sky. Take away the cairns at Clachaig or Torrylin however, and there is nothing particularly visually remarkable about these specific locales. And yet, distinctive features do exist within this landscape. It would have been quite possible, for example, to construct the monument at Clachaig a mere 200m to the west, on a projection of the 35m shoreline which is an obvious landmark (Fig. 3.4b). As discussed for Torrylin, the significance of place here seems to lie less in any visual particularity than in a change of register. Clachaig cairn is placed precisely at the junction of a broad expanse of gently sloping land and a stretch of higher, hilly ground dropping down to steep cliffs. The opposition is between an area of fairly unrestricted possibilities for movement and one in which access and passage are much more limited. On a larger scale, the cairn can be seen to sit between the undulation of the landscape to the north and the flat expanse of the sea to the south, between the bounded and the infinite -- but an infinity encroached upon, on a clear day, by the outlines of the mainland and the islands.

Carn Ban ARN 10

Carn Ban is a largely intact, rectangular long cairn with two axial chambers: the main chamber of four compartments opens out onto a deeply concave forecourt while the other, smaller chamber lies at the opposite end of the cairn. The monument is situated on the northern rise of the steep-sided valley of Allt an t-Sluice, about 6km from the south coast of Arran. The hillside runs from northeast to southwest; the cairn is aligned slightly across the slope with the crescentic, orthostatic facade facing uphill, northeast by north.

The dense cover of mature forestry plantation which surrounds the cairn today creates a strong impression of enclosure. However, even without the trees a delimitation of space can be seen to operate by means of the siting of the monument.⁵ To begin with, when the individual faces the forecourt, the extreme gradient of the hillside dropping down evenly to the southwest means the great mass of the cairn rises up against clear sky. This feature alone creates a strong spatial boundary, the effect of which would be heightened by the mural nature of

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the facade in its original state, before inundation by hillwash. As at East Bennan, the hillside rising up beyond the burn on the opposite side of the valley presents a linear backdrop which both reinforces the bounding qualities of cairn and facade and, through the proximity of the horizon, draws the landscape inwards towards the observer (Fig. 3.5a). Looking out from the entrance portals to the northeast, the continuing uphill slope is another close visual barrier which encloses the area still further.

At Carn Ban the sense of bounded space would have been extremely strong within the forecourt. The substantial height of the central part of the cairn, the deep crescent of the facade enclosing an area of land which sweeps down towards the entrance without any break in gradient, and the way in which the ground falls away beyond the tomb all contribute to this act of demarcation. Henshall has noted the slight nature of the cairn at the ends of the facade, which probably never reached the tops of the orthostats defining the horns (1972, 381). On such a slope even a very small amount of cairn material would stand up against clear space, so that the sense of enclosure created by the encircling arms of the facade can be achieved without the necessity of massive construction. The presence established by the monument, however, does extend beyond the forecourt. At East Bennan and Clachaig a level area in front of the forecourt is defined, partly by breaks in gradient, which falls under the influence of the chambered cairn. At Carn Ban there is no such level area, but the physical projection of dominance can be felt from a good distance away. As at East Bennan, once the subject comes into line with the projecting tip of the facade, even at a substantial remove from the cairn itself, a focal transition occurs in which the trajectories of possibility for engagement with the monument converge. It is at this point that the directional focus, until now centred on the locale in a more general sense, becomes completely controlled by the tomb itself. We move from a view of the monument within the landscape to one of the landscape within the monument.

Again, as with the monuments so far discussed, it is not possible to approach the forecourt on a direct alignment with the main chamber for any great

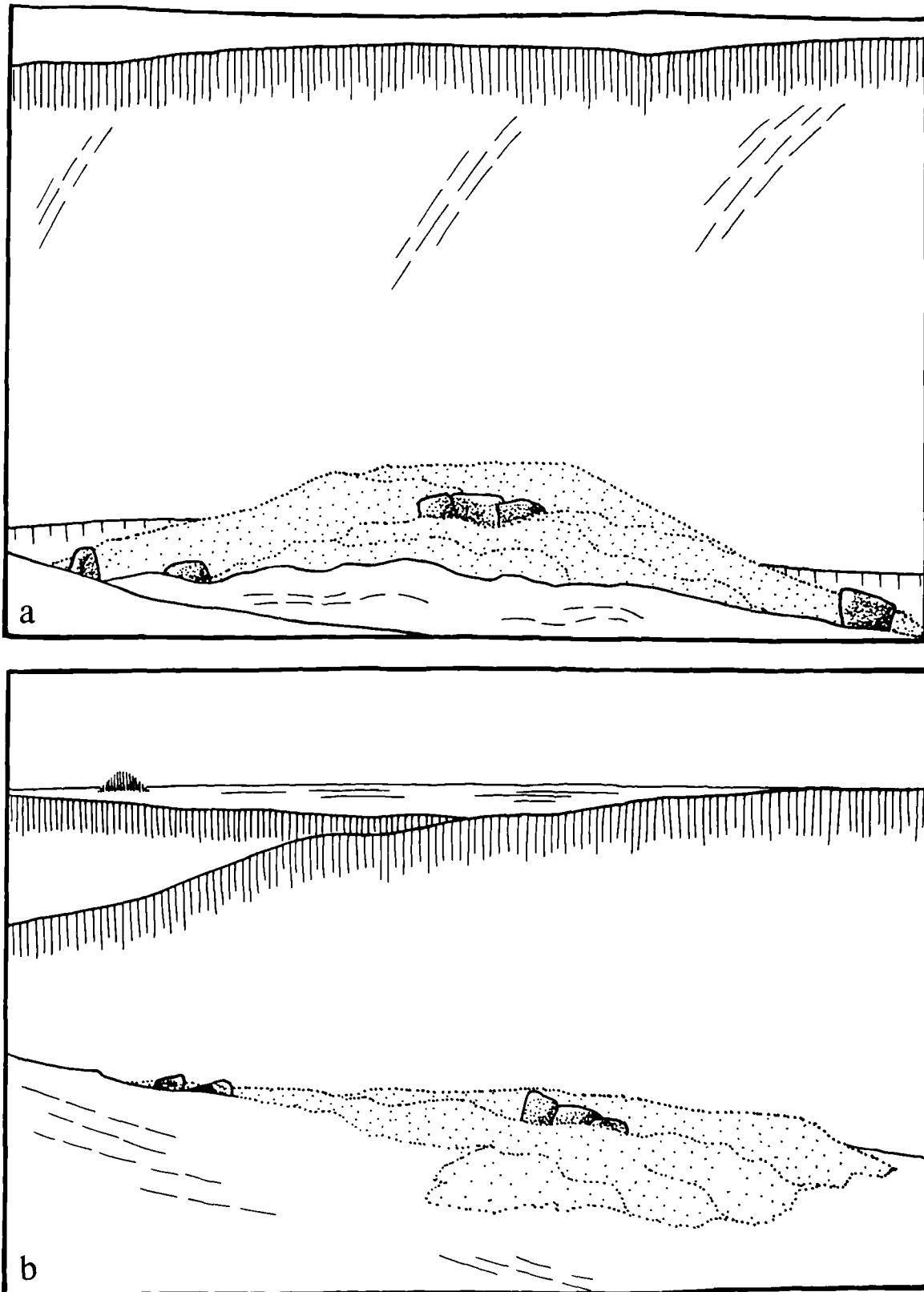


Figure 3.5 a: View of Carn Ban to the SW, facing the entrance. b: Looking S across the dramatic area and forecourt, with Ailsa Craig on the horizon.

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distance, as its situation high on the valley side prevents the cairn coming into view from the northeast, below the observer, before about 100m from the entrance. In addition, the descent from this direction is very sharp, running almost straight downhill, and so is perhaps less likely. Slightly less difficult would be to approach the cairn from below and skirt round the perimeter to the northeast end; by far the most accessible route would be along the valley contour from the northwest and southeast, roughly perpendicular to the long axis of the monument. The layout of the forestry plantation only permits approaches of a reasonable length from the north and east. Much of what follows may also apply to the culmination of approaches from the northwest and southeast however, as the differentiation of the northeastern end of the monument by orthostats standing proud of cairn material at the extremities of the facade, as well, perhaps, as a tendency to aim for the immediate skyline, might have drawn movement ultimately towards the forecourt end.

When the entrance to the main chamber is approached obliquely down and across the slope from north and east, the bulk of the cairn is conspicuous, its mass rising strongly from the downward slope of the hill. The linear nature of the monument is obvious, particularly from the east. This tends to draw the subject in towards an alignment with the cairn's long axis; the downhill approach and the expansive breadth of the facade as it reaches outwards and upwards intensify this channelling towards the forecourt and chamber entrance, a process which takes place well outside the forecourt area. From the north, because the forecourt is oriented towards the observer, one is confronted by the expanse of the facade from much further back and the processes of movement control and focal transformation are initiated from a greater distance. Significantly, it is from this northern approach that the view stretches out far beyond the cairn to the sea, the key focus being Ailsa Craig roughly 25km to the south, framed by the rising land in the foreground (Fig. 3.5b). Indeed, this miniature island would also be visible on the horizon for some distance as one walked towards the tomb along the side of the glen from the northwest. This conjunction through bodily movement of

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topography, a distinctive natural feature and a monumental locale is strongly reminiscent of that encountered on the approach to East Bennan from the north, although on a larger scale due to the greater distances involved at the inland site of Carn Ban. I think it fair to suggest that both this southward approach to East Bennan and the route towards Carn Ban discussed here -- along the side of the valley from the northwest, eventually turning down, southwards, towards the forecourt facade -- would have been the 'best' way to encounter the cairns. In other words, these particular, directed sequences of human engagement with landscape and architecture may have been the preferred pathways of interpretive discourse among the living, the ancestral community and the mythic forces of the land.

Approaching from below the monument, from between south and west, the cairn is massive -- an impressive feature on the hillside which stands against the horizon from the valley bottom right to the edge of the cairn itself. The approach to the presumed entrance of the southwestern axial chamber is again dominated by the presence of the monument. This is a presence reinforced by sheer bulk and mass, the weight of the cairn almost bearing down upon the subject on the steep upward climb, rather than the presence established through enclosure and the manipulation of movement experienced at the forecourt end. The same outward references may well be in operation however, as the sea horizon and Ailsa Craig, although today obscured by conifers, should come into view on the uphill approach.

Horace Fairhurst said of Carn Ban that 'the site is most unusual in that the cairn ... runs uphill and the well-marked forecourt is on a distinct slope' (1981, 20). However, many of the same factors are evident here that have been discussed for East Bennan, Torrylin and Clachaig. Certainly, the landscape in which Carn Ban sits is of a less open character than these lowland sites, with much more restricted views. The sense of an enclosed, limited area in front of the tomb is therefore perhaps more intense at the former, but the nature of the impression of boundaries upon the individual is similar. Then too, there is the inability to approach the

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facade on a direct alignment with the cairn for any great distance, a situational feature which works in tandem with the monumental architecture to force directional changes as one is drawn in towards the forecourt. The use of sharp gradients to enhance the bulk and skyline effect of the cairn and to draw the focus inwards is a repeated element, as is the occurrence of prominent landmarks within the sightlines of the monument. What is perhaps more difficult is to assess the pre-existing significance of place for Carn Ban, beyond reiterating that the framing of Ailsa Craig by the rising sides of the glen affords the only long distance vista from the site, creating a certain linearity of focus towards the sea horizon.

Monamore ARN 9

The long cairn at Monamore encloses an axial chamber of three compartments. Double portal stones form the central point of a wide, shallow, asymmetrical facade of 'post and panel' construction -- orthostats linked by sections of dry-walling. The body of the cairn extends beyond the ends of the facade; stone robbing has blurred its original outline, but it may well have been of trapezoidal form. The monument lies at the edge of a gently sloping terrace in the small, steep-sided glen of Allt Lagriehesk, just over 2km inland from the southeast coast of the island. The cairn is aligned northeast-southwest, angled very slightly across the slope of the hillside, with the forecourt facing onto the relatively level area of the terrace and the body of the cairn running off down the hill. Level ground extends about 25m from the entrance to the southwest, beyond which the steep gradient of the glen resumes.

When one stands facing the entrance the mound of the cairn rises up markedly against clear space, despite the fact that the greatest depth of the cairn material does not reach above a metre. Euan MacKie's excavations demonstrated that the cairn in its original state may never have risen much higher than this, with the chamber capstones perhaps remaining visible (MacKie 1964). Certainly, immediately behind the facade the cairn seems only to have reached a level with the top of the drystone panels between the forecourt orthostats (*circa* 75cm). Thus, the outer portal stones may well have projected over a metre clear of the body of

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the cairn, presenting a particularly imposing elevation against the immediate skyline. Directly beyond the cairn to the northeast the other side of the valley rises to its highest point, mimicking the graded heights of the facade orthostats descending from a central maximum; above this again is a glimpse of the sea. To the left of the monument, round to the west, the landscape stretches out far into the distance, while the eastern and southeastern prospect is the much more uniform horizon of the opposing valley slope in the middle distance. The distinctive peaks of The Ross to the northwest and of Holy Island to the east bracket the expanse of the facade within this landscape. Although the view is today largely obscured by the forestry plantation which surrounds Monamore, the glimpses afforded through the trees and unpublished photographs of MacKie's pre-afforestation excavations permit the following observations.

I have discussed the creation of bounded space in front of the tombs at East Bennan, Torrylin and Clachaig, in the context of an open landscape. Features found at these sites can also be seen at Monamore, but they may operate in a subtly different manner to establish a focal area over which the tomb extends its influence. To begin with, the breaks in slope which define the northeastern and southwestern limits of the terrace are natural boundaries with a strong visual effect. The placing of the facade at the very point at which the land breaks down towards the valley bottom emphasizes both the linear nature of this bounding and the sense of enclosure, of being poised between the rise of the hillside and the broad mass of the cairn. Above and beyond the entrance portals the relatively close backdrop of the glen may serve to direct the focus in towards the monument. But this is achieved in greater part by the contrasts posed by the long distance views which frame the forecourt. The separation of the sharply curtailed level terrace from this distant and far-reaching panorama is a marked one, in which the immediacy of the small scale locus of the chambered tomb is stressed in relation to the abstraction of distance. The sense of 'here' as opposed to 'there' is intensified. The situation of the tomb, placed so that the maximum possible area of flat ground stretches out in front of the forecourt, points to the centrality of this focal space. The bounded

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locale in which the monument exerts its dominance over the subject is in effect a part of the monument itself.

Monamore differs from the chambered tombs previously discussed in that the means of access are much less restricted at the former. The slope of the glen is less extreme than at Carn Ban, for example, so that although steep, an approach down the hill from the southwest on a direct alignment with the cairn and chamber is possible for an appreciable distance. The continuous, even nature of the slope means that in the context of relatively open woodland, cultivable fields and pasture, the monument would most likely be visible for a long period, occasionally dipping out of view here and there.⁶ The terrace-edge position would also maintain the cairn's skyline profile for a good distance. The same is true when approaching from beneath the cairn, from the northeast -- the combination of the sharp uphill gradient below and the marked levelling-out of the terrace in front makes the tomb prominent on the closest horizon, despite the slight nature of the cairn in comparison with the great mass of material of which monuments like Carn Ban are composed.

The terrace extends along the contour of the hillside for some distance to the north northwest and south southeast, and this would seem to be a natural route of passage. From the south southeast the sense of linearity would be quite strong, the long sides of the valley framing the sharp rise of The Ross beyond. From this aspect the tomb is approached obliquely, with the forecourt opening out towards the observer. From here the asymmetry of the facade is apparent, with the flatter, western arm stretching along the edge of the terrace and across the distant view of the hills, while the more deeply curved eastern half tends to direct movement away from the downward break of slope, deeper into the level area fronting the tomb.

Henshall (1972, 39; 67) has discussed the asymmetrical nature of the facade at Monamore (Fig. 3.13). She notes that a more regular, shallow crescent would result if the inner pair of portal stones were taken as the starting point, moving on to postulate a sequence of construction comprising a chamber with small, single portals, followed by the addition of a facade, followed in turn by the insertion of

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the larger outer portals which were then joined to the rest of the facade by dry-walling. This is perhaps a rather convoluted attempt to explain away the asymmetry of the facade. MacKie certainly considered the possibility of two-phase construction in which the large portals and facade were erected in front of the smaller portal stones, but found the excavation evidence inconclusive, beyond noting that the facade was constructed on the old ground surface and that the forecourt deposits seem to have accumulated against it (MacKie 1964, 20-1). Henshall's three-stage sequence seems to be geared primarily towards a hypothetical desire for symmetry. However, the arc of the forecourt would be undeniably irregular even if it were centred upon the inner portals. The imbalance may seem slight in plan, but is in reality a distinct aspect of the architecture, particularly evident from an angled perspective. In any case, there is no question that the builders of Monamore could not have created a perfectly symmetrical construction if they had so desired. The form of the facade must therefore be intentional, and rather than trying to explain it away we should attempt to come to terms with this intentionality, moving away from the plan and into the integrated architectural and topographical locale.

MacKie's excavations found no trace of a pit, post-hole or stone-hole representing a pre-existing feature southeast of the entrance which might have been accommodated by a deeper curve to the eastern arm of the facade. The motivation for asymmetrical construction may therefore operate at a larger scale. Following the valley contour from the north northwest, one approaches the cairn at a strongly oblique angle. The western arm of the facade stretches out towards the individual, clearly marking the boundary between the level terrace and the steep ground running down towards the burn below. This tends to draw the subject in towards the central area in front of the entrance. At the same time, one is confronted by the deeper arc of the farther arm which acts as a visual barrier emphasizing the sense of enclosure. Significantly, beyond this eastern curve are visible the rugged upper slopes of Mullach Mor and Mullach Beag on Holy Island (Fig. 3.6a): the most distinctive landmarks visible from Monamore are framed beyond a more

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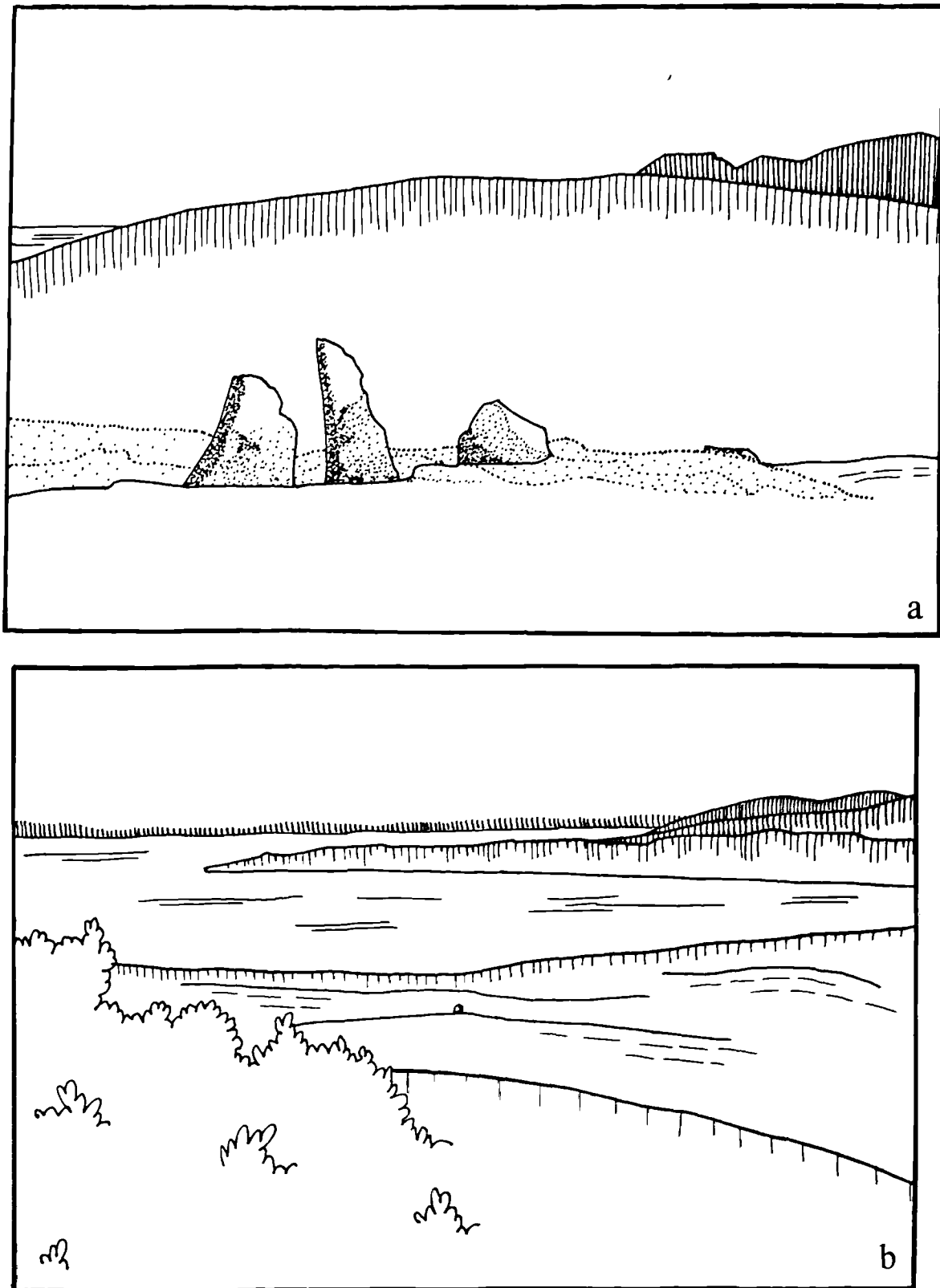


Figure 3.6 a: Looking E across the eastern arm of the facade at Monamore towards Holy Island; portal stones at left. b: Looking S from Dunan Mor, across Lamlash Bay to Kingscross Point, with North Blairmore monolith at centre.

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definitely demarcated perimeter. The strong focus of Holy Island draws the subject onward, while the barrier of the facade prevents the monument from losing its priority to the pull of the seaward vista to the north, and at the same time makes controlled reference to the progressive nature of landscape by acting as the nearest horizon in a layered sequence of horizons which concludes between the sea and sky. The sense of arrival, of place, is articulated by this visual dialectic.

Dunan Beag ARN 7

Dunan Beag is the largest surviving long cairn on Arran, 43m in length. The cairn today appears slightly trapezoidal but may have been of more rectangular form originally. An axial chamber of at least three compartments would seem to have opened on to a deep, concave forecourt, while one of at least two compartments lies at the opposite end of the cairn. The monument is situated near the southeast coast, on the steep northeastern flank of Blairmore Glen, aligned practically north-south on a section of hillside with a less acute incline. The long axis lies diagonally across the northeast-southwest slope, with the forecourt facing uphill. To the south and west the land falls rapidly, whereas the eastern side of the tomb is bounded by much more level ground. The forecourt too gives onto an area of flatter land which continues roughly 30m northwards before rising swiftly once more.

Again, the situation of the monument develops elements immanent within the landscape to control the individual's spatial awareness, to create a presence which operates visually but which is perhaps felt more than seen. The mind is particularly susceptible to suggestion; what becomes apparent through a contemporary experience of these monuments is that manipulation of the subject is achieved as often by discreet suggestion as by insistent demand. The interplay between the two directs a reflexive encounter with the monument and the landscape in which we move between desire and possibility.

The functioning of sharp breaks of slope as concrete boundaries is a recurring feature; at Dunan Beag, the level area beyond the forecourt is delimited to the north and northeast in this manner, as the sharp gradient of the hillside

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suddenly resumes. Another familiar element is the mural effect of the facade rising against clear space, with the cairn running on down the valley side. Beyond the facade one looks south over Lamlash Bay, the eye following one line of hills after the other, each increasingly high and increasingly distant, finally coming to rest at the strongly linear profile of the southern upland plateau. The linearity and sheer mass of this horizon act as a significant visual barrier, preventing the focus from being swept out over the cairn to the vast expanse of landscape beyond. To the right and left of the cairn a sense of finite space results from, on the one hand, the enclosing nature of the flanks of Meall Buidhe rising on the other side of the glen, and the spectacular outline of Holy Island dominating the sea horizon on the other.

Moving to a larger scale, this latter, southeastern prospect would seem to be of prime importance as far as the orientation of movement is concerned. With regard to the forecourt end of the cairn, an oblique approach down the side of the valley is most unlikely. This is the present route of access through the forestry plantation which blankets the area, and the descent is so sharp as to prevent one looking far beyond one's feet, let alone registering changing visual perception of the monument below. As at Monamore, it is possible to align oneself directly on the chamber entrance from a good way up the hill to the north, although again the approach is hardly gentle. By far the easiest route of passage is to move along the valley contour from the northwest. From this aspect Holy Island is an unmistakable principal focus which at the same time directs attention onto its echo, the massive linear mound of the cairn. The vista that opens out beyond the tomb to the southeast is also that of greatest contrast -- the lowest slopes of the Clachland Hills stretch gently down to the sea, from which the peaks of the islet emerge abruptly. The significance of an oblique view across the tomb forecourt, towards a distinctive landmark which seems to act as a reference for movement, has been observed at other sites -- East Bennan, Carn Ban, Monamore. It is interesting to note, therefore, that the north-south orientation of Dunan Beag is ideal for achieving such a relationship between landscape, monument and person, and that to align the cairn with the facade facing west, the only other resolution for

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this aim, would sacrifice the level area in front of the tomb.

At this point it is also worth noting two standing stones of considerable height which form a southeasterly alignment between the chambered cairn and Holy Island. The first, standing 2m high with its long axis east-west, is situated halfway along the eastern edge of the cairn at 3m distance. A metre north of this stone a small amount of calcined bone had been placed in a shallow scoop and capped by a small stone slab (Bryce 1910; quoted in Henshall 1972, 376). The second stone stands about 300m to the southeast at North Blairmore, prominent on a small rise in the gently undulating landscape; nearly 2m in height, its long axis lies north-south. The visible proximity of single standing stones is in fact the major exception to the general isolation of the Arran chambered cairns: a large monolith stands 80m from Monyquil cairn (ARN 2), another is clearly visible from Moss Farm (see below p. 126), while the fractured fragments of a third lie close to one corner of the cairn at Carn Ban. In only three cases are chambered cairns intervisible; in two of these instances (Torrylin and Clachaig; Tormore II and Moss Farm) each of the monuments establishes its own discrete locale, any reference between the two cairns appearing to be of less significance than the interaction of each monument with its immediate landscape. Neither do the tombs normally function as visual foci for later monuments -- minor exceptions include the siting of a bronze age round barrow and round cairn by the chambered cairn at Clachaig, at about 300m distance to the north and east respectively, and the construction of a probable bronze age kerb cairn 90m east of another Clyde tomb, Baile Meadonach (ARN 13). More common on Arran is for depositional activity in the late neolithic and early bronze age to occur *within* the structure of the chambered cairn.

Returning to Dunan Beag, the conifer plantation at present prevents an approach from the northwest, so that the visual relationship among the cairn and the standing stones cannot be ascertained from this direction, but it may be of a sequential nature with initial visibility of all three being supplanted by the dominance of the cairn as one progresses towards Holy Island, only to open out again after encountering the tomb. Certainly, from the west the cairn stands

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prominently on the skyline as one climbs the steep hillside towards it; from this perspective the first standing stone is completely obscured. The individual may gravitate towards the gentler gradient at the northern end of the tomb -- depending on the original height of the cairn the near stone may still have been hidden, at least from within the forecourt. In any case, from the west the subject has to skirt round the cairn to obtain a view of either standing stone.

The dating of isolated monoliths is notoriously problematic, but it is certainly possible that these two were erected sometime during the period of initial use of the cairn, or even before its construction, and that sequential physical movement -- as well as journeys in the mind -- among these varied monumental loci and distinctive 'natural' places linked people, monuments and landscape in a material and spiritual framework. Reflecting on one place in terms of another within a prescribed sequence of engagement, perhaps extended and elaborated through the life cycle of the individual, would be a strong method for drawing the mind towards a particular, desired perspective on the world, a particular way of knowing.

From the broader expanse of land to the east and southeast the linearity of Dunan Beag running across the contour is visible over a considerable distance -- a barrier to movement which confronts the subject in that it forces orientational decisions and adjustments. Again one might postulate progression from monolith to monolith, and gravitation towards the forecourt end through a combination of avoidance of the sharper drop from the southern limits of the cairn and the interaction of the foreground and background topography -- the latter slopes down from south to north to meet the rise of the former, forming a V-shaped profile -- the eye being drawn towards their junction north of the cairn.

Finally, the approach from below the tomb towards the south chamber is similar to that at Carn Ban, with the cairn rising up massively on the immediate horizon until one is very near the cairn itself. (The standing stone, too, appears massive, with its greatest area facing the observer.) From this perspective the contrast between the sloping ground west of the cairn and the much more level

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land to the east is clearly apparent. It is in such contrasts that much of the significance of place at Dunan Beag would seem to lie. The monument sits between the closed-in landscape to the north and west and the much more open, rolling ground to the south and east, between the close backdrop of the Clauchland Hills and the deep, layered southern horizon. The spectrum of vision sets the enclosing arms of the wide crescent of Lamlash Bay against the openness of the sea, and the flat yet dynamic expanse of the water against the vertical stasis of Holy Island.

Dunan Mor ARN 8

Sitting 200m farther up the hill from Dunan Beag, Dunan Mor is a round cairn with three radially arranged chambers. On the west side a massively-built, three-compartment chamber lies on an east-west alignment; in the southern sector of the cairn, a chamber of at least two compartments is aligned north-south; while to the northeast the fragmentary remains of a third chamber lie on a northeast-southwest axis. The cairn is situated near the edge of a flat spur of land projecting from the northeastern flank of Blairmore Glen, an elevated location with extensive views in a southerly direction as well as to the northwest. From the southeast round to the west the land drops sharply -- so much so that Dunan Beag is invisible -- while level ground extends to the northeast for approximately 50m before the rise to the Clauchland Hills resumes.

The west chamber is by far the largest of the three. From the entrance (at present some 3m within the edge of the cairn) a level area of ground extends 20-25m westward, ending abruptly in a sharp drop. Beyond this local horizon rises the farther slope of Blairmore Glen which creates a massive and uniform backdrop. This is broken only by the distinctive Sheeans summit which, as it lies on an alignment with the chamber, appears directly ahead when looking out from the entrance portals. From the same perspective, another mountain is framed in the distance to the northwest, while Goat Fell, the highest mountain on Arran, is just visible before the view is obscured by the near side of the glen closing off the northern prospect. To the south the broad expanse of Lamlash Bay lies below,

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with the Scottish mainland marking the farthest horizon (Fig. 3.6b).

The mass of the cairn dominates the activity focus of the area in front of the west chamber -- a mass reinforced by the closed nature of the landscape beyond the cairn to the north and west. The monument literally imposes upon the observer since one is unable to retreat to any great distance from it and yet still remain within the focal area -- in other words, to leave the latter is to lose sight of the monument. As for secondary foci, although Goat Fell does appear prominent in the distance, the more immediate and open landscape to the southeast impresses itself far more strongly on the individual, with Holy Island again acting as a key feature. It is perhaps worth noting that from in front of the west chamber, as indeed from the south chamber, the standing stone at North Blairmore is clearly visible in the middle distance, on its distinct rise in gently rolling land to the south (Fig. 3.6b).

The interplay between outward focus and the inward, gravitational pull of mass, a dialectic which grounds place, is very marked as regards the south chamber. From the entrance the full extent of the long-distance southward view can be appreciated -- the gently undulating land sloping down towards the sea, the broad arc of the shoreline, Holy Island and the narrow tongue of land at Kingscross Point drawing the eye out towards the ocean and the mainland far beyond. In contrast, round to the west, south and east the relatively close landscape acts as a strong visual barrier. The cairn sits very close to the edge of the spur here, so that the observer is almost part of that distant landscape. At the same time, however, it is this severe limitation of space in front of the chamber in which movement can progress freely, physically unimpeded, which permits the monument to draw the immediate landscape into itself. From within this area the cairn stands up massively, even in its present denuded state; the effect is enhanced by the distinct southwards slope of the land which places the observer slightly below the monument. When intact the cairn would have obscured the rise of the hillside above and behind it, appearing as an enormous and immediate skyline feature, viewed of necessity at very close range (Fig. 3.7a). In this sense the architecture

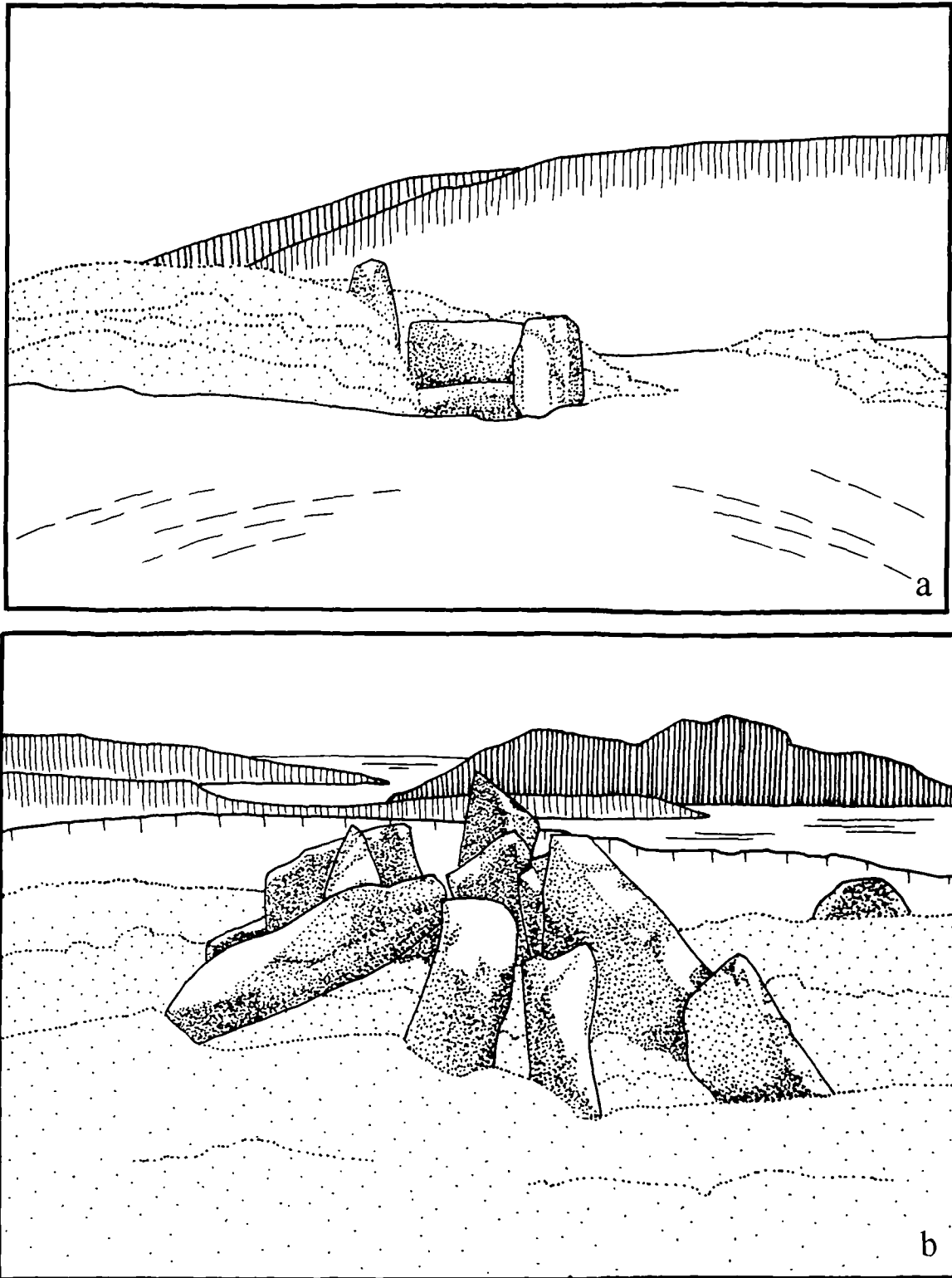


Figure 3.7 a: View of the southern chamber at Dunan Mor, looking N towards the entrance; to the right of the chamber the cairn has been almost entirely removed. b: View of Giants' Graves and Holy Island to the NE, from within the body of the cairn behind the chamber; orthostat marking the tip of the eastern arm of the facade at right. After Bryce 1910.

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takes possession of the contiguous locale -- the cairn and the ground in front of the southern chamber entrance become indivisible.

The positioning of the northeast chamber draws on the various aspects of the locale to create a place-monument-person relationship of rather more familiar form. Viewed from the northeast the tomb rises up dramatically against clear space as the land falls away directly behind the cairn, while a flat line of hills beyond forms a high, final horizon. This strong physical and visual bounding is opposed to the northeast, across the relatively large level area fronting the monument, by a steep slope which is another near yet ultimate skyline feature. The landscape flanking the northeast entrance is more open, with a more distant, layered horizon opening up to the observer's left (northwest) and, presumably, Holy Island prominent to the right (southeast: modern forestry plantation today obscures this view). The overall impression, however, is of enclosed space, in which the individual is held in place by the dialogue between the natural and the artificial.

The northeast chamber may be approached directly on its axis for a fair distance, in that not only does the level ground extend some 50m out from the entrance, but the gradient of the northeastern hillside further back is not so sharp as to prevent access from this direction; the cairn would most likely appear, prominent against the sky on its projecting spur, from approximately 200m distance. In contrast, since the hard uphill approach from the west round to the south is so steep and the cairn is set somewhat in from the edge of the plateau, the monument does not become visible until just before the break of slope; the impact is therefore delayed but of a very immediate nature. The situation of Dunan Mor is not prominent in the sense of being a dominant landscape feature which instantly draws the eye. The surrounding cover of conifers makes it difficult to pick out from a distance, the easiest pointer being the absence of trees just below the monument due to the extreme slope, rather than the change of gradient which is largely masked by the plantation. However, the grey mass of the cairn when intact and free of vegetation would be distinctive, at least from the nearer, open landscape of

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the broad Blairmore Glen stretching between the south and southeast, as would the level spur in a less densely wooded environment. A long, gradually ascending approach is possible from here, the cairn remaining visible until the slope increases markedly just over 100m from the tomb; it is then lost from view until it appears on the skyline at close proximity.

Approaching along the valley, from the east and the northwest, one comes upon the monument at quite a late stage, as the hillside curves round fairly strongly in both directions. In both cases the spur emerges suddenly, the cairn standing large against the sky, backed by the level hill line beyond. The monument establishes a presence through sudden impact rather than by the gradual encroachment upon the senses pertaining to the southeastern approach. Interestingly, if the individual does come at the tomb along the valley contour, it is necessary to move around the cairn in order to reach the chamber entrances.

The three chambers are oriented in such a way that the experience of landscape and of place is qualitatively different at each. From in front of the northeast entrance, the strong sense of bounded space, the relatively large dramatic area and the dominant mass of the cairn between the individual and the more distant landscape puts the world beyond at a remove. The immediate locale linked to the west chamber is more curtailed in terms of area, but makes reference to a variety of other loci on the wider scale. The level ground fronting the south chamber entrance is the most limited of all, placing the individual at the interface between 'here' and 'there', between the integration of immediate landscape and architecture and the strong outward focus of a view which encompasses the identities of places in the near, middle and far distance. As far as the monument as a whole is concerned, it is this outward, seaward focus which would seem to assume primary importance: Holy Island is visible from the vicinity of all three chambers and the positioning of the tomb is such that the most open landscape is to the southeast and the sea.

Here a telling contrast may be drawn with a nearby site, a small stone circle at the summit of the pass between the glens of Blairmore and Strathwhillan.⁷ This

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monument is only about 900m northwest of Dunan Mor and Dunan Beag, yet is placed so as to exploit a completely different landscape focus. The circle sits in a level area enclosed on all sides by sharply rising hills, but with a long, open vista up to the northwest and the spectacular mountain range of the northern half of the island. It may well be significant that the two largest remaining stones of this circle lie on a northwest-southeast axis. The chambered cairns, slightly above and around the shoulder of the hillside to the southeast, have clearly been situated to operate within a different network of associations.

As at East Bennan and Torrylin, the locus into which the Dunan Mor cairn has been interpolated is topographically well defined, forming a distinct pause in the forward progression of the individual through the terrain -- a qualitative change in movement which, as I have argued above, intensifies the tangibility of arrival and departure. When approaching Dunan Mor from the southern half of the compass, on attaining its level locale after an arduous climb one cannot but stop to catch one's breath. Part of the prior significance of place derives from, among other things, the repeated expenditure of time at a particular point in physical space: here the nature of the terrain itself encourages the individual to pause and perhaps look about the landscape awhile.

Giants' Graves ARN 11

Situated near the southeastern tip of the island, Giants' Graves is the larger of two long cairns which sit on a sizeable level terrace in a steep hillside running down to the coast. A massively built axial chamber, perhaps originally of four compartments, opens onto a crescentic forecourt, while the entrance to a smaller, two-compartment axial chamber at the opposite end of the cairn may have been set within a flat facade. A later extension to the trapezoidal cairn blocked this latter entrance (Henshall 1972, 294). The long axis is aligned north-south, with the concave forecourt looking north over ground which slopes away relatively gently for approximately 200m, before dropping precipitously to Glenashdale Burn. From the northeast to the southeast the land descends fairly sharply towards the sea, to the south the terrace narrows rapidly into the hillside, while higher ground rises

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250m to the west.

Of the monuments examined on Arran, the Giants' Graves chambered tombs are perhaps the most difficult to assess in terms of their interactive relationship with the landscape and the impact this has upon the individual, as the surrounding conifers present an impenetrable barrier to vision (as well as to movement) which completely encircles the monuments, with one glimpse only of the locale afforded to the south. The trees are planted so close to the cairns that, for example, one emerges from the forest directly into the forecourt of the larger tomb. Recognition of the points of transition during the process in which the monument establishes a presence in the less dense, neolithic vegetational context must therefore remain speculative. The immediacy of a contemporary encounter with the monument in which the individual is simultaneously released by the enclosing forest landscape and re-enclosed by the enveloping arms of the facade possesses a spontaneity which is absent elsewhere, as even the closely-planted deciduous larch at Monamore permit a reasonably clear view of the surrounding landscape during the winter and spring months.

Much of what follows must of necessity be of a provisional nature. However, it is still possible to draw out some of the ways in which landscape and monument play on one another through the subject, in particular with regard to the reciprocal influence between the two tombs. Analysis of the latter will form part of a consideration of the smaller cairn, Giants' Graves South.

Giants' Graves differs from the other tombs so far discussed in that the northern, crescentic facade opens onto a long stretch of land which slopes down and away from the monument at a moderate gradient. Facing the entrance to the northern chamber the impression of enclosing space exerting an inward pull on the observer is constituted architecturally by the massive nature of the portal stones, the orthostats flanking the entrance and those fronting the forecourt horns, and by the deep semicircle of the forecourt area itself. Again, marked breaks of slope to left and right of the observer and a narrowing landscape and close horizon beyond and behind the facade emphasize the sense of delimitation. These are themes we

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have seen before. What stands out here is the distinct direction of focus *out* from the forecourt area. Looking out from the tomb portals the subject encounters a tightly-bounded locale: from the eastern horn the sharp drop of the terrace edge extends northwards, parallel to the long axis of the cairn, while beyond the western horn the inner limit of the terrace is defined by the rising hillside, albeit in a slightly less linear fashion. This long 'avenue' of land is eventually cut across by the drop into the steep-sided glen of Glenashdale Burn, beyond which a quite spectacular view, documented in an early photograph of the site (Bryce 1910, Fig. 4), stretches away along the coastal hills descending to Whiting Bay and Lamlash Bay. To the viewer's right, across the forecourt, the prominent, craggy outline of Holy Island reinforces the outward projection of focus (Fig. 3.7b).

In effect, a focal opposition is enacted through the monument. On the one hand, the potential of the landscape is utilized to draw eye, mind and body in towards the tomb. By analogy with other cairns, the process by which these various strands of perception converge in front of the monument is likely to be drawn out in time and space, here perhaps beginning 150m from the portal stones. On the other hand, the monument is the locus *from* which reference is made. From the forecourt, a contrast can be drawn between the immediate landscape which at the same time falls under and extends the influence of the architecture, and the more distant landscape of the world beyond. But whereas at sites such as Torrylin, Carn Ban or Monamore these elements are fused -- key landmarks acting as focal points beyond or behind the cairn facade, for example -- at *Giants' Graves* they are separated into different points of view. The individual must alter position in order to alter perception. This is an important consideration, as it is through the domination of perception that the monument acts upon the subject. The situation, orientation and architecture of the chambered tomb make certain references, certain links, certain points of view more obvious, perhaps more acceptable. Yet the encounter with the locale will always be a dynamic, interactive one, in that the fluidity and creativity of thought will constantly rework and reinterpret the associations.⁸ The possibility of complex constructional sequences for these tombs

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certainly has implications for the continual reinterpretation of the monument as it interacts with the landscape, as the conceptual is made concrete *via* an architectural medium. This ongoing process of reification may perhaps be seen in the enlargement of the Giants' Graves cairn which, effectively blocking the southern facade and chamber entrance with at least a further 7m of cairn material, must alter the existing avenues of perception.

Even within the same monument the nature of the references engendered by the monumental locale changes; movement between the north and south chambers, for example, being movement between different viewpoints. Facing the flat facade at the southern end of the cairn, the sense of enclosure would be marked, even given the great expanse of sea and sky to the northeast and to the east. On either side the limits of the terrace form natural boundaries, while behind lies the linear form of Giants' Graves South. This combined with the linearity of the facade, the mass of the cairn against the immediate skyline, blocking out part of the distant landscape, and the slight southwards slope of the terrace from the northern end of the tomb, would tend to situate the individual within a strongly defined, small-scale locality. But from this perspective reference to a larger scale *can* be made, at the same time, to the distinct identity of Holy Island.

The forest cover prevents any detailed analysis of movement through the landscape towards Giants' Graves. Any approach, however, would involve the negotiation of difficult terrain. The present access route comes up from Glenashdale Burn to the north, a hard climb which eases quite suddenly on attaining the terrace. The monument may well become visible as an immediate horizon feature quite near this shift in gradient, after which a direct approach on alignment with the cairn's long axis is possible, continuing up the much more gentle slope. From the northwest the experience would be similar, except that on reaching comparatively level ground one would be funnelled round towards the tomb between the edge of the terrace and the sharp western rise, emerging much closer to the cairn before it becomes visible and alignment on the long axis is possible.⁹

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The occurrence of vertical rock faces to the northeast and southwest would seem to rule out progress from these directions, while a combination of rugged landscape and intersecting streams might tend to impede passage from the south. The most continuous, even approach would seem to be to ascend the hillside rising up from the sea. The fact that Giants' Graves is situated slightly back from the terrace edge means that it would not come into view until the individual was fairly close beneath it. From this point, a rapid series of transitions would occur in the relationship between the monument and the hill beyond, in which the linear axis of the long cairn emerged as a dominating feature; a similar sequence of shifting emphasis on foreground and background, perhaps, as that noted for the southern approach to East Bennan (see above p. 87).

Giants' Graves South ARN 19

On the same terrace about 20m to the south of Giants' Graves lies Giants' Graves South, a small trapezoidal cairn containing a single-compartment axial chamber. One massive portal stone remains defining the northern side of the entrance. The cairn is aligned east southeast-west northwest with the chamber at the latter end, so that the land drops down towards the sea behind the cairn with Holy Island visible towards the observer's left, while the entrance faces onto gently rising ground across a level expanse -- a configuration by now familiar among the Clyde cairns on Arran.

Previous attempts at chronological differentiation have relied almost entirely on typological categorization. But realistically, questions of what came first and what came next at this locale are at present irresolvable, so the object of analysis must remain the material culmination of a long process of working through and reworking interpretive principles that situated humanity in a landscape of ancestral obligation and mediation, of past and potential mythic significance.

The present configuration of the two chambered tombs creates a striking focal space in the area of level ground between them, onto which give both the entrance to Giants' Graves South and that of the southern chamber of Giants' Graves. In relation to the long axis of Giants' Graves, Giants' Graves South is

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oriented marginally over 90 degrees with the entrance angled towards the larger cairn, emphasizing the bounded, inward-looking nature of the spatial interface between the two. This feature might have been enhanced at one stage by the dual linearity of the flat front of the chamber end of Giants' Graves South and the flat facade of Giants' Graves in its pre-blocking phase. The entrance of Giants' Graves South faces onto a large yet fairly well defined area of moderate gradient, bounded closely to the south by the deep gully of a burn running out to the sea, from the southwest to the west by the steep face of the hillside continuing upwards, and to the northwest by a fairly sharp downward slope. The northern aspect is the most open both in terms of immediate landscape and farthest horizon, descending gradually for a good distance before dropping into Glenashdale. The placement of Giants' Graves not only closes off this vista with a material boundary but also effects a change of scale; a much smaller, dramatic space is defined, a focus poised between two monumental entrances and held in place partly by the inwardly directed linearity of the architecture.

In one sense this is a transition to a more introspective view of landscape: a tight focal area is established which can be contrasted more strongly with the immediate surroundings and with more distant loci such as Holy Island. Just as the forecourt area of a cairn with crescentic facade differs qualitatively from the bounded, dramatic area over which the monument exerts a direct influence, and the latter from the larger locale within which the monument is situated, so too the reflexive action between the Giants' Graves cairns sets up a series of contrasts, oppositions and transitions within the landscape which direct the individual's perception of place. The difference between the inward-looking and the outward-looking view is perhaps made more apparent, more accessible.

Tormore II ARN 5

Tormore II is comprised of a small, single-compartment chamber set centrally within an oval cairn, the long axes of the rectangular chamber and the cairn oriented north northeast-south southwest. Situated in the west of Arran, the cairn sits in the side of a hillock, on a low, undulating sandstone ridge which rises

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from flat, wet ground in the northern part of Machrie Moor. The land falls away gently from the monument to the south and west and rises to the east, while to the north northeast the chamber entrance faces onto a longer stretch of land (*circa* 200m) which slopes upward and away from the cairn at a very slight gradient, before dropping away into the moor.

One of the most interesting aspects of Tormore II is the fact that it does not make overt reference to the landscape feature that visually dominates the greater part of Machrie Moor -- the impressive mouth of Machrie Glen with mountains beyond. The view up the glen is visible from neighbouring Moss Farm chambered cairn only 150m to the north northwest, and it is also the primary landscape influence as regards a group of stone circles which lie a few hundred metres east northeast of Tormore II, but invisible from the cairn.¹⁰ From Tormore II this dramatic feature cannot be seen in its entirety, being largely blocked by the nearer horizon of the hillside on which the cairn sits. In this instance it would seem that the immediate landscape and the seaward focus are more fundamental to the engagement of the subject with the monument. Significantly, all of the chambered cairns in the area (Tormore II, Moss Farm and Machrie Water) have a sea view, lying on the western flank of the ridge or westwards towards the water. In fact, of the twenty-two chambered cairns recognized on the island, twenty are situated within sight of the sea, and it would therefore seem to be of prime importance with regard to the interplay of landscape, monument and subject. In the vast majority of cases, the water appears behind the cairn or at an oblique angle to it (or both) when the individual faces the entrance, so that the architecture stands between the observer and the sea. It is only rarely that cairn and sea together cannot be visually encompassed, and it should be noted that one of these exceptions comprises the only chambered tomb known on Arran which does not belong to the Clyde tradition, the passage grave at Carmahome (ARN 18).¹¹

At Tormore II, facing out from the chamber entrance, the individual stands within a very shallow bowl: on either side the land slopes gradually toward the cairn from low hills, while directly ahead is another close local horizon, above

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which a uniform line of distant hills beyond the moor projects only slightly. The level expanse of the moor to the northeast is for the most part invisible, enhancing the immediacy of the locale. The area in front of the cairn, although relatively large, is clearly delineated and separated to a certain extent from the wider world beyond when viewed from the perspective of the tomb itself (Fig. 3.8a).

The curtailed nature of this immediate locale, and its status as a focus for contrast, becomes more apparent when viewed from another perspective -- that of the individual moving towards the monument. As the subject progresses through space and time an encounter takes place with an ever-changing landscape, and it is through this progression of change, of differentiation, that the identity and character of particular locales emerge. To approach Tormore II from the north northeast is to move up from the flat, open ground of the moor into more hilly, undulating land and, once there, to approach very gradually downhill towards the cairn entrance along a slight linear depression. As the individual progresses towards the monument, which becomes apparent at about 150m distance, he or she becomes steadily more enclosed by the rising land on either side, while beyond the cairn the land drops away in front of a long, open stretch of moorland. The mound of the cairn itself stands between the subject and the more distant landscape, at the boundary between near and far (Fig. 3.8b). In contrast, when standing at the cairn and looking out from within the enclosed area this distinction is effected by the immediate landscape, the local horizon itself forming the boundary which separates the individual from the landscape through which he or she may have just passed.¹² The fact that the monument is not visible until one has made the transition from wide, expansive surroundings into a more curtailed environment enhances the particularity of the locale.

From the east and southeast the cairn again appears relatively late on, as the observer crests the hill 150-200m from the monument. Again he or she moves between landscapes with different foci -- from the wide enclosed bowl of the moor bounded by the hills of the Shiskine Valley and the central ridge, to the smaller-scale, immediate landscape of the ridge itself, backed by a stretch of moor, the

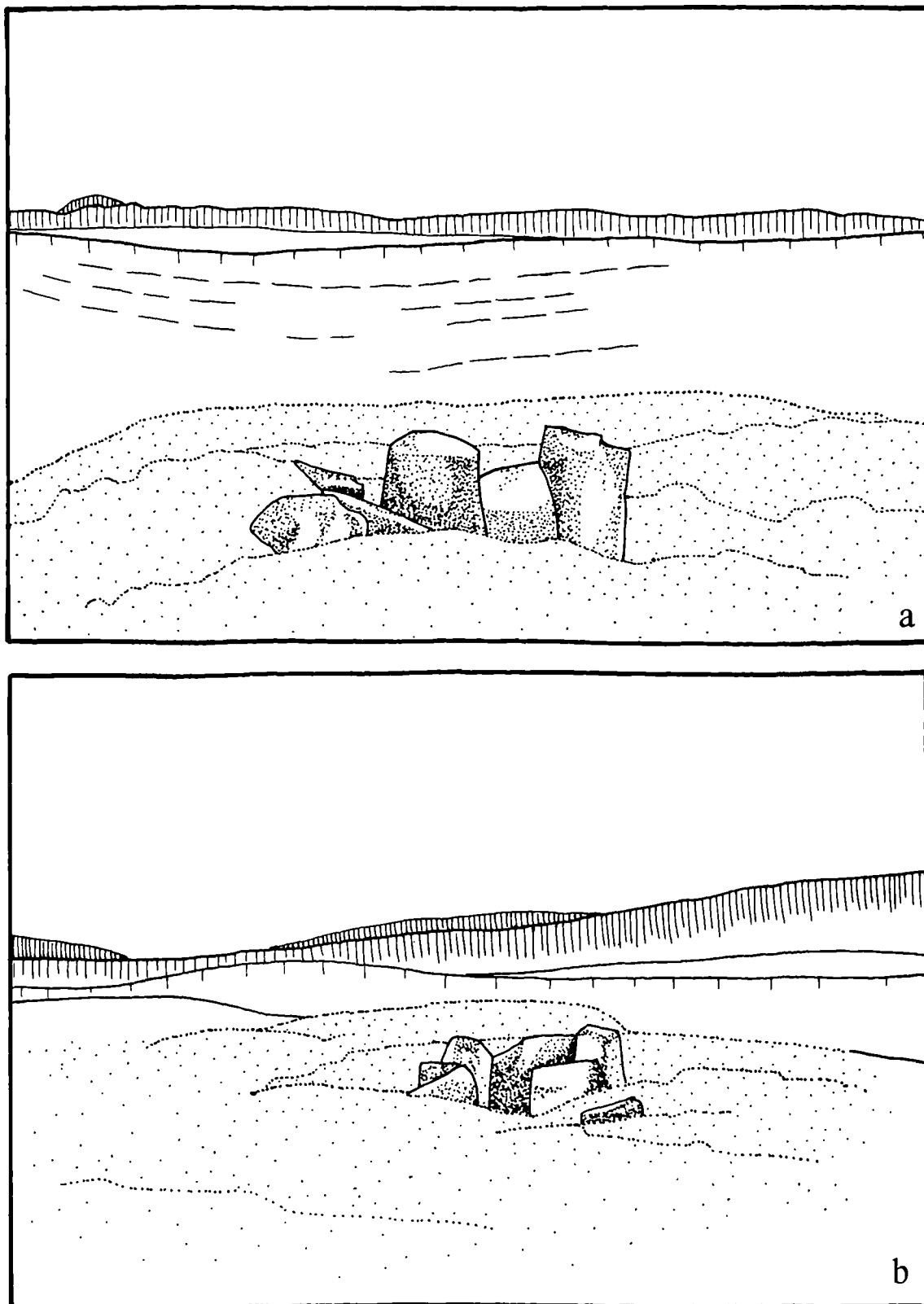


Figure 3.8 a: Looking over Tormore II to the NNE, with bounded dramatic area beyond. b: View of Tormore II to the SSW, facing the entrance.

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broad expanse of Kilbrannan Sound, and Kintyre.

From the west and southwest Tormore II is visible over a much greater distance. The cairn would never have been particularly prominent in comparison with some of the long horned cairns discussed above and lacks the tall orthostats which tend to extend distance visibility, so it would be the nature of the cairn itself which limited it as a long distance goal rather than the terrain, which is flat and open across the moor to the seaward side of the valley almost 1.5km away. From these directions the monument appears against the low hills of the central ridge, unlike nearby Moss Farm cairn which is situated so as to appear on the horizon. Yet again the individual moves from a larger to a smaller scale landscape, and from the uniformity of the broad, flat moor to a locale which operates more closely in terms of definitions, distinctions and boundaries. Perhaps it is the distinctive nature of this landscape in relation to the greater part of Machrie Moor which acted in part to establish the central ridge as a locus of special significance in which chambered tombs were eventually to emerge in the construction of the identity of place; perhaps also the status of this geographical feature as a transitional point between different foci and slightly different types of landscape.

Moss Farm ARN 21

The greatly denuded remains at Moss Farm suggest a chambered cairn of trapezoidal or sub-rectangular form, aligned east-west. The chamber would seem to have been entered from the eastern end, through a crescentic facade of orthostats of which only two remain today; the larger of these, nearly 2m in height, may be a surviving portal stone. The cairn is situated about 150m north northwest of Tormore II, on relatively high ground in the northern part of Machrie Moor. The land drops fairly sharply beyond the cairn to the south and west, with flat, low-lying ground spread out below. In the other directions the landscape is much less expansive, being part of the undulating ridge on which the monument stands. The facade faces onto very gently rising land which crests some 150m to the east, forming a strong local horizon.

This distinction between expansive and curtailed landscapes is an important

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one, as it also marks a visual distinction between monument types. Only 300m to the east lies the first of a series of six stone circles which are all in close proximity to each other. Yet none of these monuments are visible from Moss Farm since the sloping ground stretching out in front of the tomb effectively blocks any view of the flat moorland in which they are situated. In a field survey of the northern part of the moor, Barnatt and Pierpoint (1981) noted a distributional contrast between site types, with the main cluster of ceremonial monuments occurring in a large, flat area of north-facing ground while settlement evidence in the form of hut circles and clearance cairns is found on south-facing slopes and ridge summits.¹³ The exception to this, they claimed, are the chambered cairns.

In view of the discovery of a complex series of timber structures and associated features beneath two of the Machrie Moor stone circles (Haggarty 1991), the possibility that further ephemeral evidence for ceremonial activity in the neolithic may in fact encroach upon Barnatt and Pierpoint's later, 'secular' areas must be considered. The main drawback of their analysis, however, is that although various sites are considered in terms of their relation to the landscape, there is only superficial consideration of the way in which they relate to each other. It is not enough to dismiss as a chronological factor the occurrence of chambered tombs in areas otherwise dominated by settlement evidence (Barnatt & Pierpoint 1981, 31). Surely one of the most interesting and significant features of the siting of monuments on the moor is the varying degree of mutual visual isolation. This is complete as far as the stone circles and the chambered tombs are concerned, as they are hidden from each other by the rise of the sandstone ridge in the centre of the moor. Not only do the two monument types seem focused differently, at least in the northern part of the moor, but the stone circles and the timber circles before them have been constructed avoiding overt reference to the chambered cairns.¹⁴ On the other hand, a standing stone at the top of the same ridge on which the chambered cairns are situated (another exception to Barnatt and Pierpoint's 'rule') is prominent from the point of view of all six circles and from two of the nearby chambered tombs.

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To return to the specific consideration of Moss Farm, a contrast can be drawn between the landscape as perceived from the monument looking out and that observed by the individual 'looking on'. From the entrance, the gentle undulations of the ridge create a number of close, local horizons, the ground sloping very slightly upwards directly ahead and to left and right of the individual, before dropping away again. Beyond this rise a series of fairly substantial hills. The fact that these farther horizons are all at a medium distance reinforces the inwardly projected sense of close landscape: the view of the world from the monument is a relatively small-scale one. The mouth of Machrie Glen is visible to the northeast but is largely obscured by the near hill crest, rendering it a much less dramatic and dominant focal point than seen in its entirety (Fig. 3.9a).

To stand within this immediate landscape and regard the monument itself is to be presented with an entirely different aspect. The mass of the cairn would be prominent against clear space as the ground drops away rapidly behind the monument, a device noted at several of the chambered tombs on Arran. This local horizon serves to separate the individual, and the monument, from the broad expanse of flat moorland which stretches out below. Expansive too is the view of Kilbrannan Sound visible to the west, with the hills of Kintyre forming the farthest horizon on a clear day. Directly beyond the cairn, as one faces the entrance, lies the junction of land and sea, as the distinctive slope of Torr Rìgh Beag runs down to meet the water. The cairn is therefore poised at a transitional point horizontally, in terms of immediate/more distant landscape, and vertically, in terms of nearer/farther horizon.

The constraints on movement towards Moss Farm are primarily visual rather than topographical. From the west, southwest and south the tomb would sit on the skyline over a lengthy approach, visible across the flat valley bottom from over half a kilometre away. In contrast, from any other direction one must ascend the low hills of the central ridge, which means that one catches sight of the monument from much closer-to, precluding a prolonged approach. Effectively, just as at Tormore II, all approaches towards the entrance end of the cairn are comparatively

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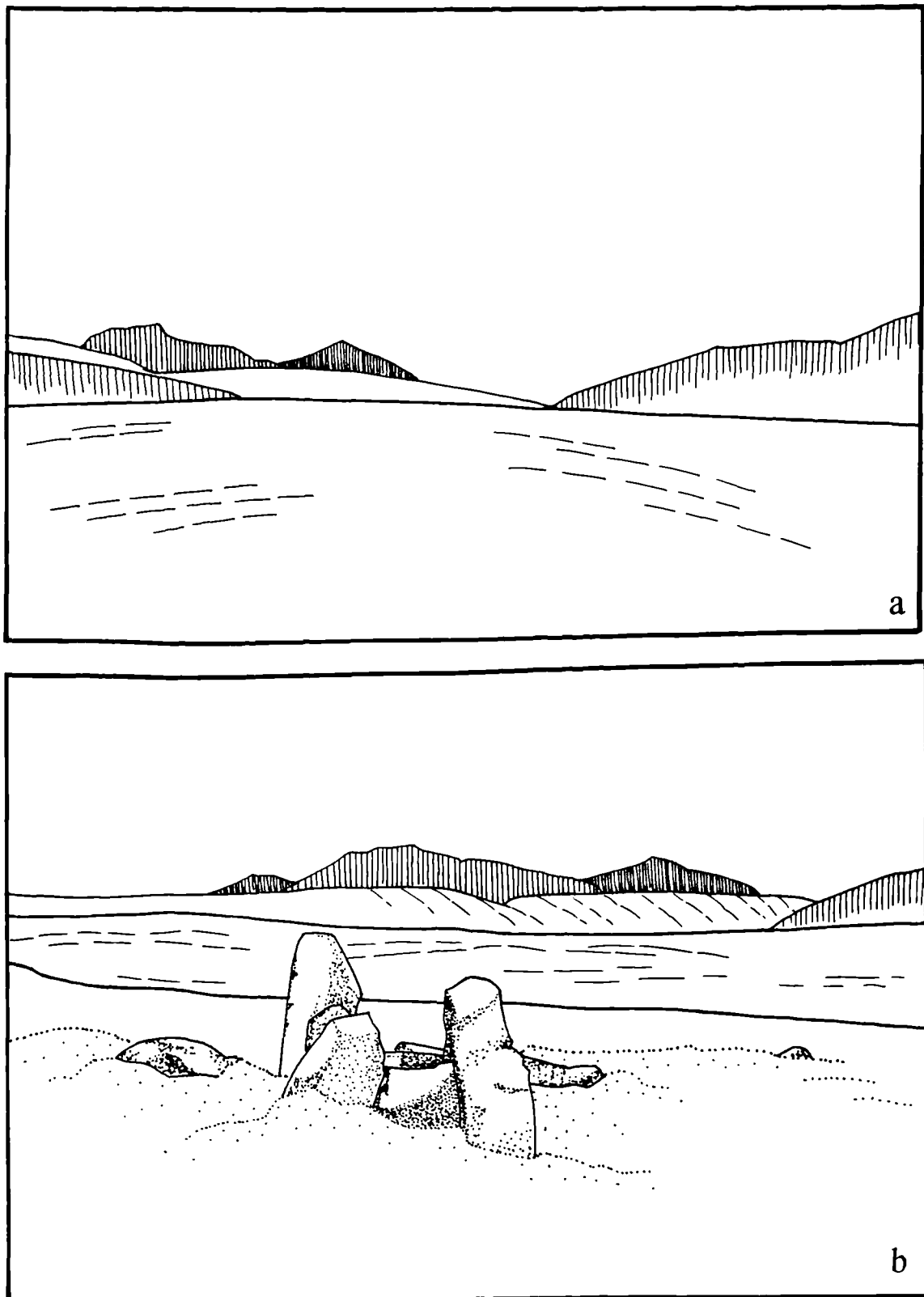


Figure 3.9 a: Looking NE to Machrie Glen from Moss Farm. b: View of Tormore I, Machrie Glen and Beinn Tarsuinn to the NE, from within the body of the cairn; orthostat marking the tip of the eastern arm of the facade at right.

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short, the longest perhaps some 200m. Once having gained sight of the tomb, however, it remains a prominent feature on the skyline or local horizon -- whether the observer is coming steadily downhill, as from the north and east, or following fairly undulating terrain, as on a southeastern approach.

Tormore I ARN 4

Tormore I has lost almost all its cairn material; in its original form the tomb was presumably trapezoidal or sub-rectangular. An axial chamber of at least three compartments is comprised of particularly massive orthostats, flanked by the remains of a facade so deeply concave as to appear almost V-shaped. The monument sits in the southern part of Machrie Moor, on the lowest slope of the broad Shiskine Valley. The site is on a gentle gradient with the final drop to the flat valley bottom 30-40m in front of the chamber entrance, while the continuing rise of the valley behind the cairn creates a close horizon round the western half of the compass. The tomb's long axis runs northeast-southwest, with the entrance looking out across the moor to the mountains in the northeast.

The most striking aspect of the site is this emphatic outward focus. From the entrance portals the panorama is dominated by the view up Machrie Glen, in which are framed the craggy summits of the northeastern range with Goat Fell and Beinn Tarsuinn prominent. The chamber itself is aligned on the latter (Fig. 3.9b). Visually arresting, the mouth of the glen would be of importance as the entrance to a mountain pass giving access to the eastern side of the island -- even today the road through this pass is one of only two cross-country routes linking east with west. It forms a clear principal focus, which would be accentuated by the visually channelling effect of the facade arms curving around the deep forecourt. Additionally, the positioning of the tomb means that looking out from the front of the cairn, the individual is oriented towards all of the higher elevations within the landscape -- distant mountains to the left (north), ahead the focal point of the glen, and the higher hills of the Shiskine Valley rising to the right (east northeast).

These features are all viewed across the substantial extent of the moor. In contrast, the individual facing the chamber entrance confronts a very immediate,

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small-scale locale, closed in by the hills which stand up against the sky both beyond the cairn and to the right of it (Fig. 3.10a). It is as one begins to ascend from the flat moor towards the facade that the major transformation of scale occurs, in which the monument changes from being a goal among others to one which exerts a much stronger pull on the individual and excludes other possibilities. Again, we might see this as crossing the boundary between two domains -- from one in which the monument operates within the wider world to one in which the landscape as outer world is drawn into and functions as part of the monument. The massive and enclosing nature of the architecture itself (the enormous scale of the orthostats implies a cairn of imposing size) can to a great extent control what occurs in the immediate locale, as it dominates a fairly narrowly circumscribed area. At the same time, the strong outward focus towards which vision, thought and perhaps movement are directed allows the monument to remain situated firmly within the wider network of place, meaning and identity.

Access to Tormore I is somewhat less restricted than at many of the tombs discussed above. It is possible to approach the entrance directly for at least 2km, and from the northeast round to the southeast the cairn would be an obvious feature on the low hillside. Any approach which covered the valley bottom, however, would involve crossing very wet ground. David Robinson's palynological analysis of Machrie Moor (Robinson 1983; Robinson & Dickson 1988) demonstrated the existence of locally wet conditions around the coring site, only 500m north northeast of Tormore I: from the sixth to the second millennium BC sedges formed the main peat components, with a gradually increasing variety of accompanying species including pondweeds and rushes (Robinson & Dickson 1988, 227). The present route of access is from the south, keeping to the slightly higher, better draining ground of the valley side. The undulation of the landscape causes the tomb to disappear and reappear several times on some southerly approaches, and the observer certainly catches sight of the monument much later than when moving obliquely across the moor -- from the present track the monument becomes visible at approximately 300m distance.

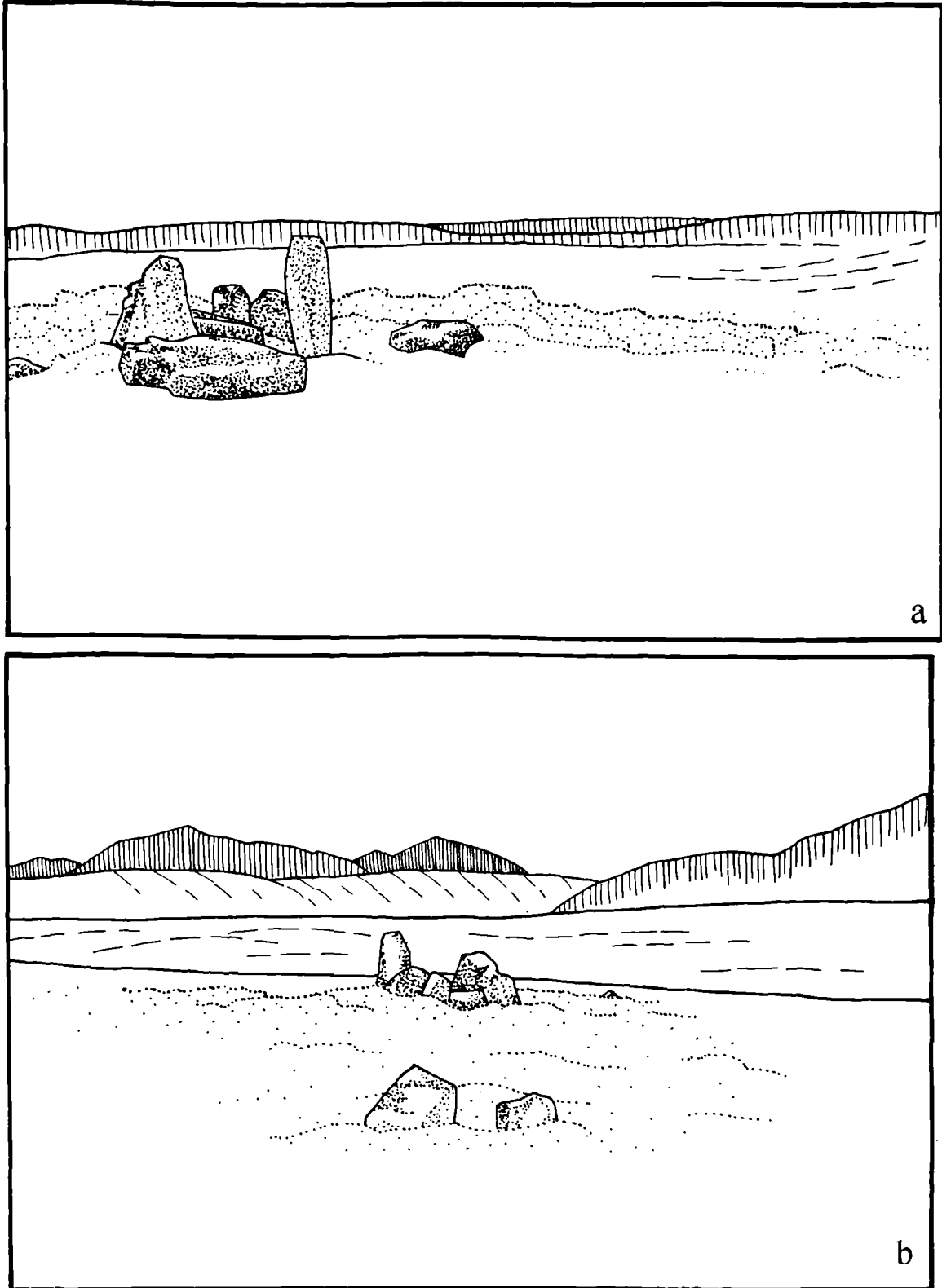


Figure 3.10 a: Looking across the forecourt to the W; fallen orthostats once formed part of the facade. b: View of Tormore I and Goat Fell to the NE, with possible natural rock formation in the foreground; the western arm of the facade would have stretched across to the far left.

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A like situation pertains to an approach down the valley from the north. Since from this aspect the facade and level area in front of the forecourt are oriented towards the individual, the immediate impact of the monument is greater and experienced from farther away. In addition, it is from this perspective that the only other long distance view opens up beyond the forecourt, a similar configuration as noted above for Carn Ban (p. 100). From the north and south the linearity of the cairn and its relation to the rising ground around it create a visual and physical barrier which tends to alter direction and orientation, movement being drawn towards the combination of level ground, open landscape and the more open architecture of the forecourt end.

It is worth reiterating here the importance of this area of ground extending beyond the forecourt. Tormore I is an imposing monument even in its present state, and with the cairn and facade intact must have made an enormous visual impact. This could have been intensified by shifting the tomb slightly westward to the crest of the hill, where it would be a prominent horizon feature (Fig. 3.10a). Two crucial elements would be lost by such a strategy, however: (a) the backdrop of the hillside which curtails vision and movement and reflects the focus back onto (b) the expanse of level ground stretching out from the facade. Here and at the other monuments we have seen, the definition of a central dramatic area within which the monument assumes mediation of the subject's perception of the surrounding country would seem to have been one of the prime considerations in the siting of the chambered cairn.

The dimensions of this transformational space vary from monument to monument. In some cases the area is quite small: at Monamore 25m of level ground lie between the entrance portals and the point at which the slope of the hillside resumes, while the 8.5m breadth of the facade governs the width of the focus. At East Bennan, breaks in gradient define an area *circa* 35 by 25m. The dramatic area may be more loosely defined, as here at Tormore I, where the level ground extending in front of the chamber entrance is bounded by a much more gentle downward slope into the valley floor. So too it may be much larger: at

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Torrylin the architectural mass of the cairn extends a dominating influence over an area of roughly 60 by 30m.

The key point here is that, even considering the smaller of the defined spaces, we are dealing with substantial areas of ground which are inextricably linked to the monuments and which must be seen as integral to them. These dramatic spaces will have enabled particular activities to take place on a potentially large scale (in terms of numbers of participants and/or area utilized) -- they will have operated as foci for action, as truly active spaces. This has implications for the way we excavate these cairns, moving us beyond concentration on forecourt-centred ritual activity and deposition. Rather than drawing a line from one tip of the facade to the other and working within this strictly limited forecourt area as, for example, was largely the case in MacKie's 1961 excavations at Monamore, we should extend our attentions to the larger activity space. It is salutary to note that evidence for activity in the form of charcoal spreads in front of the tomb at Monamore was still being detected at the end of the single axial excavation trench which extended about 6 metres from the portal stones (MacKie 1964). A glance at some of the more important post-war excavations of British chambered tombs and related non-megalithic long mounds reveals that investigation in front of the entrance (or, in the case of long mounds, in front of the mortuary end) is generally confined to an area stretching only 5-7m beyond the limit of the mound (Ashbee 1966; Britnell 1984; Morgan 1959; Piggott 1962; Saville 1990; Whittle 1991). A notable exception is the Kilham long barrow, where an avenue of post-holes, dated by the excavator to one of the earlier neolithic phases of the barrow, was found to extend about 18 metres from the burial end of the monument (Manby 1976, 116; 126; 144).

Small features and scatters of pottery, animal bone and lithics often extend to the limits of such excavations. I am not arguing that evidence for ritual activity need be continuous over the entire dramatic area, or indeed be of such substantial nature as the post rows at Kilham. But I would suggest that careful excavation at a good distance from the entrance portals might reveal areas of trampling, charcoal

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spreads, or perhaps further artefact scatters, and might go some way towards integrating our understanding of these monuments into the wider context of the lived experience of landscape.

About 20m southwest of the chamber at Tormore I and within the area once covered by the cairn, are two large, parallel stone slabs on end, only 30cm apart, aligned northeast-southwest. These lie on a slightly different alignment from the main chamber, being oriented on the peak of Goat Fell (Fig. 3.10b). Henshall says of this 'curious arrangement' that 'the space they enclose does not suggest a cist, but is hardly more convincing if interpreted as part of a subsidiary chamber' (1972, 58). Fairhurst considers the feature to be a natural one (1981, 86). Only excavation will decide the matter one way or the other, but the possibility that the stones were a pre-existing natural feature would certainly have ramifications as far as the prior significance of place is concerned, taking account of the alignment towards the northeastern mountain peaks.

Monuments which elaborate upon such features are known elsewhere. At Gwernvale in southeast Wales, a chambered cairn of the Cotswold-Severn group, a very long sequence of deposition of material including lithic tools and, later, ceramics, extends back into the palaeolithic (Britnell 1984). Much of this depositional activity took place in the vicinity of a natural monolith standing to a height of about 70cm and some may in fact have been focused upon it, particularly as a mesolithic burin was found wedged tightly into a crevice at the top of this monolith (Britnell 1984, 50; 122). During a phase of activity associated with a single radiocarbon assay yielding a date range in the earlier fourth millennium BC, a double row of timber posts would seem to have been aligned upon the monolith; the pre-cairn Neolithic pottery is concentrated around -- and some is directly associated with -- this timber construction and an adjacent structure, also of wood, in an area which takes in the natural orthostat. The construction of the chambered tomb later incorporated this whole area into the cairn forecourt and horns (Britnell 1984, 138-41). The monolith sits on the central axial line of the monument, parallel to and about 3.5m behind the single portal stone which forms the focal

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point of the facade; a line of stones was found to extend from the monolith, deeper into the body of the cairn. Thus this natural feature may well have determined the siting of the cairn and the layout of some of its elements (Britnell 1984, 59).

Certainly, it is drawn into an extremely long-lived sequence of activity, and the point at which it becomes a focus for some of this activity may occur well before the neolithic.

Near Pendine Head, Carmarthenshire, the Morfa Bychan linear cemetery consists of one probable and three certain chambered tombs aligned along a terrace which is bounded on one side by low limestone cliffs and on the other by a sharp drop. On the same alignment, flanked on either side by the cairns, is a natural stone stack which has eroded from the limestone escarpment. Above the terrace, situated in a natural gap which provides access down to the chambered cairns, lies a possible long cairn which is also aligned towards the natural feature (Barker 1992, 41). It would seem reasonable to suggest that the distinctive stone stack was of long-standing special significance and acted as the impetus for cairn construction in this particular location.

A final example is Caerloggas I, a ring-banked enclosure in mid Cornwall (Miles 1975, 24-43). Here, depositional activity occurs from the mesolithic onwards in the locale of a remnant tor on a prominent hilltop, the highest point on Caerloggas Downs. As at Gwernvale, artefact deposition is not necessarily entirely or continuously focused upon the natural feature, but some episodes are undoubtedly of a specialized nature. A complex of pits was dug under and against the moorstone marking the top of the tor, the largest pit containing a range of objects including a worn quartz crystal and an incised slate. A shallow ditch then partially enclosed the tor, turves were used to level the site, and a ring of bright yellow clay was centred on the moorstone, demarcating the enclosure; later a bank was constructed over this and heightened more than once. A large number of objects were deposited round the natural tor, including a variety of flint tools and over one hundred white quartz pebbles. So here, existing landscape features act as the point of origin for a more or less conventional henge (Bradley 1993, 29).

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Caerloggas I sits next to two barrows, and the three monuments form an alignment towards the end of a promontory marking the eastern limit of St. Austell Bay (Miles 1975, 24). Perhaps we are seeing a similar integration of large- and small-scale landscape features at Tormore I: the mythic significance of a fortuitous alignment of an unusual rock formation on the tallest summit on Arran, *and* on an important mountain pass, becomes both physically and metaphorically embedded within the monument. In other words, the tomb may in effect appropriate this prior significance, becoming the means of its reading by the living community.

Metaphorical journeys

The monumental locales on Arran are constituted by a dialectic of architecture and topography, in which the unique qualities of particular landscapes are drawn out and played upon in terms of tightly interwoven thematic structures. The most important themes which have begun to emerge within the consideration of individual monuments, and which I want now to elaborate upon, are the withdrawal from the wider landscape of an area of ground which becomes integral to the monument, and the operation of the tomb as a focus for bodily movement and a vehicle for intellectual reflection.

Regarding the siting of chambered cairns on Arran, Isobel Hughes has drawn attention to the preference for locations which both stand apart from and offer a prospect over the wider island setting (1988, 51). But there is a deeper complexity here. It is not merely that geographical space is by its particular topographical nature slightly removed from the broader surroundings, although this may be an element in such cases as the siting of cairns on natural terraces. Rather, it is largely the specific interaction of architectural construction and landscape, in particular the emphasis on and exploitation of latent possibilities within the locale, which creates 'place', and which in so doing begins to effect changes of scale, to enhance transitions and boundaries, to *define*. It is this act of definition that establishes an element of separation and separateness which in effect allows for the experience of more than one landscape through the subject's engagement with the

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monument.

In many cases an impression of enclosed space is created within at times extremely open landscapes. The bounding of this dramatic area fronting the cairn is effected by a number of means. We have seen the regular occurrence of rising land at a short remove from the chamber entrance, which acts as a firm visual and physical boundary, and the frequent opposition of this with steep downward slopes -- the long axis of the cairn running downhill or its limits sitting close to a sharp shift in gradient. The mural nature of the monument is exploited as the cairn rises up strongly in clear space, the portal stones and those of the facade (where such exists) standing proud of the cairn material. Where a further landscape can be seen over and beyond the monument, a uniform horizon may reiterate the bounding nature of the mass of the cairn, keeping the primary focus on the tomb and the level area in front of it. On the other hand, where the tomb is backed by a long prospect, the emphatic architectural intervention between near and distant worlds sharpens the definition and separation of the two.

The integration of architecture and topography can be extremely close. The embracing, enclosing character of a crescentic facade is exploited to the utmost at East Bennan by extending the arms out to the point at which the ground begins to drop away from level on either side, while at Monamore the inherent bounding qualities of a narrow terrace are enhanced by placing the facade directly upon its outer edge, the gentle curve of the arms projecting inwards onto level ground. The demarcation of place occurs through architectural influence, yet this influence derives its strength and clarity by drawing on the particular characteristics of the surrounding terrain.

The influence of architectural mass itself is another factor governing the delimited, enclosed sense of place. Many of the Arran tombs are found in locations which are naturally small-scale, such as East Bennan's restricted plateau, the terrace on which the Giants' Graves cairns stand, the valley-edge site of Tormore I or the ridge undulating around Tormore II. The visual impact of a large monument can be far reaching in such a situation, with the cairn dominating the

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subject's perception over a fair distance. The way in which combined natural and architectonic boundaries merge with the influence of the monument as principle focus can be seen in Figures 3.11 and 3.12. Grids were set up at East Bennan and Torrylin to enable the graphic recording of this influence upon the observer. A graded scale of impression was established -- necessarily highly subjective -- with 5 representing complete primacy of the cairn, diminishing to 1, where the tomb still draws attention but begins to appear more as a particular goal within the wider landscape. Readings were taken at 10m intervals along a series of transects parallel to the long axis of the main chamber. The resulting plans demonstrate the substantial distance over which the monument exerts a profound influence and the way in which this plays off the topography to create a distinctive and bounded activity space. At East Bennan the effect of the coincidence of facade breadth and level ground is clearly apparent, in which a geographically bounded area is further defined by the dominance of the monument over the subject. The more diffuse pattern evident at Torrylin is partly due to the more open, less varying terrain within which it sits, but also to the truncation of the cairn; furthermore, the existence of a facade, flat or crescentic, would tend to narrow the focus slightly. This particular plan underlines the strong effect of the cairn silhouette rising from the skyline, as very high readings are evident almost 45m from the remains of the chamber.

Similar transects were walked at Monamore (Fig. 3.13), with readings at 5m intervals. The plan demonstrates the small-scale nature of the narrow terrace and the way in which the cairn sits poised at the outer edge, as well as displaying the rather shorter distance over which a slighter cairn with marginally crescentic facade projects a maximum impression. In addition, however, it makes clear the effect of forestation on the experience of place; rather than an extended approach during which the chambered cairn places ever more insistent visual demands upon the observer, one is quite suddenly confronted by the monument, which has an immediate and intense impact. Within the more open canopy of the neolithic landscape, the impression of a sense of place would originally have operated upon

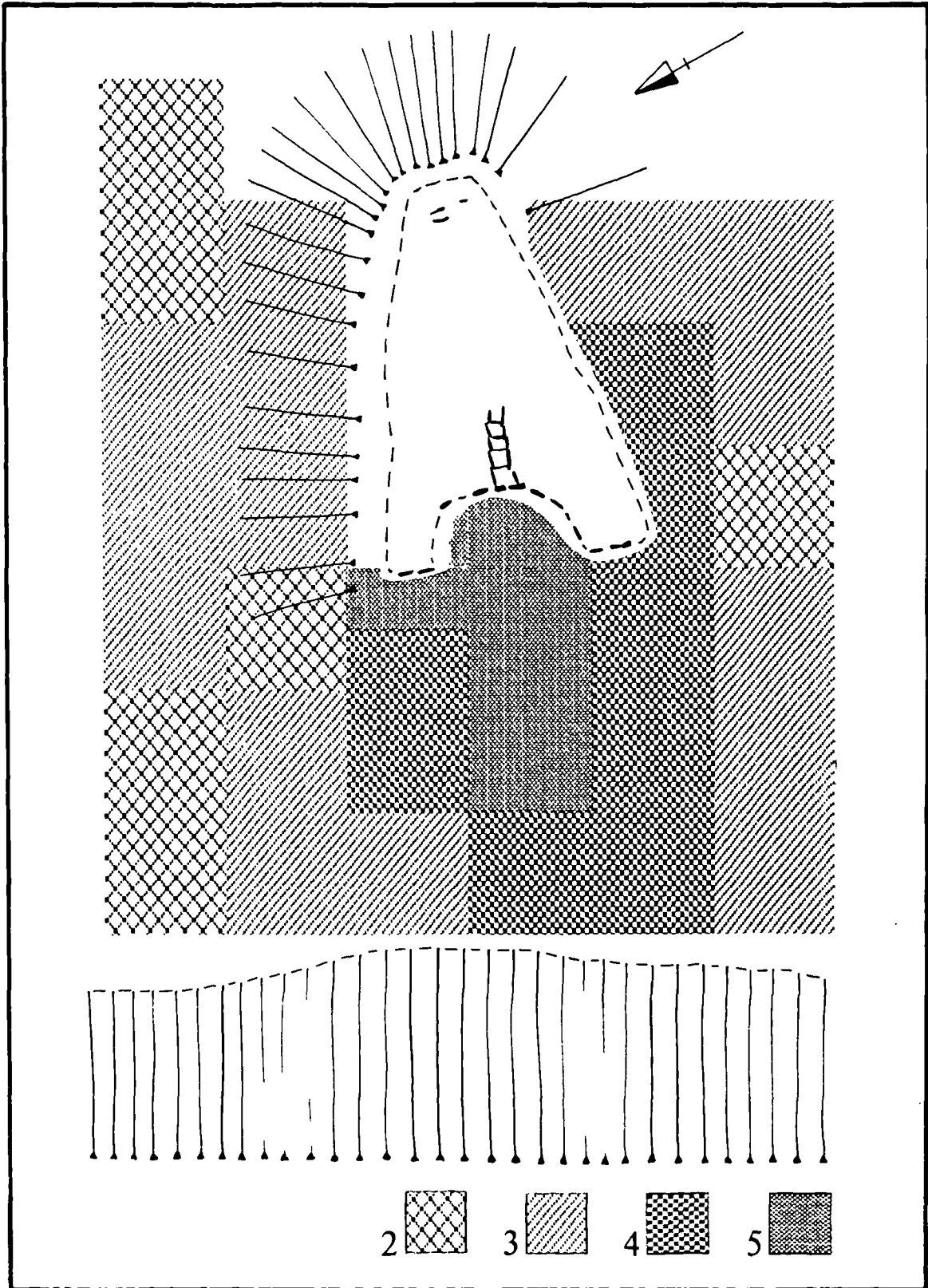


Figure 3.11 Graphic representation of the monumental presence established at East Bennan. Cairn plan after Henshall 1972. Scale 1:500.

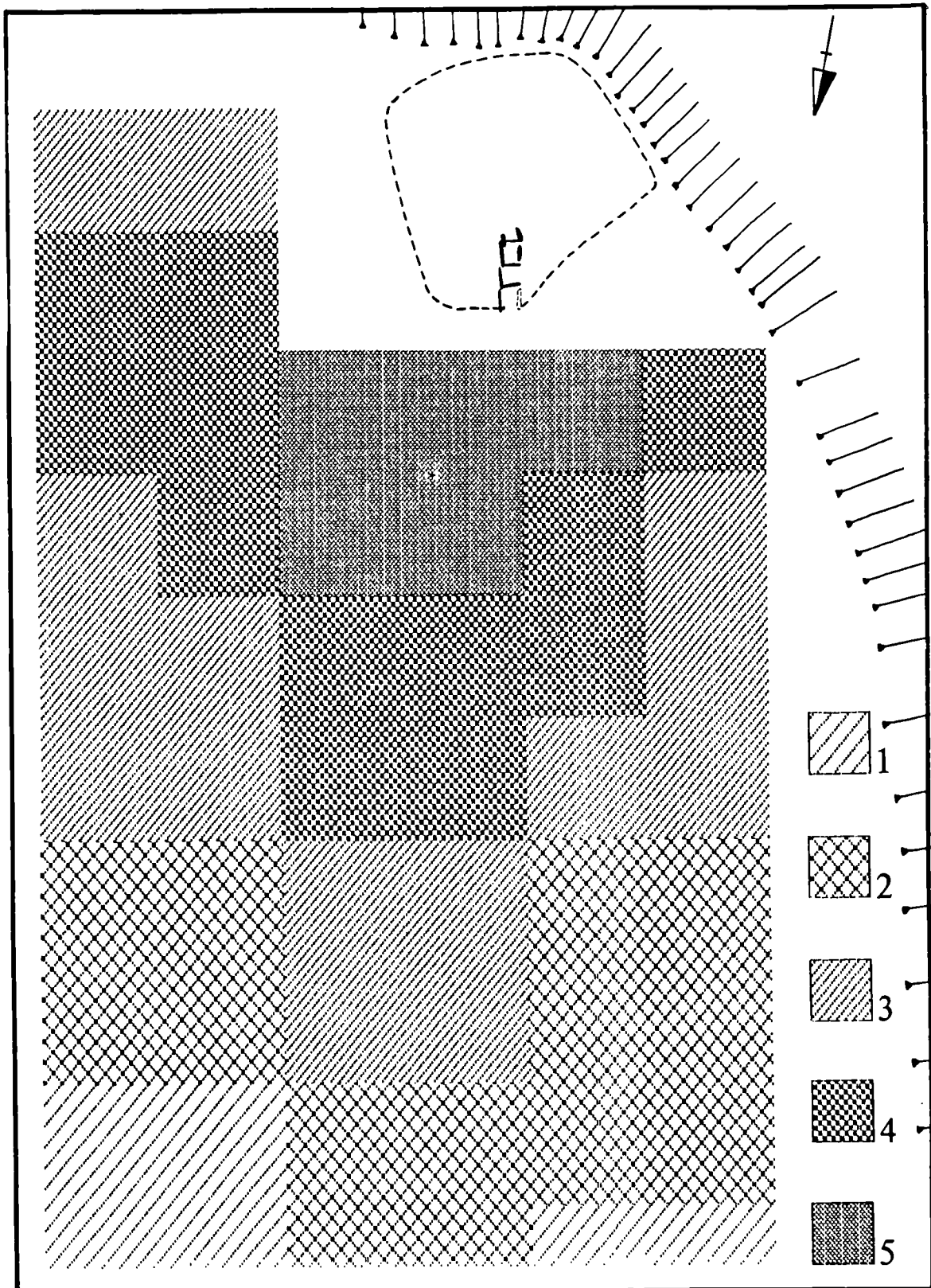


Figure 3.12 Graphic representation of the monumental presence established at Torrylin. Cairn plan after Henshall 1972. Scale 1:500.

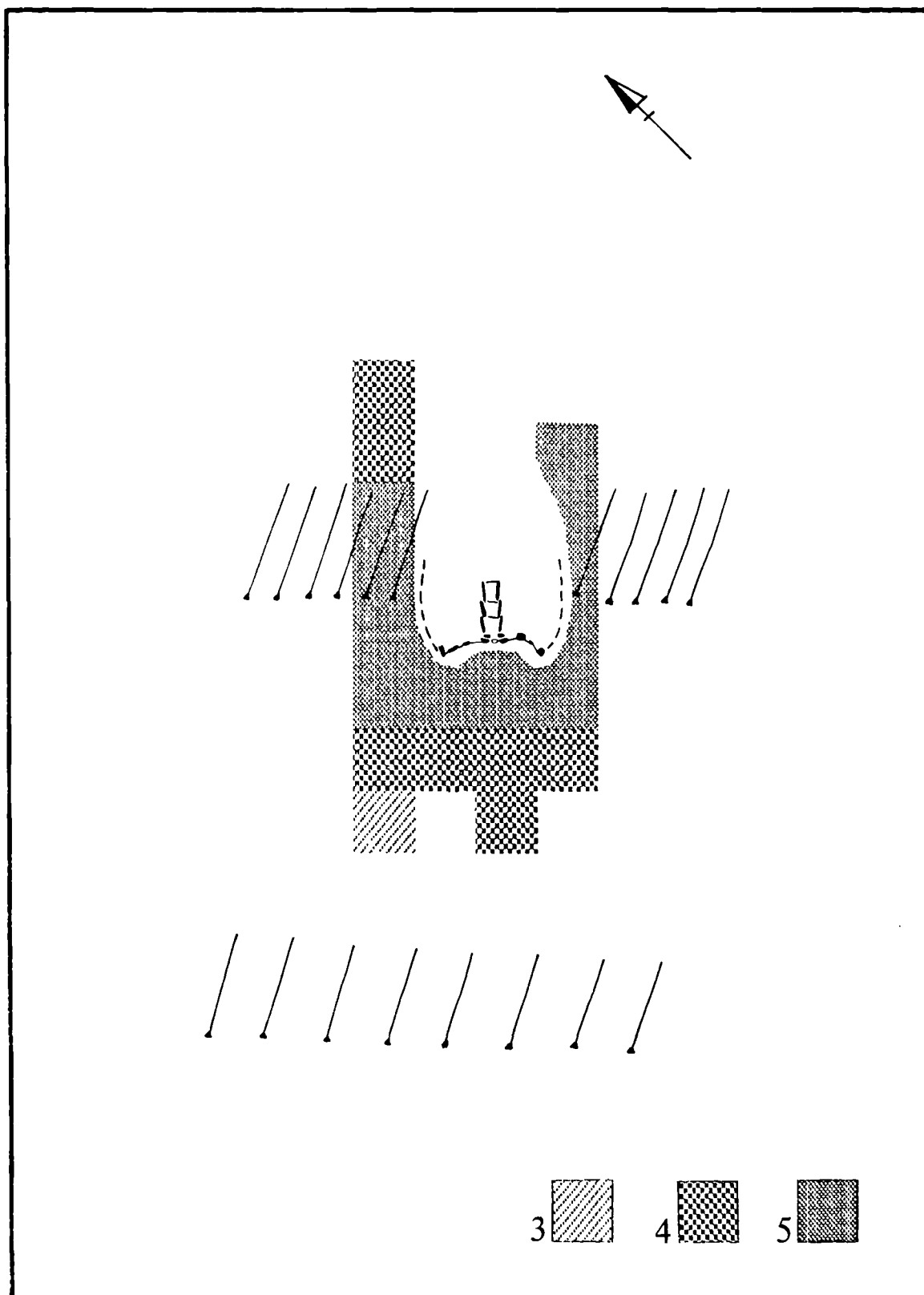


Figure 3.13 Graphic representation of the monumental presence established at Monamore. Cairn plan after Henshall 1972. Scale 1:500.

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the subject in a manner more similar to that occurring today at East Bennan and Torrylin.

These graphic representations underline the point that the experience of place moves forward within a specific material context: engagement with the monument occurs through a dialectic of constraint and opportunity. This pertains similarly to the larger scale, as access to the various tombs is often restricted to a certain extent, either in terms of topography or vision or a combination of both. The steep hillsides upon which lie Carn Ban, Monamore and Dunan Beag encourage approaches along the contour, while the abrupt breaks of slope associated with Torrylin, Clachaig and East Bennan control movement more directly, as some lines of approach are so difficult as to be unlikely. The nature of the locale in which Tormore I is situated greatly reduces the number of directions from which the cairn may be approached as a long distance goal; the extremely boggy conditions would no doubt have imposed further constraints.

The pattern which begins to emerge is one in which certain avenues of approach are seemingly favoured, encouraging the individual to encounter the monument in a particular way. In many instances the physical character of the site is such that movement through the landscape must alter in some way in an encounter with the monument: a hard climb or a steep descent may be broken by a pause on level ground, and natural barriers may impede further movement in certain directions. Arrival and departure become more obvious in this way, adding a further concrete dimension to the sensual perception of place.

Manipulation of the subject can be initiated at a substantial remove from the monument. The individual may be exposed to the linear aspect of the cairn over a considerable distance, a direct view of the front elevation unobtainable until arrival within the dramatic area and frequently necessitating a distinct change in direction. The entrance is in fact rarely approachable along the chamber alignment from any great distance; where physical topography does not in theory restrict such access, visual topography does. Prominent landmarks may function as long distance referents, often coinciding with the more massive linear aspect of the monument.

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So at Torrylin, the longest approaches focus on the islands of Sanda and Davaar respectively, which are silhouetted above the long bulk of the cairn. It is also during the course of the longest approach towards East Bennan that Ailsa Craig appears as a distant goal, while at Carn Ban, of the two extended approaches possible, it is that in which the facade and forecourt are angled towards the subject that the same landmark is evident beyond the monument on the sea horizon. A similar configuration exists with regard to Dunan Beag cairn and Holy Island.

Up to this point the changing perception of the monument and its situation within the landscape has been a gradual progression. The shift from the imposing monumentality of a large cairn at close range (even the smaller monuments are substantial constructions) to the intensity of the much smaller-scale, enclosed dramatic space is, however, a swift transformation. The establishment of intimacy occurs through a dialectic, as the monument opens up to the observer while at the same time encircling him or her with a whole new set of boundaries. For the flat- and crescentic-fronted tombs, this transitional moment occurs once the subject has reached a level with the ends of the facade, which loosely define the focal width of the dramatic area. It is at this point that the presence of the monument becomes all-encompassing -- other reference points must now be read through the monument rather than by an even reciprocity. In effect, rather than acting as a focal point within the wider world towards which vision and movement are drawn, the monument now focuses the landscape which is seen and therefore conceptualized in a more directed fashion. Just as the cairn itself is now viewed from a different aspect, with the massive linear barrier replaced by the 'theatrical' architecture of the tomb entrance, so too the cairn's wider setting is seen from a different perspective. An inner world is created by drawing in elements of an outer world so that a sense of place is sustained by the opposing forces of dynamic tension.

A further transition will occur as the tomb chamber is entered, with the final withdrawal from both inner and outer worlds. On re-emerging from the dark, cramped confines of the chamber into an area which is defined physically but just as strongly by tradition, taboo and customary usage, the individual's conception of

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the world he or she momentarily left behind may well be refined through this encounter with the intellectual structures which govern the operation of day-to-day life and which act as the guiding principles behind the chambered cairn itself. This ultimate transition may be the prerogative of only a few members of the community. In any case, given that current thinking emphasizes the significance of the monuments as housing some form of ancestral presence over their role as receptacles for burial, it is quite conceivable that any number of ceremonial events -- of celebration, dedication, initiation, obligation and so on -- might take place within the forecourt and/or dramatic area without physical recourse to the interior of the tomb.¹⁵

Any engagement with these monuments, then, is a drawn-out process of transition and transformation. In a landscape traversed by a web of pathways which connect the human rhythms of days, seasons and lifetimes, we might conceive of the cairns as the physical embellishment of pre-existing points where certain paths intersect, the significance of which resides in their role as loci of arrival and departure (Barrett 1994a, 93; 1994b, 136-46) -- I have noted, for example, the frequent siting of the tombs at transitional points in the landscape and in locations that one cannot simply pass through. Many authors discuss the inhabited landscape in terms of path and place, but the most detailed analysis of the way in which this relates to the concept of tenurial appropriation has been developed in a series of essays by Tim Ingold (1986). Briefly, 'tenure' is the appropriative process through which claims of control over resources within the landscape are made, thereby situating people in place-time schemes.

Tenure is about the ways in which a resource locale is worked or bound into the biography of the subject or into the developmental trajectories of those groups ... of which he is a member (Ingold 1986, 137).

Ingold identifies three different forms of land tenure: zero-dimensional over sites and locations, one-dimensional over paths and tracks, and two-dimensional over surface areas (1986, 147-55). The operation of the first two in hunter-gatherer societies, whereby movement to and fro along the pathways linking various places

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fulfils both economic and moral imperatives, and as such is an integral part of social life 'projecting ancestral past into unborn future' (Ingold 1986, 153), is contrasted with the two-dimensional tenure of agricultural societies in which the concept of 'land' is distinguished from and contained within 'landscape'. By implication, this corresponds to the dichotomy between an inclusive sense of identity in which 'belonging' depends upon drawing the other into one's own sphere and an exclusivity which defines the other in opposition to oneself. Thus, while the hunter-gatherer lays claim to natural locales which embody the landscape, envisaging the world *from* particular places, the agriculturalist conceives of the world in terms of boundaries defining locales *around* various loci.

In an extended study of the ramifications of the built environment, Peter Wilson (1988) considers the issue of identity with a slightly different emphasis. Wilson sees 'open' hunter-gatherer society constructed through physical, social and spiritual movement within overlapping, unbounded zones which focus upon particular locations. This contrasts with the foundation of what he terms 'domesticated' society upon the boundary, in which the 'reciprocal identity of person and place' expresses the right of exclusion (Wilson 1988, 71). The role of architecture within this opposition is grounded in the idea that whereas mobile peoples 'read or ... find cosmological features in an already existing landscape', more sedentary groups 'tend to represent and model cosmic ideas in the structures they build' (Wilson 1988, 50).

Dichotomies such as this, however, can become over simplified -- an important factor when we consider the relationship between monumental construction and the transition to agriculture, and thus the character of the earlier neolithic. Recent studies have begun to re-examine the nature of the link between ritual monuments and an agricultural, 'neolithic lifeworld'. Richard Bradley has noted that although large monuments erected by communal effort and the use of agricultural techniques may appear at about the same time, the shift to more intensive farming practice does not occur for an appreciable period (1993, 18-20). He points to Portugal, where domesticates do not form a major part of economic

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strategies until long after the earliest megalithic monuments have appeared; Brittany, where palynological evidence for cereal cultivation indicates a similar situation; and to Scandinavia, where large settlements with substantial buildings accompany the shift of agriculture into a higher register long after the initial appearance of monumentality. Bradley argues that it was partly through the inscription of monumental architecture into the landscape that attitudes towards nature and 'the wild' necessary for the practice of agriculture on a large scale might have been formulated, the formality of the monument infusing the landscape with a sense of order which is reproduced in social and economic practice.¹⁶ With reference to southern Britain, John Barrett (1994a; 1994b) stresses a similar chronological separation between initial monument construction and intensive farming, seeing the ritual monuments of the fourth millennium arising from and drawing forward zero- and one-dimensional tenurial claims of considerable antiquity:

the enclosures and long mounds were ... more likely to have been the expression of a traditional reading of the landscape, which extended back over centuries, than to have represented some 'rethinking' of the world in terms of a Neolithic (Barrett 1994a, 93).

To consider the possibility that the Arran tombs operated as loci linked by - or linking -- pathways is useful on several grounds. It allows us to resist the simple polarization of mesolithic/neolithic social order and thus to move beyond models which regard the monuments more as representative than interactive media. It provides us with a way into thinking about people's changing perceptions of how they situate themselves within the materiality of existence; although on Arran a directed view of the wider world *from* the monument is a factor of crucial importance, the demarcation of bounded areas within and around the tomb also has implications for the ordering and/or restriction of access and an identity sustained through opposition rather than integration.

These monuments are inscribed within a pre-existing network of natural referents. This is a landscape of profound familiarity in which place has no need

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to advertise itself. The individual knows precisely where these foci of significance are and can pick them out unfailingly: a prominent landmark, a distinctive area of terrain, liminal ground or a seemingly undifferentiated point in the landscape. Our recognition of this landscape will always be impoverished because the link between intellectual and physical worlds is culturally and historically specific; as archaeologists we lose sight -- literally and figuratively -- of the points of reference between the poles of the obvious and the artificial. But to acknowledge this is also to open up further possibilities for thought. For example, the variability of locational aspects for the chambered tombs on Arran becomes more understandable when considered in these terms. The question becomes not so much 'why is this monument *here*?' (e.g. Perry & Davidson 1987), but 'how might certain strategies be played out in a world in which this monument is here rather than there?'

One of the effects of the monumental elaboration of place is that its influence can be extended both visually and physically. From at times considerable distances the stark, linear mass of the cairn stands out as a concrete goal, but a goal among others, perhaps other points at which pathways meet. Some of these other nodes will be visible in the 'prospect' view. As the individual moves towards the monument, most likely along highly formalized routes, its sheer scale will begin to impress more and more upon his or her attention. Although alternative pathways and other aims, material or not, may still be pursued at this stage, the potential options may begin to be narrowed down, partly through the reciprocal referencing of the cairn with these other significant loci. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the way in which Ailsa Craig, a clear landmark for the entire southern coast, is put into a special relationship with the cairn at Torrylin, a relationship which is revealed in stages as one moves ever closer to the monument: the two referents play off each other initially, merge gradually, and finally part as the tomb takes over as sole focus.¹⁷ It is the architectural modification of the landscape which allows the individual to encounter the two places together over such an extended field of time-space and which directs his or her bodily movement at a finer degree of resolution. The subject is guided to move from a view of the

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monument and other nodal points within the landscape to a view of the landscape within the monument. In other words, the landscape -- Ailsa Craig, the sea, the horizon, the distant mainland -- are eventually seen 'through' the chambered cairn, as it forms a barrier between the observer, held within the dramatic space, and this farther world. The element of abstraction inherent in the enclosed nature of the dramatic area is crucial in this process of transformation, as one is effectively withdrawn slightly from the wider landscape so that it can be experienced ... perceived ... thought in a particular way: it becomes, in a sense, embodied within the monument. A particular kind of place is established, towards and within which particular kinds of movement and thought are possible; as I have noted above, directionality and positioning are integral to the statements people make about their world. The mechanisms may be slightly different at sites such as Giants' Graves and Tormore I, where prime foci are seen from the tomb entrance rather than beyond the body of the cairn, but the principles are the same.

The chambered cairn may be conceived of as an intellectual filter through which the world is viewed. Natural phenomena, both terrestrial and celestial, are afforded their particular significance with reference to it.¹⁸ Meaning, rather than simply residing encoded within the tomb as a symbolic repository, is drawn from beyond the tomb and mediated by a human/ancestral presence; the dramatic focal area so integral to the architecture becomes a vehicle for the coming together of the timeless and the limited time scales of human generations. Drawn in by a sophisticated development of qualities inherent in the landscape, people are abstracted momentarily from the cadence of daily life, then sent on their way again slightly transformed.

This is the theatre of ritual, of ceremonial, of landscape, of living -- the dramatic interaction of street theatre. The monument divorced from its material context becomes a simple arena for the presentational theatre of the proscenium arch; what we see instead by inhabiting the monumental locale is a dialectic interplay between landscape and architecture which acts as a conductor for interpretation. The individual is held in place by this interpretive dynamic, moving

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from place to place along a series of pathways, from horizon to horizon. This physical journey is also metaphorical, as the cairn may operate as an intermediate reference point for the attainment of more remote goals. It is unnecessary to go to Ailsa Craig physically if what it represents can be arrived at by engagement with the chambered cairn. In this regard the tomb may be seen as a focus for thought: abstract concepts can be visualized *via* the materiality of a familiar landscape and relationships between the physical and the metaphysical can be explored. The monument forms part of both material and intellectual frameworks for living in which knowledges about one's place in the world are constituted and perpetuated.

Knowledges are built out of a process of enablement and constraint. Although to construct a monument is to erect barriers and boundaries, it is also to create new media of opportunity. The physical barrier of the cairn may draw on certain aspects of the terrain to create an intensely focused, intimate space, but the barrier is permeable in that it allows the subject to progress figuratively into the realm of the abstract. Within structuration theory, Allan Pred has discussed the way in which the structuring of space operates as a medium for the production and reproduction of social relations, particularly with regard to power, and the historical contingency of this process (1985). By placing constraints upon and creating possibilities for people's actions, power relations also both limit and create possibilities for perception, thought and knowledge:

... the very nature of the structuration process as it unfolds in place is such that the power relations underlying routine and non-routine local practices are themselves established, reproduced and transformed by routine and non-routine practices (Pred 1985, 339).

Pred identifies an 'external-internal' interplay of thought and action through which the individual contributes to social reproduction and the 'becoming' of place, transformative processes which he regards as inseparable. Internal mental activity results from physical involvement in a specific material setting, yet this external action must arise *from* mental activity -- goal formation, recognition of possibilities, choices among alternatives -- which is itself based on prior experience

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in other time-space contexts (Pred 1985, 340-1). So what is possible, probable, desirable and desired converge at the chambered cairn; although strict spatial formulae within ritual practice are imposed by those in authority, individuals are able to slip imperceptibly beyond boundaries both literal and figurative (Parkin 1992). As people move within and around the monument and direct their thought and memory through it, the affirmation or challenge to individuals' roles in the ritual context carries through to the working out of social relations in other contexts of life.

Through engagement with the landscape a social and cosmological order is constructed, which undergoes continual reinterpretation as a series of principles are worked and reworked through time. Within this historical dynamic changes may gradually find material expression; thus the monumental elaboration of certain points in a network of paths and places -- the placement of monoliths might be included in this -- and the ensuing long-term process of architectural alteration. In one sense this process can be seen to impose increasing constraints, as place is 'tied down' more and more: through artificial construction certain nodal points seem to take priority and direct perception of others. Later, liminal areas are increasingly closed down with, for example, the blocking of chambers and forecourts. Perhaps what we are seeing here is part of a process of transformation in which tenurial appropriation of two-dimensional surface areas becomes conceivable, as specific areas of ground attain increasing significance as entities in themselves rather than being understood by more overt reference to other places. This may be the principle behind the earlier bronze age round cairns and barrows on Arran which, as foci for the deposition of single burials, may have acted to bind the biographies of genealogically related individuals into particular locales in a much more direct, immediate way. That the construction of these monuments may have involved stages in which an elevated platform operated as a sort of 'theatre in the round' where rituals enacted around the internal cist may have been highly open, in visual terms, to the greater body of participants and onlookers (J. Barrett pers. comm.), may hint at a less oblique relationship among the living and the

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deceased members of the community and their respective familiar landscapes than that linked to the hidden chambers and external references of the megalithic monuments. At the same time, the nature of discourse between the human group and ancestral figures becomes more static, in that their material remains are ultimately inaccessible, sealed within blocked chambers or under the body of round mounds.

So it may be that, partly through the development and extended use of the chambered cairns on Arran, the land at and around specific points in the landscape became of greater importance than the physical and metaphorical journeys among the inhabited landscapes of living, ancestral and mythic communities that these places once encouraged. Perhaps during the course of the third millennium and into the second, the concept of human groups living *on* the land began to become conceivable, as opposed to the self and the land being different facets of the same thing; perhaps claims to symbolic, spiritual and material resources came to reside more in the specific areas of ground into which they were embedded than in the significance of where you had been, where you were going, and where else those places could take you.

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NOTES

¹See Ingold 1993, 155 for a slightly different interpretation.

²The origins of these interpretive relations with the landscapes of Arran stretch back into deep antiquity. Dates from a mesolithic occupation area in the south of the island indicate activity during the first half of the seventh millennium BC (Affleck, Edwards & Clarke 1988), while evidence for minor woodland clearance may be even earlier (Robinson & Dickson 1988). The chronological resolution of our understanding of the period of initial establishment and use of the tombs remains fairly coarse, being based primarily upon radiocarbon dates obtained from excavations at Monamore cairn (4160-3690 BC overlying the old ground surface on which the cairn was erected; 3040-2480 BC just beneath the forecourt blocking [Q-675, Q-676; MacKie 1964]) and analogy with dates spanning the mid fifth to mid fourth millennium associated with Grimston-Lyles Hill series pottery from Machrie Moor, sherds of which have also been found in eight chambered cairns on Arran (Haggarty 1991). Depositional activity within the cairns and chambers continues, probably intermittently, throughout the third millennium, finally coming to a close sometime in the first half of the second millennium BC.

³Code references correlate to Audrey Henshall's corpus of Scottish chambered cairns (1963-72).

⁴By 'open' I am referring to topographical character rather than to the nature of the neolithic vegetational cover, which is discussed in detail in Appendix B. Here, an open landscape is defined by a wide prospect over the surrounding country; a closed landscape is without long-distance or expansive views.

⁵The landscape in which Carn Ban and the other chambered cairns on Arran were constructed seems to have been extremely open in terms of the arboreal canopy (see Appendix B).

⁶The cairn at Monamore was erected upon an open, grassy area of ground, while colluviation initiated during the period the chamber was in active use may have been the result of cultivation further up the hill (MacKie 1964, 4; 9; 17-19).

⁷This stone circle is described in Barnatt 1989, 246.

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⁸Interestingly, another chambered long cairn with crescentic facade lies 300m away on a narrow terrace farther up the western hillside, not intervisible with Giants' Graves. Torr an Loisgte too is aligned north-south and the view to the north is the same as that described here. But the forecourt faces south, so that the individual facing the tomb would see Holy Island rising beyond the right-hand arm of the facade -- an identical configuration of landmark and architecture to that at East Bennan and Monamore.

⁹This route would take the individual beneath Torr an Loisgte cairn.

¹⁰See p. 126 and Appendix C.

¹¹From the point of view of the observer facing the entrance to the main chamber (in the case of Dunan Mor all three chambers are taken into account), the direction of the sea view from the Arran tombs is as follows:

	No. of cases	% of total
Ahead	6	26%
Ahead and left	5	22%
Ahead and right	7	30%
Behind	3	13%
No view	2	9%

¹²The monumental locale at Tormore II therefore reiterates, in slightly different material form, a common theme among the Arran monuments: a relatively short, closed-in view from the entrance, over a bounded dramatic area, contrasts with a more extensive view from within this focal space, looking over and beyond the body of the cairn.

¹³John Barber's excavations at Machrie North and Tormore have demonstrated that the sites of similar hut circles acted as foci for domestic activity throughout the greater part of the bronze age, while some of the clearance cairns originated during the earlier part of the period (Barber 1982b).

¹⁴These two locales with their different foci would seem to have developed in parallel, stretching back at least into the fifth millennium BC. The identity of place established in the eastward, inland part of the moor is discussed in Appendix C.

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¹⁵It is of course the creative nature of human ways of knowing and the vast potential for their material expression that generates intellectual tension, opening up these transitional phases and transformational moments to reinterpretation and challenge as well as reaffirmation. It is in this light that we might consider activities like the blocking of the southern chamber at Giants' Graves, the infilling of the forecourt area at Monamore and possibly Dunan Beag, or the deliberate filling to roof level of the chamber at Carn Ban with a charcoal-rich, stony matrix. The chamber, entrance area and forecourt are, after all, highly charged transitional areas both spatially and symbolically.

¹⁶Although I agree with the general cast of Bradley's argument, I see the links among humanity, 'nature' and 'culture' as being articulated in a different way, which is set out in Chapter Five.

¹⁷The recursive relationship here is particularly overt. More often, prominent features of the landscape are seen obliquely across the dramatic space or forecourt area.

¹⁸Although the orientation of the Arran cairns with regard to particular topographical characteristics takes priority over that based on celestial cycles, in a few cases a very general relationship between the monument and the sun or moon may be posited (Burl 1981, 254-5):

	Midsummer sunrise	Midwinter sunset	Lunar standstill rise	Lunar standstill set
Entrance faces event	Carn Ban Tormore II		Tormore I	Monamore Slidery Water
Event occurs behind body of cairn	Monamore	Tormore I		Carn Ban Tormore II

Monuments in the contemporary landscape: the Black Isle

These Antiquities are so exceeding old that no Bookes doe reach them,
so that there is no Way to retrieve them but by comparative antiquitie,
which I have writt upon the spott, from the Monuments themselves.

John Aubrey
Brief Lives

Introduction

Situated in the northeast of Scotland, the Black Isle peninsula is in topographic terms a lowland landscape in a highland setting. The backbone of the peninsula is the Millbuie Ridge running southwest-northeast, which rises to its highest point in the centre of the Black Isle at Mount Eagle, just over 250m OD (Fig. 4.1). This central spine is surrounded by low-lying, undulating firthlands which look over the narrow Cromarty Firth to the craggy northern highlands and across the Beaully and Moray Firths to the mountains in the south. The sheer cliffs of the Sutors of Cromarty form the northeastern tip of the peninsula; together with the opposing cliffs of the North Sutor in Easter Ross, across only 1.5km of water, these form the entrance to one of the most sheltered natural harbours in northern Europe. The southwestern boundary of the Black Isle is essentially the low-lying land where the Millbuie Ridge terminates, between the mouths of the River Conon and the River Beaully.

In topographical terms, therefore, the Black Isle is a closely definable region of approximately 285 square km. This is reflected in the type of archaeological

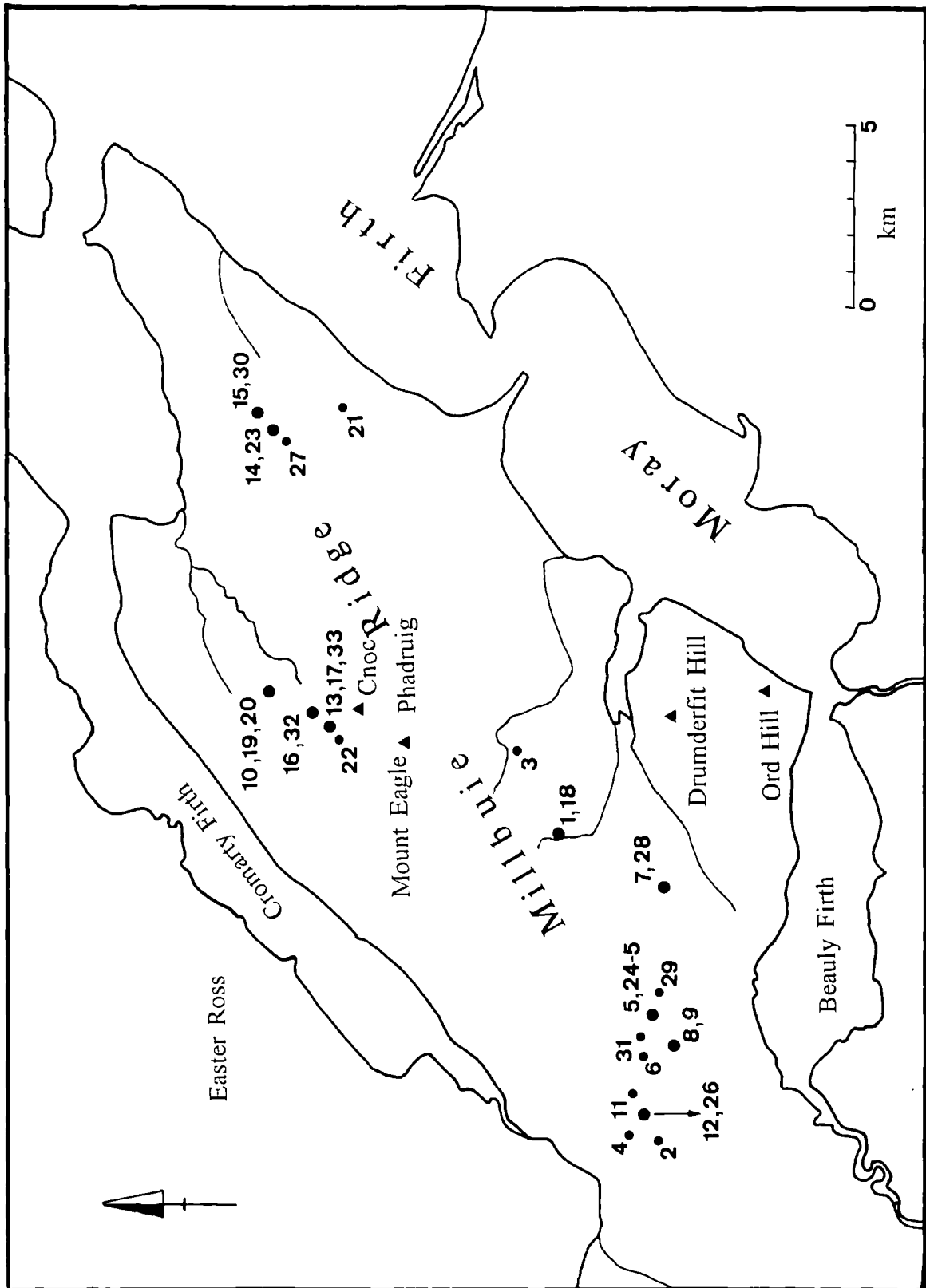


Figure 4.1 Sites mentioned in Chapter Four; numbers correlate to Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Sites mentioned in Chapter Four

Site	Code	Grid Reference	
Chambered cairns			
1	Balnaguie	ROS 6	NH 628 547
2	Balvaird	ROS 7	NH 539 519
3	Belmaduthy	ROS 8	NH 644 559
4	Bishop Kinkell	ROS 9	NH 541 528
5	Carn Glas	ROS 12	NH 578 520
6	Carn Urnan	ROS 13	NH 566 522
7	Croftcrunie	ROS 20	NH 610 520
8	Kilcoy North	ROS 23	NH 570 517
9	Kilcoy South	ROS 24	NH 570 516
10	Mid Brae	ROS 31	NH 661 628
11	Muir of Allangrange	ROS 33	NH 550 526
12	Muir of Conan	ROS 34	NH 546 525
13	Woodhead Round	ROS 42	NH 650 610
Non-megalithic long cairns			
14	Glenurquhart I		NH 733 624
15	Glenurquhart II		NH 737 629
16	Wester Brae	ROS 39	NH 656 613
17	Woodhead Long	ROS 41	NH 653 607
Non-megalithic round cairns			
18	Balnaguie		NH 629 547
19	Brae Farm East		NH 662 628
20	Brae Farm West		NH 661 628
21	Callachy Hill		NH 738 605
22	<i>Culbo</i>		NH 646 606
23	Grey Cairn		NH 733 624
24	Mains of Kilcoy I		NH 577 519
25	Mains of Kilcoy II		NH 577 518
26	Muir of Conan		NH 544 520
27	Whitebog Wood		NH 732 621

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Site	Code	Grid Reference
Enclosed cremation cemetery		
28	Crofterunie	NH 610 520
?Domestic site		
29	Kilcoy	NH 583 519
Field systems		
		(centred on)
30	Glenurquhart	NH 737 630
31	Heights of Kilcoy	?NH 572 522
32	Wester Brae	NH 655 614
33	Woodhead	NH 652 608

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research carried out with regard to the area: in the 1950s, for example, Anthony Woodham produced a survey of prehistoric monuments in the Black Isle (Woodham 1956b), while some twenty years later the Royal Commission conducted a wider-ranging survey within the same geographical bounds (R.C.A.H.M.S. 1979). Yet one of the most striking features brought out by these surveys is the remarkable diversity within a restricted area not only of monument type but of architectural traditions within these various types, which may involve substantial chronological overlap or simultaneity. Considering only sites of a mortuary nature, there are chambered cairns, non-megalithic long cairns, round cairns (composed either of earth and stone or solely the latter, which may or may not possess a kerb, sit upon a platform or enclose cist burials and which vary greatly in size), an enclosed cremation cemetery, and cists without artificial covering mounds which contain either inhumations or cremations.

Indeed, this diversity may be one of the factors behind the general lack of archaeological studies on the peninsula. Superficially, the neolithic mortuary monuments constructed from the late fifth to possibly the mid third millennium BC are particularly conducive to traditional forms of analysis: enclosed within this small geographical region, the cairns conform predominantly to the criteria of the Orkney-Cromarty group of chambered tombs and in fact, within the broader formal category, constitute the core of a localized architectural tradition which favours rectangular chambers within round cairns (Henshall 1963, 62; 1972, 260-1).¹ The chamber entrance -- or the wider end of the monument in the case of non-megalithic long cairns -- is almost without exception oriented towards the east, between northeast and east southeast, while with regard to siting the monuments regularly occur at altitudes between 80 and 180m OD.

On paper, then, the neolithic cairns of the Black Isle begin to assume a certain integrity. To experience them in the field, however, is to recognize the heterogeneity of form and distribution which resists ordered categorization and generalization. The architectural detail of the Orkney-Cromarty cairns is by no means homogeneous, nor does their distribution or landscape context display deep

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regularity. Monuments with varied architectural features may cluster within sight of each other, while those with greater mutual resemblance may be physically entirely isolated. Here too it becomes apparent that the occurrence in the Black Isle of extremely regularized monuments of the Clava tradition, or of the unchambered long cairns which do not permit direct physical recourse to the symbolic resources of ancestral remains, matter more than as minor statistical exceptions to the general rule. On the contrary, they serve to pull apart the conception of the peninsula as a discrete entity, breaking it down into smaller localities. Previous archaeological analyses have tended to see the Black Isle as a 'meeting place' for diverse cultural indicators, in which groups of people of varying ethnicity and different cultural traditions perhaps co-exist. Intellectual frameworks which seek to emphasize conformity over particularity are unable to cope adequately with the disparate nature of the material; consequently, attention is directed away from the peninsula itself towards 'origins' in other regions, towards various peoples who are equated with specific forms of material culture (e.g. Woodham 1956b; Woodham & Woodham 1957a; Henshall 1963, 1972). Indeed, Henshall confronts us -- albeit unintentionally -- with the bizarre image of travelling tombs engaged in architectural *conversazione* in which people seem entirely incidental, when she states: 'The tombs of Easter Ross are likely to have arrived up the Great Glen route. It is in the area at the southwest end of this route that fruitful contact is likely to have been made between the rectangular chambers of the southwest and the passage-graves of the west' (1972, 261).

But another way into this may be to consider briefly the nature of the region in the present and more recent past, and in so doing to relinquish the security of apparent geographical coherence which has so far accompanied archaeological enquiry in the Black Isle. Although for long linked to the mainland by its ports, the Black Isle way of life has been characterized by a strong degree of insularity, an isolation which was really only broken with the relatively recent construction of bridges over the Cromarty and Beaully Firths (Willis 1989). But this small world of productive farmland and fishing fields surrounded by the more inhospitable

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highlands can be broken down into a number of even smaller worlds. The primary geographical feature, the Millbuie Ridge, itself partitions the peninsula into mutually isolated landscapes, for the most part projected towards different bodies of water which have distinct identities.

Each village still retains its own particular character. The small cottages of Rosemarkie, for example, cluster beneath prominent hills which rise strongly immediately to the north and west; these combine with the shallow crescent of Rosemarkie Bay to direct the focus of the village across the narrow stretch of the Moray Firth to the spit of land at Fort George which juts out towards it from the mainland. The county town of Cromarty, looking out towards the hills of Easter Ross from the very end of the peninsula, could not be more different, its elegant eighteenth century buildings and wide streets a relic of the prosperity it enjoyed during this period as an international port. Economically the town still looks outward rather than to the Black Isle itself, with the growth of industry associated with the North Sea oil fields. In language too the Black Isle separates into smaller groupings. Even today the local people distinguish three accents on the peninsula, while distinctive dialects like that of the fishing community of Avoch are only now beginning to disappear with the great influx of incomers from other parts of Britain (*Willis 1989*).

This is not to say, however, that a broader regional identity is entirely lacking. Formed in the early nineteenth century, the Black Isle Farmers' Society has acted as an integrating force within the agricultural community. But today this is carried out primarily at an economic and political level among the farmers themselves (predominantly male); its social role has now largely ceased, in part due to the increasing professional diversification among farming families. Thus, although members of the Society know each other, their families no longer do. A sense of community is still strong, but again breaks down into smaller localities within the area as a whole. In a late twentieth century world dominated by travel and mass communication, two settlements on either side of the peninsula may still seem mutually remote.

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This is not a model to be transposed back into the prehistoric period; the neolithic inhabitants of the Black Isle need not have necessarily envisaged themselves in terms of discrete communities which for certain purposes were regarded as 'belonging' to an overarching social grouping distinct from those to the south, west and north. But I do think it serves to illustrate that, on the one hand, linguistic and material variety which form part of quite different ways of living can exist in close geographical proximity and that the very nature of the landscape does have some part to play in this, while on the other hand, the people concerned need not consider their various communities as entirely foreign to each other. Diversity of monument form and context is perhaps easier to conceive from this perspective, which allows for more than simple reliance on the long-distance movement of various groups and/or the geographical transmission of cultural ideas for explanation. Whether situating the monuments within a series of smaller worlds within the Black Isle will permit us to say anything more meaningful about the way in which human experience was lived out and carried forward in the neolithic is of course the point at issue.

Kilcoy

At the southwestern end of the peninsula, three chambered cairns and two bronze age round cairns cluster within 900m of each other, high on the flanks of the Millbuie Ridge (Fig. 4.1; Table 4.1). The similarity of their landscape setting and a certain degree of intervisibility among them means they may be considered as a group. The cairns are all situated in what is now intensively utilized arable land, on a southeast facing slope which runs down towards the Beaully Firth at a steady, fairly strong gradient. About 1km below the monuments the land breaks into the more gentle undulations of the coastal strip.

Kilcoy North ROS 23

This is a large round cairn enclosing a two-compartment Orkney-Cromarty chamber. The inner compartment is polygonal while the outer was probably of

rectangular form; the chamber is aligned almost due east-west with the entrance facing towards the east.

Effectively, the tomb sits just below the top of the slope, because although the land continues to rise to the summit of the Millbuie Ridge, the gradient lessens so substantially some 250m northwest of the cairn as to form a uniform skyline. Both from the perspective of the monument itself and from its surrounding locale, this close horizon can be contrasted with the extensive vista which opens out below. The firth is visible from southeast through south to southwest, with the summits of the Aird massif rising on the other side of the water, while to the west the mountains create a layered horizon which recedes into the distance. The firth provides the landscape with a strong focus which draws together the broad expanse of land within which the Kilcoy cairns are situated.

If we are to understand something of the logic of interaction between the round cairn and the landscape, we need to establish some kind of understanding of the movement of the subject within this dynamic. But one of the problems particular to an architecture based upon the circle does in fact concern the orientation of the subject. Often directionality and positioning are governed by external media; in the centrally planned church, for example, the central circular space may be enclosed within the linearity of a Greek cross to provide either real or representative cardinal orientation. Alternatively, the positioning of the altar may control movement in an entirely round church, even if only by the orientation of its rectilinear form at the centre of the circle. Andrew Fleming (1972) has discussed the various strategies employed to orient the subject with regard to stone or timber circles, such as the use of elliptical form or the flattening of one side of the circle. (The latter feature occurs at some chambered cairns -- the Boyne passage graves or those at Loughcrew, for example -- but the massive nature of such architecture means the effect is by no means as striking as it is in plan.) Here again, the provision of foci often depends on additional architectural features within or without the circle, such as free-standing facades, coves or single posts/monoliths. Orientational indicators may also be incorporated into the fabric of the circle itself.

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Thus a recumbent stone within a circle of uprights draws attention to a particular sector, as does the provision of kerb stones along part of the perimeter of a round cairn, or perhaps a particularly large or even stretch of kerbing around a completely encircled cairn.

As far as chambered round cairns go, the entrance would seem to provide the primary integral orientational element, which draws the eye as it interrupts the uniformity of the circle. In this study, therefore, I have used the chamber entrance as an orientational constant for each monument, the perception of the subject envisaged in terms of left, right, before and behind. Certainly, I would find it surprising if the entrance, redolent of liminality and transformation, did not act as a key focus for both physical and mental directionality. However, it is worth pointing out that this may not have been the only focus. Excavation has been of too limited an extent to determine whether more ephemeral architectural features external to these particular monuments provided additional orientational control. Internal features may also have had a part to play: the pointed back slabs which contrast so strongly with the flat-topped side and divisional slabs of the chamber can be substantially taller than these other chamber components, and in some cases may have projected above the cairn material. These orthostats do not always oppose the entrances and so may have provided another directional focus. Landscape features or culturally specific, qualitative notions of directionality may have also influenced the subject's orientation.

Returning to Kilcoy North then, to stand at the entrance looking east is to have a prospect over a wide and uniform area of land which slopes gently down and away from the observer. Directly ahead, beyond these immediate surroundings, is the symmetrical outline of Drumderfit Hill some 8.5km distant; somewhat to the right of this can be seen the distinctive form of Ord Hill which stands at the narrowest point of the Beaully Firth (Fig. 4.2a). To the left the line of vision is curtailed by a relatively near horizon, the flat, even nature of which is broken only by the low mound of a hill in the middle distance which repeats the shape of the cairn itself. To the right the view opens out, the mainland rising

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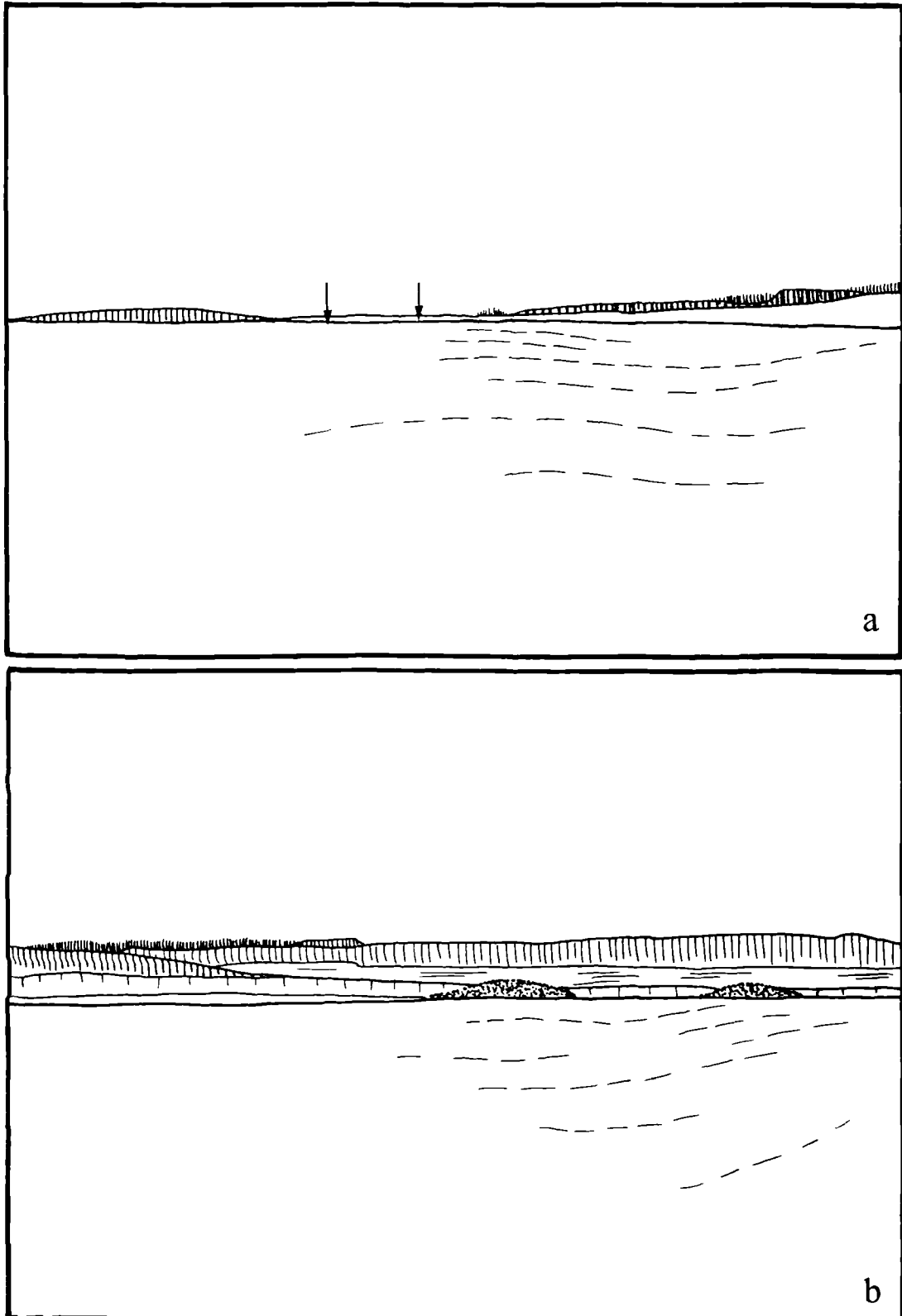


Figure 4.2 a: Looking E from chamber entrance at Kilcoy North; Drumderfit Hill at centre, Ord Hill at right. Arrows mark position of Carn Glas chambered cairn at left and bronze age round cairns at right. b: View of Kilcoy North to the S, with Beaully Firth beyond; Kilcoy South at right.

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above the firth. This contrast enhances the impression that the cairn overlooks an area of land which, although physically extensive, retains a character of immediacy. The water and the close skyline are obvious limits of reasonable proximity which delimit a locale. That another chambered cairn, Carn Glas, should in its original state have been visible emerging from the latter boundary (upon which the bronze age round cairns are also situated) may well be significant in this context, marking the 'next' locale, much of which is essentially just out of sight (Fig. 4.2a; see below p. 170). By virtue of the fact that Kilcoy North is placed just down from the crest of the hill, it sits firmly within and belongs to this particular small world; to site it only 250m upslope would have provided extensive views all round, permitting it to overlook -- and be overlooked by -- yet another locale. Instead, discrete worlds seem to be respected within the Kilcoy landscape.

A textual perambulation around the chambered tomb serves to underline this point. From the east the cairn is a skyline feature from at least 700m, and even in its present denuded condition assumes a prominent aspect for a considerable part of this distance. During the steady climb towards the entrance, the monument stands at the junction between the closed-in landscape to the right and the more varied, mountainous vista to the left. On both sides the subject is contained by local horizons -- that uphill to the north is a skyline, while that to the south obscures much of the land running down to the firth. It is not until one has almost reached the monument that this wider view is fully revealed, standing in opposition to the cairn's close backdrop. The nearby Kilcoy South chambered cairn, which shares this discrete locale, is situated 125m down the hill to the southwest; its positioning at a very slight increase in gradient means it tends to appear and disappear on this westward approach before finally becoming an obvious secondary focus.

The transitional point between this landscape and that to the north (the southwestern tip of the Millbuie Ridge, upon the summit of which sits a Clava passage grave) is some 250m uphill from Kilcoy North. Moving down this slope from the north, it is just as the wide expanse of firthlands becomes visible that the subject comes upon the monument, suddenly, and at close enough range for the eye

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to be drawn by its substantial bulk (Fig. 4.2b). From the first, the chambered cairn plays a significant role in the individual's perception of this newly-encountered world. The cairn rises on a local horizon which initially obscures Kilcoy South from view. The expanse of land beyond -- the firth and the southern uplands -- contrasts strongly with the visually constraining nature of the hillside to either side of the observer, again emphasizing the integrity and southern focus of the immediate area and the way in which the cairns act within it, as part of it, rather than over or removed from it.

From the west, the cairn appears as one rounds the tip of the ridge, 300-400m distant. It both stands on a local horizon and breaks the skyline, again interposed between the near and distant panorama. The descent is a gentle one in which the sheer mass of the cairn becomes increasingly insistent, blocking out more and more of the view beyond. By the time one has approached within 30m it *entirely* dominates the subject; from the north round to the cairn one can see nothing but sky, while to the south and southeast the nearer landscape is invisible, with only the more distant hills rising above the close horizon. Similarly, from the south the cairn appears massive, both it and Kilcoy South being the only disruption to the flatly uniform skyline beyond (Fig. 4.3a). Visible as horizon features from approximately 500m away, these two monuments clearly occupy the upper limits of a substantial locale which is strongly oriented towards the waters of the firth at its southern extremity.

Kilcoy South ROS 24

Kilcoy South differs greatly in form from its near neighbour. The interior is composed of a three-compartment Orkney-Cromarty chamber, the innermost of which is a discrete circular cell separated from the main, polygonal compartment by a short passage. The main body of the chamber is aligned southeast-northwest, the passage entrance opening to the southeast onto a deep, V-shaped forecourt with faces of drywalling and larger boulders defining the tips of the facade. By analogy with certain Orkney-Cromarty cairns further north, it has been suggested that the cairn was originally of 'short-horned' form -- an equilateral figure with four

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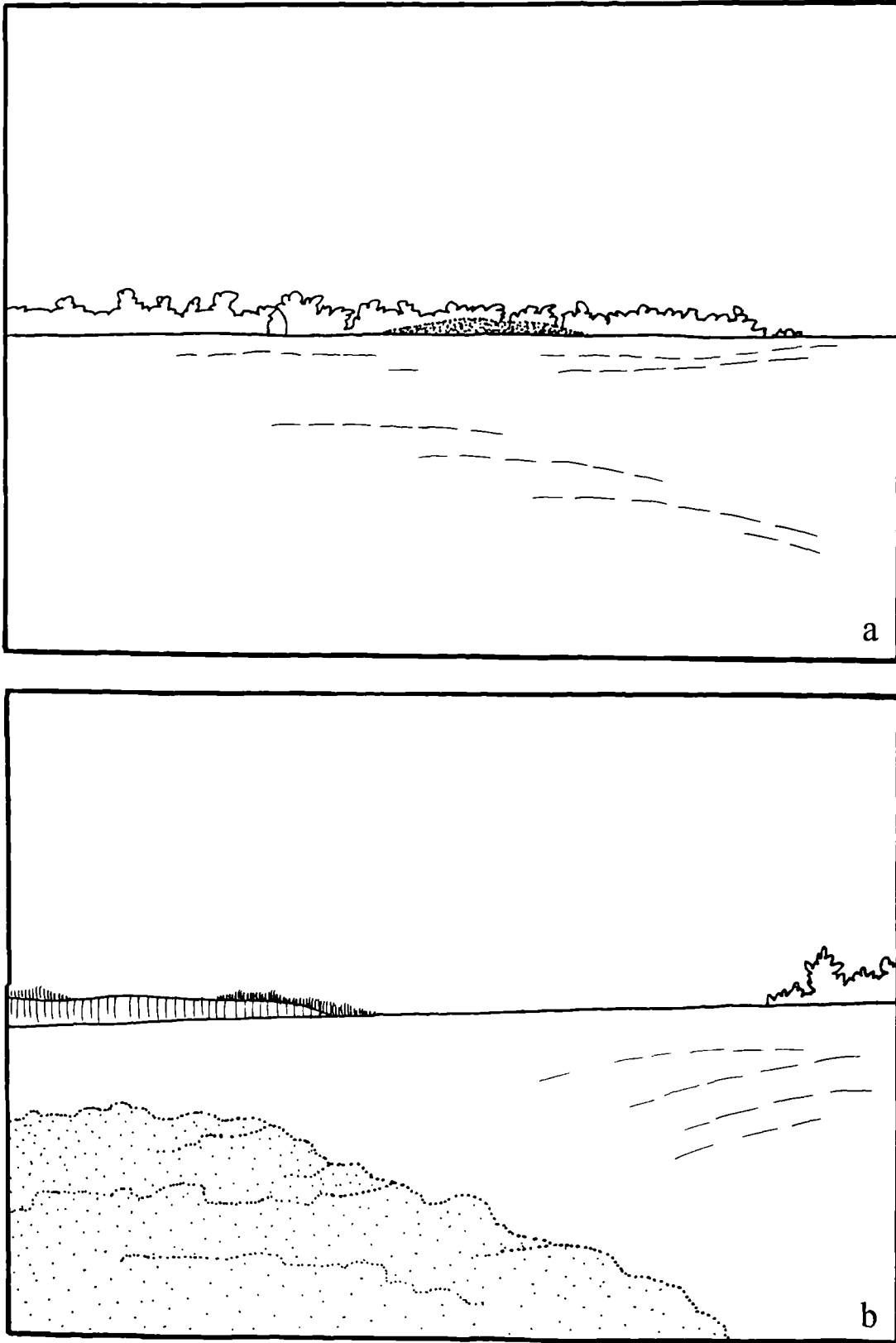


Figure 4.3 a: Looking N to Kilcoy North, from c. 120m distance. b: Looking NW from the rear chamber area of Kilcoy South.

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concave faces (Woodham 1956a; Henshall 1963). As it stands today, however, the cairn is so greatly disturbed that it would seem equally likely to have been round, oval, almost square or even heel-shaped.

The relationship between the two chambered tombs is complex, and one in which the temporal element is still not understood. On the one hand, I have noted the way they act in tandem from at times substantial distances; how they sit up together at the edge of a landscape, or rather at its corner, their entrances oriented away from the invisible world on the summit of the Millbuie Ridge above them, and from that which lies beyond and behind them to the west and northwest (Fig. 4.3b); how by their very contiguity they infuse that margin with a certain intensity. It is clear, though, that from a more immediate perspective one tomb can take on an element of dominance, as the specific siting of each comes into play with the proximity of the observer. I have mentioned the priority assumed by Kilcoy North at the transition between the Kilcoy landscape and that to the north; conversely, as one approaches the cairns from the south the initial dual focus is replaced by Kilcoy South alone, its position at a break in slope masking the second monument from view and its mass rising prominently on the skyline.

In addition, no internal focal area is established by the interaction of the two monuments, in terms of either architecture or siting. For example, the situation of Kilcoy South on the slight gradient shift tends to introduce a certain distance between the tombs, since each rises on a local horizon when seen from the other. Their respective entrances turn away from each other, rather than utilizing converging sightlines to define a small area of ground to which the subject is drawn and held. The deep, funnel-like forecourt of Kilcoy South, combined with the considerable height of the cairn, creates a highly circumscribed space immediately in front of the entrance, which to a certain extent excludes Kilcoy North from the observer's perception. Excavation at the former has shown that an earth and stone platform was laid down outside the entrance of the monument, levelling-up the marked slope of the ground (Woodham & Woodham 1958). This provision of a level floor -- on which lay an extensive charcoal spread -- would

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seem to indicate repeated and presumably prolonged activities taking place within the separate confines of the forecourt.

Certainly, the simple fact that Kilcoy North sits farthest up the hillside gives it a perceptual primacy as regards movement towards and around the monuments. But although it appears as a substantial mound viewed from the outer forecourt area of the southern tomb (Fig. 4.4a), it occupies a rather peripheral position at the edge of the observer's field of vision. It is the broad, flat expanse of land stretching away in front of Kilcoy South which dominates the perception, punctuated by the silhouettes of Drumderfit and Ord Hill described above, and the waters of the Beaully Firth which draw the eye down towards the south. In the absence of evidence for activity foci or pathways between the cairns, or of a mutual enclosure -- excavation has been confined to the chamber and forecourt of Kilcoy South (Woodham 1956a; Woodham & Woodham 1957b, 1958) -- it seems that although their physical proximity indicates reciprocal referencing at a charged transitional point in the landscape, each chambered cairn also maintained an exclusive, discrete identity within the locale.

Carn Glas ROS 12

Carn Glas consists of a rectangular Orkney-Cromarty chamber of two compartments, surrounded by a round cairn once of immense proportions. Late nineteenth century records of the site suggest a height of over 6m (Beaton 1882), while excavations in the 1950s revealed a 2m wide retaining wall defining the perimeter of the cairn, indicating an approximate diameter of 34m (Woodham & Woodham 1957a). The chamber is aligned almost due east-west, with the passage entrance at the eastern end.

Carn Glas lies just under 1km east northeast of the two Kilcoy cairns. The landscape setting is much the same, and the positioning of the monument operates in similar fashion within the dialectic interplay between the close uniformity of the immediate surroundings and the varied forms and distances of the firthward focus. The cairn straddles the interface between the steady drop of land running in a southeasterly direction and the virtually level ground to the north and northwest

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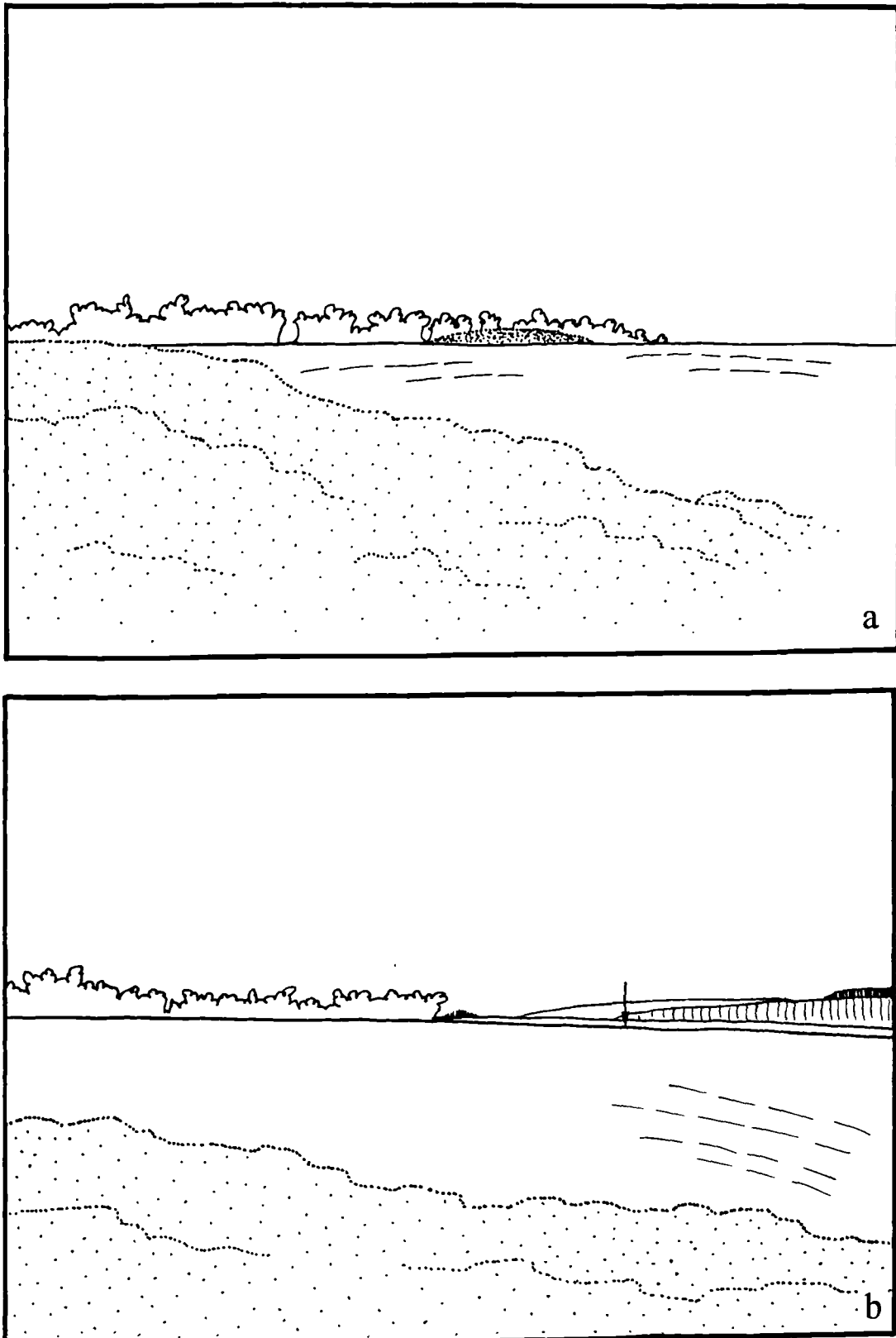


Figure 4.4 a: Looking NE to Kilcoy North from forecourt of Kilcoy South. b: Looking E from chamber entrance at Carn Glas, towards Drumderfit Hill. Arrow marks position of possible domestic site.

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which forms the spine of the Millbuie ridge. Thus, looking out from the entrance, the configuration of the locale is very like that experienced from Kilcoy North, if not quite as expansive (Fig. 4.4b). Because the observer looks across the contour at an oblique angle, the ground falls away at a very gentle gradient; this uniform stretch of landscape terminates in a local horizon some 750-800m distant. The entrance is again aligned on Drumderfit Hill, an isolated peak on the skyline. To the left of this the view is unvaried and curtailed; to the right, low hills rise on the near side of the firth, leading on to the water itself further round to the south, viewed above a reasonably close horizon which obscures the flat firthlands at the water's edge. Once more there is a strong impression of delimitation, a sense that the individual is poised to walk into an area of land which possesses perceptible boundaries and which may be distinguished from others that may be only a few minutes' walk away.

From deep within this locale, from the south and east, Carn Glas rises prominently against the sky from the moment it becomes visible (from 450-650m away), its mound an obvious keynote on an otherwise featureless horizon. Approaching from the east, rising ground hides from view the locale overlooked by Kilcoy North and South, with only the distant western mountains emerging beyond. This western boundary is made more emphatic by the presence of two bronze age round cairns: when the subject stands about 100m east of Carn Glas, for example, the three cairns stand in a line on the horizon, their backdrop the sky and the mainland highlands (Fig. 4.5a). Coming from the south, the slightly curving contour of the hillside effects a reasonably close visual boundary to either side of the individual, although from this perspective the transition between fields of influence of the Kilcoy chambered cairns and of Carn Glas is less sharply defined, one merging into the other. But significantly, the lie of the land obscures the former from sight until one has come very close to Carn Glas; even from here they are at the very limit of visibility in that it is familiarity with the *present* landscape which permits identification of the precise position of the monuments, and only the very keenest eye will register them as distinct shapes on the horizon.

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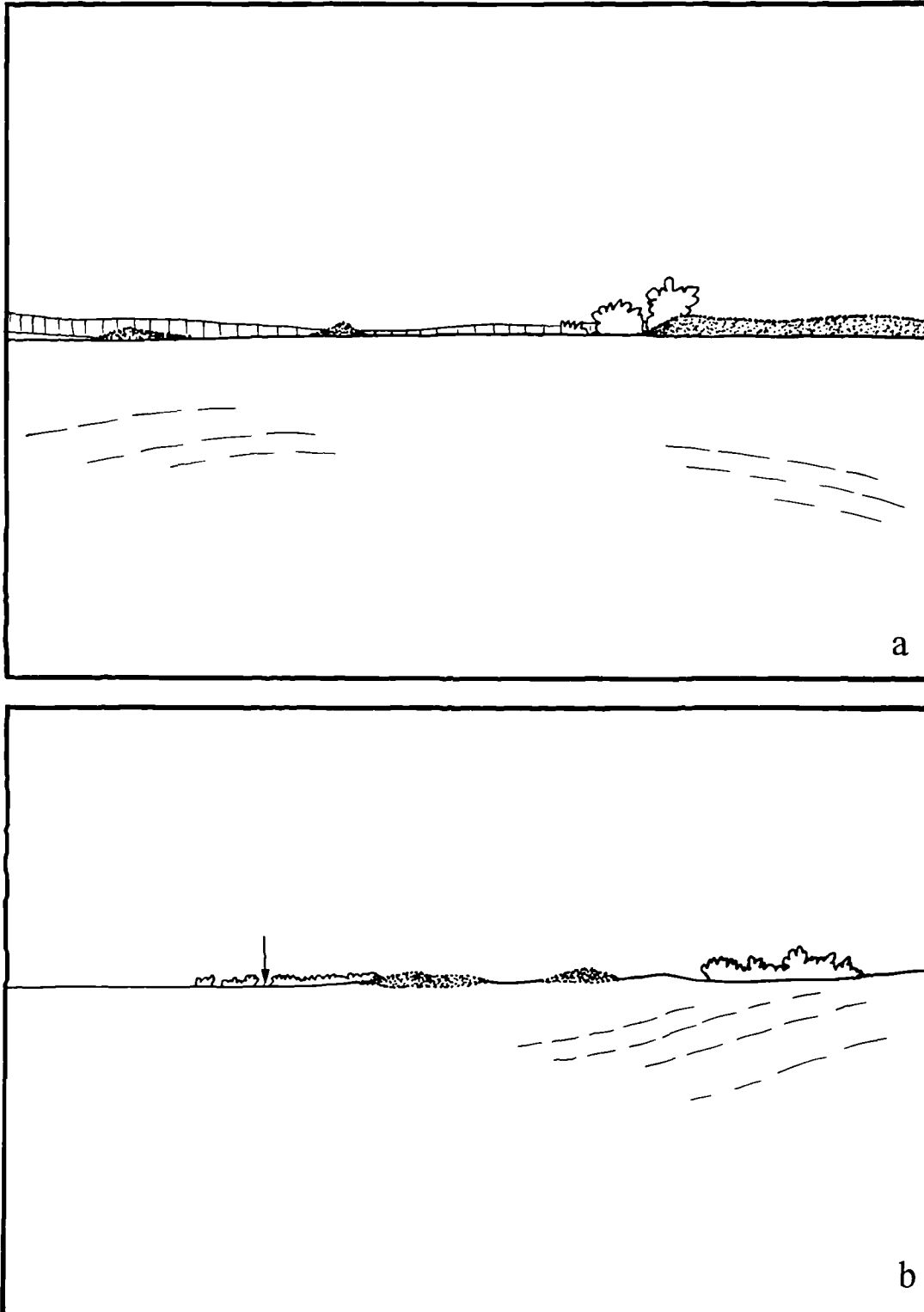


Figure 4.5 a: Looking WSW to the two bronze age round cairns and, at right, Carn Glas; the locale overlooked by Kilcoy North and South lies over the horizon. b: View of the Mains of Kilcoy cairns to the NW; at right the ground is beginning to rise up towards Carn Glas. Arrow marks position of Kilcoy North, which is just about to break the horizon.

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Carn Glas is also a skyline focus from the north and west. In the latter direction lies the southwestern tip of the Millbuie Ridge, a discrete landscape which does not impinge upon that which looks to Carn Glas or, as we have seen, the locale in which Kilcoy North and South act as visual and intellectual referents. And as with these two cairns, from the north it is at the moment when the vista of the firth and its gently undulating surroundings opens up to the viewer that Carn Glas is revealed, standing between a simple hill line to the left and the complexity of layered horizons to the right, above and around the water. The positioning of the cairn at a transitional point between different worlds is particularly obvious on this southward approach: the individual, hemmed in on either side by rising hillsides, is drawn towards its silhouette against empty sky, the entire firchside landscape remaining out of sight until a level with the cairn has been attained.

Two points of interest may be noted from the evidence obtained from modern excavations at Carn Glas. The first is the striking difference between the nature of the backslab and the orthostats forming the chamber sides and internal divisions (Woodham & Woodham 1957a, pl. VI). The latter are of even, rectangular shape, their flat upper surfaces once supporting lintels. They maintain a consistent thickness of 15-30cm and would appear to have suffered very little weathering. In contrast, the backslab is a massive and irregular orthostat almost 50cm thick, its pointed top rising nearly a metre above the other chamber components. This stone appears to have sustained a substantial degree of weathering over its entire length. Bearing in mind that the cairn remained relatively intact until the late nineteenth century and that ensuing despoliation had left only the upper surfaces of the chamber orthostats exposed over the long term (Woodham & Woodham 1957a, 104), this differential erosion would not seem to be linked to processes of dismantling and attrition. Certainly, the backslab may have been obtained from a separate source. But it is tempting to add a temporal element as well, regarding the enormous orthostat (rising 1.6m from the chamber floor) as a monolith which may have stood at this spot for a considerable length of time before the chambered cairn was built around it. Indeed, Colin Richards has

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noted that the pointed form of Orkney-Cromarty chamber backslabs in the Black Isle is also typical of single standing stones in northeast Scotland (1992, 72). This particular locale would therefore have witnessed a development of monumentality of considerable time depth, culminating in the architectural intensity of the present cluster of round cairns.²

Secondly, the discovery of a saddle or shallow trough quern in the chamber is worthy of mention (Close-Brooks 1983). The quern came from disturbed levels above modern sheep burials. The published accounts conflict somewhat, but it seems probable that the quern was in the fill of the innermost compartment (Woodham 1955; Woodham & Woodham 1957a). The excavator has noted the possibility that the quernstone may have formed part of the chamber roofing material which was thrown back into the chamber after the animal burials were inserted (Close-Brooks 1983, 284). This suggestion finds tentative support from the discovery of another saddle quern, at Kilcoy South. Although this may have been incorporated as part of intentional infilling of the outermost compartment (Henshall 1963, 118), its position among fallen roof slabs suggests it is perhaps more likely to have been a roofing component (Woodham 1956a; Close-Brooks 1983). On the basis of an as yet extremely sketchy chronology, both querns are of neolithic type (Close-Brooks 1983).

The possibility that unbroken saddle querns were being placed in the chamber roofing has implications for an understanding of the operation of these chambered cairns in material and intellectual frameworks for living. If direct references to particular modes of food preparation -- perhaps with connotations of fertility and gender relations -- are being internalized within the fabric of the tomb, it may be that the way the locale is to be read with regard to the monument, and *vice versa*, is dependent upon factors largely missing from the contemporary landscape. Whereas this must be true to a certain extent in all cases, it may be of greater relevance to the interpretation of these monuments than, for example, those studied on Arran -- particularly with regard to the siting of many of the Black Isle chambered cairns in prime agricultural land, where they often punctuate the

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boundaries between areas with the potential for high yield cereal crops and that more suited to mixed arable cropping and pasture, or between good arable land and that productive of fodder and forage grass.³

Mains of Kilcoy I and II

These two substantial round or oval cairns sit 200m south southwest and downhill of Carn Glas, which functions as an obvious focal point. The cairns are placed 70m apart on the crest of a small undulation in the land, the linear axis of which runs north northwest-south southeast. Effectively, the monuments are on a rise in the centre of a minor depression, with Carn Glas situated on the higher ground beyond (Fig. 4.5b).

Mains of Kilcoy I is the more northerly of the two, slightly oval in shape, 14m east-west by 10m north-south and standing to a height of *circa* 4m. The perimeter has been altered, perhaps by ploughing but almost certainly by the addition of field stones, as indicated by the discovery of a saddle quern of probable iron age date at the base of the cairn and within its body, 2m in from the western edge (Woodham 1961; Close-Brooks 1983). Roughly central to the cairn was a massive stone cist, 2.4m long by 60cm wide and oriented between east-west and northeast-southwest. The cist had been disturbed prior to excavation and only a few fragments of burnt bone were recovered from the floor layer at the eastern end (Woodham 1960; 1961).

Mains of Kilcoy II has been reduced to a stone spread approximately 30m in diameter and 1.5m high. Early reports of the cairn indicate that, on the one hand, large quantities of stone had been added during field clearance, while on the other, the site had been quarried extensively for road and dyke building (Beaton 1882; North 1909). Excavations in 1908 revealed a cist containing a Ribbed Bowl Food Vessel -- by analogy with Irish examples, a form current in the mid to late third millennium (Ó Ríordáin & Waddell 1993, 37; 39) -- and fragments of bone and charcoal. The cist was aligned east-west, measured 1m by 50cm and was surrounded by a charcoal-rich, apparently burnt matrix (North 1909). The peripheral placement of this cist would allow for the possibility that the monument

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contained, or still contains, further burials. In addition, it is quite possible that the immediate locale -- the slight depression and the rise upon which the cairns are placed -- acted as a focus for additional mortuary deposition and/or other components of mortuary ritual such as the construction of funeral pyres or the sorting and washing of cremated bone.

This positioning at the only marked undulation, parallel to the slope, between Kilcoy North and South and Carn Glas, not only creates a distinct and extremely small-scale locale which revolves around the two cairns but also creates a strong impression of placement at the transitional point between two worlds. That to the west is a vast, flat expanse backed by the distant mountains of the mainland. When viewed from the cairns, the silhouette of Kilcoy North is just visible as the last form to break the horizon at the end of this line of mountains, to its right being a simple, even skyline which continues all the way round to Carn Glas. This monument in turn is the first element of a varied and hilly backcloth for the gently undulating landscape to the east; in its original form it would have risen massively against the sky. As regards the aspect of the Mains of Kilcoy cairns from each of these separate locales, I have already mentioned the way in which they appear at the very extremity of the immediate landscape from Kilcoy North (from Kilcoy South it is the trees now growing around the cairns which are visual markers), and how from well within the area overlooked by Carn Glas they line up with the latter on the horizon, reiterating with architectural form a conceptual boundary of closely circumscribed vision. The broad north-south division between worlds, discussed above (pp. 166; 172), is also respected. Seen from Mains of Kilcoy I, the ground steepens considerably immediately to the northwest and crests not far beyond, blocking any view of the summit of the Millbuie Ridge. To approach from this direction is to come upon the cairns suddenly, at relatively close quarters, shortly after entering the firth landscape. This provides a marked contrast to the long approaches possible from *within* this southern landscape, towards the gradually magnified focus of the two cairns. So although the subject is poised among at least three distinct locales, visual reference

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can be made only to those within the firthiside context.

The Mains of Kilcoy cairns, while gravitating toward the pre-existing focus of a particular chambered tomb, would also seem to elaborate upon spatial distinctions in the Kilcoy landscape -- spatialities in which the neolithic monuments are embedded and the perceptual boundaries of which may have roots in the familiar landscapes of an even deeper antiquity. The gradual accretion of monumentality will have formed but one material strand of the biography of these spatial entities and of the ways in which they might be conceptually interwoven or kept apart. The organization of locales in terms of settlement, accepted routes of movement and material and/or qualitative categorization of the land, for example, will also have formed part of a web of references within which the monuments operated and lives were carried forward.

Excavation in advance of a gas pipeline afforded a glimpse of another of these interwoven, referential threads. About 500m east southeast of Carn Glas and well within its ambience, overlooked from its entrance, a low ridge runs north northwest-south southeast. On its western side, two adjoining pits were dug during the neolithic, the present truncated remains being of bowl-shaped profile, 1-1.2m in diameter and 20-25cm deep. Both were found to contain charcoal-rich matrices with minute fragments of calcined bone. In addition, the larger of the pits contained sherds of coarseware pottery, regarded by the excavator as domestic debris, and a leaf-shaped arrowhead (J. Wordsworth pers. comm.).⁴ So it would seem that some form of domestic activity -- or just possibly another form or different stage of mortuary rite -- was focused upon a point in the landscape in close visual and spatial proximity to the chambered cairn (Fig. 4.4b), probably during the same period that the monument was in active as opposed to solely reflective use. Already we move deeper into a spatial order of a complexity hardly touched by my necessarily crude evocation of discrete locales.

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Carn Urnan ROS 13

Morphologically this is a passage grave in the classic Clava tradition. No cairn material remains, but the predominantly intact interior and exterior kerbs define an oval chamber opening onto a passage, the entrance of which looks south southwest. From the point of view of the observer facing the cairn, the tallest stones of the peristalith extend from the right of the entrance towards the south, while those which continue round to the east and those to the left of the entrance comprise the next tallest range. The interior kerb is most substantial around the chamber entrance. Similarly, emphasis is placed upon the southern sector of the ring of eight standing stones encircling the cairn: the first two monoliths to the right of the entrance are immense slabs with pointed tops, both nearly 2m high, whereas the remaining orthostats are more rounded and boulder-like, ranging from 1m to 1.4m in height (measurements from Barnatt 1989). Recent excavations at two of the monuments at Balnuaran of Clava have demonstrated the contemporaneity of the cairns with their surrounding circles of monoliths (Bradley n.d.).

One of the points of interest respecting Carn Urnan is that whereas its integral components conform to the highly standardized features of the Clava cairns which cluster in a restricted area predominantly south and southwest of the Beaully Firth, its landscape setting is atypical. It has long been recognized that Clava passage graves and ring cairns are generally inconspicuously sited in the low-lying land of valley bottoms or, slightly further up the valley sides, on flat ground or in dips and hollows (e.g. Henshall 1963; Burl 1976). The view from these cairns can be very restricted, and the sense of enclosure extremely strong. Although some utilize small knolls in their construction (e.g. Avielochan passage grave, INV 3), it is notable that many others avoid slight rises or nearby knolls. In contrast, Carn Urnan is situated at the very summit of the Millbuie Ridge at its southwestern limit, permitting views of a distant landscape on almost all sides. Only three other Clava passage graves are sited on hill crests.⁵

Although the various cairns at Kilcoy govern different locales, they do make

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reference to these other worlds, if only through an emphasis on their boundaries. In addition, they are strongly oriented towards the Beaully Firth and the relatively near landscape on its farther side. The summit upon which Carn Urnan stands, however, is a self contained world, visually isolated from these nearby landscapes. The water of the firth, for example, is only just visible, the immediate landscape hiding the coastal land from view (Fig. 4.6a). Walking around the monument the individual looks out over an area of almost level ground which is bounded all round by a flat, close local horizon. To the north and south this boundary lies some 250m distant, while to the east and west the immediate landscape extends for about 400m. Beyond this, a varied and multilayered panorama of hills and mountain peaks extends round from north through west to southeast, while between southeast and north, looking along the axis of the ridge, the more distant backdrop is more uniform and does not emerge so far above the local horizon. Although the area in which Carn Urnan establishes a presence is physically extensive, the lack of a 'middle distance' gives an impression of restriction and curtailment, of a small bounded area which finds definition in the chambered tomb at its centre and which maintains a strong element of separation, of withdrawal from the wider landscape. This contrasts sharply with the Kilcoy cairns which, by elaborating the transitional points where one ambient locale merges into another, by playing upon the natural configuration of landscape features -- the opposition of closed and open sightlines, the continuous slopes and linear undulations -- enhance the impression of a *progression* of worlds through which the subject moves and to each of which may pertain a greater or lesser sense of 'belonging'.

In the modern landscape it is difficult to assess the impact Carn Urnan would have had upon the individual coming into its area of influence, since besides having been reduced to three rings of stone, it is now in a garden which from any distance largely obscures what remains. Much of the surrounding land is under the plough, so largely inaccessible. The following comments can therefore give only a sketchy impression of the interaction of subject, monument and landscape. The positioning of the cairn at the highest point of the gently sloping ground of the

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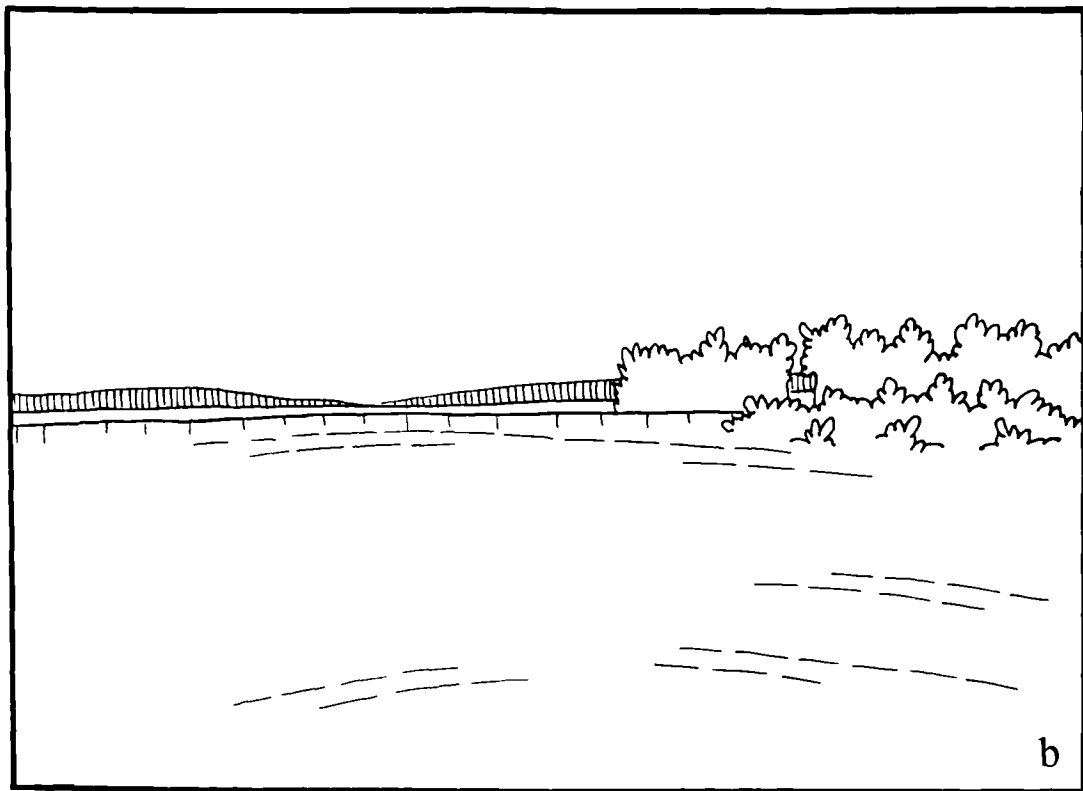
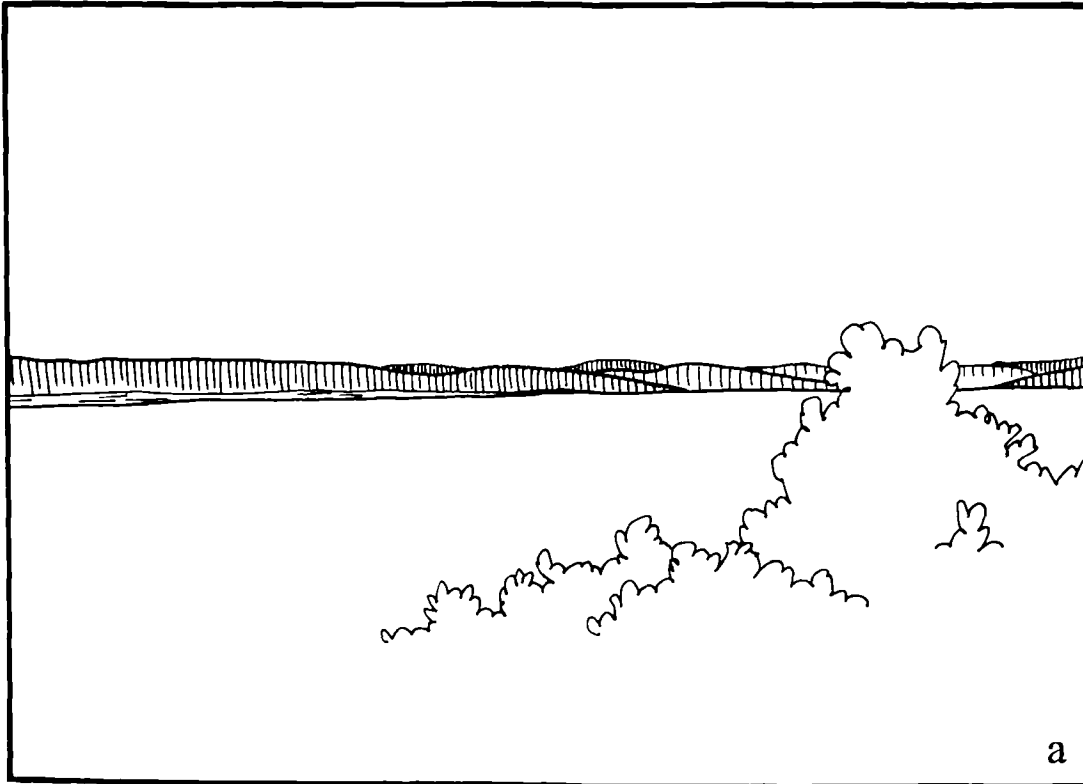


Figure 4.6 a: Looking S from the chamber entrance at Carn Urnan; the Beaully Firth is just visible above the near horizon, backed by the hills of the S mainland. b: Looking ENE from the chamber entrance at Muir of Conan; the wood at right blocks sightlines to Muir of Allangrange.

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ridge summit means that approaches from all directions will only find a visual focus in the monument at a relatively late stage (in some cases from as little as 150-200m away), but that when it finally becomes visible it is as a strong horizon feature, which it remains throughout. Approaching the entrance, the subject is presented with a dialectic balance: the right hand side of the passage grave, with its heightened peristalith and more massive monoliths, is flanked by the uniform, close skyline formed by the summit itself, whereas to the left is the spectacular backdrop of mountains in the north. Although the land rises gently towards the cairn in all directions, the gradient is steep enough to prevent a view of these more distant landscapes until quite late on; essentially the subject moves within an entirely immediate landscape until Carn Urnan and the farther horizons emerge more or less in tandem, resolving themselves into more distinct entities as the observer nears the monument. This serves to intensify the impression of entering a discrete world, of becoming separated from others -- a perception guided by the monumental construction which sits visually, physically and presumably metaphorically at its centre.

How far this involves leaving behind the world of everyday routine is unclear. Chambered cairns in general, with their combined funerary and ancestral connotations, must always have involved some movement outwith the realms of daily experience. But at the same time, such movement can only derive its significance from its existence within the repetitive, cyclical, self-perpetuating rhythms of this lived experience. Our understanding of the Clava cairns in general, and of Carn Urnan in particular, is extremely limited in terms of context, so that at present we are unable to determine whether the small world centred on the latter was an entirely separate, relatively unfrequented ritual landscape, or if instead the cairn sat surrounded by patches of cultivation, grassland and woodland which were regularly drawn into the day-to-day routine. The only published evidence from excavation in the environs of a Clava cairn is of ard marks and an intercutting sequence of post holes beneath a fallen standing stone at the Culdoich ring cairn (Barber 1982a). Beyond noting that the tentative postulation of a date for these

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features sometime in the fourth millennium BC does not, on present evidence, rule out activities contemporaneous with the use of the cairn, the precise nature of these activities or their relationship to the ring cairn in terms of land use context cannot as yet be established.⁶

As a final note regarding the interaction of people, architecture and landscape, the guiding principles behind the construction of the Clava type cairns are expressed materially in a more overtly repetitive, standardized manner than is found among any other British chambered tomb grouping. This would seem to indicate extremely esoteric ways of knowing the world, perhaps of a more restricted and regulated nature than that we have seen among the Clyde cairns on Arran and have begun to catch sight of at the Orkney-Cromarty cairns in the Black Isle. Interpretive fluidity may have been constrained by this specific formality, and the boundaries established through ritual practice may perhaps have been more inflexible here than those created within the more diverse materiality of other tomb traditions. It is conceivable that the metaphorical framework within which these cairns operated could therefore be perpetuated over great expanses of time, a suggestion which may find support in the seemingly minimal alteration and modification seen within the Clava group. But perhaps this is to place too much stress upon the determinative qualities of the architecture. After all, although the individual, aligning him or herself on the passage at Carn Urnan, will have been able to witness again and again the spectacle of the moon, at its most southerly position in the sky, rising above the entrance -- and from the entrance, to see it set directly ahead (Burl 1981, 257) -- this is not to say that the perceived *meaning* of each event need have remained perpetually unchanged. Perhaps it is just that the specific materiality of cairns like Carn Urnan makes more sense to us than, for example, the more heterogeneous Orkney-Cromarty tombs, in that major referents of the former are still identifiable and, importantly, (in terms of traditional archaeological methodology), *classifiable* by virtue of similarity.

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Muir of Conan ROS 34

The round cairn at Muir of Conan surrounds a rectangular Orkney-Cromarty chamber of probable bipartite form, aligned on an east northeast-west southwest axis; the passage entrance opens to the east northeast. The cairn seems to have been bounded by a boulder kerb, traces of which remain in the southern and western sectors.

The monument is tucked into the southeast side of a minor rise in an extensive area of level ground at the western limit of the Black Isle, now predominantly arable. About 400m to the northwest the land begins to descend into the valley of the River Conon, while to the east the ground climbs very gradually to the summit of the Millbuie Ridge, where Carn Urnan is sited. (The lie of the land prevents intervisibility.) On a smaller scale, the ground rises very slightly immediately north, west and southwest of the monument before falling away again; the effect of this is to obscure a small part of the nearer landscape when one stands at the perimeter of the cairn looking out in these directions. This contrasts with the unimpeded view of a continuous stretch of fairly flat ground which is available to the northeast, east and south.

This contrast can be appreciated from the entrance to the tomb. In front of the observer the ground drops away from the cairn very gently and gradually, stretching off into a long vista of almost imperceptibly undulating land. In the middle distance the Millbuie Ridge appears as a low mound on the horizon. Roughly 400m to the east lies another Orkney-Cromarty chambered cairn, now greatly ruined (Muir of Allangrange, ROS 33). A small wood obscures the view in this direction, but the proximity of the cairns and the lie of the land, particularly their similar siting on higher points in an otherwise level landscape, would make for a high degree of intervisibility if the surroundings were more open (Fig. 4.6b). This wide vista extends around to the right of the observer, flat fields running away to the east southeast for about 1km, backed by the eye-level horizon of the Millbuie Ridge. Further round, to the southeast, a subtle rise forms a skyline at about 300m distance, an obvious boundary for the immediate locale. To the

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individual's left, however, the small hill upon which Muir of Conan sits continues to rise very slightly for a short distance, cutting out the nearer landscape; beyond, the highlands of Easter Ross are silhouetted against the sky, an impressive visual boundary which seems nearer and much more abrupt by virtue of its height.

The individual's perception of the locale is directed by the architecture of the tomb, in that positioning a person at a particular point in space by its general location, and directing his or her focus by the specific orientation of chamber, passage and entrance, the monument engenders interconnecting references of eye, body and mind. Not only can this placement of the subject in relation to a specific landscape configuration be effected over and over again, but the reiteration of the same principles at different loci can permit quite different landscapes to be envisaged -- literally and therefore perhaps metaphorically -- in similar terms. Thus, perceptual comparisons may be made between, for example, Kilcoy North and South and Muir of Conan, with many of the locational/orientational aspects of the former repeated in the less dramatically defined landscape of the latter. From the entrances of the Kilcoy cairns, the view to the left is curtailed by the close skyline of the rising slope, while that ahead and to the right draws the eye down over an expansive area of ground, but one with quite clearly discernible limits. Similarly at Muir of Conan, the visual boundary to the viewer's left is closer and more marked, in this case through a combination of rising land in the immediate vicinity and a strong mountain backdrop. Again the subject looks down over a broad locale, although this time from an only marginally elevated position; once more its boundaries are relatively clear. Again one is placed *within* an extensive landscape rather than the closed confines of a small-scale and distanced world such as a natural depression or an isolated summit like that of Carn Urnan. But, as at Kilcoy, adjacent locales are not equally visible, and in one sense Muir of Conan can be seen to stand in and look over one locale while turning its back on another.

This is also evident from the point of view of the individual moving within the environs of the tomb. Coming from the east northeast on alignment with the chamber, the cairn stands large on its knoll against the sky, framed by craggy

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mountain peaks. The approach towards the entrance is a long, slow, extremely gentle climb, and its horizon aspect is apparent for more than 250m -- probably appreciably more. To the viewer's right the land rises slightly and then falls away beyond, while to the left, in a southerly direction, is a broad, level expanse with mountains on the horizon. It is the combination of a single local horizon with only a distant line of mountains beyond it which, as we have seen elsewhere, can endow a wide area of ground with a sense of immediacy. Moving closer to the cairn the ground rises more strongly on the right-hand side, enclosing the subject by impeding long distance vision as the mountainous backdrop and the nearer landscape to the north disappear (Fig. 4.7a). On the final approach towards the entrance, the subject begins to climb the hillock upon which the cairn is built, entering an area some 35m², defined on three sides by a break of slope and on the fourth by the cairn perimeter, and entirely dominated by the monument.

A series of transects were set out at Muir of Conan to record graphically this impression of the monument upon the observer, using the same technique and scale of impression as utilized at East Bennan, Torrylin and Monamore (see above p. 138). The results are presented in Figure 4.8, and demonstrate the considerable visual and physical impact of a substantial round cairn (*circa* 20m in diameter) in an extensive and uniform area of level ground. (It should be noted that although the severely denuded cairn survives only to a depth of less than 1m, the broom which has colonized the monument forms a mound 3-4m high; by comparison with the recorded proportions of Carn Glas, this may approximate very roughly to the original dimensions of the cairn.) Unlike many of the Arran monuments, cairns such as Muir of Conan and the three tombs at Kilcoy seem not to be withdrawn from the wider landscape: not only do they project a forceful physical presence well out into the surrounding country, but, without seeking particularly prominent locations, their horizon aspect maintains a strong element of long-distance visibility from within a considerable land area.

From the southeast, south and southwest, the approach is relatively level, with Muir of Conan prominent on its low rise, again acting as a long distance

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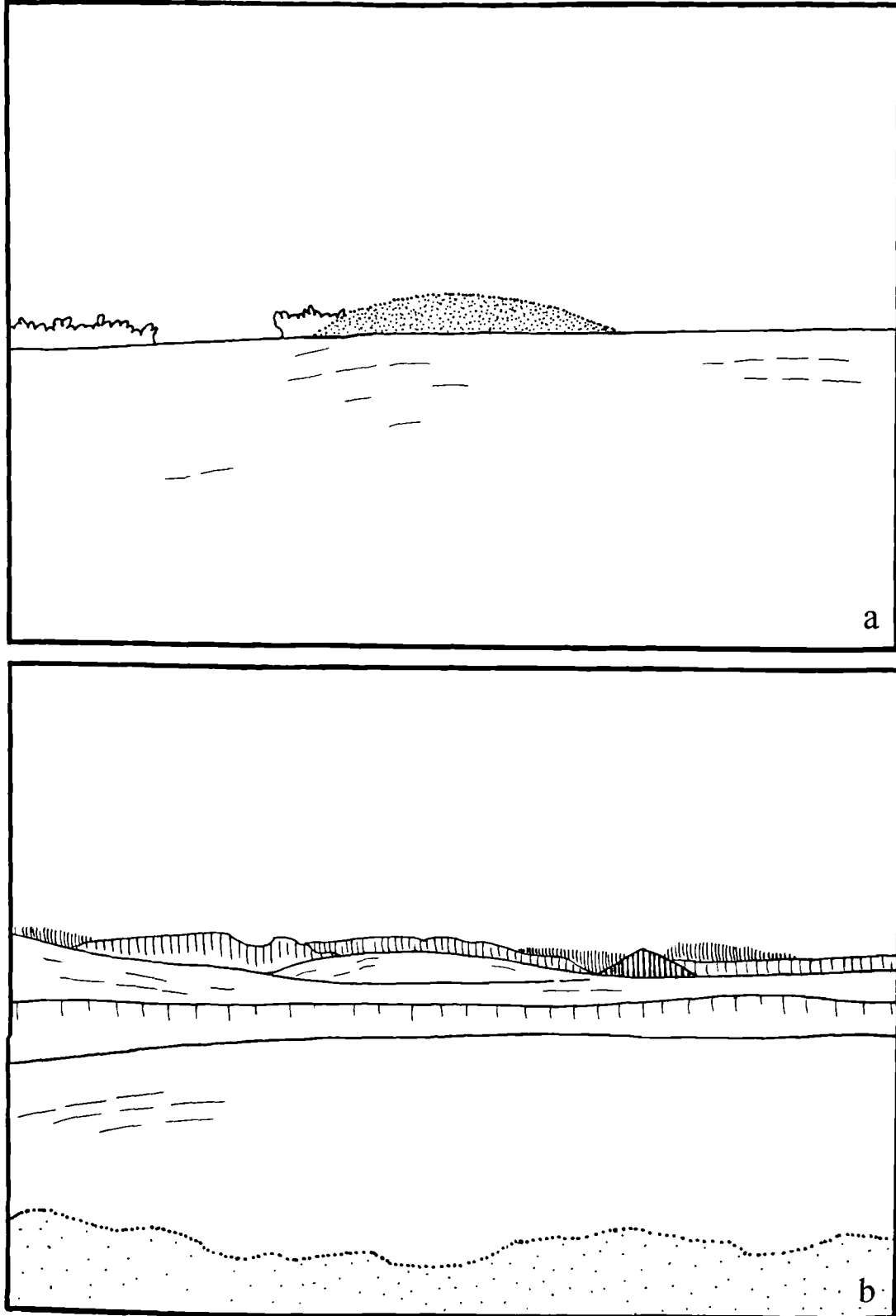


Figure 4.7 a: Looking WSW to Muir of Conan, towards the entrance, from c. 50m distance. b: Looking WNW from behind the backslab at Balvaird; the Rivers Conon and Orrin meet in the flat land beyond the near local horizon, and Torr Achilty rises at right.

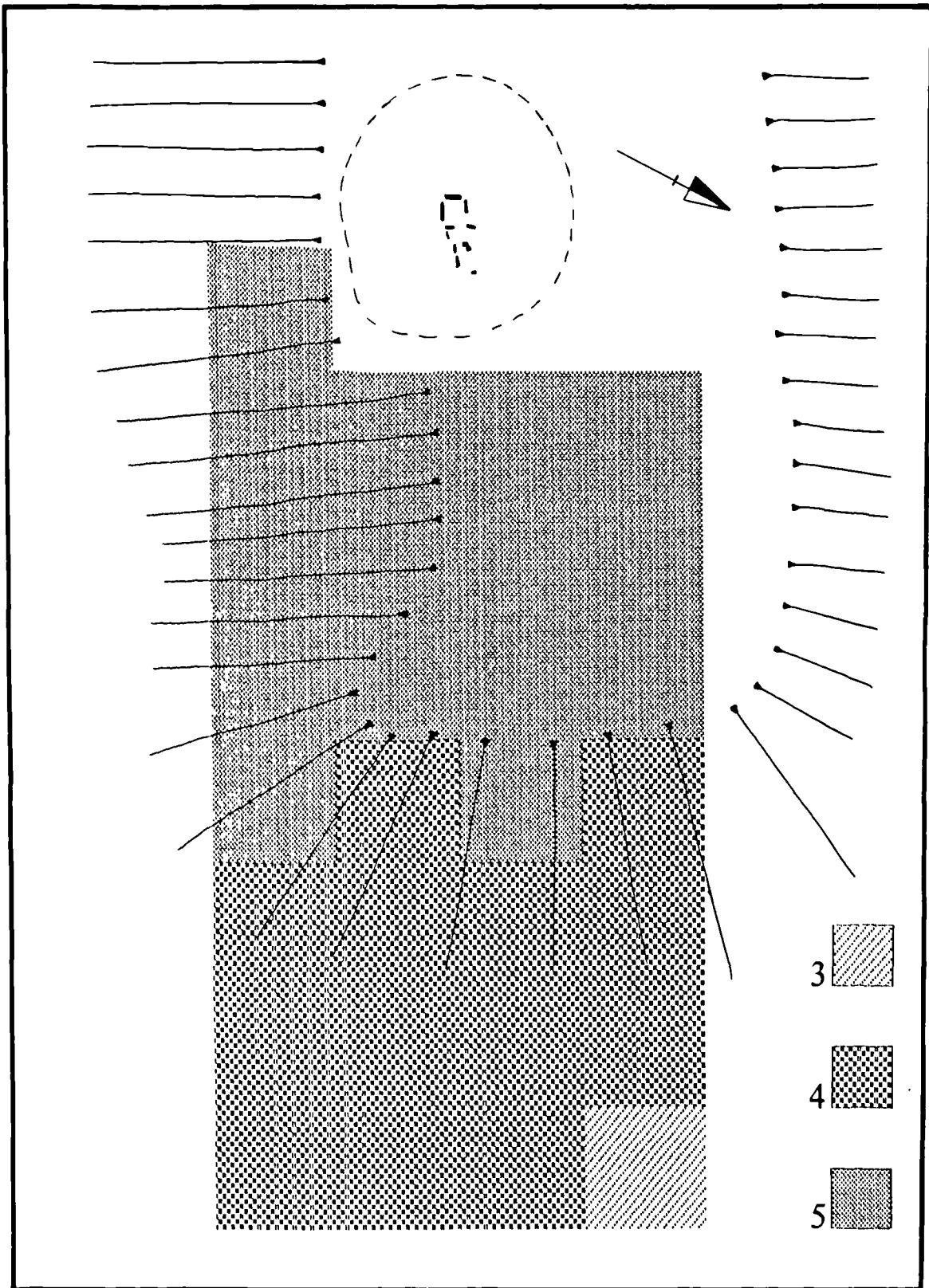


Figure 4.8 Graphic representation of the monumental presence established at Muir of Conan. Cairn plan after Henshall 1963. Scale 1:500.

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skyline focus. As one progresses towards the cairn, this small hill cuts out more and more of the sky, as well as any mountain peaks that may be visible far beyond the chambered cairn. From the north and west the cairn maintains a much weaker presence, since its positioning just down from the crest of the rise, on its southeastern slope, means that from these directions much of its bulk is hidden from view. Only the top of the mound would have emerged from the hill line, while the landscape beyond would have been invisible. The locale most strongly connected to Muir of Conan would therefore seem to be that which surrounds the cairn from northeast through southeast to southwest -- a locale perhaps shared, at least in part, by Muir of Allangrange.

Another round cairn, about 12.5m in diameter and with no apparent kerb, lies 420m to the south southwest. Today the two monuments are screened from one another by a deciduous plantation, but the lie of the land would certainly not prevent Muir of Conan acting as an obvious visual reference for the presumably bronze age round cairn. In view of the fact that later burial monuments routinely accrue in physical proximity to the neolithic cairns in the Black Isle, it would seem likely that sightlines between them would have been open, at least initially. The round cairn near Muir of Conan sits at the margin of the latter's ambient locale. Only a short distance further southwest from the bronze age cairn, the individual loses sight of Muir of Conan, while ahead another chambered cairn becomes a new focus (Balvaird; see below p. 192). This might be seen as another variation on the architectural elaboration of boundaries between worlds -- potentially of considerable longevity -- which I have noted previously.

Bishop Kinkell ROS 9

This is a probable round cairn with an Orkney-Cromarty chamber divided into two compartments -- the inner polygonal, the outer almost square. The chamber lies east northeast-west southwest, the passage entered from the former end.

Bishop Kinkell is situated at the western extremity of the Black Isle

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peninsula, on a steep, northwest facing slope which rises from the River Conon. About 150m below the cairn the gradient becomes more gentle as it begins to run into the wide, shallow bottom of the strath. On the far side of the river, hills and mountains stretch into the distance beyond the valley. Today the Conon empties into a delta at the entrance to the Cromarty Firth nearly 4.5km north northeast of Bishop Kinkell; this vista is somewhat obscured in the present landscape by a thickly planted conifer belt. In the late fifth millennium, however, with the higher relative sea level of the Main Postglacial Transgression, the estuarine delta would have been directly below the site of the tomb and about 1.5km distant. This, then, or something fairly similar to it, may have been the outlook when the cairn was first built.

In contrast to the wide panorama to the west, north and north northeast, the slope which continues to rise above Bishop Kinkell crests not much farther beyond the cairn. Muir of Conan and Muir of Allangrange chambered cairns are respectively only 600 and 900m away to the southeast, yet their landscape is not only differently composed and differently focused to that of Bishop Kinkell, but entirely separated visually from it as well. The chamber faces very slightly across the contour of the valley side, so that from the entrance the land stretches gently uphill, terminating in a fairly high skyline *circa* 400m ahead (east northeast). In an easterly to southeasterly direction the slope is much steeper, cresting some 150-200m to the right of the observer. To his or her left, the view is an open one, looking down into the valley and the river delta, with the hills rising ever higher in the distance to the north.

From the east northeast the cairn is visible for about 350m, an approach towards the entrance which differs from the others so far discussed in that one is walking slightly downhill. If we think in terms of a series of guiding principles upon which these monuments build, of an intellectual structure which draws together architectural space, landscape and 'skyscape' and which allows for specific elaboration as well as general interconnectivity, then certain principles might well find potential expression in a number of ways, playing upon the innate qualities of

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particular locations, while others may be more inflexible. The consistent occurrence among Orkney-Cromarty tombs of entrances facing between northeast and east southeast may indicate the latter, a directional quality of a certain fixity which can take priority over other principles and be accommodated by their fluidity. Thus, the desire for easterly orientation at Bishop Kinkell may have overridden the articulation of other strands of the conceptual framework which, in the Black Isle, commonly find expression in an uphill approach to the entrance of the tomb.⁷

Because the slope of the hillside continues to drop evenly beyond Bishop Kinkell, the cairn rises up in clear space as the individual progresses down towards the entrance, bracketed by the impressive mountain peaks of another, far-off landscape. The increasing curtailment of the landscape to the left and the opposing broad vista to the right emphasize the linear quality of the shallow strath. Coming down the hill from the southeast, the gradient is so extreme that the monument does not appear until fairly late on, probably from 150m away or less. When it does, it is as a mound standing substantially proud of the land, backed by the higher ground on the other side of the valley.

When approaching from the valley bottom the cairn stands prominently against the sky; as with Carn Glas and the other Kilcoy cairns, this is the only shape to draw the eye on an otherwise featureless horizon. It would seem likely *that the cairn would move in and out of visibility on the journey up from the water*, an aspect which also occurs within the Kilcoy landscape. A more gentle climb is possible from the southwest as one moves up and across the contour; again the hill crests a reasonably short distance beyond the tomb making it a skyline feature for a substantial period of time.

Henshall considered unusual the steep hillside setting of Bishop Kinkell (1963, 338), but in fact many of the locational features can be loosely paralleled by those we have already seen at Kilcoy: the opposition of closed and open views, the uniformity of the immediate environs, the setting of cairns near the upper limits of an identifiable locale with a river/firth focus, and the combination of visual and

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physical boundaries defining these considerable areas of ground which 'look to' the monuments. It is worth mentioning in passing that the chambered tombs which lie across the river from Bishop Kinkell, on mainland Easter Ross, appear where we might begin to expect them -- just down from the top of the valley side, with a broad view over the rolling ground running down to the water.

Balvaird ROS 7

In view of my opening comments concerning the complex dialectic of similarity and dissimilarity in the Black Isle, of specificity and generality and, if this is not to push it too far, of individuality and gregariousness, it is perhaps appropriate to move now to a monument which might *not* be just where we would come to expect it.

The Orkney-Cromarty chambered tomb at Balvaird consists of a probable two-compartment chamber, the inner compartment being polygonal, the outer rectangular. The chamber is aligned east southeast-west northwest, with the passage entrance at the eastern end. The cairn is too greatly disturbed for any determination of its original form.

Like the two previous cairns, the monument is situated at the western limit of the Black Isle. It is positioned at the very edge of the undulating Muir of Conan which is overlooked from the entrance; immediately behind the cairn the land drops away sharply westwards into the broad, flat bed of the confluence of the Rivers Conon and Orrin (Fig. 4.7b). A strong oppositional perspective is established: the view of the world from the entrance to the monument -- a reasonably small-scale, closed-in landscape -- contrasts profoundly with the view of the monument in its surroundings in which the cairn, perched on the edge of one world, stands against the spectacular backdrop of steep-sided highland glens opening up into a level plain. Although near:distant, closed:open contrasts have been discussed with regard to other chambered cairns in the Black Isle, the combination of entrance orientation and placement of the monument upon a marked gradient shift means these contrasts are visually and physically more mutually exclusive at Balvaird.

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Standing at the entrance, the observer looks out over a series of reasonably deep undulations which work their way gradually upwards to a skyline some 500m ahead to the east southeast (Fig. 4.9a). To the left the land rises more evenly and continuously, forming a single horizon at 200m distance. Just over this horizon in the northeast one would be moving into the fringes of the locale which finds its focus in Muir of Conan chambered cairn, encountering first the bronze age round cairn discussed briefly above (p. 189). To the subject's right the land rolls very slightly downwards; the primary visual boundary occurs about 400m from the cairn where the slope becomes steeper as it begins the long descent towards the firthlands of the River Beaully. Beyond this local horizon the Aird massif stands as a strong, distant backdrop.

That Balvaird chambered cairn is in a sense poised between the immediacy of this visually contained, relatively uniform landscape and the potential of ever more distant and varied worlds beyond the Black Isle (of both living human groups and spiritual communities), becomes clear when one moves toward the tomb. From the east southeast the cairn rises in clear space at the edge of the plateau, beyond and below which stretch the flat fields around the meandering rivers, backed by the dramatic mountain skyline. The narrow, V-shaped profile of the mouth of Strathconon draws the eye, forming an obvious focus within this farther, more rugged landscape. From the observer's point of view, the distinctive cone-shaped form of Torr Achilty forms the right-hand portal of this pass into the highlands; this peak rises directly above the chambered cairn when one approaches on alignment with the chamber (Fig. 4.9b).

As the individual descends gradually towards the monument, the rising land to the right (northeast) becomes more enclosing, while a broad panorama extends round from the cairn towards the subject's left-hand side. The closer one comes to the cairn the more the landscape beyond disappears from view, while at the same time the outline of the cairn mound and the silhouette of Torr Achilty draw closer together. Eventually, having reached essentially level land 150m from the cairn, the two images effectively merge into one, as at this point the intact cairn would

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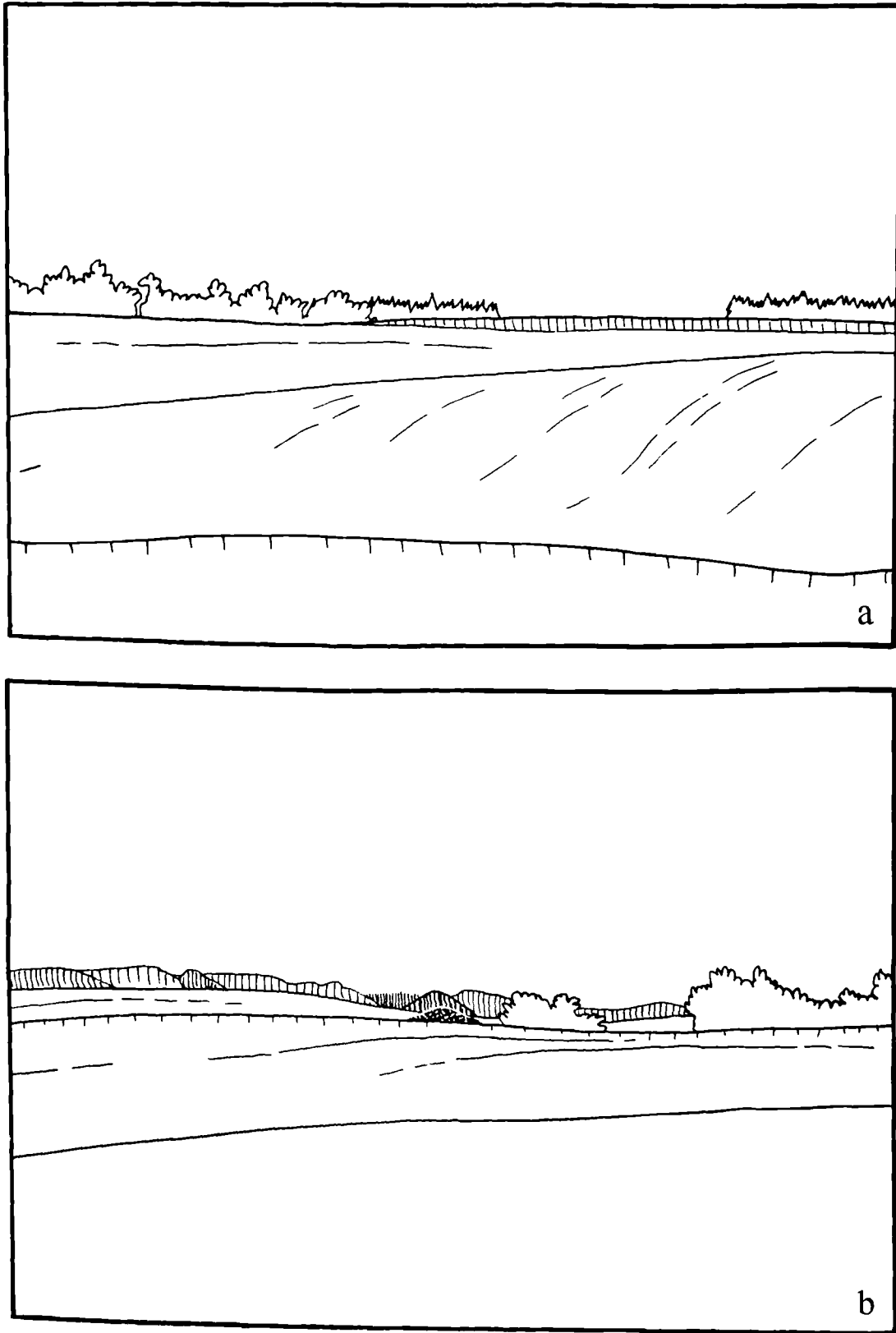


Figure 4.9 a: Looking ESE from the chamber entrance at Balvaird. b: View of Balvaird and Torr Achilty to the WNW, c. 175m from the cairn.

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have finally blocked out the Torr. One might speculate that the perceived innate qualities of the natural feature are not only referred to but actively drawn upon here, as the natural focal point is gradually absorbed by its architectural counterpart. Coalescence may therefore be envisaged not only in physical, visual terms but on the metaphorical plane as well. I have noted a very similar connection between natural and architectural foci -- potentially between human and ancestral or mythic endeavour -- at Torrylin chambered cairn on Arran.

By the time the cairn has emerged as the sole focus, the physical barrier of the swiftly-falling land behind the monument has assumed a prominent aspect, stressing the distance between the immediate environs of the tomb and other locales. The monument's domination of the individual within this immediate landscape is enhanced as, 30m from the cairn, he or she steps down into a slight dip; thus the final approach to the entrance is effectively uphill, moving up out of the depression.

From the north and south the cairn stands out on a local horizon, on the break of slope, backed by distant hills. It is really only by approaching the cairn 'side-on' in this way that the more curtailed locale of the monument and the open panorama to the west can be taken in together. From a westerly direction, the mound of the cairn would probably be too small to be identified from the flat valley bottom (albeit bearing in mind the possibility of distinctive vegetational patterning acting as an aid to the eye), and is obscured closer-to by the strong gradient of the lower slopes. Balvaird comes into view as the land levels out somewhat, at about 200m distance, sitting up on the crest of the steep hillslope. To reach the monument entails a short, hard climb, that skirting round to the north being slightly less strenuous.

It is the construction of the monument at the top of a steep slope which places it at a certain remove from the expansive western landscape, from the shallow bowl between Strathconon and the Cromarty Firth, through which the River Conon flows. This applies to the cairn as perceived from both within and without this landscape. As with other chambered cairns in the Black Isle, Balvaird

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would seem to be posed quite definitely at the edge of a locale -- or perhaps more accurately, at the place where one locale ends and the other begins. (Regarding the possible antiquity of such spatialities, it is worth noting that the backslab is a massive, pointed orthostat, *circa* 2m tall -- again a stone that could quite easily once have stood as a monolith.) But the area of ground which focuses upon the cairn is the smaller-scale landscape which is seen from the entrance; this is quite different from the substantial, open locales of the Kilcoy group, for example. This is not simply a question of orientation, the desire for a southeast facing entrance perforce directing the focus of the tomb onto the more curtailed area of ground. We have already seen that the entrance of Bishop Kinkell gives onto the closer landscape, and yet here the overall locale of the tomb would seem to include all the land stretching down towards the river; in effect, placed at the upper margin of a locale of considerable extent, the cairn entrance looks toward the closest, uppermost boundary. Two features should be noted here: firstly that the relatively continuous nature of the slope upon which Bishop Kinkell sits places the monument firmly within an expansive landscape which extends from the skyline above to the valley bottom below; secondly that both near and distant worlds are visually accessible from the point of view of the observer looking out from the entrance. Neither of these features occurs at Balvaird. The considerable drop behind the cairn separates it physically from the land below, land which remains entirely invisible to -- and therefore removed from -- the individual standing at the chamber entrance.

On the other hand, reference to features of more distant worlds is more explicit at Balvaird than at other chambered cairns in the Black Isle. In comparison with the orientation of the monument on Torr Achilty, the alignment of Carn Glas and Kilcoy North towards Drumderfit Hill is less precise, in that the latter peak lies directly ahead when one looks *out* from the tomb entrances. In addition, if one were to approach either of these cairns from behind, with Drumderfit Hill aligned beyond, their placement with regard to the lie of the land would not permit the gradual visual incorporation of the natural feature into the

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monument such as occurs at Balvaird. The definition of locale in the Black Isle, and the physical and metaphysical interrelations among landscape, monument and person, are not always articulated in the same fashion. Themes, songs, stories and dialects vary.

Balnaguie ROS 6

This monument consists of a rectangular, two-compartment Orkney-Cromarty chamber, enclosed within a round cairn. The chamber entrance faces just north of east and would probably have opened onto a forecourt. The cairn material has been almost entirely quarried away, all that remains being a stone bank defining the perimeter. This may be a retaining wall similar to that excavated at Carn Glas, its tighter packing accounting for its greater resistance to disturbance. The cairn would have been enormous, with a diameter of nearly 30m. The chamber itself is comprised of massive orthostats, the pointed backslab almost 1m in thickness and over 2m high.

Balnaguie is situated near the centre of the Black Isle, towards the bottom of the southern flank of the Millbuie Ridge. It sits at the tip of a raised tongue of land, along the west side of which runs the narrow ravine of Muirton Burn. The land falls away sharply towards the burn from the cairn perimeter; to the south and east the ground breaks downward a few metres further out from the limit of the cairn, the gradient here only slightly more gentle than on the western side. This small, north-south spur is surrounded to the west, north and east by rising ground; southwards the land runs gently and evenly down towards the low hills fringing the Beaully and Moray Firths, 7km distant. Beyond this again, the high ground of the southern mainland forms a reasonably level skyline (Fig. 4.10a).

The ridge upon which Balnaguie is placed is today covered by an open wood, and there is much coniferous forest in the immediate vicinity. This gives the impression of very enclosed space, the only open vista being that to the south. Although the unnatural density of the forestry plantation may overemphasize the enclosing feel of the landscape, the lie of the land would ensure that the opposition

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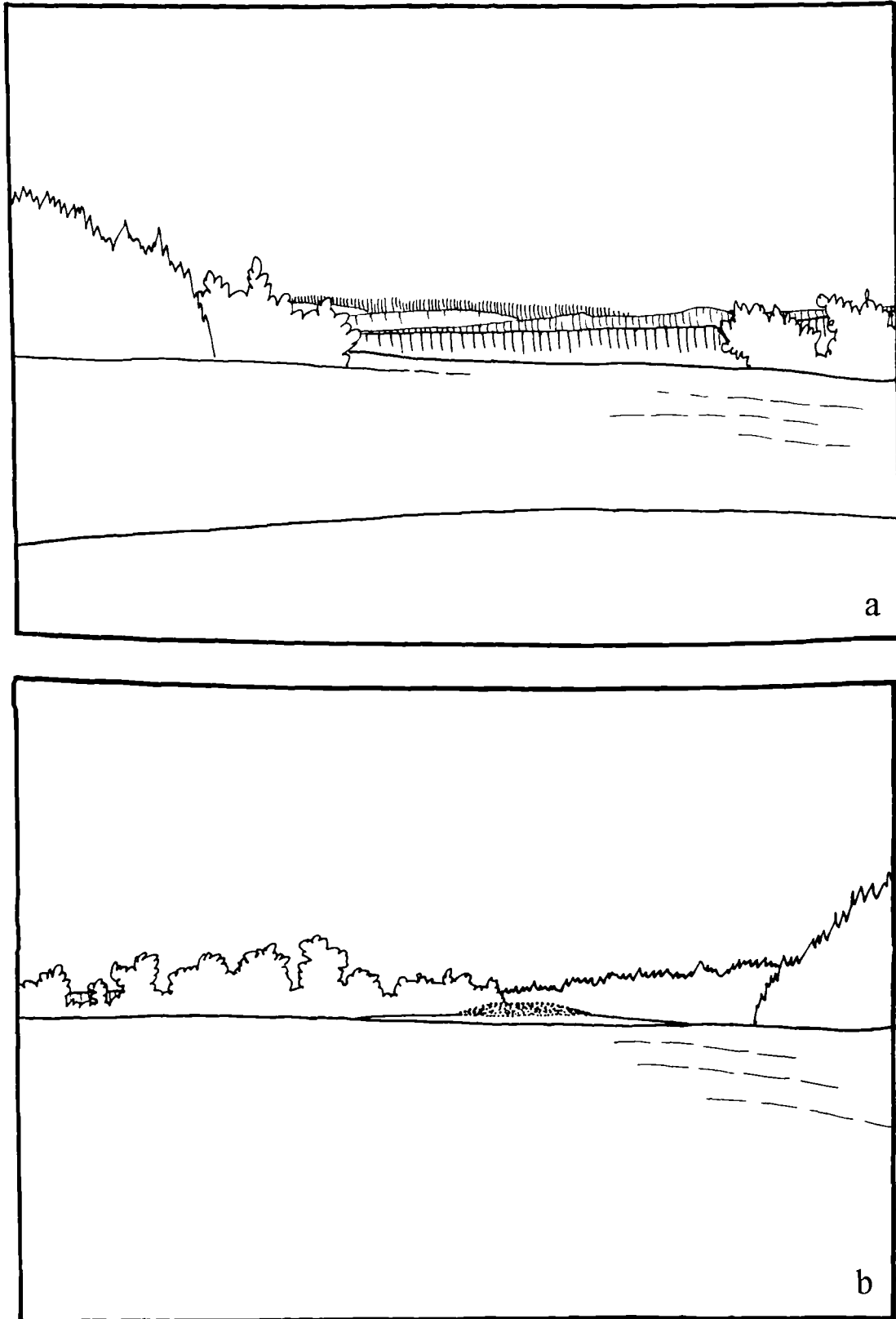


Figure 4.10 a: Looking S from Balnaguie. b: View of Balnaguie to the NE; trees at left mark the course of Muirton Burn.

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between curtailed and expansive prospects would remain broadly the same in more sparsely wooded surroundings.

From the entrance of the tomb, the ground stretches away from the observer at an extremely gentle gradient before breaking down into a steep slope about 7m eastward, creating a strong local horizon. Beyond this the land rises up again into another low ridge. Prominently placed on the horizon formed by this second ridge sits another round cairn, 80m east of Balnaguie. Flat-topped, 1.2m high and 14m in diameter, this was almost certainly set up during the bronze age, yet another example of the accretion of monumentality in restricted localities which I have noted elsewhere in the Black Isle. Behind this rises a steep hillside which forms a close, high, eastern skyline about 350m from the chambered cairn. Looking out to the left from the entrance, the view is again strongly curtailed by the rise of the Millbuie Ridge; this contrasts with the rolling landscape and distant hills visible to the subject's right (southeast), beyond the immediate horizon of the spur itself.

From the east Balnaguie and the later round cairn would sit up prominently, each at the end of its tongue of land, with the south:north, open:closed landscape opposition obvious for the entire approach. Once the individual reached the bottom of the long eastern slope the chambered cairn would be lost from view; a climb up to the bronze age cairn would reveal it once more, taking up all of the level ground at the tip of the ridge. The cairn is massive when seen from the depression between these two low ridges -- even today the remaining facade stones have some impact despite the denudation of the cairn and its colonization by mature trees. The final approach to the entrance is a short, sharp climb, so steep that initially the lower part of the cairn would be masked by the hillside. The cairn would appear in its impressive entirety above the observer from about 12-15m back, enormous against the sky and blocking out the whole of the landscape beyond. This kinetic and visual experience of the monument is translated into graphic form in Figure 4.11, which follows the same conventions as before -- a scale of impression upon the observer which rises from 1, where the monument begins to draw attention as a

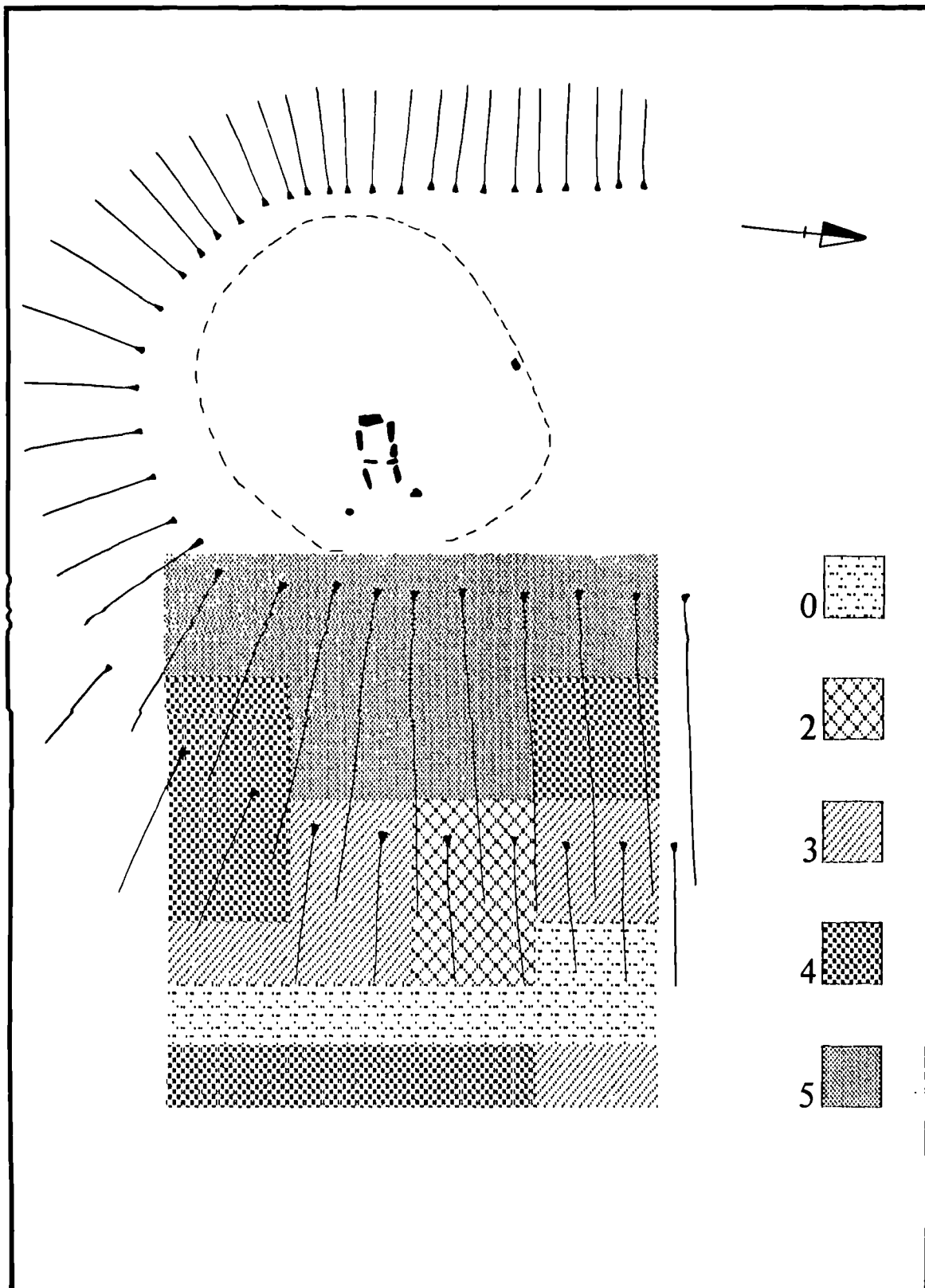


Figure 4.11 Graphic representation of the monumental presence established at Balnaguie. Cairn plan after Henshall 1963. Scale 1:500.

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goal within the landscape, to 5, in which the cairn achieves complete dominance within its surroundings. A zero-level of impression was also utilized at Balnaguie, representing areas inaccessible for recording purposes in the present vegetation. The plan demonstrates clearly the intensity of the monument's presence in such a small-scale locale, particularly when one considers the denuded state of the cairn.

Coming down the side of the Millbuie Ridge from the north, the individual would catch sight of the chambered tomb at approximately 400m distance. From this perspective its elevated position is noticeable, the way in which the ground falls sharply away on three sides clearly apparent. Having arrived at the level ground of the ridge itself, the cairn would again loom large against a distant backdrop of hills, while on either side the deeply undulating immediate landscape creates a rather more restricted view. Proceeding along the ridge towards Balnaguie, the only option remaining to the subject is to skirt round the perimeter of the cairn to the left, towards the entrance, since the proximity of the cairn edge to the precipitous slope of the ravine makes it too difficult to negotiate a way round to the right. Similarly, any approach from the rolling land to the west, which could conceivably focus on the cairn intermittently from almost a kilometre away, would of necessity involve crossing the burn north or south of the cairn and then continuing on from the new direction.

The southern approach is a long, steady, gradual climb. From here the cairn (today represented by a bracken mound) is conspicuous on its minor eminence, which interrupts the general uniformity of the upward gradient (Fig. 4.10b). Due to the gentle nature of the slope continuing beyond Balnaguie, the monument may be a silhouette on the skyline for a fair distance. The landscape becomes increasingly visually restricted to left and right as the subject comes nearer to the cairn, the effect of which is to emphasize the small scale of the immediate locale in which the cairn is situated. Balnaguie assumes a particularly dominant character as one moves towards it, not only because it quite literally overlooks the individual from its raised position, but because its considerable mass is subtly enhanced by its having taken over all of the limited available ground at the tip of the ridge, a

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feature which is obvious from a southerly aspect.

Using the traditional morphological terminology of earlier authors, this monument fits happily into the distinctive regional sub-group within the Orkney-Cromarty architectural classification which is centred on the Black Isle (see above p. 159). But its setting and the way in which it plays upon its surroundings cannot be so easily characterized in terms of recurrent themes. We might ask, therefore, whether Balnaguie can be assessed in the same terms as the other chambered cairns so far discussed, which envisage a series of locales leading on from one another, the discrete characters of which are sustained at varying levels. Is it possible to see this monument linked to or focused towards one locale rather than another? Certainly the long and open expanse of land running south from Balnaguie, bounded on the west by Muirton Burn, would seem an obvious area to which the monument might refer and *vice versa* -- particularly as it is from here that the farthest visual reference to the monument is possible. But a strong element of isolation from the broader locale and constructional strategies of domination over the subject pertain to this tomb. This may hint at a quite different dynamic operating among locale, monument and person than that which I have begun to draw out elsewhere.

This part of the Black Isle *is* different, in that its features are much more varied. These are not the sweeping hillsides of Kilcoy and the Conon valley, or the wide, undulating Muir of Conan. Instead, strongly rolling fields sit next to smooth, level stretches, and gentle hillslopes oppose much more strongly defined features. But it is one of these latter features that has been singled out for Balnaguie, rather than its having been placed within a more uniform, larger-scale part of the immediate landscape where it would operate in a way more similar to most of the cairns discussed so far. The effect is to focus attention much more strongly upon the architectural construction itself, in its small, more private world - - an effect strengthened by the emphasis on mass and elevation. The manipulation of movement as regards engagement with the monument is closely linked to this: the limitation of approach routes, the direction of movement towards the forecourt,

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the strenuous climb to the entrance, the severe restriction of space for movement in front of the tomb. Again this stands in opposition to the much broader, more general influence of the Kilcoy cairns, Muir of Conan or Bishop Kinkell. Rather than acting as a reference point within a large, defined locale, or marking one of its important margins -- in effect as a locus of 'passing through', a landmark of transition and transformation which serves to emphasize, materially and metaphorically, the progression of the human community among the various worlds which together comprise the lived and experiential landscape -- Balnaguie seems to turn inwards. Perhaps this is more a place of arrival, *withdrawal* and then departure, more of a lodestone which *removes* you temporarily from the routine rhythm of the days and seasons and takes you to another, more unfamiliar world altogether, than a landmark by which you regulate the movement of your own living and ancestral communities within those rhythms. Perhaps what we are seeing is a different way of expressing what all the tombs must in one sense be:

a primary landmark
dangerous, essential, demanding.
(Dòmhnall MacAmhlaigh, 'Landmark')

Belmaduthy ROS 8

Belmaduthy cairn possesses a unicellular, rectangular, Orkney-Cromarty chamber, oriented east northeast-west southwest. Access is through a passage at right angles to the chamber, centrally placed on its southern side. The passage seems to have opened onto a wide, crescentic forecourt which faced south southeast. The monument is in a cultivated field, and the cairn perimeter has been seriously disturbed by long term agricultural operations. What material remains at present forms a rough oval with the long axis running north northwest-south southeast. However, late nineteenth century records of the site suggest that the long axis originally paralleled that of the chamber, and that there may once have been a peristalith -- or at least intermittently spaced kerb stones (Beaton 1882, 490-1).

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The monument is on the crest of a low rise on an otherwise reasonably level terrace, about one quarter of the way up the southeast facing slope of the Millbuie Ridge. From the east through south to southwest is a far-reaching prospect of low hills and mainland mountains, with perhaps a glimpse of the Moray Firth on a clear day. Northwards the ground continues to rise towards the ridge summit, a much more confined, less varied landscape. The location therefore has a strong unidirectional focus, a quality played upon and accentuated by the specific directionality of the tomb. This near:far opposition can be fully appreciated from the entrance, as directly ahead the most varied horizons recede farthest into the distance, while to the viewer's left and right the layers diminish and the sightlines are less extensive.

From this perspective a related aspect is strikingly apparent: that Belmaduthy sits somewhat apart from this world spread out beneath it. The natural terrace forms a small-scale locale which is strongly defined in both visual and physical terms. The ground slopes very gently away from the entrance for 75-100m, at which point it becomes much steeper. The local horizon formed by this break of slope is a major visual boundary when seen from the cairn, since the nearest landscape visible beyond it is about 2.5km distant (Fig. 4.12a). Its role as a physical boundary comes into play from the opposite perspective, when approaching from this rolling landscape, as the cairn emerges on the skyline at the same moment as the exertion of the ascent is substantially relaxed.

The observer, therefore, comes upon Belmaduthy very late on, with the cairn's mass already appearing considerable and blocking out an appreciable part of the landscape beyond. The linearity of the terrace is marked, resembling a series of long folds running northeast-southwest. One of these 'folds' lies behind the cairn to the northwest, as the land slopes gently downwards for a distance of about 200m before rising once more. The effect is to make the cairn stand up on a local horizon when seen from the southeast, at the same time breaking the skyline. To left and right the tomb is framed by low hills, while in the far distance the mountains of the northern mainland are just visible. Viewed from this perspective,

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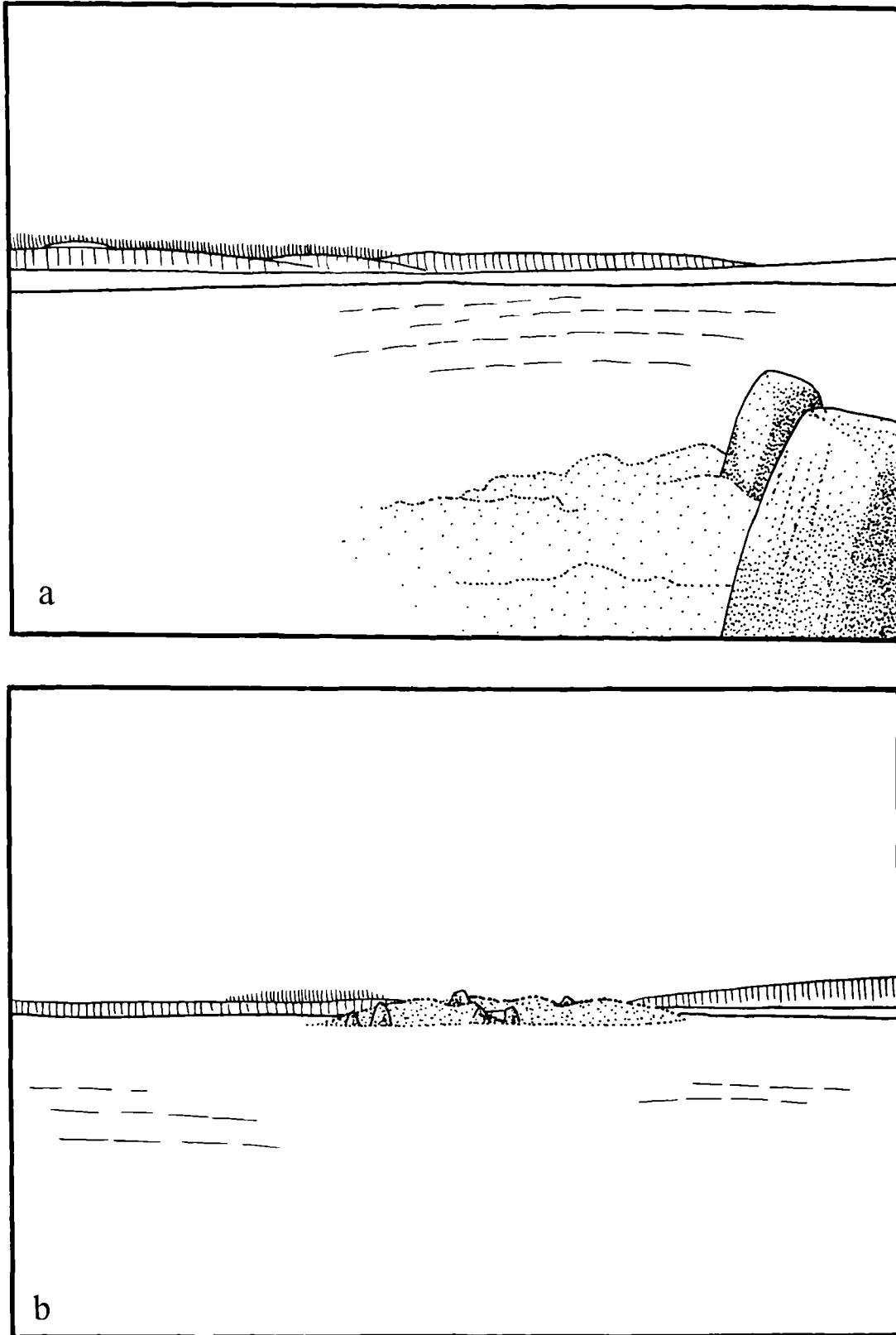


Figure 4.12 a: Looking SSW from the forecourt at Belmaduthy; facade orthostats at right. b: View of Belmaduthy to the NW.

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Belmaduthy sits firmly within a large but relatively closed-in, visually curtailed locale (Fig. 4.12b).

Approaching from the northwest, it is as one crests the rise of the Millbuie Ridge 500m from the cairn that both the monument and the long vista between east and southwest come into view for the first time -- a somewhat similar effect to that observed on the downhill approach to Kilcoy North (see above p. 166). The monument stands below the observer, on the local horizon formed by its slightly elevated position. Once the subject has moved down into the depression -- or fold -- described above, nothing lies beyond the cairn but the sky.

Belmaduthy can be seen as a reasonably long-distance goal from the northeast. Following the contour of the ridge, this approach and that from the southwest cover very level ground, in which the mound of the cairn is a prominent horizon feature. From the northeast Belmaduthy will be visible from the higher ground rising up towards Mount Eagle, then disappear as the individual drops down into the glen of the Roskill Burn, reappearing once more at about 350m distance. The monument comes into view from the southwest much later, first appearing from just under 400m away.

Altogether, Belmaduthy sits within a closely-defined, uniform locale -- approximately 750m northeast-southwest by 600m southeast-northwest -- in which it maintains a forceful presence. Although placed in a commanding position overlooking the land stretching away towards the southern half of the compass, it is both visually and physically removed from this. The relationship among the near and far worlds and the architectural construction, however, is of a different nature than at Balvaird or Balnaguie, the other sites which stress a theme of separation.

The unidirectional focus compares to many of the locales discussed above. The tomb was not, for example, positioned on the crest of the rise to the northwest, where it would have had the additional prospect of the gently undulating ground at the broad summit of the Millbuie Ridge. And as elsewhere, the firthward focus seems important; to have placed the tomb only 600m further up the ridge would have been to lose this extensive panorama.

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A final point concerns the construction of the monument itself. The pointed slab which forms the southwest end of the chamber is notable for its massive size (1.5m by 2m by 60cm), its regular, triangular outline, and its smooth surface, which contrasts with the extremely uneven conglomerate of many of the other chamber orthostats. The broad sides of this endstone face east northeast/west southwest, placing it well within the orientational range of most of the backslabs from Orkney-Cromarty chambers in the Black Isle. Thus although the entrance alignment at Belmaduthy diverges from the broad standardization apparent among these monuments, the orientation of the largest chamber orthostat does not. Bearing in mind the lack of evidence from excavation, it is again worth considering the possibility that the monumentality of some of these loci predates the erection of a chambered cairn at the site, and that the later monuments incorporate or transform older directional qualities.

Woodhead

Near the centre of the Black Isle peninsula, high up on the northwest facing slope of the Millbuie Ridge, a chambered cairn and probable bronze age round cairn lie within sight of each other. The present-day setting is a patchwork of arable fields and pasture running steadily downwards from the cairns for 1.5km, before the gradient eases into the comparatively level land which fringes the Cromarty Firth. Although close by, two non-megalithic long cairns seem situated so as to allow references to a rather different landscape.

Woodhead Round ROS 42

This cairn was probably originally circular, enclosing what seems to be a single-compartment, rectangular Orkney-Cromarty chamber. The chamber is aligned northeast-southwest, with the entrance at the former end.

The monument is placed on gently sloping ground, just down from the summit of a narrow spur which projects northeastward from Mount Eagle. The wide expanse of land undulating towards the firth stretches from the west

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southwest, through west and round to the north. Beyond this lie the highlands, a dramatic and varied landscape with considerable depth of visibility (Fig. 4.13a). In between these quite different worlds the waters of the firth can be seen to the north and west, acting as a strong focus and a clear boundary for the immediate locale. Opposing this far-reaching prospect is the close, even horizon of the spur itself, which obscures from view both Mount Eagle and its neighbouring peak, Cnoc Phadruig.

Woodhead Round is hemmed in on two sides by mature forestry plantation; assessment of the nature of the view from the entrance must therefore remain speculative. Directly ahead, to the northeast, the observer is looking along the long axis of the flat-topped spur, which drops down to join the main slope of the Millbuie Ridge about 1km from the cairn. The tomb entrance would therefore seem to look out over a fairly level, uniform stretch of ground which forms a horizon at reasonable proximity, above which distant landscape features are very unlikely to emerge. This is certainly the case to the viewer's right, as the ground continues to rise slightly to the highest point of the spur, then levels out. To the left (north), the quickening of the downward slope 150m from the monument creates a local horizon which hides much of the nearer farmland; beyond this is the rolling ground running down to the firth far below, and mainland Easter Ross.

As elsewhere in the Black Isle, the interplay of architecture and natural boundaries seems to situate the monument at the outer reaches of an area strongly delimited in most directions. In this case, as at Bishop Kinkell, the entrance looks towards the nearer, uppermost margins of its locale of sweeping hillsides and undulating firthlands. This is partly a function of northeasterly orientation on the northern flank of the Black Isle's spine. However, it is not the question of orientation alone which has dictated this location. Building the cairn 500m to the southwest, (not far from where the bronze age round cairn was erected), would still place it at the upper margins of this landscape, but, while maintaining northeasterly directionality, would permit a wider prospect over the area, rather more like that seen from the entrances of the three chambered cairns at Kilcoy. Yet this option

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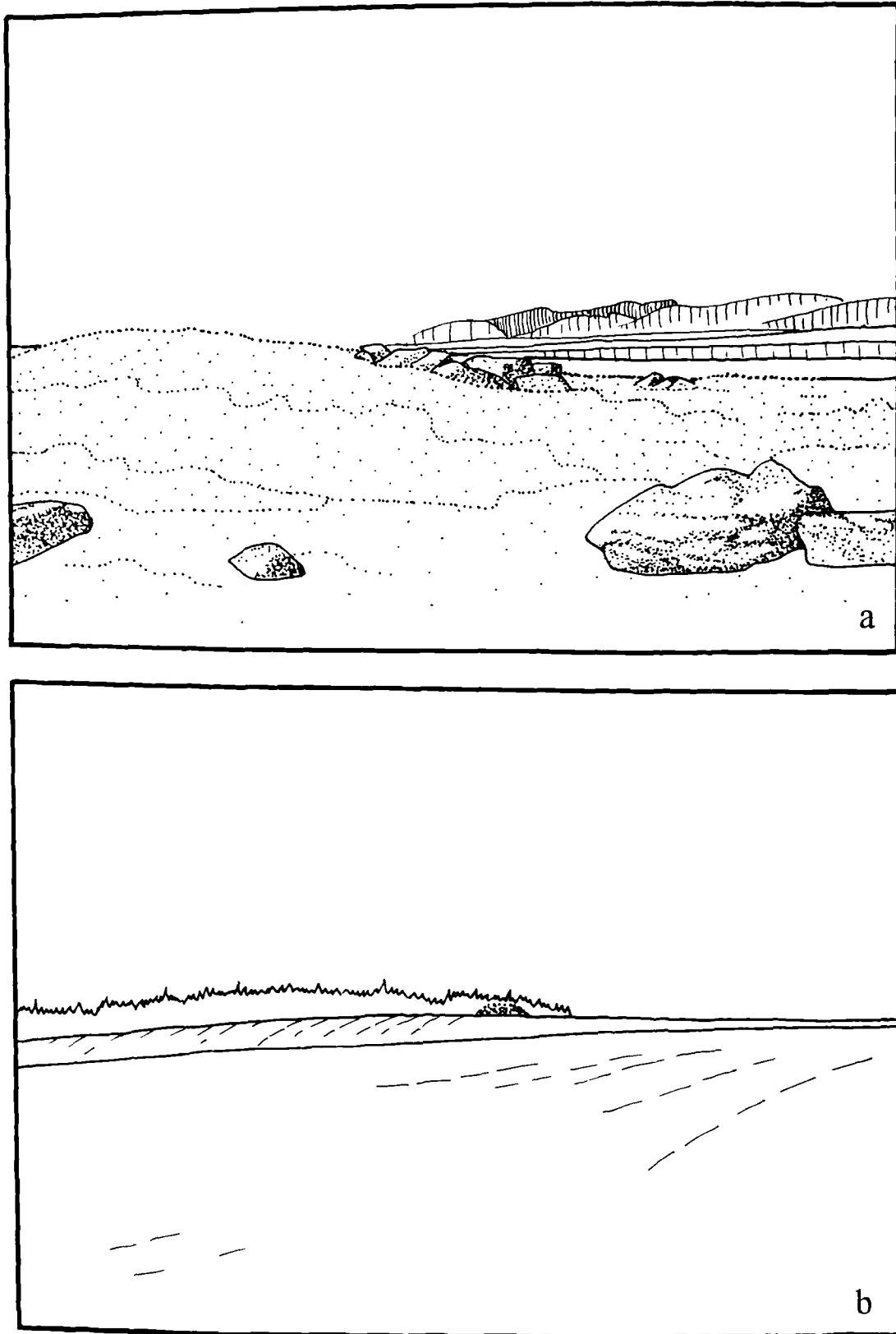


Figure 4.13 a: Looking WSW to Woodhead Round, with the remains of the chamber at centre. b: View of Woodhead Round to the ENE.

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was one among many which was deliberately *not* chosen. Admittedly, the motivation behind positive and negative choices remains elusive. But perhaps it is just possible to catch the echoes of a past landscape physically and perceptually different from the present orientation towards the distinctively Scottish wool and whisky industries. Perhaps in its monuments we can detect the final resonances of a spatial order that, as the physical framework within which human lives unfolded, formed part of a conceptual order which both made possible and was carried forward by such motivations.

To draw this out then, we might postulate that the actual siting of Woodhead Round puts it at a 'corner' of the locale -- i.e., nearer two clear boundaries than one. Just beyond each of these boundaries one comes upon other monuments with mortuary connotations. Wester Brae long cairn (ROS 39), seemingly unchambered, lies 700m east northeast of Woodhead Round, while 350m to the southeast lies Woodhead Long (ROS 41), a monument of similar type. By analogy with excavated long cairns and long barrows in Scotland and England, these cairns (as opposed to the earlier structures they may well cover) are likely to have been constructed sometime during the late fifth to the earlier third millennium BC (Kinnes 1992), and therefore may have been utilized within ceremonial practice at the same time as Woodhead Round -- the rather hazy, present chronology for the Orkney-Cromarty tradition covers the earlier fourth to later third millennia. The nature of the ritual carried out here differs from that at the chambered cairns, but morphological features may indicate certain thematic links -- in particular, the east-west axis and emphasis on the eastern end of the monument.⁸

Today in dense forest, the two long cairns are placed above, and would seem to look over, a broad, level area of ground at the head of Allt Dubhac, which flows northeastward off the summit of the Millbuie Ridge. The closer horizons are to the west and north, blocking out the land on the south bank of the Cromarty Firth towards which Woodhead Round is so clearly focused. Woodhead Long sits in a slight depression, and before being surrounded by forestry was just visible from the top of Woodhead Round cairn (R.C.A.M.S. 1943). From the point of

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view of the person on the ground, therefore, the two monuments are unlikely to have been intervisible. The most probable configuration is that, progressing from one to the other, as the monument ahead of the observer came into view the other would be just disappearing behind. Wester Brae, on the southeastern flank of the spur extending from Mount Eagle, is entirely invisible from the chambered cairn. The three monuments would seem to operate within discrete, differently focused landscapes, yet are close enough that the subject, leaving one locale for another, would encounter a substantial monument as he or she entered a different world, or very shortly after. As I have suggested with regard to other loci on the peninsula, it is the transitional areas between locales rather than central places within them that often seem to require architectural signification.

Approaching Woodhead Round from the northeast, towards the entrance, the subject will have first seen the cairn from a maximum of 400m away. From here it would be on the skyline, and it remains on a local horizon for the duration, due to a downward break of slope 50m beyond the cairn to the southwest. The edge of the spur dropping down to the northwest has a bounding effect on the viewer's right which becomes increasingly well defined as one comes closer to the monument; to the left, the rise towards Cnoc Phadruig restricts the view more and more so that the contrast between closed and open landscapes is clearly apparent. From the northeastern perspective, Woodhead Round sits effectively at the transition between the two landscapes. Above the entrance and to its left, fairly level fields can be seen in the middle distance, culminating in a skyline at about 1.5km, while above and to the right is the distant, rugged highland landscape. Intact, the mass of the cairn would have blocked out much of the former once the observer had arrived in front of the cairn, so that to left would be only sky and the extremely curtailed immediate surroundings. The local horizon from which the monument rises continues round to the subject's right, where it is formed by the edge of the spur, 50m distant. Thus although Woodhead Round seems placed very much within the expansive locale bordering the Cromarty Firth, the closely bounded, level area of ground dominated by the tomb entrance does seem

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differentiated from the wider surroundings. The slight separation of this small-scale area is, however, of far lesser magnitude than that observed at Balnaguie, Balvaird or Belmaduthy.

Coming from the southeast, the cairn will again appear very late on, as the view to the northern mountains opens up to the observer. Woodhead Round will be silhouetted against this striking backdrop, since the ground drops down sharply not far beyond, to the northwest. In contrast, the cairn can be seen for an appreciable distance from the southwest, west and northwest -- certainly from up to a kilometre, perhaps more when the cairn was intact and free from vegetation, depending upon the density of the prehistoric arboreal canopy. From these directions it rises conspicuously on the skyline for almost the entire approach (Fig. 4.13b), only disappearing from view between about 150 and 50m from the cairn, as the slope becomes so steep in the final stages as to hide the summit. When one regains sight of it, therefore, it appears massive in its small, immediately bounded locale. This brief transitional period underlines the slight removal of this smaller world from the more general setting.

Culbo

Culbo round cairn lies 500m southwest of Woodhead Round, just over halfway up towards the summit of the Millbuie Ridge at Cnoc Phadruig. Although mostly under pasture today, the surrounding land has been more intensively utilized in the past, and the cairn perimeter has been substantially altered by ploughing. The monument, likely erected during the bronze age, still survives to a height of 1.3m; the present diameter is about 14m but may have been closer to 18m originally.

The cairn is placed over a shift in gradient: whereas the land running down to the northwest is relatively steep, the hillside rising to the southeast is much more gentle. This up:down, southeast:northwest divide is apparent in other ways. From the monument, the view from northeast through south to southwest is strongly curtailed as the upward slope, although more gentle, is still reasonably strong, forming a single, high, flat horizon at close proximity. The land running down to

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the cairn perimeter from these directions is certainly more closely linked to Culbo than that falling away sharply to the northwest, and is probably the area more likely to have seen associated ritual activity. Between northeast, north and southwest one has an entirely different outlook, down the long slope to the flatter lands at the water's edge and on to the varied horizons of the mountains beyond (Fig. 4.14a).

This monument is positioned deeper into the locale than the primary focus of the landscape, Woodhead Round. Although the big Mains of Kilcoy cairns have an affinity with Culbo, they too are sited differently, sitting much more obviously at the upper margin of their firchside landscape. However, Culbo is not centrally placed within a specific area of ground, as it draws the eye from much further away in certain directions than in others. Coming down from the southeast, from the ridge summit, the observer would catch sight of the cairn from about 400m away, from where it would rise prominently on a local horizon, backed only by the mountains and perhaps a small part of the undulating ground on the banks of the firch. From a northeasterly perspective, however, the round cairn is clearly visible on the skyline for almost 3km -- that is, from just under a kilometre from the water. Coming along the hillside from the northeast, Culbo appears at not much beyond 500m, then disappears once the subject is within about 130m. It becomes visible once more at 20m or so, this time on a local horizon, then breaks the skyline at 10m.

Although set at some remove from the conspicuous mound of the chambered cairn, Culbo is still strongly focused towards the earlier monument. Placed at a higher altitude, the latter is an obvious reference point. In addition, as the individual moves toward the cairn from the northwest, it is possible to walk on an alignment with both cairns, as Woodhead Round appears on the skyline above the bronze age cairn. This alignment matches almost exactly the actual chamber orientation of Woodhead Round -- surely unlikely to be a coincidence. The conjunction of the two architectural features is sustained for the entire approach, from the moment they come into view some 300m from Culbo to their ultimate

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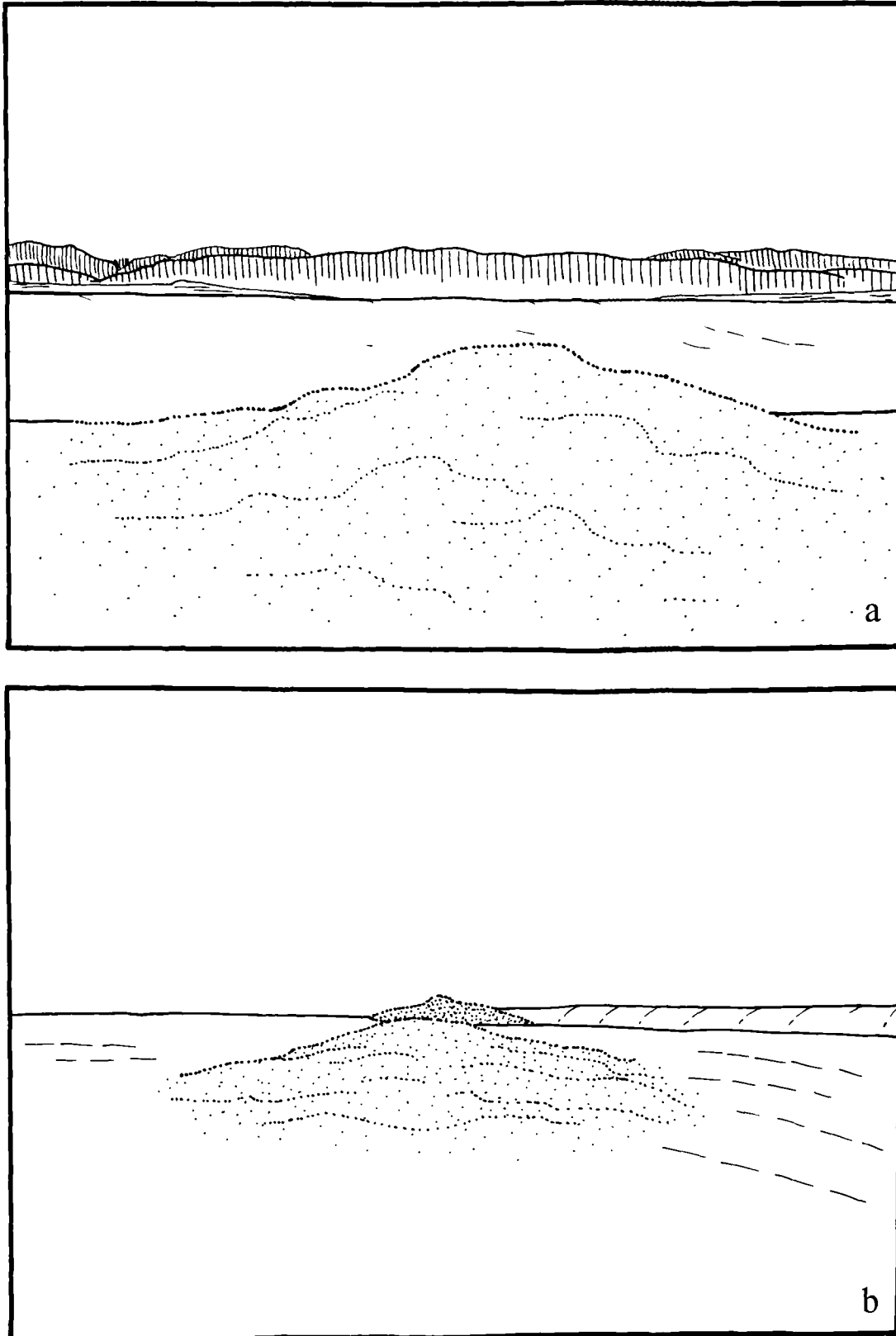


Figure 4.14 a: Looking NW to Culbo; the water of the Cromarty Firth is just visible at left and right. b: Looking ENE along the long axis of Glenurquhart I, towards the Grey Cairn blocking the former view to the sea.

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fusion at 70-100m distance, from which point the bronze age cairn emerges higher and higher from the skyline. Rather than being set up in opposition to an earlier conception of ancestral and living communities and locales, the built form of the later period seems to draw upon strands of an earlier materiality, while establishing a presence of its own. So whereas Culbo cairn is visible from a greater distance within the firchside landscape (although the severe denudation of Woodhead Round limits its present visibility, it will always have sunk below the horizon while the bronze age cairn was still visually prominent lower down the hillside), it is worth reiterating the obvious point that the chambered cairn was permitted to continue as a physical and metaphorical focus, remaining virtually intact until the early nineteenth century (Woodham 1956b, 72).

Glenurquhart

The final group of cairns to be considered consists of two non-megalithic long cairns and a large round cairn, the latter of probable bronze age date. These lie within 600m of each other at the northeastern tip of the Millbuie Ridge, some 8km from the end of the peninsula. The cairns are all positioned at or near the margins of the flat-topped summit of the ridge, here about 400m across.

Glenurquhart I

The long axis of this cairn runs east northeast-west southwest. Measuring 21m in length, it is very slightly higher and wider at the northeastern end.

Glenurquhart I is placed about 75m in from the southeastern edge of the summit. From northeast through north to southwest one looks out over the almost level ground at the top of the ridge, the land rising only very slightly between northeast and northwest as it stretches away from the monument, creating a close, even horizon with some of the peaks of mainland Easter Ross visible in the distance; in the other directions the horizon is a skyline. The ridge summit is therefore a small-scale landscape with a very strong sense of boundedness.

The view round the other half of the compass contrasts markedly: in the

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middle distance, beyond the local horizon of the break of slope marking the edge of the summit, another long, steep-sided ridge runs parallel to the Millbuie Ridge, forming the far side of a deep, strongly linear valley. To the east northeast one catches a glimpse of the Moray Firth opening out into the North Sea, neatly framed by the rise of the near hillside on the left and the distinctive tip of the opposing ridge on the right. Glenurquhart I is aligned precisely on this opening to the sea. Standing at the wider end of the cairn, facing east northeast, the subject looks over an area of level ground which terminates *circa* 75-100m away; the water appears directly ahead in the distance, above this close local horizon. To the viewer's left, level ground stretches away along the summit, while to the right, across the narrow valley, rises the high visual boundary of the southeastern ridge. From this position, therefore, one has a prospect over both the immediate locale and the wider environs.

Visual reference to the most distant aspect of these surroundings is unlikely to have been possible from the southwestern end of the cairn, looking down its long axis. Today only 1m in height, I suspect much of the cairn material has gone into the field dykes surrounding the monument; if its original state approximated to that of the more intact long cairn at Wester Brae, the sea view would be entirely obscured by the cairn's mass. The contrast between the closely circumscribed, small-scale world of the summit and the more far-reaching landscape beyond is thereby made even more apparent: from the southwest, the cairn stands between the subject and expansive views, while at its northeastern end, the clear boundary of the summit edge physically removes the viewer from the world beyond.

From the east northeast the individual climbs the long, steady slope which forms the tip of the Millbuie Ridge -- a reasonably easy ascent since it crosses the contour of the land at a strongly oblique angle. The ridge side closely circumscribes vision on the subject's right, while to the left a relatively open vista takes in the linearity of the deep valley. Because the cairn is set back somewhat from the edge of the summit it will become visible at a fairly late stage, perhaps from a distance of only 250m as one nears the top of the ridge. The ground slopes

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downward very slightly behind the cairn to the southwest, accentuating its mass as it rises from a local horizon. This horizon stretches around from left and right of the cairn at reasonable proximity to the observer; looking to the left (south southeast) the immediate locale terminates 125m away, to the right (north northwest), at 200m. The land beyond the long cairn is now under forestry which forms a close, dense backdrop; albeit in a rather less dramatic manner, the rise of the ridge continuing to the southwest would have restricted long distance sightlines even when colonized by more naturally dispersed vegetation. Depending on the angle of slope and the density of the arboreal canopy, the rugged highland landscape of the mainland may just have been visible beyond the immediate landscape, in a westerly direction. Facing the cairn, therefore, the subject stands within a closely defined, small-scale landscape which is very much self contained and removed from the wider world, and over which the monument exerts a strong influence.

From the south southeast the cairn is approached up a steep hillside; again the individual catches sight of the monument very late on, as the gradient begins to level out at approximately 100m distance. The cairn appears as a skyline feature lying across the subject's path. The higher ground and the higher end of the cairn both lie to the right and may therefore draw the individual towards the small area of level ground poised between the monument and the edge of the summit, between near and distant worlds.

Coming from the opposite direction, from the north northwest, the steep climb up the northwestern flank of the ridge eases about 500m from Glenurquhart I, which does not come into view, however, for another 200m or so. The proximity of the long cairn to the edge of the summit means that it rises up in clear space from this perspective, with the flat, high skyline of the ridge to the southeast in the middle distance, reiterating the linearity of the cairn's mass and reinforcing the integrity of the immediate locale. The configuration of landscape and monument remains the same as the individual moves towards it across very gently undulating ground, with slightly more expansive views extending to left and right

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of the observer.

From the west southwest, on alignment with the long axis of the cairn, the individual approaches along the spine of the Millbuie Ridge. Moving through a wide, level expanse, the high ground on the north side of the Cromarty Firth would be visible beyond the immediate surroundings, to the viewer's left, while to the right the long, linear ridge across the valley would be more visually restricting. The land begins a gentle but steady incline, so that the cairn when it appears -- perhaps at 250m -- is on the skyline, and will remain so until the observer has arrived at the monument. (The existence of the forestry plantation here makes the foregoing somewhat speculative.) At the southwest end of the monument, one is again within a tightly-bounded area, surrounded on all sides by close horizons and dominated by the architecture.

Unlike many of the chambered cairns in the Black Isle, Glenurquhart I does not sit within an extensive locale -- rather, it operates within the closely defined area of the northeastern tip of the Millbuie ridge. It is near the edge of this locale, however, enabling reference to be made to more distant worlds. Notably, it does not make reference to the closer landscape of the southeastern flank of the ridge itself, which remains invisible since the cairn is set far enough back from the limit of the summit, nor can the cairn be seen from within the valley. A similar situation exists with regard to Glenurquhart II, a long cairn of like proportions 600m to the northeast. Here too the cairn is positioned towards the margin of the level summit, close enough to the edge so as to exploit the opposition of immediate and distant landscapes (in this case the hills of mainland Easter Ross), but deep enough in from it so as to prevent a view of the fields running down to the Cromarty Firth. It is just possible that these cairns were intervisible when intact, but the existence of slightly higher ground between the two makes this more unlikely than not. Thus the small-scale landscape of the summit can be focally partitioned even further.

The question arises as to how this integral partitioning, and the wider separation of landscapes, were related to other spatial distinctions in the landscape

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introduced by the passage of day-to-day life. The vast majority of the Black Isle has been subject to intensive, long-term land use in the present and at various periods in the past, so that visible traces of prehistoric settlement and field systems have been largely erased, while remaining subsoil features are likely to be severely truncated. There are, however, a few extant cairnfields and systems of field boundaries, associated in one case with hut circles. One of these field systems remains at Glenurquhart, comprising what appear to be small cultivation plots, larger fields and clusters of clearance cairns, some in linear arrangements. These extend over most of the summit area discussed above, surrounding Glenurquhart II and running down the northwestern flank of the ridge. These prehistoric fields may have run up to Glenurquhart I as well, later obliterated by what appear to be eighteenth or nineteenth century field dykes.

In this case, stratigraphic relationships with the neolithic cairns cannot be established through field survey. The Glenurquhart long cairns may have been physically and visually separated from the routine movements of everyday life during the neolithic, which would seem not to be the case for most of the chambered cairns I have discussed in the Black Isle. The ridge summit here may perhaps have been drawn physically into the lived experience of communities only at particular times of the year, or encountered for specific purposes outwith the general round of daily activities. However, there are other possibilities. The Glenurquhart field system has in the past been tentatively assigned to the iron age, but recent survey and limited excavation of field dykes, lynchets, clearance cairns and hut circles at Tulloch Wood, across the water on the southern bank of the Moray Firth, has indicated at least the possibility that the earliest upstanding remains at Glenurquhart may comprise the clusters and alignments of cairns, which may have emerged in the early bronze age, with the field boundaries developing, perhaps intermittently, throughout the rest of the period and possibly into the iron age (Carter 1993). A consideration must remain that the cairnfields and field boundaries either build upon or mask earlier, more ephemeral land divisions, or at least perpetuate prior qualitative and spatial distinctions within the landscape,

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related to less intensive systems of cultivation and stock rearing. Thus it might be that the neolithic groups involved lived much of their daily lives in close and regular proximity to an ancestral and or spiritual presence.⁹

Grey Cairn

This is a massive round cairn, 20m in diameter and 2.5m in height, which sits upon a platform with an average diameter of 24m. The platform is retained by a stony bank 1m in width, the outer face of which comprises a kerb of substantial stones set on edge.

There is only 16m of ground between the round cairn and Glenurquhart I, the former being positioned to the east northeast of the long cairn, at the very edge of the summit. This placement heightens the skyline effect of the Grey Cairn from all directions and ensures that, unlike Glenurquhart I, it acts as a long-distance focus from the east through south to southwest. Straddling the interface between two landscapes, this probable bronze age cairn is a referent for a much more extensive area than are the long cairns. By comparison with other bronze age round cairns nearby, we might postulate that the area of ground towards which the Grey Cairn is directed, and from within which reference would be made to it, is primarily that to which the long cairns are not strongly linked -- the valley created by the southeastern flank of the Millbuie Ridge and the slope of the ridge opposing it. At the narrow summit of the latter, for example, Callachy Hill cairn would have been a prominent silhouette on the skyline from within the valley, before the land was turned over to forestry. Another round cairn, now largely ruined, stands in Whitebog Wood plantation, 300m south southwest of the Grey Cairn. This monument is positioned at the point where the lower, steeper slope eases off towards the crest of the hillside above, just as we have seen at Culbo, and would act as a prominent, long distance landmark near the upper limit of the valley landscape.

In addition, however, there are overt links between the Grey Cairn and the world of the ridge summit, which go beyond visibility factors. Certainly, the field system discussed above has similar implications for potentially close physical links

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between the spiritual and the everyday during the bronze age. But one of the most interesting features of the placement of this monument is that it interferes with the alignment of Glenurquhart I upon the small triangle of open sea to the east northeast (Fig. 4.14b). The round cairn effectively appropriates the natural focus of the long cairn: whereas the individual facing out from the latter's wider, higher end had looked directly towards the farthest possible view, the construction of the bronze age monument not only blocks out this vista but creates a small area of ground entirely dominated by built form (which, incidentally, would seem a more likely focus for ritual activity than the ground dropping down into the valley from the perimeter of the round cairn). The earlier cairn no longer refers to the distant seascape, but seems to answer to the demands of a much more insistent, much more human presence.

Monuments in the contemporary landscape

As archaeologists, we attempt to make sense of material assemblages which once made their own very specific sense in worlds distanced in time, in the nature of material existence, and in philosophical perspective. By virtue of its very longevity, the archaeological residue comprises a domain of liminality, of tension between different, perhaps even intellectually opposed, contemporary worlds. The order we seek to draw from the physical remains of past worlds may compete or conflict with the expectations of coherence this materiality was once designed to address.

The neolithic monuments in the Black Isle provide a particularly clear example of the tension generated between different contemporary strategies for making sense. The apparent order of architectural form seemed to lead inevitably, in the traditional mode, to the proposition of various integrated ethnic/material cultural entities converging upon the peninsula. The importance of the routine events of living which recursively drew meaning from and made intelligible the lived world was thereby subsumed under broad, long-term, socio-cultural processes. I rejected morphology as an analytical focus, therefore, because it meant that all the

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important things were happening elsewhere, sometimes far removed from the peninsula itself. 'Cultures' -- or their material indications -- seemed to arrive fully formed, and the only historical dynamic seemed to be a bit of parochial cross-fertilization which might result, for example, in a slightly different subspecies of a widespread class of tomb. The intellectual aspirations I had for making sense of the material, grounded in the contemporary motivations of an interpretive archaeology of inhabitation, had to be realized *in* the Black Isle itself, in its unique fabric within and through which past lives were constructed. But having moved into the present landscape with its own distinctive, modern character, having confronted the diversity of relationships established between the architecture and the land and encountered a palimpsest of land use of deep and difficult complexity, I find the mortuary monuments remain interpretively elusive, at the fluid boundary between coherence and fragmentation. Nonetheless, at least this liminal domain is now inhabited by people, not simply by material cultural traditions.

In the previous chapter, the Arran tombs were considered to operate as part of a matrix of movement which, *via* ancestral mediation, linked the life trajectories of individuals and communities with the mythic forces of the land, the sky and the sea. So too in the Black Isle I envisage the chambered cairns elaborating certain points of passage through a series of worlds, physical but undoubtedly also metaphorical. The nature of the bonds between people and the land, however, would seem to be articulated in a different manner. The Orkney-Cromarty cairns often appear to sit at the uppermost margins of expansive but defined locales, which may take in estuarine or coastal areas, level, fertile firthlands and broad hillsides suitable for mixed grassland and arable cultivation. The frequency with which one comes upon nineteenth century references to artefacts of neolithic type being brought up by the plough, along with the more recent discoveries of features associated with neolithic pottery in more than one of these monumentally overlooked locales (J. Wordsworth, pers. comm.), suggest that these landscapes may well have seen a relatively high level of human activity during this period -- not surprising given the hospitable nature of the area in comparison with the

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surrounding highland massif. Bearing in mind the placement of many of the cairns near the limits of modern cultivation, at points in the landscape where the land becomes increasingly suited to forage and fodder crops and to permanent pasture, I think it reasonable to suggest that the monuments act as markers of the transition between worlds in which much of daily life is carried forward, and those more irregularly frequented, which may be visited or passed through as part of more seasonal patterns of movement, perhaps by particular members of the community.

The implication of the situation of the tombs at the margins of, yet firmly within, the most continuously 'lived in' part of the landscape is that in this case it is the specific, more ephemeral material aspects of these various small worlds which may have been crucial elements in the interwoven threads of reference by which certain ways of knowing the world in its entirety were maintained -- particularly as artefacts intimately concerned with processes of food preparation which would take place within the intensely inhabited locales may be built into the fabric of the monuments themselves. Our difficulties in drawing out the means by which narratives making a space for humanity within the cosmos were given authoritative voice may thus derive from the fact that these are the very elements of the neolithic landscape which we have lost: the location of permanent and transhumance settlement, the areas utilized for shifting and/or more long-term cultivation, summer and winter grazing, and those areas exploited in hunting and collecting strategies.

The qualitative divisions among these areas will undoubtedly have built initially upon moral, spiritual and economic conceptions of the landscape that stretched back into the mesolithic. The monumental formalization of the transitional loci among various physical and metaphorical spatialities may itself have an extended trajectory, with single monoliths its first expression in durable materials, perhaps erected just at the time when, and because, the relative significance of component parts of the landscape was beginning, gradually, to change. The chambered cairns further elaborate the theme of passage among worlds, as not only are they situated at transitional points in the world of the living,

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but they also mark points of contact with the ancestral community -- the intersection, perhaps, of the visible and invisible pathways of humanity. The nature of commerce with the powers of an ancestral presence is eventually altered, as chambers and passages may be filled in and entrances ultimately blocked. From the evidence of excavations at Kilcoy South, this may occur in the second half of the third millennium¹⁰ and is therefore possibly contemporary with the further accretion of monumentality at foci of transition, in the form of round cairns covering or containing one or more individual burials.

The erection of bronze age cairns so close to the neolithic tombs may represent an attempt to link the origins of specific lineages, through the mnemonic of monuments marking the position of their founders and/or heads, with an older, more generalized ancestral community, which may itself have taken on mythical connotations by this time.¹¹ Communication of the living with the metaphysical forces into which the present and future wellbeing of the human group was bound may now have been articulated with greater reference to the biographies of individuals and their specific relations of kinship to past and present solidarities, rather than to the biography of the community as a whole. What we may be seeing is the genealogically oriented appropriation of the symbolic resources embedded within these ancient boundaries.¹²

The non-megalithic long cairns in the Black Isle are quite differently situated from most of the chambered cairns, sitting within comparatively small-scale landscapes removed -- visually and physically -- from the sweeping hillsides and expanses of firthland which constitute the greater part of the peninsula. Today these cairns are situated in very marginal land, and it may be that during the neolithic, possibly as early as the end of the fifth millennium BC, the rituals which culminated in the construction of these sculptural monuments were enacted in areas set apart from the most densely inhabited time-space regions of everyday life, even if at this early stage patterns of living remained fairly mobile. The long cairns clearly represent a different form of symbolic tenure of ancestral and/or mythic resources, which may be partially contemporary with that manifested in the

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chambered cairns. But their mutual spatial exclusivity and shared directionality may indicate that the chambered and non-megalithic monuments respect the same conceptualization of the physical and metaphorical disposition of the landscape.

The most likely explanation for the correspondence between the long cairns and the few visible remnants of prehistoric land management in the Black Isle may be potential late neolithic/early bronze age expansion into previously marginal land, land which was eventually returned to less intensive use. A similar expansion may be represented by cairnfields which seem to have extended north and northwest of the Kilcoy chambered cairns, outwith the tombs' firchside locale (Beaton 1882, 479). There is a possibility, therefore, that from the second half of the third millennium BC, even as they were being embellished by the construction of the great round cairns, the boundaries of antiquity were becoming increasingly metaphorical, rather than necessarily representing actual, qualitative transitions between landscapes, between separate worlds.

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NOTES

¹A morphological summary of the Black Isle chambered cairns and non-megalithic long cairns is as follows:

	No. of cases	% of total	Summary
O-C chambered cairn	10	53%	
probable O-C cairn	2	11%	O-C 64%
Clava passage grave	1	5%	Clava (16%)
uncertain Clava cairn	2	11%	long 21%
long cairn	4	21%	

O-C chambers	No. of cases	% of total	% of certain cases
rectangular	6	50%	60%
polygonal	4	33%	40%
uncertain	2	17%	

O-C cairns	No. of cases	% of total	% of certain cases
round	7	58%	70%
other	3	25%	30%
uncertain	2	17%	

O-C chambers and cairns	No. of cases	% of total	% of certain cases
rectangular/round	4	33%	44%
rectangular/other	2	17%	22%
polygonal/round	2	17%	22%
polygonal/other	1	8%	11%
uncertain	3	25%	

²An alternative possibility is that this was a standing stone brought from elsewhere for incorporation into the chamber.

³These monuments tend to be situated within well drained areas of land, but at their edges, near to more imperfectly draining soils. A summary of the location of the Black Isle chambered cairns in relation to present agricultural potential is as follows:

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Land capability	No. of cases	% of total
excellent arable	1	7%
mixed arable/pasture	5	33%
boundary between excellent to mixed arable/pasture and fodder/forage/pasture	5	33%
boundary between good arable and mixed arable/pasture	4	27%

⁴The arrowhead is probably of the same honey-coloured flint as a potentially late neolithic leaf-shaped arrowhead found associated with a possible burnt shaft in the innermost compartment at Carn Glas (Woodham & Woodham 1957a, 107), but is less finely flaked.

⁵Carn Daley, INV 16; Dalcross Mains, INV 26; Kinchyle of Dores, INV 37.

⁶Construction and use of cairns of the Clava tradition is postulated to extend from the mid fourth to the later third millennium BC (Barclay 1992); radiocarbon determinations from Richard Bradley's excavations at Balnuaran of Clava should refine somewhat our rather shaky chronological control. Preliminary pollen and soil micromorphological analyses relating to the buried soils beneath the Balnuaran of Clava cairns suggest that the area may have been under cultivation, after which vegetational regeneration occurred. Subsequent clearance by burning may have immediately preceded the construction of the ring cairn and two passage graves. A possible hearth and scatters of lithic artefacts around and beneath the cairns may indicate prior domestic activity; Bradley postulates that the cairn material may incorporate stones re-used from earlier structures (Bradley n.d.). Derek Simpson's unpublished excavations at the Raigmore Clava cairn produced evidence for earlier to mid fourth millennium settlement underlying the monument, which would seem to have been erected in turn within a landscape of which the open character had been maintained for some time (Romans & Robertson 1975, 39; Harkness & Wilson 1974, 250).

With respect to the reconstruction of neolithic vegetation and land use patterns around Carn Urnan, the potential exists for a reasonably high level of resolution through palynological analysis, as a substantial area of small lochs and peat bog lies just over a kilometre away from the cairn to the northeast, at Monadh Mor.

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The peat and/or sediment stratigraphy here may well stretch back into the neolithic.

⁷Of the fifteen chambered cairns and four long cairns known in the Black Isle, the entrance orientation (or that of the wider end of long cairns) can be identified in 79% of cases. Excluding Carn Urnan from the calculations, since it conforms to the standard directionality of the Clava tradition, the orientational data are as follows:

N	0	S	0
NNE	0	SSW	0
NE	2 (14%)	SW	0
ENE	5 (36%; 21%=long cairns)	WSW	1 (7%)
E	3 (21%)	W	0
ESE	2 (14%)	WNW	0
SE	0	NW	0
SSE	1 (7%)	NNW	0

86% of the identifiable orientations lie between NE and ESE.

Information regarding the nature of the approach to the entrance of Orkney-Cromarty cairns, where identifiable, and to the wider end of long cairns is as follows:

	O-C	probable O-C	long cairns
uphill	6		2
prob. uphill		1	
slightly uphill	2		2
level	1		
slightly downhill	1		

The two cairns with more unusual orientations, Belmaduthy (SSE) and Mid Brae (WSW), are approached uphill and slightly uphill respectively.

^{*}Five certain long cairns have been identified in the Black Isle, all in the northeastern half of the peninsula. One of these, Mid Brae, contains an Orkney-Cromarty chamber; the other four are apparently non-megalithic and, although in varying states of preservation, seem to form a reasonably uniform morphological group:

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	axis	length	width	max. height
Glenurquhart I	ENE-WSW	21m	ENE 10m WSW 10m	1m
Glenurquhart II	ENE-WSW	19m	ENE 11m WSW 8m	0.5m
Wester Brae	ENE-WSW	26m	ENE 15m WSW 11.5m	2.5m
Woodhead Long	E-W	40m	E 14m W 12m	2.4m

⁹Wester Brae long cairn sits at the edge of a similar field system which has certainly been truncated by forestry plantation. Also planted over is a cairnfield stretching between Woodhead Long and Woodhead Round.

¹⁰Sherds of a short-necked beaker with zoned, comb-impressed decoration were found in the blocking material in the innermost compartment, about 60cm above the floor surface (A. Woodham, pers. comm.).

¹¹Apart from the examples already cited, there are two more cases of bronze age monuments being set up near chambered cairns in the Black Isle. Two kerb cairns sit at 10m and 85m distance from the Orkney-Cromarty long cairn at Mid Brae, while at Croftcrunie an enclosed cremation cemetery was erected immediately next to a possible Clava passage grave (ROS 20), now destroyed.

¹²The material implications of an increasing emphasis on formal lines of descent are discussed in more detail in Chapter Five.

A walk through the hills: Loughcrew, County Meath

... while a story usually consists in the memory you have of it,
here not remembering the story becomes the very story itself.

Italo Calvino
Time and the Hunter

Writing about monuments: the public forum and the space between

The Loughcrew hills rise from the limestone plains of east-central Ireland, a distinctive range visible for many kilometres around. From the top, an expansive panorama can be had of the fertile, easily tilled lands of Meath and its neighbouring counties; on a clear day the view extends almost from coast to coast. The range comprises four summits, all of which rise above 250m OD and which run nearly due east-west over a distance of about 4.5km. From east to west these are: Patrickstown, Carnbane East, Newtown and Carnbane West.¹ On and between these summits seventeen certain and thirteen possible passage tombs are extant, albeit in some cases in a very ruinous condition. Four lie on Patrickstown summit, seven on Carnbane East, five on the slopes between Carnbane East and Newtown, one on Newtown summit, and thirteen on Carnbane West (Fig. 5.1). The landscape has been subject to long-term, intensive agricultural operations, with associated drystone dyke construction, so that not only may the overall number of cairns have *been reduced but their relative distribution among the summits may also have altered over time*. This may have particular relevance for Patrickstown, as although Michael Herity's assertion (1974, 50) that twenty-one tombs had been destroyed

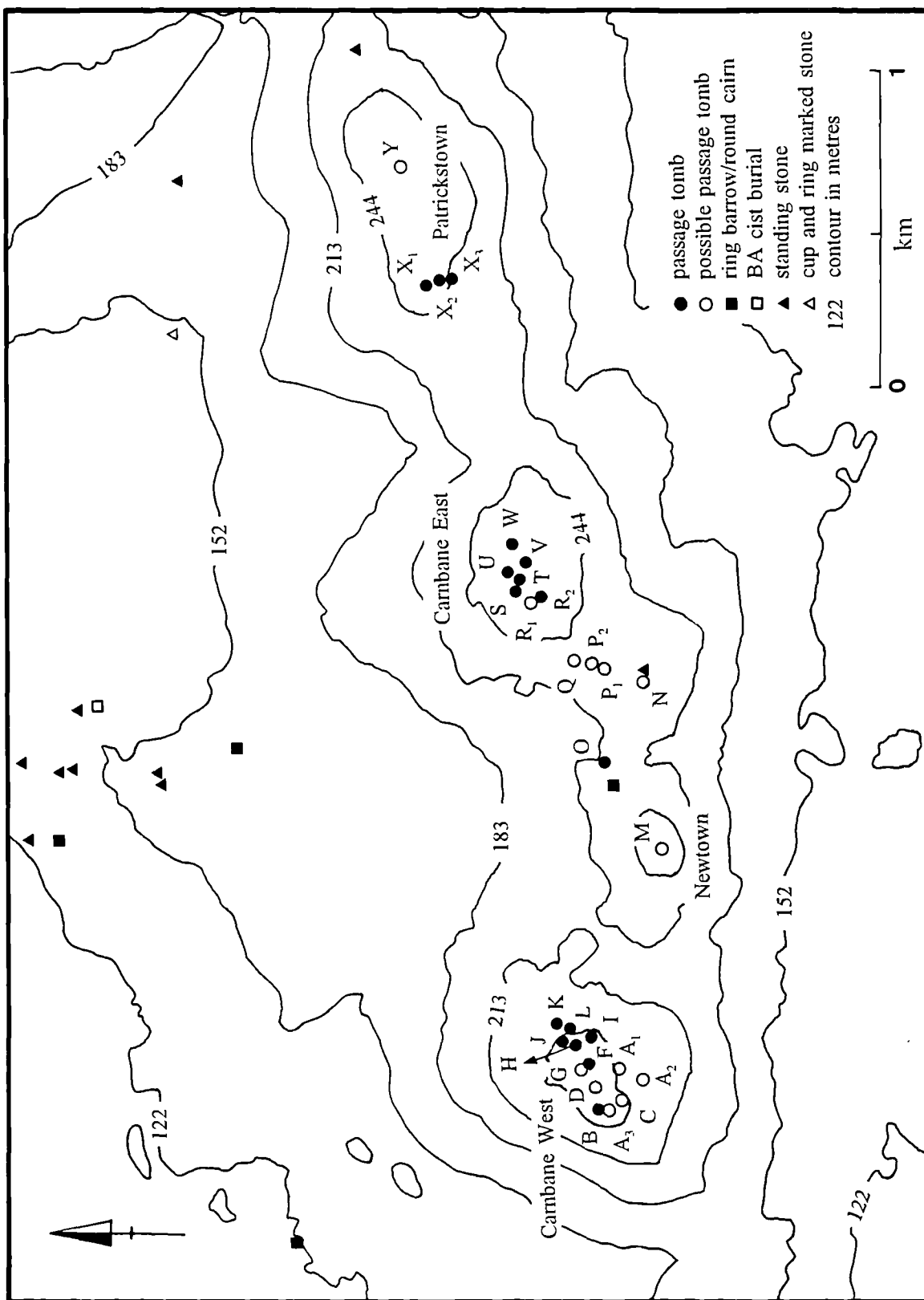


Figure 5.1 Sites on and around the Loughcrew hills.

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here prior to 1863 is based upon a misreading of a nineteenth century account of Loughcrew and its environs, the largest of the remaining cairns on Patrickstown was indeed practically levelled by the local landowner by this date (Conwell 1866, 1873), and it is conceivable that other passage tombs had been similarly dismantled on this summit before archaeological notice was taken of the complex.

The Loughcrew monuments consist of circular cairns ranging from 5-53m in diameter, generally bounded by a slab or boulder kerb. The orthostatic chambers are morphologically varied, with simple polygonal and cruciform plans alongside those with more complex internal divisions and side cells. One of the most striking aspects of the Loughcrew passage tombs is the occurrence of abstract 'decorative' motifs incised and pecked upon the chamber and passage orthostats, and in two cases on kerb stones. Fifteen of the cairns are known to possess decoration.

Of the three case studies discussed here, the Loughcrew passage tomb cemetery has received most attention in the recent literature, and the interweaving relationships among concepts of space, place and landscape, the movement of the human body, and architectural form have begun to be addressed with regard to Loughcrew specifically as well as to Irish megalithic traditions at a more general level. Julian Thomas (1990) advocates analysis of the Irish tombs founded on the partial, sequential experiences of monumentality obtained by the subject moving through three-dimensional space, on the routine encounters with the physical world which draw materiality into mental and verbal narratives by which human existence -- physical and intellectual -- may be interpreted. He sees developing complexities pertaining to the journey to the inner world of the tomb -- increasingly channelled movement, for example, or growing emphases on spatial divisions -- as a mode by which perceptions of symbolic ancestral resources could be manipulated, crucial as these were to the reproduction of communal authority. Thomas regards the decorative motifs on the stone surfaces as symbolic media by which 'approved' knowledges and interpretations might be made available to certain members of the community, perhaps as part of an extended, cumulative revelation (1992). This

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need not imply the maintenance of static, dominant ideologies, since the inherent ambiguity of these non-representational motifs allows for fluidity and multiplicity of meaning, and the 'insinuation' of particular interpretations as opposed to their imposition is rightly emphasized (Thomas 1992, 146; 154).

Thomas's analyses are concerned primarily with the tomb interiors, and as such relate to highly restricted encounters in terms of both movement and possible numbers of simultaneous participants in this particular ritual discourse. Concentration is largely upon individual experience within the monument, which may well be confined to a privileged few. Thomas does not more than glance at issues of public space, and discussion of movement out *from* the monuments, between and around them, is dealt with at only the most superficial level: he merely observes that the absence of complete intervisibility among the cairns of the Loughcrew complex may indicate intentions of sequential encounters of monumentality within prescribed patterns of movement (1992, 144-5).

As part of a wider discussion of the concept of the megalithic tomb 'cemetery', Gabriel Cooney does consider spatial ordering at Loughcrew in slightly greater detail (1990). Regarding the arrangement of monuments within cemetery groupings as a vital issue for study, Cooney examines the four major passage tomb complexes in Ireland -- the Boyne Valley, Carrowkeel, Carrowmore and Loughcrew -- claiming to identify repetitive spatial patterning among them which he sees indicative of non-random organizational evolution. Cooney concentrates mainly on patterns of cairn clusters within cemeteries, but also addresses questions of orientation and siting as they bear upon long-distance visibility and intervisibility.

There are two points to be raised here. First, the temporal and spatial evocation of place through the interaction of landscape, architecture and the human subject can never have been a random, 'haphazard' process. Monuments are not merely inserted into a physical locale as a transformation of space which imparts meaning to it and engenders a sense of place (*contra* Thomas 1993a), nor can their interpretive trajectories operate in isolation from their natural and artificial

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surroundings. Rather, the intellectual landscape of perception effectively draws monumental construction *to* a particular point in space in the context of a sentient landscape, a landscape already infused with meaning. The initial architectural modification of place will respond to the interpretive possibilities of this landscape, while opening up new avenues for and placing new restrictions upon interpretation. The threads of enablement and constraint will be continually reworked as the accretion of monumentality within megalithic cemeteries affords increasing thematic complexity. Recognition that the interrelation of architectural and natural form is the driving force behind these monumental complexes means detailed analysis of the specific physical aspects of individual locales becomes crucial.

This brings me to my second point. Cooney's failure to engage with specific landscape contexts in sufficient detail results in a series of largely meaningless paper comparisons which take little account of three-dimensional reality. He manages only to inhabit a landscape of inadequate graphic representation, the pseudo-objective, 'total and abstracted view' (Thomas 1990, 168) of cairn distribution plans robbed of any intimation of physical setting (for Loughcrew: Cooney 1990, Fig. 2). Specific strategies carried forward in particular locations cannot be adequately addressed in this way.

The themes I have touched on here with regard to these recent studies -- on the one hand, the focus on built form, particularly interiors, and the consequent concern with practices within the domain of a strictly limited group of individuals; on the other hand, analyses of cairn clusters conducted at a relatively abstract level -- can be found to run, in different permutations, through other writing with a social theoretical basis within Irish megalithic studies (e.g. McMann 1991, 1994; Sheridan 1986; Thomas 1993a). I would suggest that the methodological devices utilized within this literature may be usefully developed, but that to do so requires that we pull ourselves back into these locales, that we attempt to make of them landscapes of intense familiarity. This is an archaeology which respects both the direct gaze and the glance out of the corner of the eye, in which the interrelations of built and natural form are regarded from the point of view of the movement of

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the subject in spatial and temporal rhythms. Issues of frontspace and backspace, public and private space, and differential access and visibility may be drawn out to embrace not only architecture but the wider surroundings. Formalized routes of movement and access may be examined in greater detail, as can the way in which architectural elaboration alters defined spatialities over time, with implications for changing relationships among living, ancestral and mythical communities and landscapes. By an extremely localized, detailed analysis of the Loughcrew passage tomb complex in which monumentality is viewed from the perspective of a familiar landscape, and by encountering the dynamic interplay of architecture and landscape from the outside, as would the majority of members of past communities, we may perhaps arrive at a deeper understanding of the ways in which social strategies were drawn forward through materiality.

This shift of emphasis towards the *exterior* experience attempts to correct the imbalance of previous studies, in which not only has the public space connected to the monuments received little attention, but the importance of these larger-scale and probably more frequent communal encounters with the tombs has been underestimated. Different members of the community will engage with the monuments at different levels of intensity, and it is people's different modes of participation in formulae of speech, movement and action which will act as a means for the establishment and reproduction of various social knowledges and authorities. As Thomas has noted, different understandings will be evoked depending upon the access to different perspectives permitted to the individual, from activities around the cairns to penetration of the deepest parts of the chamber (1993b, 33). However, his emphasis on the final act of blocking the chamber and/or passage as privileging the frontspace of communal interaction with the tomb downplays the considerable significance this public forum will have sustained prior to such architectural modification (Thomas 1992, 155; 1993b, 34). Certainly a fundamental change in the nature of intercourse between living and spiritual communities is taking place here, a key issue which I shall return to examine in some detail. But the monuments' exterior space will always have been a primary

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focus for the legitimation of authority and knowledge claims -- and indeed for possible challenges to the existing order -- precisely *because* of its public nature.

The Loughcrew cemetery is a theatre for communal action involving, as does all theatrical experience, an element of risk. Entry into dialogue with ancestral forces, and greater powers beyond, can never have been taken lightly, since the continued wellbeing of the human group lies at its heart. Certain individuals will have carried responsibility for threading a path through a multitude of tensions, energies and vulnerabilities on behalf of the wider community, guiding the encounter of that living community with the 'other'. However, the role of the greater communal body will have been of crucial import, its physical presence reifying the consensus with which ancestral and mythical communities were approached. I would go so far as to suggest that where dramatic focal areas capable of accommodating large assemblies of people are integral to the monuments, as we have seen with the Clyde cairns on Arran and which I shall discuss with regard to Loughcrew, the presence of the communal body and its participation in group action around and among the monuments, as well as its validation of the more restricted, hidden activities of particular individuals, will have been deemed essential for the effective outcome of the ritual.

It is the necessity for structures of authority within these small-scale societies to be articulated in the public eye, their need to be underwritten by the public forum, which constitutes both their power and their fragility. On the one hand, individual responsibility for actions which will have ramifications for group welfare can be somewhat diffused under the guise of group decision. On the other, the consequences of such actions undertaken by or under the guidance of community representatives will be equally open to view, and the maintenance of authoritative position will be to a certain extent dependent upon public opinion. In addition, authority must take risks to be effective, in that it has to put forward knowledge claims which move beyond the communal experience, and yet submit to the judgement of the group as regards the actual outcome of these claims. The possibility for personal culpability therefore accompanies the status of authority

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(Povinelli 1993, 685).

It is in this context of dynamic tension holding in place the communal body, the metaphysical world and the individuals who mediate between them that we can regard the activities inside and outside the passage tombs. The secret knowledges upon which those in authority drew, and which may have been imparted to others gradually, over the long term, must have been *seen* to exist and to have practical effect -- thus the activities which took place in the public space outside the tombs underscored the validity of the mysteries enacted within. The distinction between those who could traverse the boundaries between front and backspace and those who were constrained to remain outside is of course crucial, but I think the contrast between active mediators and passive observers has been somewhat overdrawn (Barrett 1994b, 58). After all, the more generalized dialogue of the exterior encounter in effect underpins the discourse taking place in the hidden backspace, as the community places its life chances in the hands of chosen individuals; it *permits* them to act on its behalf through an act of faith.

The spatial relationships assumed by participants in ritual performance, and the implications for relations of power and knowledge among them which are both drawn from and pass through into everyday life, emerge from the metaphors of passage around which all rituals are based. One of the themes running through the preceding two chapters has been that sequences of bodily movement, directionality and positioning express fundamental statements about the world and the place of humanity within it, and that ritual entails both intellectual and physical journeys which can extend over considerable regions of time and space. The approved formulae of these journeys need not go uncontested, however, as groups or individuals may gradually alter spatial and temporal boundaries. Close examination of the specific landscape context of performative settings such as the Loughcrew cemetery will draw out some of the possibilities for movement and bodily disposition beyond the immediate confines of the architecture, as well as identifying potential changes over time. This in turn may permit us to say something about the way in which strategies of social negotiation operated through

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the material media of natural and constructed space.

Just as Thomas proposes the existence of complex, graded levels of access to the symbolic media within the passage tombs (1992), so too would I envisage highly prescribed routes of movement around the cairns on the four summits, hedged about by regulation and taboo and undertaken by various communities and solidarities only under strict guidance. The occurrence of decorative motifs on kerb stones of at least two of the Loughcrew tombs is not only the tangible expression of qualitative aspects of space and directionality, but also hints at exterior ritual performance carried out at different points around the perimeter of the cairns, rather than focusing solely on the liminal area of passage entrances.² On the larger scale, the complex interlinking of monuments and landscape features in terms of intervisibility, orientation and siting strongly suggests formalized movement between cairn clusters on each summit and among the summits themselves. It is at this scale that I wish to base my analysis; the resolution is of necessity coarse grained, but I would maintain that it moves us forward from the simple postulation of the existence of sequential encounters with the monuments to an understanding of how such engagements might have been encouraged or constrained by the interaction of landscape and architecture.

If, then, we consider the Loughcrew tombs in terms of foci around which ritual activities took place and among which occurred journeys on the physical and metaphysical plane, it becomes apparent that the open spaces *between* the cairns hold as much significance as the monuments themselves, each defining the other. The subject moves through a series of focal areas, the margins of which are defined by the coincidence of cairns with topographical boundaries within a regionalized landscape (Figs. 5.2 & 5.3). In many cases these boundaries are the summit margins, so that the individual, centrally placed within a focal area, is bounded by the silhouettes of cairn mounds rising up on the horizon on all sides. To attempt to understand some of the complexities of the time-space regionalization of this passage tomb cemetery it is necessary to immerse oneself in the landscape, to truly inhabit it. I want therefore to take a textual walk through

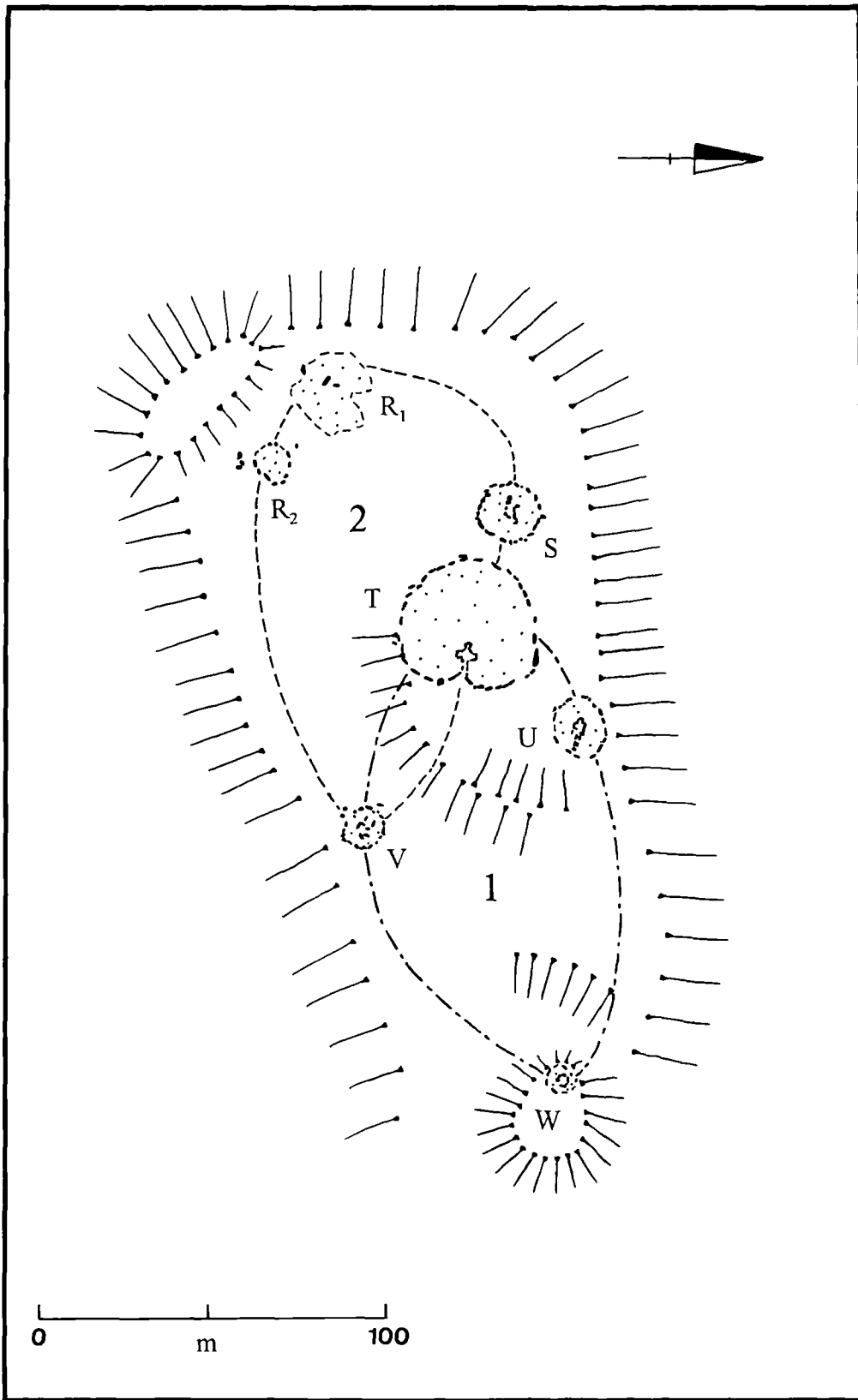


Figure 5.2 Focal areas 1-2, Carnbane East.

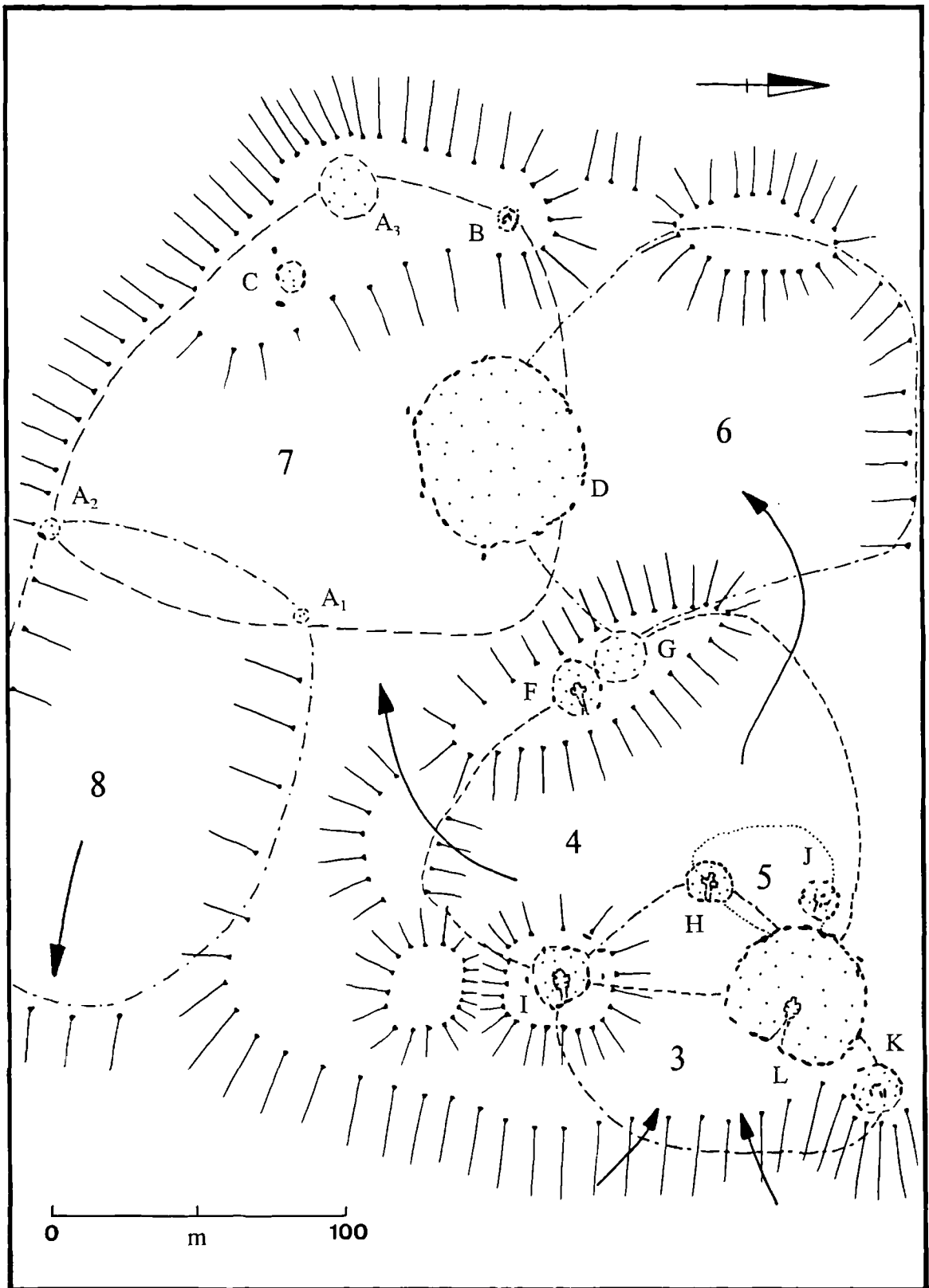


Figure 5.3 Focal areas 3-8. Carnbane West.

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the Loughcrew hills -- an essentially descriptive exercise -- and then to put forward some interpretive propositions for the inhabited landscapes of living, ancestral and mythical communities of the neolithic.

The temporal and spatial rhythms of life are structured by repetitive cycles of coming and going. On the purely physical level, for every inward passage there is an outward journey -- every spatial sequence can therefore be reversed. I have chosen to move through the Loughcrew landscape from east to west, a choice which is not entirely arbitrary. In textual terms it is the simplest direction in which to proceed, with regard to clarity and ease of communication. In aesthetic terms it is sympathetic to the dynamic interplay of monumentality, landscape and 'skyscape'. Travelling from east to west is by no means the only way to encounter the Loughcrew cemetery, but neither does it impose a false order upon it. The movement of the subject is linked to the repeated passage of the sun, which in turn may draw in greater seasonal cycles; sunlight would penetrate the chamber of Cairn T on Carnbane East, for example, just after sunrise at the vernal and autumnal equinoxes (McMann 1991, 83).³ And one need only once see the sun rise above Patrickstown and set below Carnbane West to appreciate the balance of the journey.

Although this journey begins in theory from Patrickstown, present conditions at this hill prevent my giving it more than a cursory glance. The summit is almost entirely covered in a dense plantation which stops just short of the three smaller cairns, one of which is represented by only two orthostats. The immense cairn at the highest point of the summit, Cairn Y, has been nearly quarried away and has actually been planted over. It is therefore impossible to assess the physical and visual relationship between Cairn Y and the cluster of small cairns.

A final point concerns the time depth of the cemetery. To move through the contemporary landscape from focal area to focal area is to describe the final spatial ordering of the tomb complex, which is likely to be the product of a long period of development and which has been subject to attrition through the

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succeeding millennia. Our chronological control over this process is still far from precise. Arthur ApSimon (1986) has proposed a time span for the construction of Irish passage tombs (as opposed to their use) which extends from *circa* 3400 to *circa* 2500 BC, while Alison Sheridan (1986) lengthens the period to cover the early fourth to mid second millennium. Sheridan proposes a series of phases of tomb construction in which the monuments increase in size and elaboration; the hazy chronological resolution of the sequence and the potential for overlap among the phases means that for Loughcrew, her model will only permit us to postulate development of the cemetery between *circa* 3600 and *circa* 2900 BC, with the majority of tombs being built during the first 550 years. At present no assessment can be made as to how rapidly the spatial configurations may have emerged within this considerable length of time (altogether the equivalent of nearly thirty generations).

For the purposes of this study, the essential point to note is Sheridan's placement of the most massive tombs near the end of the sequence (*contra* Herity 1974) -- for Loughcrew this takes in Cairn Y on Patrickstown, Cairn T on Carnbane East and Cairns D and L on Carnbane West. The most unequivocal support for this chronological succession is the stratigraphic evidence from Knowth, where the main mound has been found to postdate two of the smaller tombs (Eogan 1984, 195). I would see further validation of Sheridan's sequence at Loughcrew, in the spatial relationship between neighbouring Cairns J and L on Carnbane West. The orientation of the passage axis of the small Cairn J is towards the low rise of ground between Carnbane East and Newtown; this alignment is almost exactly replicated in Cairn L. However, the placement of the latter is such that it entirely blocks out the view from the entrance of Cairn J: the individual looks out on a blank wall of stone a mere 3m away. I would argue this to be a likely indication that the huge mass of Cairn L is a later construction than the smaller passage tomb.

Writing about landscape: a walk through the hills

From the rolling plain stretching eastward to the River Blackwater, Patrickstown hill obscures the rest of the Loughcrew range. The axis of the broad, flat-topped summit runs east-west, and although steep all round, the eastern and western slopes are more gentle than the extreme gradient of the northern and southern sides, and so may form the more likely routes of access. Three of the four largest cairns of the Loughcrew complex are clearly visible from considerable distances (up to 20km in some directions), and although the central cairn on Patrickstown is today only identifiable as a slight rise in the tree line, in its original state it too would have been a long-distance reference point (Fig. 5.4a). However, the central placement of the cairn on the level summit combines with the steepness of the approaches to prevent visibility of the monument from the rising ground of the peak itself. Coming up the eastern slope, the subject would only regain sight of the cairn very late on, upon attaining level ground at the top. The cairn mound would rise strongly against the sky from this perspective, a configuration which would be sustained for the duration of the approach to the tomb. The great mass of the cairn (present remains indicate a diameter of some 30m) would most likely mask much of the range of hills continuing to the west -- these would really only come into view as one moved round the monument into the western half of the summit.

From here, Carnbane East becomes the major focus. Newtown remains hidden, while Carnbane West is only partially visible, and then only from the northernmost part of Patrickstown hill. Cairn L is the only monument on Carnbane West likely to have been visible from the summit. In contrast, the way in which the eastern half of Carnbane East summit runs gradually down towards Patrickstown, before breaking abruptly into a steeper slope, lays open to view all of the passage tombs in Area 1, as well as one of the cairns in Area 2 (Fig. 5.2).⁴ Cairn T assumes a dominant aspect, centrally placed at the highest point of Carnbane East, its conical mass dark against the sky. Prior to its construction it may have been possible to see the mound of another cairn of the second focal area,

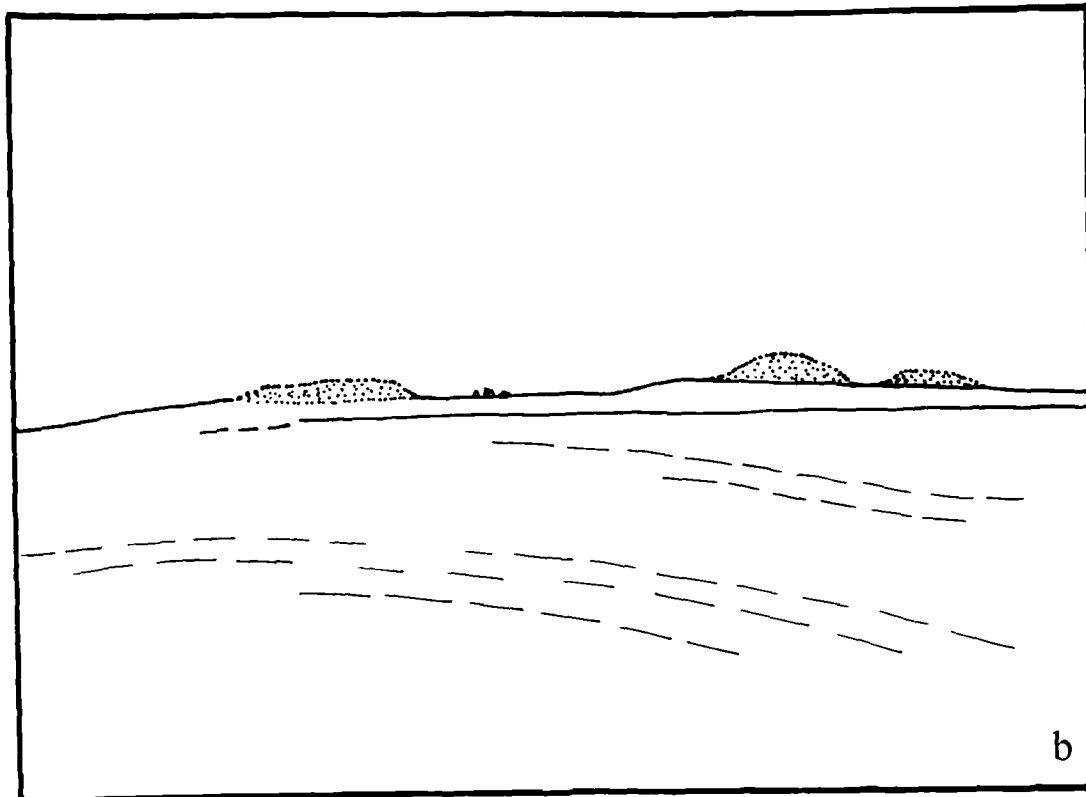
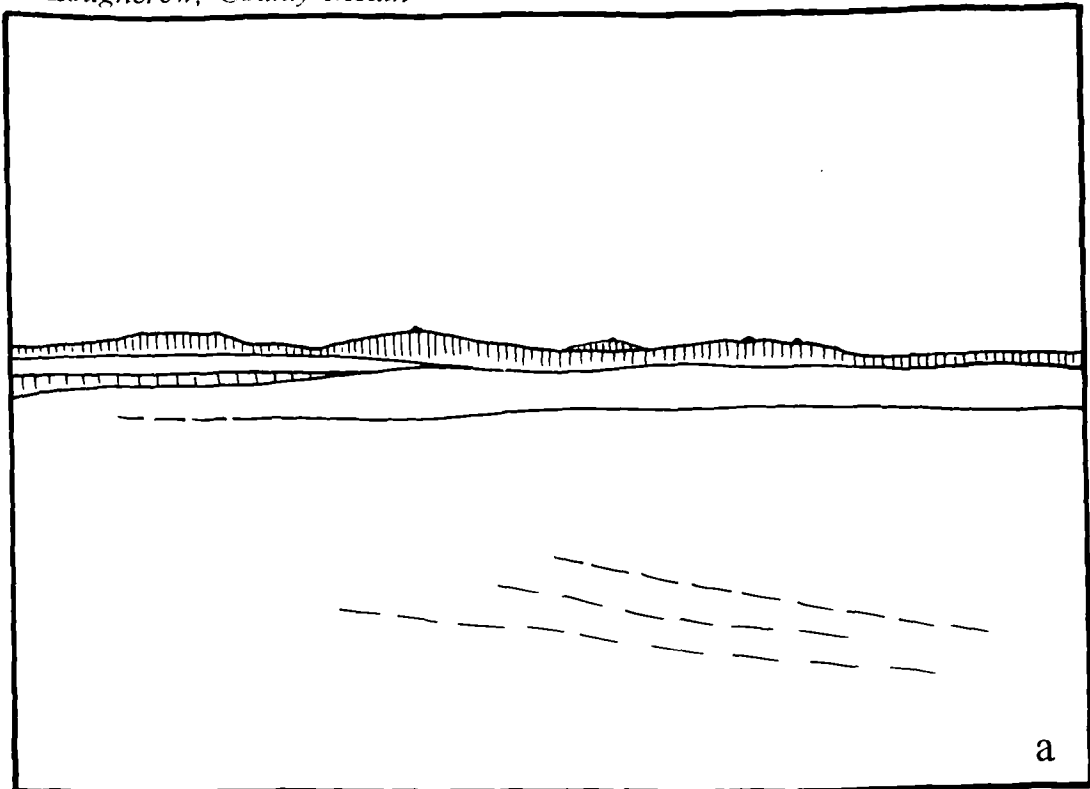


Figure 5.4 a: Looking SE to the Loughcrew hills from 3.5km distance. Left to right: Patrickstown, Carnbane East, Newtown, Carnbane West. b: Looking SW from the upper slopes of Carnbane East, up towards the cairns of Area 1. Left to right: Cairns W, V, T, U.

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again silhouetted against the sky; afterwards its stones would have become indistinguishable from those of the big central cairn at this distance.

Progressing further westward the individual begins to move away from level ground, coming to a group of three passage tombs just off the edge of Patrickstown summit (Cairns X_1 , X_2 , X_3). It may be that these monuments once formed part of the boundary circuit of a focal area like those on Carnbane East and West. On the other hand, the group may have stood as a separate, intermediate stopping point on a formal route of passage through the hills, just as the cairn cluster on the lower, western slopes of Carnbane East may have done (Cairns P_1 , P_2 , Q). Certainly, these two cairn groups are rather similarly placed in relation to their respective summits, not least in that there is no mutual visibility between them and the hilltop cairns which lie to their east, whereas the view to the west in both cases encompasses further components of the tomb complex.

Continuing downhill and to the west, the observer loses sight of the Carnbane East tombs approximately midway between the two hills. Progress is easy, since the land undulates downwards at a comparatively moderate gradient before beginning to rise again gradually. Eventually, however, the way is blocked by a rocky scarp which rises almost vertically towards Carnbane East. At this point one must skirt round to left or right in order to find an accessible upward route. Ascent is possible from northeast and southeast; both involve a hard climb but both are easier than the northern and southern approaches, neither of which can really be made without pause for rest. The northeastern approach might be the more likely in practical terms, in that it is a slightly more gradual, stepped ascent. Of course, it cannot be assumed that ease of access is the primary guiding principle behind patterns of formalized passage. Günther Schlee provides a nice illustration of the contraposition of ideal and practice in his study of the *Jila* pilgrimages of the Gabbra of northeast Africa which, as we have seen, both re-enact time sequences of the mythical past and inscribe these sequences into the landscape through the spatial fusion of landscape features and lineage histories (1992; see above p. 79). Schlee notes that the *Jila* journeys by no means take the shortest

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route between significant points, but that at the same time physical fatigue can result in deviation from the approved path. The elders responsible for directing communal movement disapprove of such shortcuts and attempt to enforce strict adherence to the 'customary' way, though not with unqualified success (Schlee 1992, 118-9).

The extreme gradient of Carnbane East prevents further sight of its cairns until a very late stage; ascending from any direction, the subject must be at least three quarters of the way to the top before the monuments appear. The approach from the northeast is typical in that when the top of the huge central cairn emerges on the horizon above, the rest of the summit cairns follow almost immediately. The transition between the limited field of vision of the ascent and the open vistas of the summit is thus a rapid one, as the subject finds him or herself drawn into the first focal area and encircled by cairn mounds which punctuate the skyline. Just like the central cairn on Patrickstown, Cairn T is a strong visual reference from the plains around Loughcrew and from much of the undulating ground among and below the hills themselves; once on the slopes of Carnbane East, however, the individual enters a liminal landscape of transformation before emerging at last into a landscape of which the greater part of the architectural component -- the six smaller cairns -- is unseen from the surrounding countryside. The contrast between exterior and interior worlds is marked: when the observer is within sight of the monuments yet still at the outer edges of the summit, not quite at level ground, he or she remains excluded from the main space of the focal area. The feeling of being on the periphery is heightened in the vicinity of individual tombs, as the mass of the cairn mounds conceals the interior space (Fig. 5.4b). The subject need not progress very far beyond the monuments into the central area of the summit for a sense of enclosure and of inclusion to be engendered, underlining the rapidity of the transition. As all of these smaller monuments stand on the skyline when approached from downslope, and rise in clear space when seen from within the focal area, breaking the distant horizon, their summit-edge position is obvious from both within and without the hilltop locale.

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At the northeastern limit of the summit, at Cairn W, the subject is somewhat removed from the other cairns of the focal area. However, the emphatic visual boundary of their profiles against an otherwise uninterrupted western skyline links the cairn unequivocally to these monuments and to the substantial stretch of ground across which they are opposed (Fig. 5.5a). Reference may also be made from here to the Loughcrew complex in a wider sense, as not only does Patrickstown assume a prominent aspect from around Cairn W, interrupting the long-distance panorama in the eastern half of the compass, but, when intact, the monuments upon it would be easily identifiable (Fig. 5.5b). At the opposite end of the scale, Cairn W seems to overlook a smaller locale which centres on a level area of about 20m², and which is roughly defined by a strong local horizon where the land breaks sharply downward to the east and southeast, a skyline to the southwest, and another break of slope up to the northwest. The existence of a visually and/or physically bounded area of ground of moderate gradient over which the passage tomb exerts particular influence is common to all of the cairns delimiting Area 1 and is specific to them -- on Carnbane West, for example, quite different conjunctions of entrance orientation and features of the terrain can be found (see below pp. 258 ff.).

Leaving Cairn W, the subject moves westward into the heart of the focal area. The physical character of the hilltop is capitalized upon architecturally to create a sense of being held within a clearly defined area: the sharp transition from steep hillside to broad, gently undulating summit in itself gives the impression of being removed from the wider world in this airy locale, an impression which is heightened by the placement of the smaller passage tombs so as to appear precisely upon this boundary from the interior, even if in reality they sit several metres in from it. Cairn T straddles the interface between the table-like western part of the summit and the sloping eastern half, again enhancing a pre-existing natural transition or boundary. Certainly, even without the huge mass of this central cairn, nothing would be visible beyond the horizon formed by this shift of gradient until one was almost upon it.

Cairn V sits approximately 50m east of this transitional point. The passage

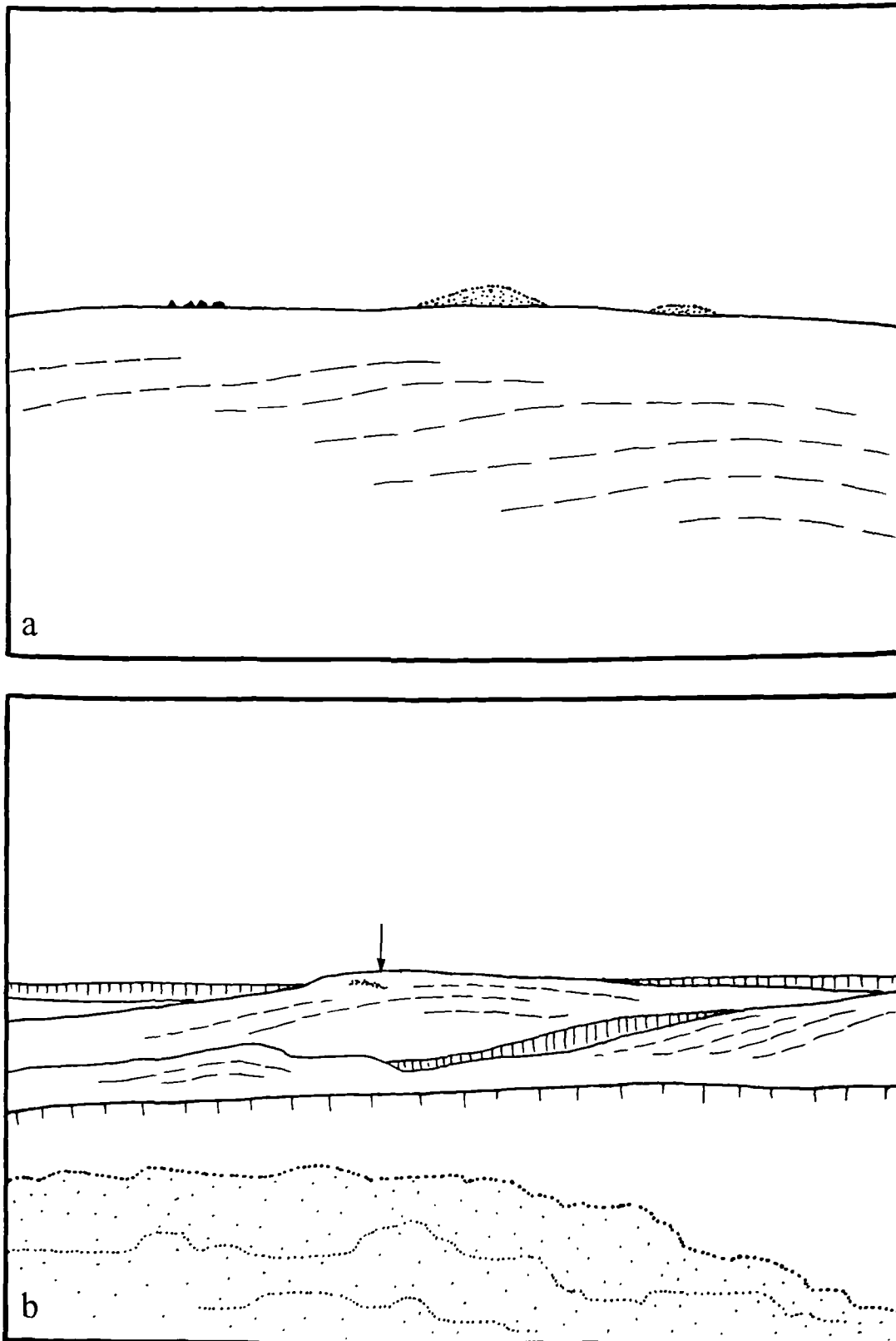


Figure 5.5 a. Looking W from the passage entrance at Cairn W, across Area 1. Left to right: Cairns V, T, U. b: View of Patrickstown from Cairn W. Remains of Cairns X₁, X₂ and X₃ visible just below summit; arrow marks position of Cairn Y.

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entrance appears to have opened to the west northwest, onto a small expanse of relatively level ground, which at about 13m begins to rise towards the central cairn on the horizon. At this distance, the latter is a dominating and massive visual barrier, a barrier which is continued round to the observer's right (northwest) in the mound of another, smaller cairn. To the left (west) the viewer looks along the length of the summit into Area 2, with cairn mounds visible at its western limit, once more against the sky. The rather overwhelming character of the massive central cairn tends to downplay this intervisibility of monuments in different focal areas; prior to its construction the transition between the two loci may not have been quite so clear cut.

Nearly 50m to the northwest is Cairn U, again at the periphery of the summit, with the ground running down and away from the monument on its western, northern and eastern sides. The entrance opens to the east southeast onto very slightly rising ground which breaks sharply at about 20m, forming a local horizon beyond which the flat plains stretch away into the distance. From here, Cairns T and V are very substantial mounds which create a strong atmosphere of enclosure; the individual is placed firmly within an architecturally bounded area, the 'natural' focus of which is Patrickstown hill. In order to see anything to the west it is necessary to move out beyond the cairn to the north and west, out of the focal area towards the actual summit edge. Cairn S then comes into view, bounding the next focal area, although the continuing westward rise of the hilltop masks much of its mass; beyond this the top of Carnbane West just emerges above the local horizon (Fig. 5.6a).

It is clear that the disposition of the smaller cairns on Carnbane East respects its natural bipartite division, whereas the placement and sheer size of the central Cairn T in a sense exploit this regionalization in that attention is drawn to the spatial interface. Rather than a matter of gradually changing perspective guided primarily by the features of the natural terrain, the construction of this vast cairn means that movement in time and space between the two regions becomes an architectonic event, as visual and physical experience are both governed and

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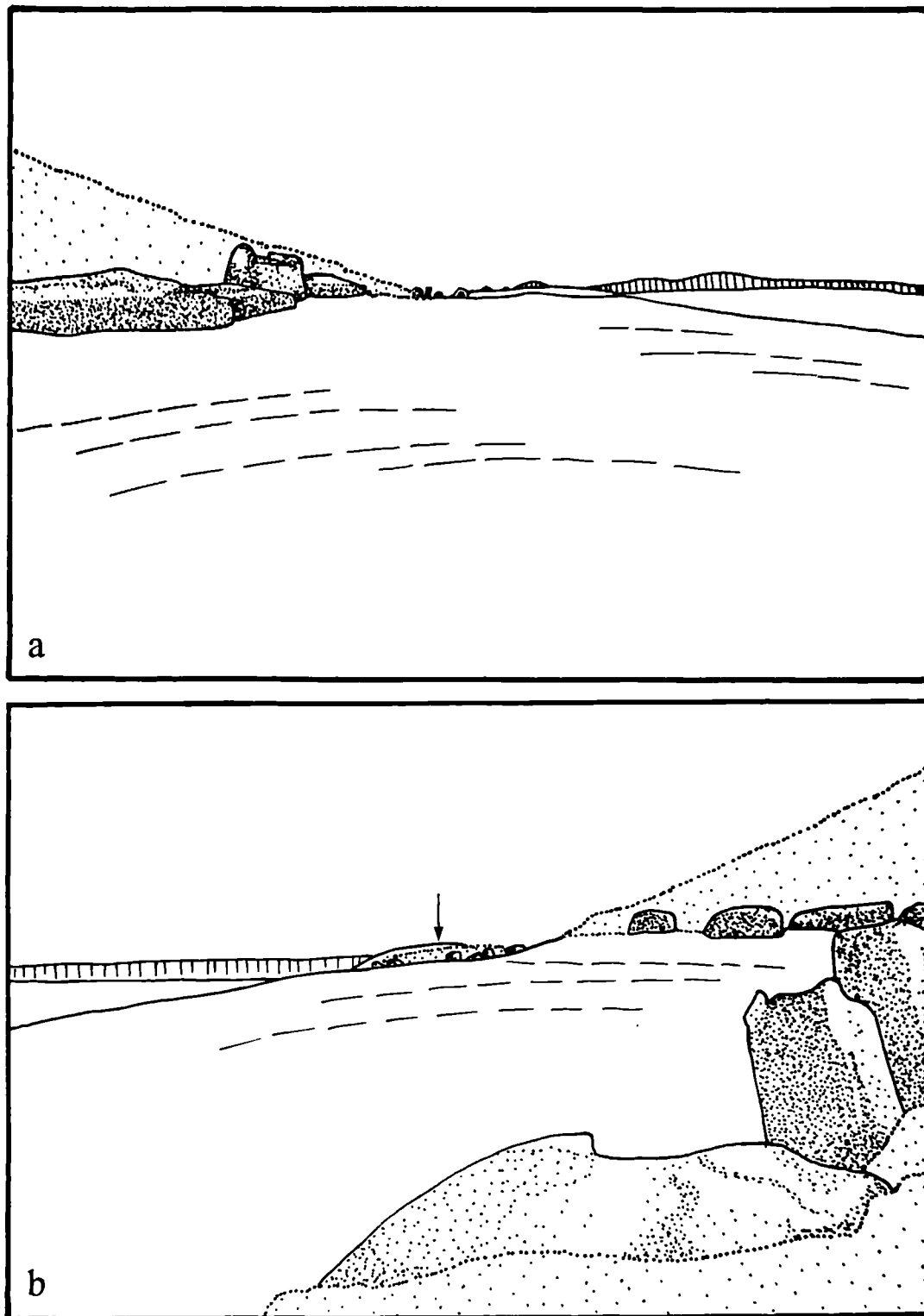


Figure 5.6 a: Looking W from just beyond Cairn W. Left to right: Cairn T with decorated kerbstone, the 'Hag's Chair'; kerbstones of Cairn S; Carnbane West. b: Looking E from kerb of Cairn S (visible in foreground) to Cairn U, with Patrickstown summit just visible beyond. Cairn T at right; arrow marks position of Cairn Y.

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limited by architectural form. Visually, gradual revelation becomes sudden transformation, while here:there and either:or replace 'somewhere in between'. Physically, the subject must now negotiate a tract of land in which the available level surface area is substantially occupied, and the nature of movement between the two halves of the summit is therefore restricted.

On the north-south axis, the placement of the big cairn seeks the highest point of the summit, resulting in a very narrow passage between the cairn perimeter and the break of slope on the north side, as opposed to the more generous, level expanse which bounds the monument to the south. With regard to the east-west axis, the monument not only sits over the broad shift in gradient discussed above, but is placed so as to provide a fairly level area of ground around the east southeast facing entrance, which stretches eastward for about 25m before breaking downwards. From the entrance, then, the subject looks out over flat plains on either side of the distinctive, flat-topped profile of Patrickstown, all of which is seen beyond a sharply defined local horizon stretching round from Cairn U in the northeast to the southeast, and beyond the summit edge to the south. The tomb passage is aligned almost east-west, curving slightly southwards as it nears the entrance. The passage is therefore oriented towards Patrickstown, whereas if one stands looking out from the entrance, directly ahead are the plains of Meath, with Cairn V just a shade to the right of the entrance alignment. Cairn W is the only tomb of Area 1 not visible from here; it comes into view 4m out from the entrance, marking the eastern visual limit of Carnbane East.

The area of level ground in front of the central cairn is relatively small in comparison to the size of the monument, so that from within it the observer is completely dominated by architectural form. This atmosphere is heightened by the fact that much of the nearer landscape is obscured -- to the north by further monumentality, to the south by the level ground extending roughly 100m to the summit edge.

Leaving this strongly bounded locale to move into the western half of the summit, the subject must skirt round the kerb of Cairn T to the north or south, the

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character of each route being markedly different. The latter takes the subject over a fairly broad, uniform stretch of ground, with two cairns directly ahead tending to draw the individual forward. To the right the wall-like bulk of the big cairn eventually recedes as the subject moves into the focal area proper; once on a level with the western sector of the kerb, Carnbane West comes into view, with Patrickstown remaining visible only from the southern half of the summit. The northern route into Area 2 involves a much more sudden transition. Held in the narrow space between the central cairn and the edge of the plateau, the subject aims towards Carnbane West on the horizon (Fig. 5.6a) while behind, Patrickstown is gradually masked by the monumental bounding of Area 1 -- or would have done when the latter was completely intact (Fig. 5.6b). Passing the incised surface of the 'Hag's Chair', Cairn T's only decorated kerbstone, the individual is confronted by the substantial mass of the first cairn of Area 2, Cairn S, while almost immediately afterward the field of vision opens right up as the rest of the tombs poised around the periphery of the level, open expanse of the focal area are revealed. On this journey between focal areas, the heavy architectural mass of the central cairn and the mounds before and behind the subject interacts with the limited surface area and the extreme proximity and abrupt nature of the summit edge to create an intensely marginal, exterior landscape, which contrasts strongly with the interior landscapes of the focal 'enclosures' which mark the beginning and end of the individual's passage.

Rather than facing onto the central space of its focal area (*circa* 50m²), the entrance of Cairn S looks west northwest, over the edge of Carnbane East in the foreground, towards Carnbane West and, beyond, to the only other substantial group of hills apart from Loughcrew itself to rise from the softly undulating plain. Reference is just possible to the cairn on Newtown, at the far left of the field of vision. From the entrance, the edge of the summit is very close: the ground drops away a mere 20m to the north, and 5m further away to the northwest. The monument thus maintains an imposing presence, as the viewer can never get very far away from it. Facing the entrance, the mass of the tomb blocks out the rest of

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the summit, to the observer's left Cairn U prevents sight of any further landscape, while on the right hand side the flat expanse of Area 2 ends in a close, final horizon, interrupted only by two cairn mounds at its westernmost extremity.

These latter demonstrate the way in which some of the Loughcrew monuments occupy a primarily visual periphery, not a strictly physical one. So, for example, although from within the circumscribed area of Area 2 Cairn R₂ appears to sit right at the summit margin, even when the observer is very near to it, in reality it is 30m in from the southwestern edge and somewhat deeper in from the break of slope to the south (Fig. 5.7a). It is not possible to ascertain the original alignment of the chambers and passages of either R₁ or R₂; looking out from them towards the central space, one is bounded very strongly by the skyline profiles of the other Area 2 cairns. To the east, Cairn V in Area 1 rises at some remove on a local horizon, behind which the outline of Patrickstown forms another mound against the sky. Cairn V is thus in a sense drawn into the focus of Area 2, while its reflection in architectural form of the natural contours beyond encourages reference to the greater whole (Fig. 5.7b). To the west, the cairns on Newtown and Carnbane West are prominent in the landscape; in addition, it is just possible to see another cairn (as well as the standing stone 14m east of its kerb) from the western perimeter of cairn R₁, appearing on a local horizon in the rolling ground between Carnbane East and Newtown (Fig. 5.8a). These interwoven associations of landscape and locale, of built form and landform, and of larger entities and constituents, recur at a series of changing scales throughout the Loughcrew complex, holding the subject in a web of forward, back and cross-referencing. Meaning inheres not in the individual's present itself, in terms of time, place and action, but in the relationship of this present to past activity and future intention, which at Loughcrew finds overt visual expression.

The descent from Carnbane East is extremely steep to the north and south, with a steady gradient maintained right down to the bottom where the ground levels off abruptly. To the southwest, however, after dropping swiftly from the summit, the slope begins to ease off into a series of terraces which work their way

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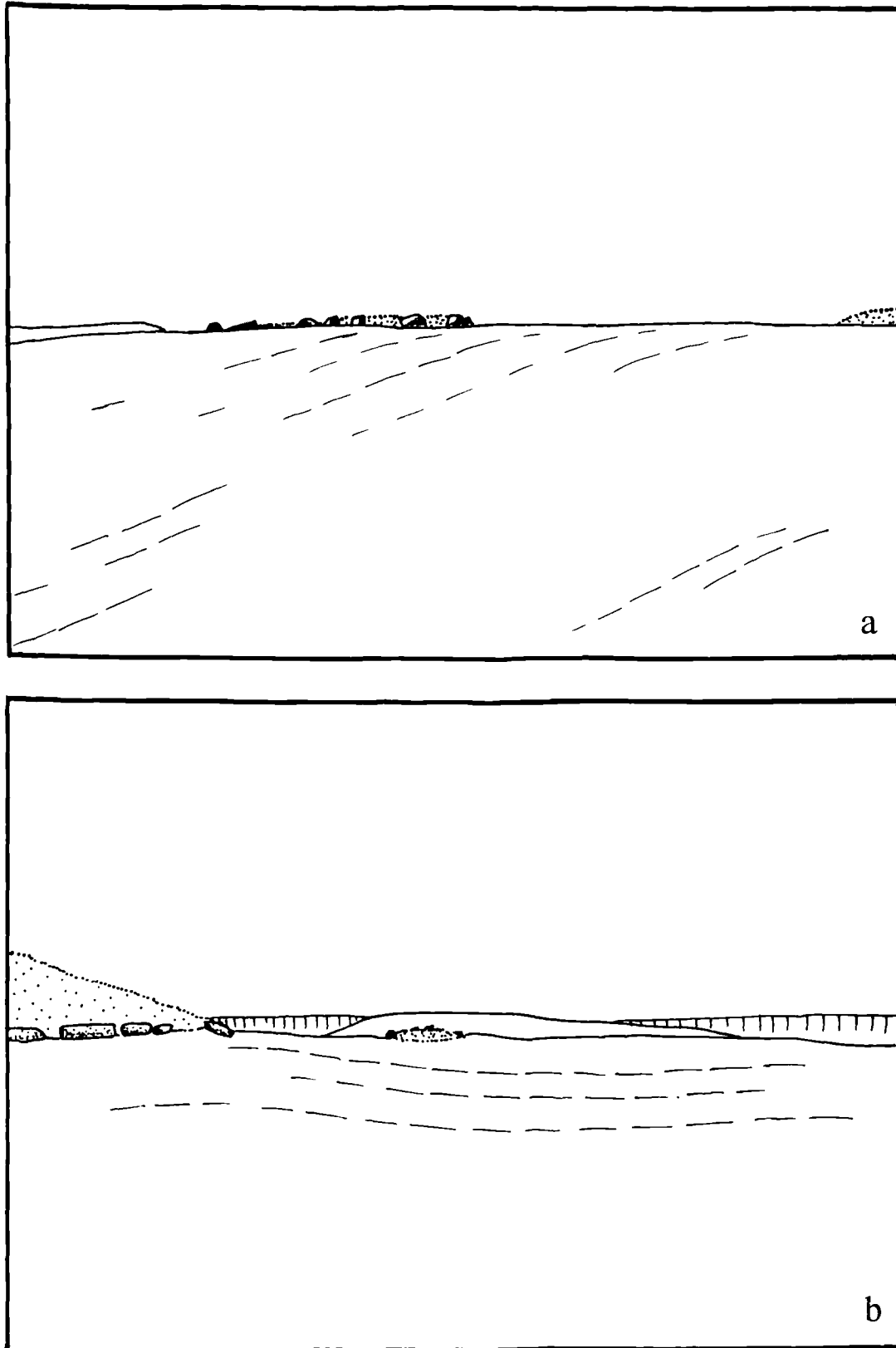


Figure 5.7 a: View of Cairn R₂ from within Area 2, 300m from the kerb. Cairn R₁ just visible at right. b: Looking E to Cairn V and Patrickstown from Cairn R₂. Cairn T at left.

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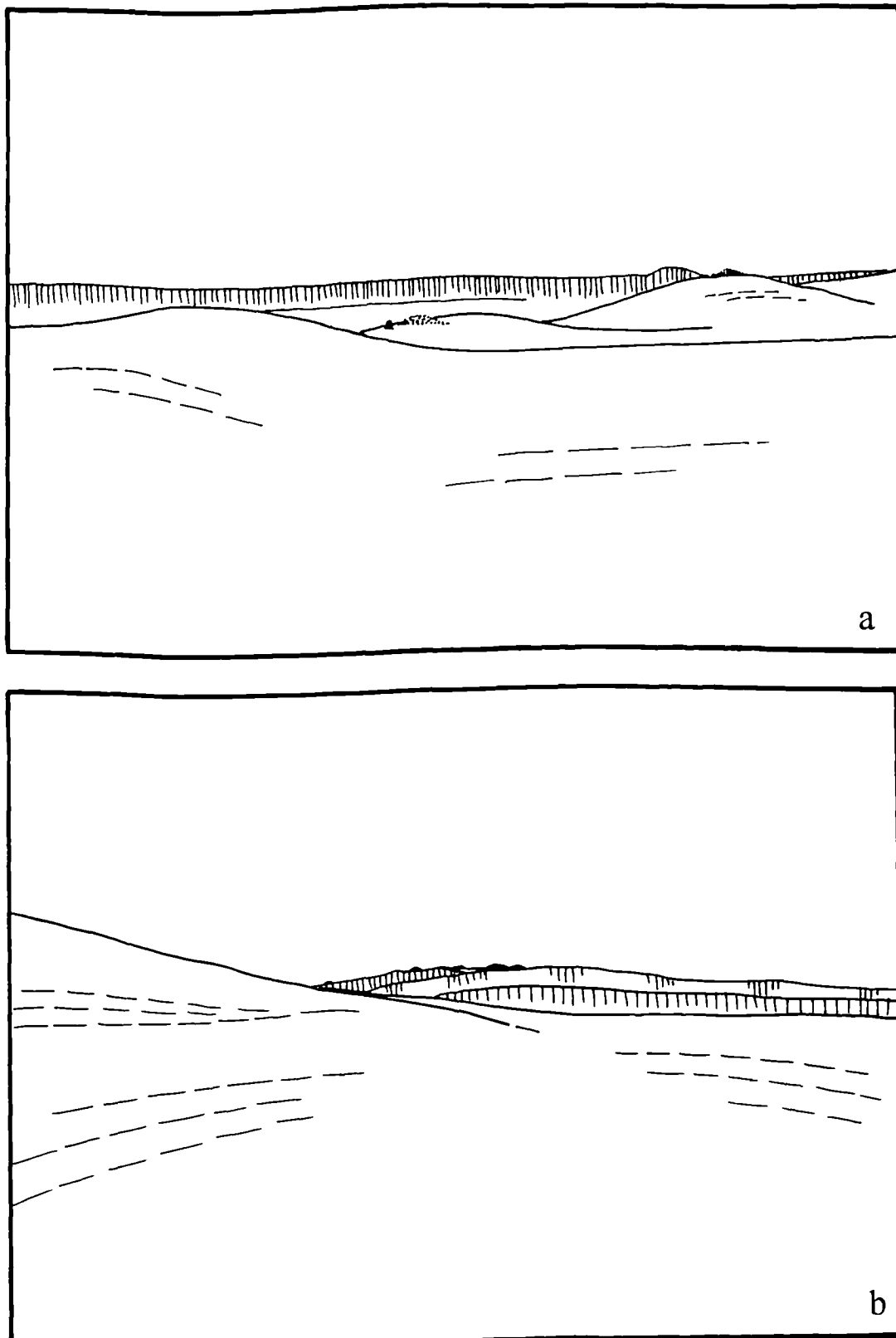


Figure 5.8 a. Looking SW from Cairn R₁, to Cairn N and standing stone on low rise at centre. Newtown rises at right. b: Looking towards Carnbane West, from just W of Cairn O. Newtown rises at left.

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down more gradually to the foot of the hills. And it is in precisely this direction that the subject encounters a further group of possible passage tombs falling one after the other in quick succession on the downward journey. From here the western peaks of the Loughcrew range stretch out in front of the observer, while 150m to the southwest the conspicuous mound of Cairn N sits on the crest of a low rise, an obvious focus for continued movement. Arriving at this monument and looking back to Carnbane East, Cairn R₁ and possibly the top of the central cairn just emerge on the skyline above.

From here the individual moves westward, drawn towards the hilltop cairns on Newtown and Carnbane West. The latter are lost to view again as one moves into more strongly undulating ground east of Newtown. In fact, the subject loses contact with a large proportion of the cemetery at this point, as Patrickstown is hidden behind Carnbane East, the summit cairns of which are in turn invisible. It is in this regard that the atypical placement of the next monument the subject encounters becomes significant. The only passage tomb of the complex to sit right down in the low-lying ground at the foot of the hills, Cairn O inscribes monumentality into a locale physically central among yet perceptually divorced from the constituent elements of the range as a whole. This cairn is situated at a deeply transitional phase in passage through the Loughcrew landscape, since immediately to the west, only a few paces from its kerb, the cairns of Carnbane West re-emerge into the field of vision (Fig. 5.8b). Interestingly, a ring-ditched barrow lies 50m west southwest of the passage tomb; although bearing in mind the ephemeral nature of small barrows and cists in an at one time intensively cultivated landscape, this is an exception to the general tendency, in later monument construction, to avoid the immediate environs of the Loughcrew hills (Fig. 5.1).⁵

Continuing to progress westward, the individual moves into a long, gently rolling stretch of ground bounded to the south by Newtown, to the east and west by Carnbane East and West, and to the north by a break of slope, beyond and below which stretch much more level fields. The crescent of the three hills situates the subject within a deep bowl, around the margins of which a whole series of

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cairn mounds stand silhouetted against the sky: T and N behind, M to the observer's left, and, directly ahead, A₂, I, F, G, H, L and K. This is the focal area writ large. The intrinsic enclosed nature of this 'interior' landscape is enhanced by the architectural embellishment of its periphery. As with the smaller cairns of the two focal areas at the top of Carnbane East, from this interior perspective the cairns draw upon innate qualities of the landscape rather than imposing new patterns upon it.

The climb up Newtown is a hard one. As at Carnbane East it is easiest to adopt a slightly spiralling route upwards. From the top, the bowl-like character of the western part of Loughcrew is clearly apparent, with cairns ranged around the deep central space from east northeast to west northwest. In view of the fact that the entrances of Cairns H, J and L on Carnbane West are oriented towards Newtown summit and the ground stretching eastward from it to Cairn N, it is unfortunate that the ruinous state of both M and N make assessment of their possible passage/entrance alignments impossible.

Avoiding the craggy southern slope with its sheer rock faces, the subject travels downhill once more, down the northwestern side of Newtown hill. Once back in the undulating base of the bowl, the individual is close to the even rise of Carnbane West itself; only its three easternmost monuments are visible above, prominent against the wide expanse of sky. (If one does not climb up to the cairn on Newtown but walks toward Carnbane West more directly, the transitions occur much more by degrees. The long, undulating field at the foot of Newtown and Carnbane West rises gently westward in a series of steps, while the farther cairns of Carnbane West gradually sink beneath the summit horizon and the three nearest monuments become the dominant architectural focus.) The visible natural and artificial features of the summit appear symmetrically arranged from here: an open space in the centre is flanked by large knolls to the left, on one of which perches a passage tomb, and to the right by an architectural mirror image formed by the huge mass of Cairn L and a smaller monument next to it on another knoll. The subject focuses upon this central, clear space framed by rising natural and built form, an

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unambiguous entryway to this western element of the passage tomb complex (Fig. 5.9a). Due to the extreme gradient the cairns and knolls disappear completely from the foot of Carnbane West proper to about midway up its eastern slope; when they re-emerge their mass on either side of the individual effectively directs movement towards and through this entrance.

Carnbane West is of a markedly different character to its companions in that a number of hillocks or knolls divide up the hilltop, creating areas of ground which are mutually screened from each other by the high, near horizons formed by these natural undulations. The major physical boundary is a rocky ridge running northwest-southeast which effectively partitions the summit into two halves -- a substantial visual barrier enhanced by the placement of two cairns upon it. From the eastern half this ridge prevents sight of Cairns A₁, A₂, A₃, B, C and D, while from the west it obscures H, J, K and L (I is hidden from here as well, by another rocky outcrop). This twofold division can be broken down further into a number of smaller focal areas, characterized as at Carnbane East by clear spaces whose limits are defined by a combination of topographical features and built form. The channelled movement towards the entrance to the summit which I have been describing does in fact bring the subject into one of these locales, Area 3 (Fig. 5.3).

Having come up the steepest part of the eastern slope of Carnbane West and regained sight of the three easternmost cairns, the subject moves onto a broad, even slope of much more moderate gradient. At this point Cairn H appears directly ahead on the horizon, framed in the entryway. These four cairns and the eastern break of slope define the limits of the entryway, Area 3, while in the distance the mounds of the cairns on the central ridge complete the architectural crescent and intensify the strongly enclosed sense of place. The tomb entrances all open out towards the observer, as they are oriented towards the other Loughcrew peaks; this also heightens the impression of being centrally placed within a defined, focused locale which operates literally as a monumental gateway. So too does the contrast between the closely curtailed view into the focal area, with its concentrated *monumentality*, and the *extensive vista* of the exterior landscape: turning to look

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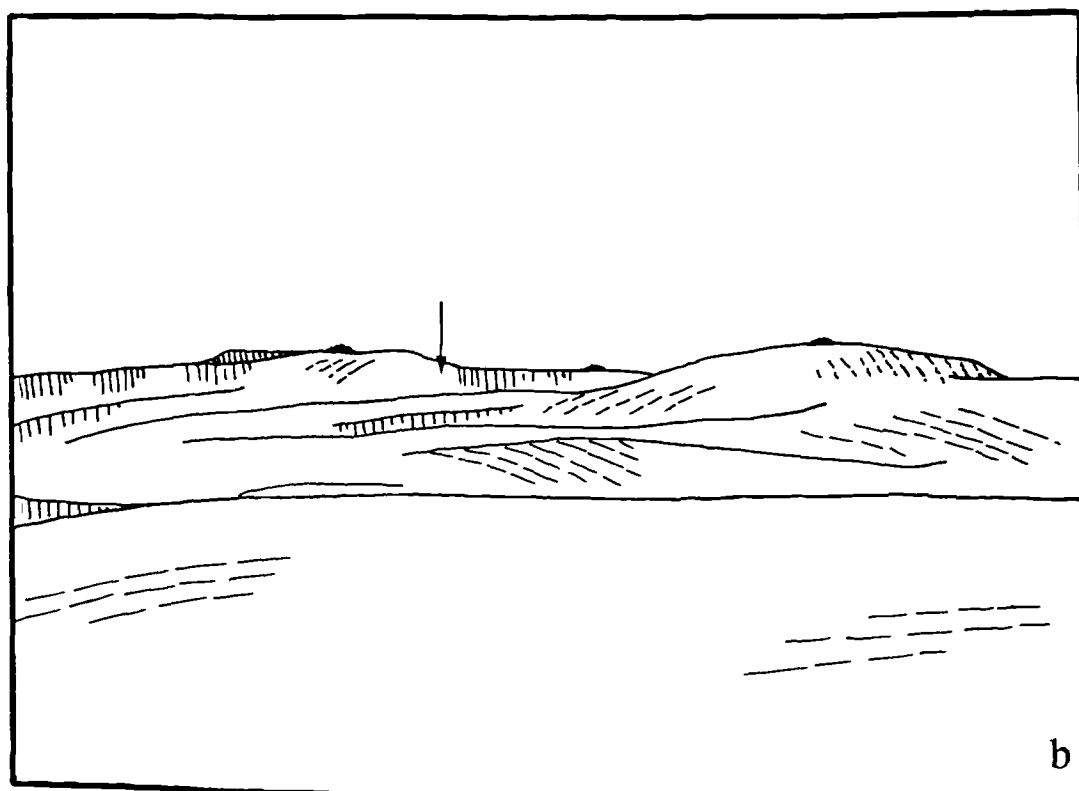
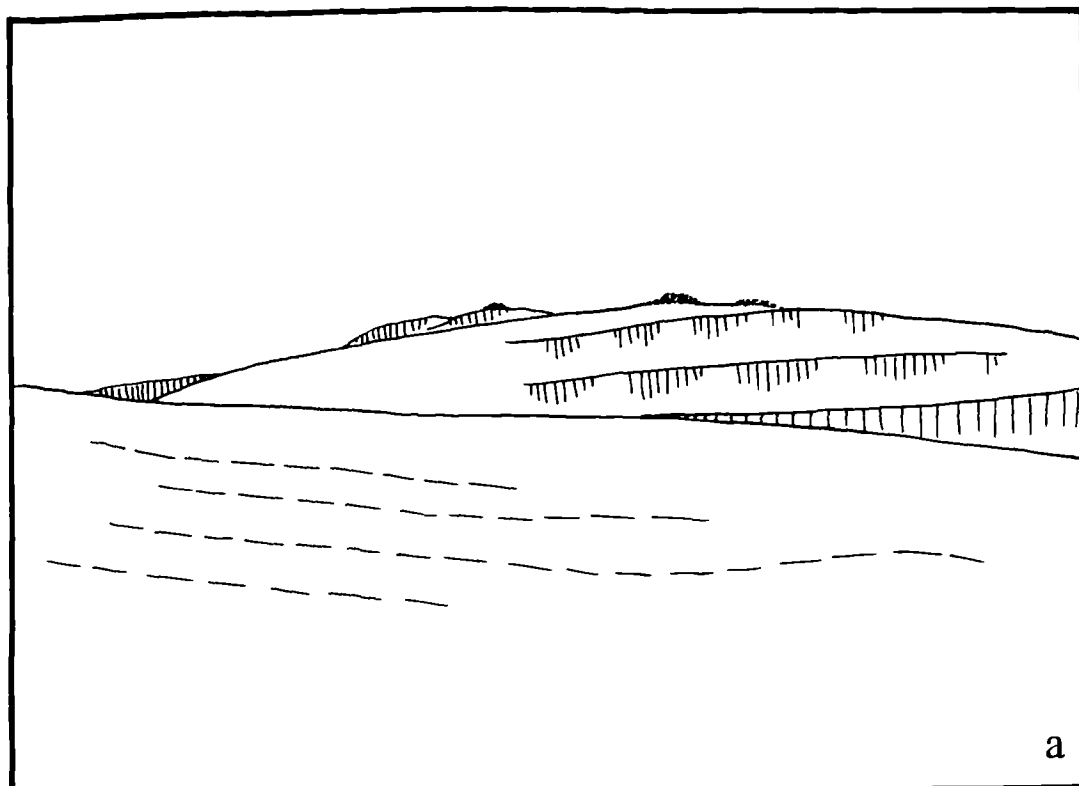


Figure 59 a: Looking up to the 'monumental entryway' at Carnbane West. Left to right: Cairns I, L, K. b: Looking E from Area 3, over the rest of the Loughcrew range. Arrow marks position of cairn cluster on the flank of Carnbane East.

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back, the viewer sees the entire Loughcrew range stretched out before him or her (Fig. 5.9b). Patrickstown is visible behind the broad summit of Carnbane East, as are the two largest cairns atop them. The cairn on Newtown hill is an obvious feature, and because it is much closer it appears to be the same size as its considerably larger counterpart Cairn T. Cairn N stands against the sky, from this perspective centrally placed on a minor rise between the larger hills. To its left, the cluster of cairns on the western flank of Carnbane East can also be picked out.

Cairn K is the most northerly of the third focal area, constructed on a rocky outcrop that juts out from the northeastern edge of the summit. The ground drops away sharply on the north, east and south sides -- the monument has been built right out to the limits of the knoll, so that much of the kerb has gradually slipped over the edge. From south through west and round to north again the ground rises marginally and then levels out into a broad, flat expanse. Cairn L blocks out this entire prospect; before its construction the viewer would have looked across from the western sector of the kerb of Cairn K to smaller tombs ranged around a large open space.

The cairn has been extensively quarried, making assessment of chamber and passage alignment difficult. The tomb entrance would seem to have opened out in an easterly or east southeasterly direction, so that the individual facing out from the passage entrance would be looking towards Carnbane East and Newtown. This orientation means that the entrance would not give onto a level area but essentially onto open air, as the ground drops very sharply for some way before joining the more gentle slope of Carnbane West's eastern face. This configuration differs from the disposition of monuments we have seen on Carnbane East and has interesting implications for access and assembly. As regards those tombs with roughly identifiable passage/chamber orientations, considerable numbers of people could have gathered around the tomb entrances on Carnbane East, even at Cairn S, and entry could be effected without difficulty. Here, however, groups of people would have to remain on the gentle slope below the tomb if a view of the passage opening was desired. From this perspective the monument would maintain an

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imposing presence -- today this can be appreciated from the north, as the mound of the cairn, rising from an elegant ring of long, thin, evenly matched kerb stones, adds height to the profile of the rocky knoll in seemingly organic fashion (Fig. 5.10a). Additionally, entry would involve a degree of physical effort, particularly if the ritual required the carrying of objects in and out of the chamber. If, on the other hand, assembly was behind the monument in the level ground now largely occupied by Cairn L, or in the central space of Area 3, any ceremonies carried on around the entrance would remain out of sight of the wider community, as would the moment of penetration and re-emergence. Audible aspects of the ritual may have been the only linking medium at this point, if any existed at all.

Only 8m of ground lie between the kerbs of Cairns K and L. With regard to the latter, an enormous passage tomb, the passage is on a slightly more easterly alignment than the tomb entrance, just as at Cairn T; thus, while the passage is oriented towards the intersection of Cairn N's rise and Newtown hill, the entrance looks directly onto Newtown and its cairn (Fig. 5.10b). A view of the flat plains stretching into the distance is framed between the rise of Newtown and that of Cairn I's knoll, which in turn curtails the view farther round to the southwest. The frontspace of this enormous cairn therefore refers to other elements of the Loughcrew complex and the world beyond, rather than inwards towards the natural and architectural fabric of Carnbane West itself. The outward focus extends to Area 3 as a whole, partly as a result of the placement of the monument's massive bulk. While not creating the entry locale, the construction of Cairn L introduces a stronger element of separation from the rest of the eastern half of the hilltop, in that it blocks out a good deal of the view into the interior and narrows the access route considerably. Whereas previously the subject would find themselves moving quite abruptly from the exterior landscape into the inner world of Carnbane West, now he or she is guided through a more drawn-out, staged process of transition.

Cairn I opposes the big cairn across the entryway to Carnbane West. The ground drops away sharply from the monument from northwest through east to south southeast so that the tomb sits a good distance above the entry area; in the

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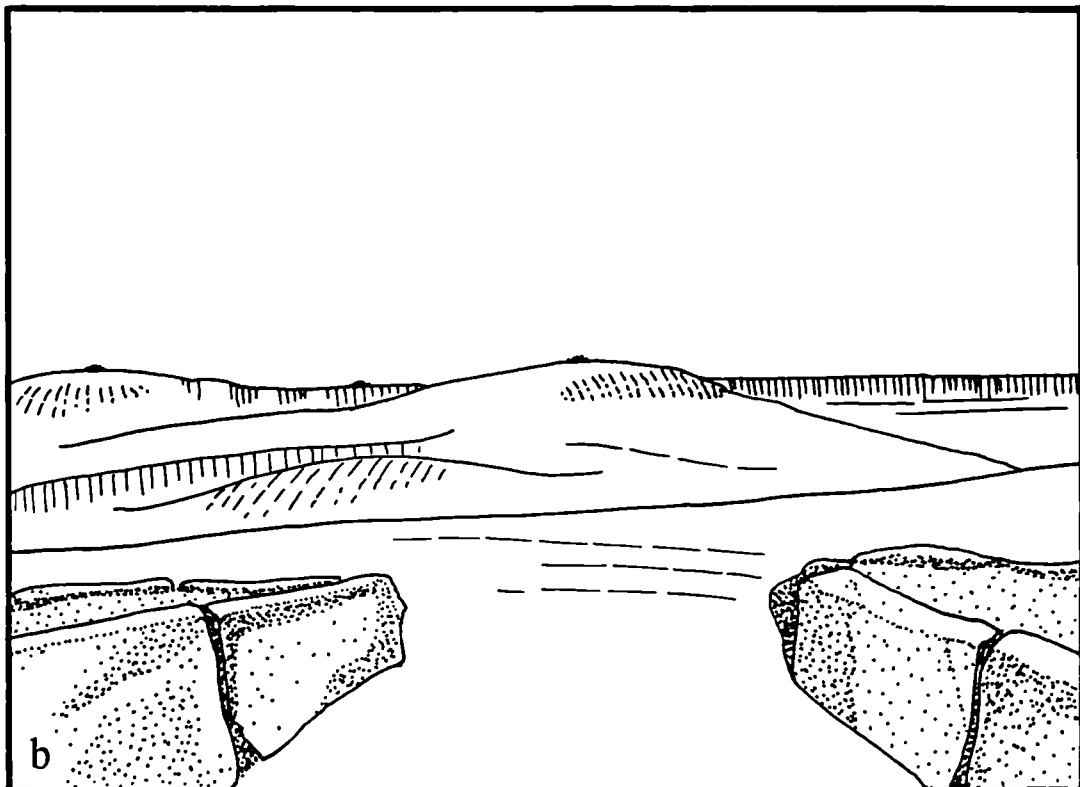
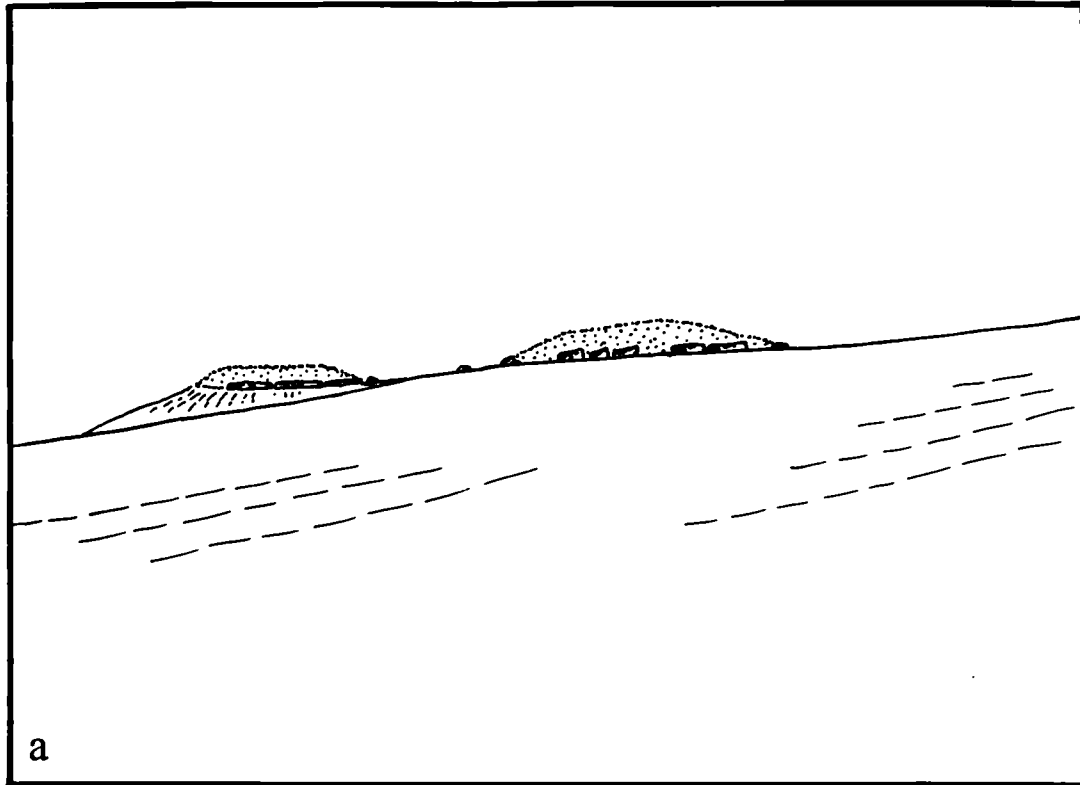


Figure 5.10 a: Looking towards Cairns K (left) and L from the N. b: View of Newtown from the passage entrance at Cairn L.

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other directions the land extends down and away from the kerb at a much more gentle gradient, towards the focal space of Area 4, the other boundaries of which include a knoll just to the south, and the central ridge. Since the chamber and passage are aligned east northeast to Carnbane East and Patrickstown, the tomb entrance opens onto a steep downward slope. As at Cairn K, group ritual cannot take place around the entrance but must remain at some remove from it in Areas 3 or 4. It is in fact easier to approach the entrance from the latter locale, working round from the western sector of the kerb to the opening. Such an entry, visually divorced from proceedings in the summit interior, stands in radical opposition to activity watched by an assembly of people in Area 3. Here, not only the moment of entry but the entire precipitous approach is open to view. Individual action may in this case attract greater attention, contemplation and judgement.

Like the other tombs fringing Area 3, from the eastern side of the cairn the focus is clearly projected outward. Approaching the entrance, the gradient is strong enough to prevent any view of the summit interior beyond the cairn mound. In contrast to this severely curtailed prospect, the tomb overlooks the rolling lands of Cavan, Meath and Westmeath in the northeast, southeast and south, the deep bowl formed by the Loughcrew hills, and the cairns and central space of Area 3, over which it assumes a dominant aspect (Fig. 5.11a). From this perspective the placement of the cairn at the periphery of Carnbane West summit is readily apparent; in addition, the individual obtains a strong impression of being at the limits of the cemetery as a whole when looking out over the southerly and southeasterly lowlands (Fig. 5.11b).

Moving northwards from Area 3, through the 'gateway' and up past Cairn H (the passage of which is aligned on the Newtown cairn), the individual passes into the much more enclosed, interior space of Area 4, which slopes very gently down from south to north. The enclosed area measures about 150m north-south by 95m east-west and is bounded to the north northwest and west by the central ridge surmounted by passage tombs, and to the southeast by the two major outcrops at the eastern edge of the summit. The southern limit of the focal area is a relatively

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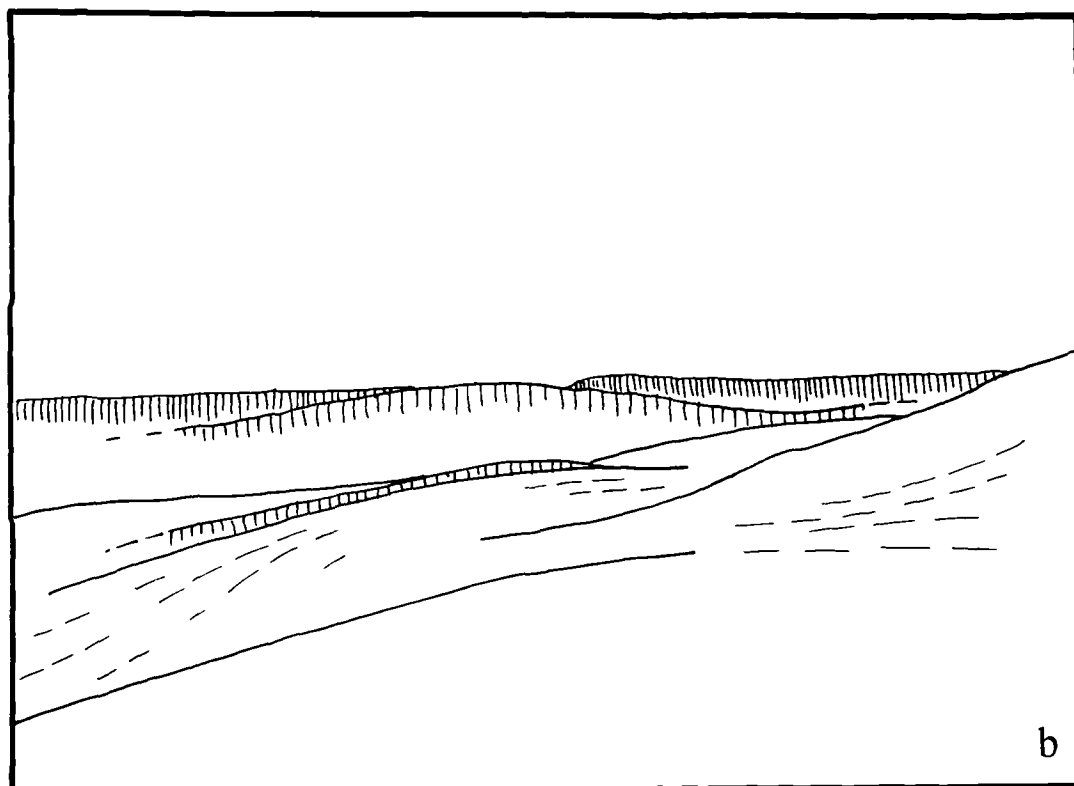
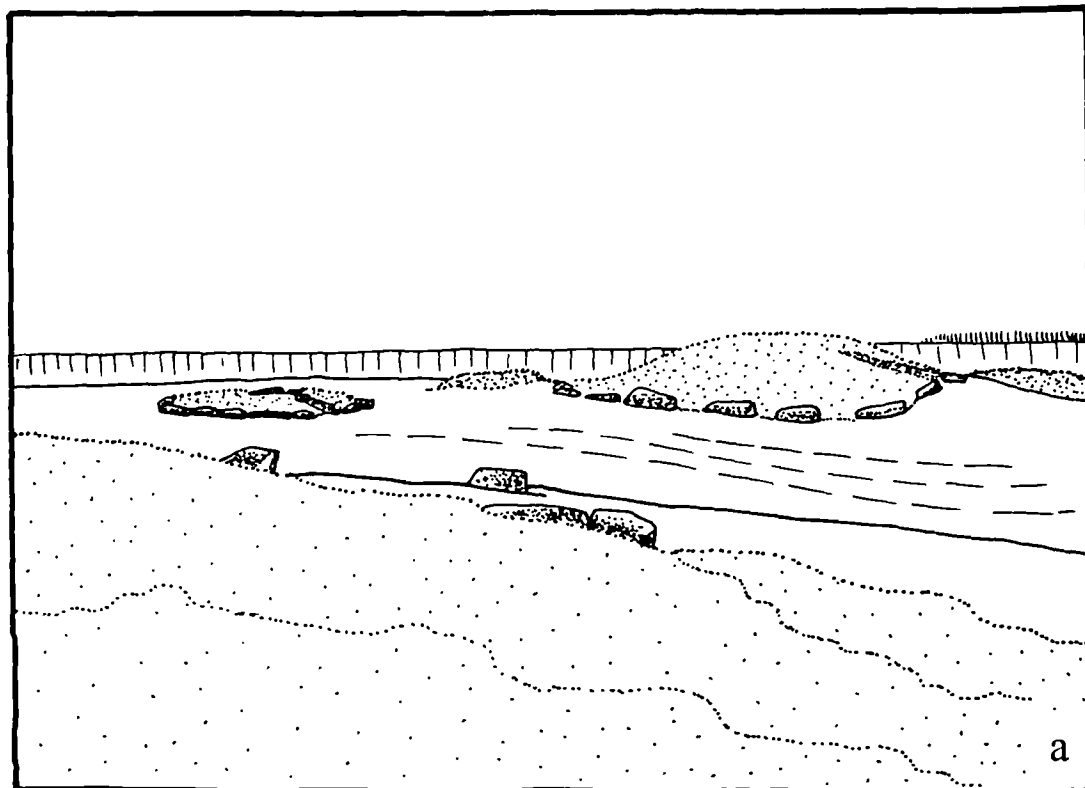


Figure 5.11 a: Looking N from Cairn I, over Area 3. Left to right: Cairns H, J, L, K. b: Looking S from Cairn I.

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high skyline formed by the crest of rising ground between the ridge and the eastern knolls. In the other directions, the flat plains stretching northwards and parts of the Loughcrew hills are seen beyond the low horizons of the summit edge and through the concentrated monumentality through which we have just progressed (Fig. 5.12a). Thus although firmly situated within the landscape of Carnbane West itself, the subject can still make visual and intellectual reference to the rest of the complex and the world beyond.

Cairns F and G sit side by side, with only 1m between their kerbs at their closest point. Both are sited slightly closer to the eastern edge of the central ridge partitioning Carnbane West, and the entrance of Cairn F faces east northeast, overlooking the bowl of Area 4 beneath it, towards Carnbane East and Patrickstown beyond. (The neighbouring cairn is too ruined for orientation assessment.) They might therefore be seen to relate more directly to the eastern part of the summit. Certainly, from here one has to walk a good way round the kerb perimeters in both directions before the western focal areas really come into view, dominated by the spectacular mass of Cairn D, the largest monument on the hills. And from within these other locales, F and G often act as a backdrop to the insistent monumentality of the other passage tombs.

Across the central space of Area 4, 90m northeast of the ridge cairns, Cairn J rises from level ground at the summit margin. As at Carnbane East, this peripheral placement is obvious from within the monumentally bounded area, the tomb standing on the horizon as the land falls away beyond the cairn mound. When the subject arrives at the tomb, however, the boundary is less well defined, since initially the northern hillside runs down at a very moderate gradient for some distance. As noted above, the passage axis parallels that of Cairn L, with the entrance facing east southeast. (In fact, the alignment of the two chambers and passages is also almost identical, with only 5m divergence between them.) It would seem that prior to the larger cairn's construction Cairn J looked over a level area of ground terminating in a sharp break downward 70m to the east. Above this horizon would be the range of hills with their cairn silhouettes. At present the

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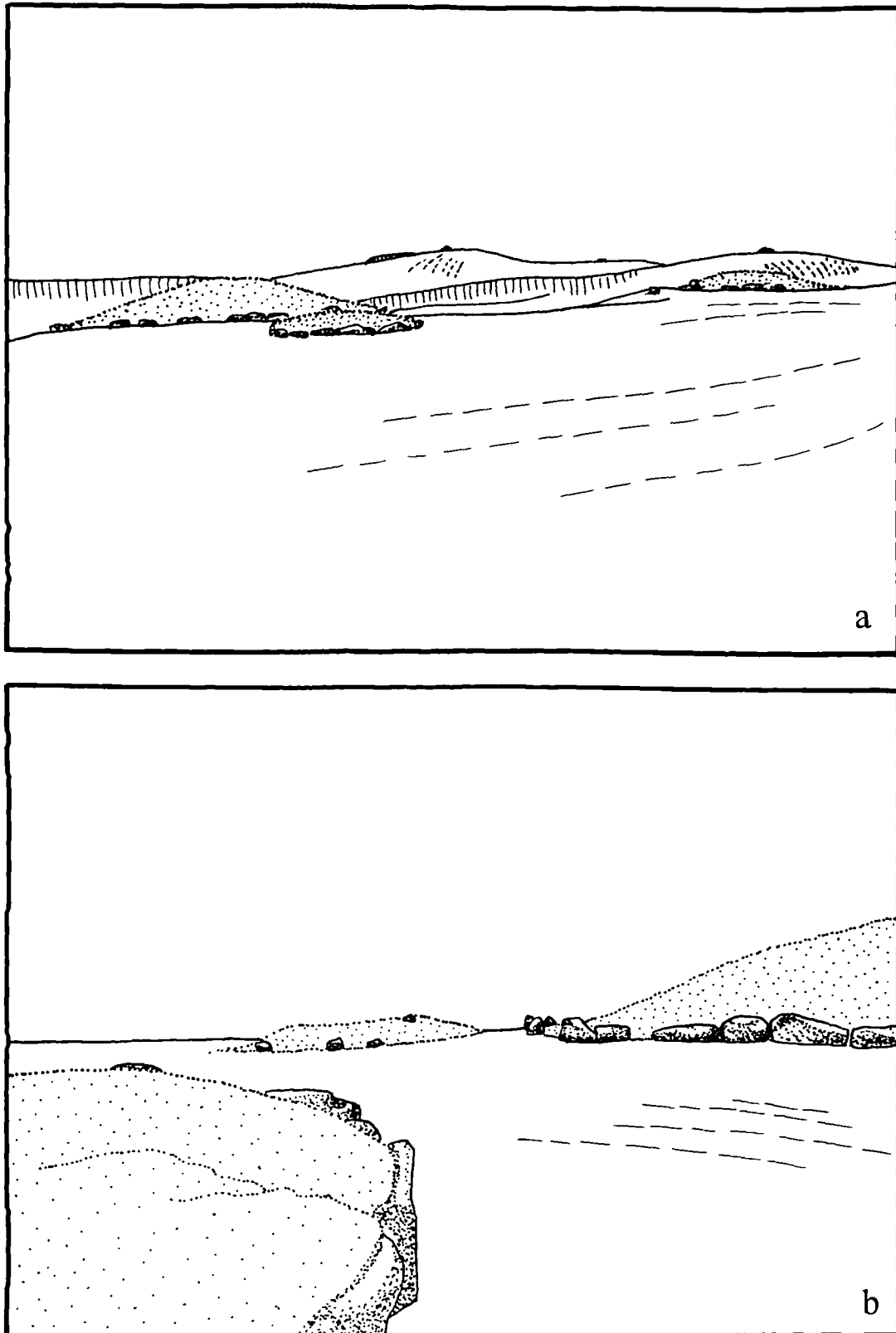


Figure 5.12 a: Looking E across Area 4. Left to right: Cairns L, H, I. b: The circumscribed space of Area 5, looking N. Left to right: Cairns H, J, K.

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overwhelming mass of the big cairn obscures this entire vista: in order to catch a glimpse of the rest of the Loughcrew complex the individual must now move round the perimeter of J, where from the northern sector Carnbane East and Patrickstown emerge, and Newtown from the southern sector. The position of the larger cairn of course precludes a direct approach to the entrance of J, as only 3m separate their kerbs.

The close proximity of these two tombs and Cairn H in this flat stretch of ground has an extremely enclosing effect on the observer (Fig. 5.12b), an effect which is enhanced by the near horizon delimiting Area 4 beyond, with its strong architectural component. This limited space, Area 5, is therefore strongly focused on and by built form, particularly as the enormous mound of Cairn L screens the most varied part of the landscape, the other peaks of the Loughcrew range.

Progressing westward out of this small focal area, the subject is channelled along the edge of the summit, heading for the lower ground between the rise of the central ridge on his or her left and the opposing rise of a rock outcrop at the northwestern 'corner' of the hilltop. Rounding the northern tip of the dividing ridge, the sense of place undergoes a rapid and profound transition (Fig. 5.13a). From a landscape in which the interplay of natural and constructed form situates the observer within fairly open spaces, generating an interior world which is yet balanced by visual references to more distant geographical and architectural features, the individual emerges suddenly into a naturally deeply enclosed locale, perhaps best described as a hollow, and at the same time is confronted by the vast form of Cairn D. Turning to look back, Cairn L is just about to disappear behind the central ridge -- this is one of the very few points on Carnbane West from where its two major cairns can both be seen.

This sixth focal area runs very approximately 115m north-south and 125m east-west and is surrounded on three sides by strongly rising land: the northern and western boundaries are marked by rocky knolls which project sharply upward at the summit margin, while to the east is the central ridge (Fig. 5.13b). The southern limit is a downward break of slope which forms a close skyline -- as indeed are all

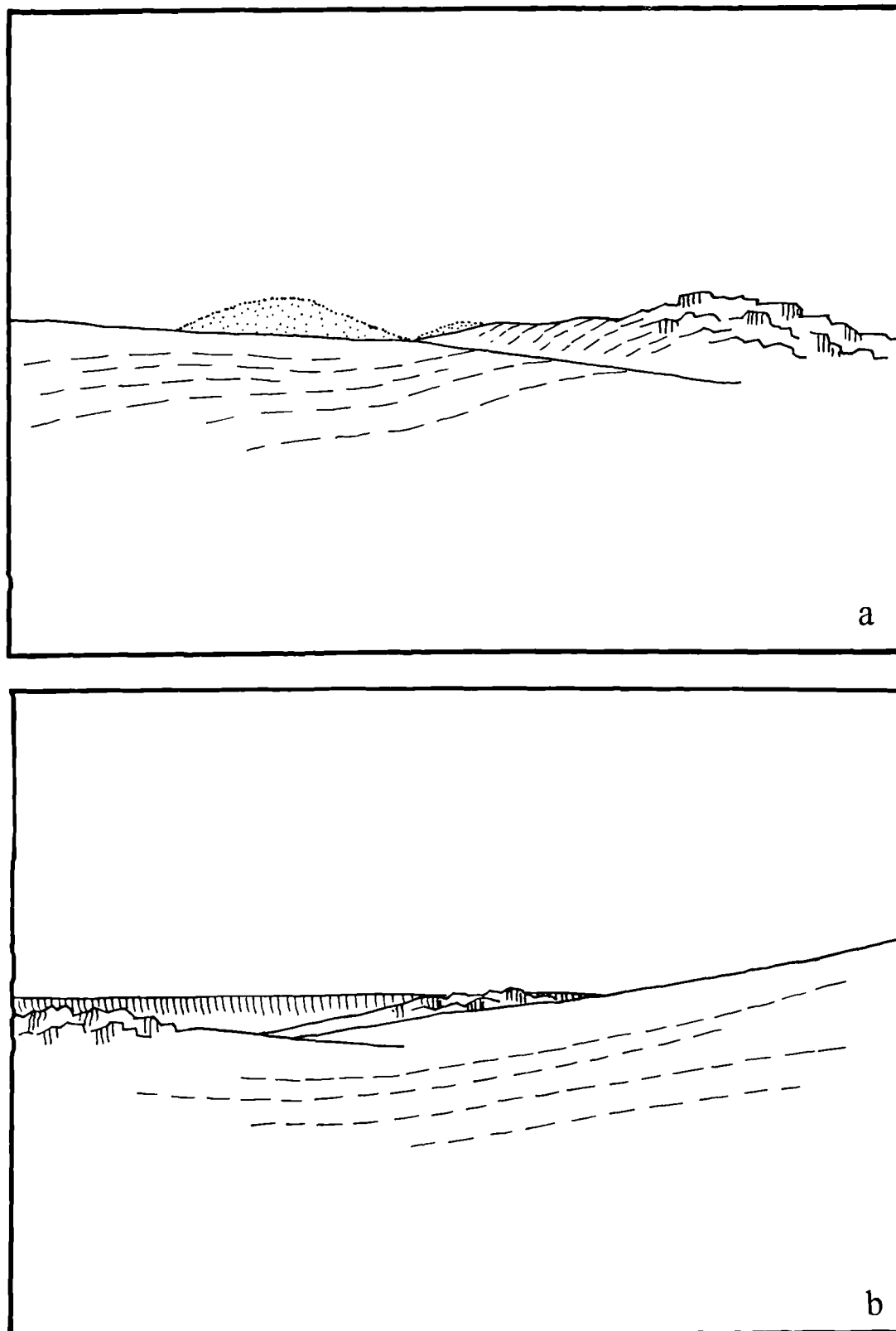


Figure 5.13 a: Rounding the N tip of the central ridge on Carnbane West, moving into Area 6. Cairn D at left; A₃ at centre. b: Looking N over Area 6 from the kerb of Cairn D.

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the other boundaries. It is on this horizon that Cairn D stands, its enormous bulk completely dominating this relatively confined space. In one sense, this is not so much a focal area delimited by the fusion of topography and monumentality as an area of ground focused *upon* one monument. For although the small ridge tombs are evident above the observer, their more easterly position on the ridge and the absence of an overlooking entrance makes this depression seem very much a backspace for these two monuments. In addition, although two further passage tombs can be seen on high ground to the southwest, they are at a substantial remove and have only minor impact.

The overpowering nature of Cairn D -- and one might here use the term oppressive -- makes it difficult to envisage the sense of the landscape prior to its construction. I imagine, however, that it would have had more the air of a transitional area of passage as opposed to the static inclosure of today, with the gentle southern slope and the cairns of Area 7 beyond entering the field of vision gradually as the subject drew near to the break of slope now occupied by the enormous mound. Having to negotiate the mass of this cairn renders the present transition between the two areas much more abrupt, just as on Carnbane East the placement of Cairn T introduces a more positive boundary between eastern and western foci. But however much Cairn D appropriates the focus of the natural hollow, or creates a focal locus in place of a pathway of transition, it is true to say that Area 6 has always been the innermost world of Carnbane West, in that a glimpse of the distant plains to the north is the only possible reference to the exterior landscape (Fig. 5.13b).

With a diameter of 53m -- and therefore a walked circumference of 163m -- this is the largest monument in the Loughcrew cemetery. Before excavation in the nineteenth century this cairn apparently resembled the other two major passage tombs on Carnbane East and West, in the inturn of the kerb on the southeastern sector. However, extensive -- and heartbreakingly destructive -- investigations working inwards from the presumed east southeast facing entrance failed to reveal a chamber (Conwell 1873), and the possibility is that the mound contains no

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internal structure at all.

Tucked into an area of level ground between the western summit margin and the southern tip of the dividing ridge, the cairn forces the subject in Area 6 to take either of two closely demarcated pathways into the much more open locale of Area 7 to the south. Moving round the western perimeter takes the individual along the summit edge, and then between the opposing masses of Cairn D and three smaller monuments on a substantial outcrop. Following the kerb round to the east, on the other hand, the subject passes the supposed inturn of the kerb. Standing at this point facing eastward, the observer looks toward the knolls defining the western limit of the hilltop, which poke up above the central ridge. On a clear day the peak of Newtown is visible beyond.

The roughly level stretch of ground running eastward from this flattened and/or inturned sector of the kerb is in fact a key transitional area, forming the crest of the rise between the southern tip of the central ridge and the eastern knolls which separates Areas 4 and 7 (Fig. 5.3). Coming from Area 7, it is as one walks over this hillcrest that the cairns around Area 4 and the further peaks of the Loughcrew range -- invisible from Cairn D -- open up to the observer. A transition of similar effect occurs going the other way, the cairns of Area 7 and Cairn D coming into view as the landscape behind disappears (Fig. 5.14a). Once again, as the huge cairn emerges from around the tip of the central ridge, the subject turning to look back will catch a final glimpse of Cairn L.

Area 7 is an expansive locale in the southwestern part of Carnbane West, bounded to the north by this hillcrest at the edge of Area 4 and to the west and south by the edges of the summit. The eastern boundary is a subtle quickening of the downward slope. Standing centrally within this area, tombs rise up around the observer on all sides. Most of these stand on the horizon, accentuating the sense of boundary demarcation -- as indeed does the placement of five cairns in elevated positions, and the obvious positioning of Cairn A₂ at the extreme edge of the summit. Cairn D is a dominant force here, a visual and physical barrier at the highest limit of the focal area.

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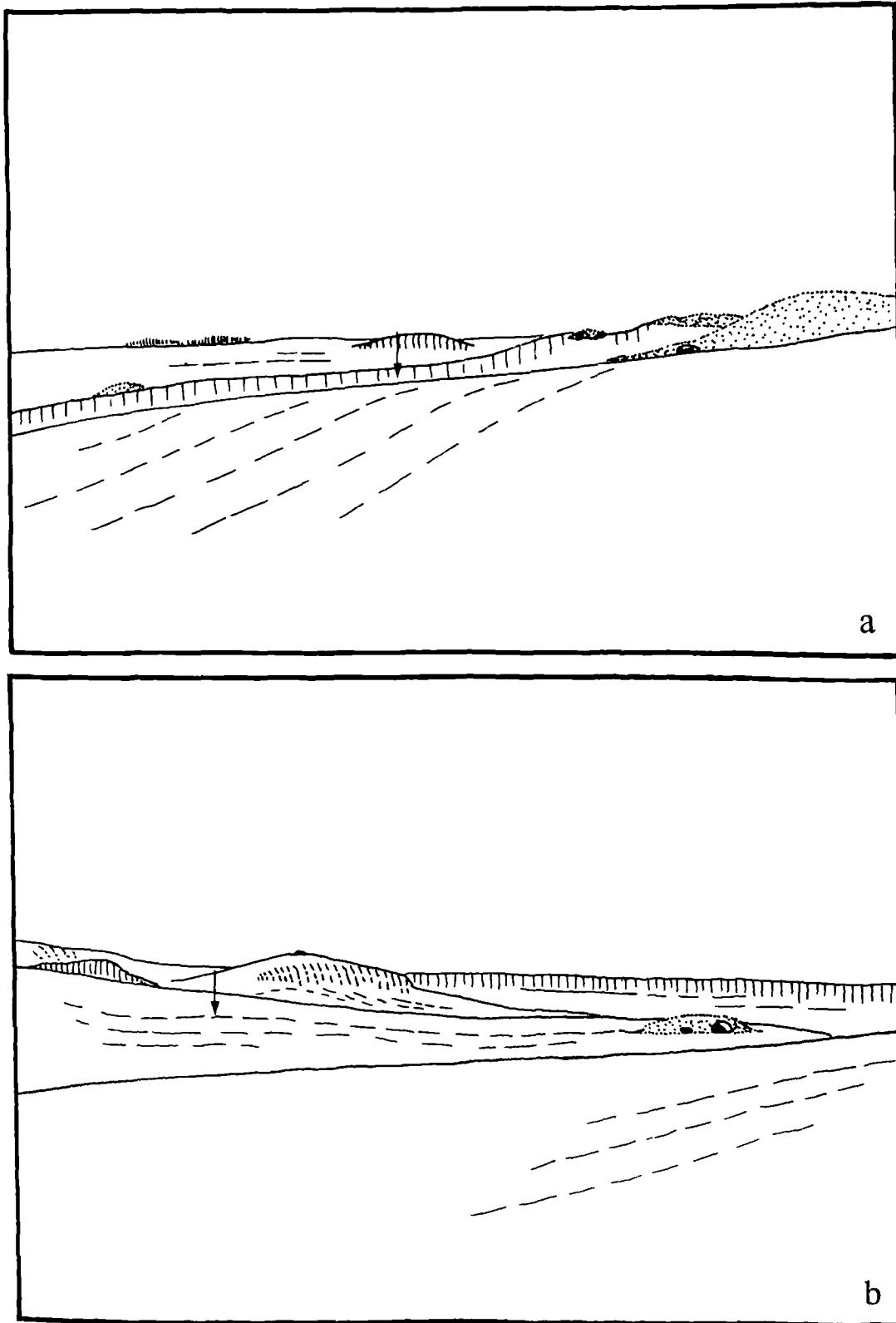


Figure 5.14 a: Rounding the S tip of the central ridge on Carnbane West, moving into Area 7. Left to right: Cairns A₂, C, A₃, D. Arrow marks position of Cairn A₁. b: View of the 'gateway' leading off the summit from Area 7, with Newtown hill beyond. Arrow marks position of Cairn A₁; A₂ at right.

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The four monuments at the southern and western periphery of Area 7 mark a distinct transition between inner and outer landscapes: coming up the steep hillside from the south and west the subject has only a restricted view of the immediate slope, and it is not until nearly at the top that the cairns come into view, followed by Newtown and Carnbane East. From within the interior world of the summit, the cairn mounds rise up against the sky. A strong contraposition of included and excluded states is therefore achieved; as at Carnbane East, the transformation of the subject from one to the other is a rapid one.

Looking eastward over the bowl-like central space of Area 7, the cairn on Newtown and Cairn T on Carnbane East are clearly visible, the multilayered vista in their direction contrasting with the close, simple horizons to the north and west. The major natural focus would seem to be Newtown, due to its proximity and its more central aspect from within the enclosed locale. The tomb entrance of Cairn B may have faced out in this direction originally; if so, the construction of Cairn D would have obstructed the sightline to the natural referent and its monumental embellishment. From the heart of Area 7, Newtown hill is seen to rise above a slight dip in the local horizon formed by Carnbane West, flanked on either side by two cairns, A₁ and A₂. The effect is similar to the view of the eastern Loughcrew hills through the 'monumental entryway' of Area 3, and in fact these two cairns and the gentle linear depression stretching eastward from them (appearing as the dip in the horizon) may be considered to mark the other major route of passage into and out of the inner landscape of Carnbane West (Fig. 5.14b).

The natural way out of this defined area, then, separated from the rest of the summit landscape, is to head for the more gentle slope to the southeast: the subject is drawn between Cairns A₁ and A₂, into the linear depression which forms a natural avenue leading down off the summit (Area 8). Apart from the eastern approach leading up to Area 3, this is the only access route to Carnbane West which provides a gradual revelation of topographical and built features, and as such it is worth considering the nature of the experience as the individual moves in the other direction, up the corridor of Area 8 towards the summit and Area 7. Coming

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up round the south side of Newtown the cairns of Carnbane West will not be visible due to the steepness of the hillside, excepting perhaps a brief glimpse of the three easternmost cairns off to the subject's extreme right. The ascent is strenuous, and the passage tombs appear only at a late stage. The land begins to rise on either side; as the individual moves up the natural avenue, two cairns appear directly ahead on the horizon, followed shortly after by monuments on the left and right. Progressing uphill, the subject is moving into a locale of much more enclosed character, from open vistas to close horizons which obscure the landscape beyond. The reverse process holds true for the opposite journey, as the largely inwardly focused landscapes of Carnbane West -- and of the cemetery as a whole -- in a sense relinquish their hold over the subject. The avenue of Area 8 is gradually assimilated into the steep, even slope of the hillside and the field of vision opens up to left and right of the observer. The lie of the land draws the individual southeastward so that, rather than moving back into the encircling bowl between Carnbane West and East, he or she progresses into the undulating fields to the south, out and finally away from the Loughcrew hills.

Writing about people: inhabiting the landscape

I prefaced my account of a walk through the Loughcrew hills with the statement that it was a primarily descriptive exercise. It is also, however, a narrative, and as such can never be entirely even-handed or unequivocal. Some elements receive considerable attention, others are merely mentioned in passing. Undoubtedly many aspects never emerge in the narrative at all. In my telling of the encounter, certain biases and preinclinations are introduced which arise from physical engagement with the landscape and architecture. While these are dependent in part upon deeply personal ways of seeing and moving, on a series of responses to mass, density, space, colour, light and shadow which are particular to the individual, these reactions are essentially refinements to a perceptual order engendered through the sensual experience which should hold true, broadly speaking, across a much wider span of time and space than simply that of my own,

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individual experience. As Christopher Tilley has remarked,

things in front of you or behind you, within reach or without, things to the left and right of your body, above and below, these most basic of personal spatial experiences, are shared with prehistoric populations in our common biological humanity (1994, 74).

In this way, the emphases, inclinations and predispositions which emerge from the narrative provide the framework for interpretation. This is not a disinterested, objective physical description which in itself reveals some inner meaning; rather, the lived experience of place leads to and informs certain ways of thinking about the interrelations between people and landscape. This act of inhabitation through which people make sense of the world was initiated with the very first human encounter with the Loughcrew hills and has been endlessly repeated over the successive and uncountable generations. It is the hermeneutic *motivations* which differ among, for example, neolithic groups, iron age occupants, sixteenth century landowners, nineteenth century antiquarians, myself. All our stories, our narratives, constitute a series of interconnected interpretations of place and of being *in* place. Denis Cosgrove and Mona Domosh have written in similar vein with respect to geographical narrative (1993), and although their remarks refer to contemporary authorship, they are applicable despite the fact that most of the experiential narratives of Loughcrew were spoken and are now forgotten. Their thoughts can be extended, in other words, to the interpretive efforts of humanity as a whole:

Our stories add to a growing list of other stories, not listed in a logic of linearity to fit into a coherent body of knowledge, but as a series of cultural constructions, each representing a particular view of the world, to be consulted together to help us make sense of ourselves and our relations to the landscapes and places we inhabit and think about. These stories are to be read not as approximations to a reality, but as tales of how we have understood the world; to be judged not according to a theory of correspondence, but in terms of their internal consistency and their value as moral and political discourse (Cosgrove & Domosh 1993, 37-8).

To weave narratives around and through landscape is to weave yourself into

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it and at the same time to let the landscape inscribe itself upon you. A relationship of intimacy, of familiarity, can only be built over time. The rhythms of topography and architecture only gradually reveal themselves: an initial day spent at Loughcrew leaves simply an impression of mass, of repetitive images, and of a landscape fractured into many locales. The complexity of Carnbane West alone requires days to work through -- it takes a surprising amount of time to begin to know what to expect as one rounds a knoll, for example, or ascends a slope. The archaeologist visiting the complex as part of a programme of fieldwork, even if he or she returns season after season, cannot attain the depth of perspective of the person who has lived a long lifetime amongst these hills, to whom every fold in the landscape is as familiar as the wrinkles and contours of his or her own body. The engagement of neolithic communities with Loughcrew would be of this order, the spiritual implications of the landscape -- understanding of which was crucial to group reproduction -- being revealed over the lifetimes of individuals who in turn passed on these acquired knowledges, selectively, to younger generations.

Although a few weeks among the passage tombs represents an intellectual engagement of an altogether different hue, and in spite of the exigencies involved in experiencing, or rather submitting to, Loughcrew in winter, a remarkable affinity with the landscape can be built up in the course of a short but intensive encounter. This embraces an albeit partial understanding of and a respect for the order of the landscape -- both the underlying fabric and the built form which draws upon, elaborates and in some cases seeks to exploit it and alter its qualities. Further, occasions where topography and architecture fuse can be recognized, and others where the latter weighs down the balance and acts as a determinant. This level of familiarity engenders a profound sympathy with the place and the threads of humanity past, present and future running deep within its warp and weft. This is surely as valid a result of intellectual endeavour as could be desired, and one which responds to Cosgrove and Domosh's call for moral and political value.

Familiarity, then, can exist on a number of different levels. Within the neolithic context we might consider a dialectic between a landscape that is deeply

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familiar -- settlements, areas of cultivation, pasture and woodland, and the pathways which traverse and link them, from which the range of hills is a prominent landmark -- and yet unfamiliar, in that running through these locations, encountered perhaps daily in terms of visual if not physical experience, are the intangible energies which, although susceptible to channelling, will always remain beyond the control of human groups. Within the corporality of the landscape this dialectic of the seen and the unseen is drawn into the fabric of everyday life through physical, visual and intellectual referencing.

The nature of the discourse between living communities and metaphysical powers will vary according to the situation of groups with regard to particular localities. So, for example, the relationship of human groups living literally in the shadow of the Loughcrew hills to the ancestral and/or mythical forces embedded within them would differ qualitatively from that of communities settled at some distance from them. For the former, the peaks would maintain a constant presence throughout the daily routine, as people worked the land in the vicinity of the range and as humans and animals moved around and perhaps between the hills in daily and seasonal cycles. For other, more distant groups, contact with Loughcrew would be more intermittent, a view of the hills perhaps opening up from a few specific vantage points which might be encountered only occasionally during everyday activities, or even less frequently, as part of larger-scale temporal and spatial rhythms of movement.⁶ For these spatially distanced communities, physical engagement with the Loughcrew complex would be included among peregrinational aspects of the life of the group, and might well acquire connotations of pilgrimage.

The character of this discourse among living, ancestral and mythic communities will also change through time. With respect to this, differing magnitudes of visibility between the mass of smaller passage tombs and the enormous Cairns D, L, T and Y are significant. From the foot of the Loughcrew range, the nearby plains and more distant prospects, the smaller summit cairns are mostly invisible -- and would likely have been so even in their original condition -- so that visually the referent remains apparently entirely natural. The architectural

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component can only be experienced from within the interior landscapes of the summits themselves, the main exception being the few cairns which sit in between the hilltops, which are identifiable from the immediate locality. With the construction of the four largest cairns, however, a locale of traditional veneration is inscribed with a human presence that may be overtly referred to from a considerable spatio-temporal remove -- as I have noted above, these later cairns are clearly defined forms from at least 20km away in some directions, perhaps more. It is these cairns which, even now, project their presence so strongly into the surrounding country. Just over 4km northwest of Carnbane East, for example, lies the small town of Oldcastle. Fronting one of its four main streets is a public house, 'The Cairns'. On the inn sign is a depiction of the three prominent passage tombs visible today; on seeing this the spatial dislocation of the Loughcrew complex undergoes a swift transformation in the individual's perception. From the closed-in, immediate focus of the urban setting in which vision remains predominantly between the pavement and eye level, where attention is drawn by goods displayed in shop windows and by the movement of passers-by or of cars in various and alarming states of decay, the mind and body immediately change direction, turning towards the hills and the cairns atop them which, until now a backdrop, move into the subject's frontspace. The introduction of artificial features into the landscape that can operate in this way over substantial distances, perhaps bringing to mind the existence of other, widely dispersed groups to whom the Loughcrew range is of similar mythical significance (Sheridan 1986, 27), may be regarded as part of a developing accent on the specifically human colouring to the landscape during the second half of the fourth millennium BC, an issue which I shall return to discuss with regard to the wider implications of the cemetery's chronological sequence.

The extent to which individuals take part in the dialogue between the visible and invisible manifestations of the landscape will be largely dependent upon relations of age, gender and possibly lineage. Thus, individual members of the community will move with different frequency, in different company, and therefore

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at differing levels of familiarity between the landscapes of routine experience and those of more esoteric knowledge, each of which informs the other in an ongoing dynamic of reciprocity. As people inhabit these interpenetrating landscapes, as they move from home to fields, woods, lakes, rivers and back again, as they follow traditional routes and prescribed pathways, and as they embed stories in topographical features or refer to them in casual conversation, the succession of shifting perspectives creates a landscape which is itself moving, both physically and intellectually. The undulating plains of Meath, for example, are lived *in* as a series of close horizons and natural boundaries, of open stretches punctuated by areas of cultivation, of copses and woodland in which visibility is restricted, all of which are separated by the time it takes to get from one to the other. From the Loughcrew summits, however, this human time is effectively collapsed, made to stand still, as vast expanses stretch out beyond reach of the eye. Yet again, in some weathers one cannot see the summit of Newtown from Carnbane West. It is as people think and *talk* these alternative literal and figurative viewpoints through, and as certain individuals are endowed with or take on responsibility for explaining the relationships between them, imparting specific meanings to places and events, that an order for living is constructed and the knowledges essential for carrying life forward are passed on through succeeding generations.

The contrast between the timeless nature of locales inhabited by or imbued with metaphysical forces and the landscape of repetitive cycles which revolve around and within the human body has often been discussed in terms of the opposition between 'ritual' or 'sacred' landscapes and those of 'secular' life. I would see this conceptualization as another thread in the deeply interwoven tapestry of material and intellectual landscapes. With specific reference to neolithic Ireland, for example, Cooney has drawn the distinction between sacred landscapes concerned with ceremonial and the landscape of field and farm, of everyday routine (1994). He sees these as conceptually separate but not necessarily physically so, while arguing that links between these domains would be effected through the use of portable objects which crossed the boundary between the two, and by visual

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references to topography and architecture like those discussed above.

An important point to make here is the paramount role of language in this context. Secular and sacred landscapes interpenetrate by way of moralities, of ways of living (as opposed to ways of life) which are talked about, discussed and sometimes disputed. Stories focused on particular places can carry moral import for the passage of individual lives, as in the narratives the Western Apache recount about their named localities (Basso 1984, 1988; see above p. 80). The names of significant points in the landscape, or phrases which refer to them, may be invoked to bestow legitimacy and/or favour upon human activities; such is the case with the swearing formulae by which the Gabbra refer to the mountains of their mythic origin (Schlee 1992). From the perspective of the sacred landscape, both verbal and physical elements of the ceremonies which took place among the Loughcrew summits would refer to the landscape stretching far out into the distance and to the routines of everyday life articulated within it, such as the seasonal agricultural calendar. The meaning of such ceremonies would derive from the experience of inhabiting this familiar landscape -- thus secular and sacred are drawn into each other.

In addition, the innate character of language, carrying within it past, present and future, is to blur temporal horizons. Not only do we tell stories about other places and other times from that in which we are situated, but language also bears the fragments of past ways of speaking and past concerns, while the creative use of language perpetually prefigures future forms of speech. The language of ceremonial may make more overt the links between past and present in that archaic forms and formulae may be retained in ritual usage. Both the physical journey of the body through the landscape and mental engagement with it, which is expressed in varying forms of talk and narrative, can therefore entwine spatially and temporally separated landscapes of ancestral communities, mythical beings and the living.

... 'I hear where you're coming from,' as if the voice itself were a traveller, arriving from a distant place. Which it would be, which it is (Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's*

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Tale).

Rather than considering landscape as a single entity, therefore, we should think in terms of a multiplicity of interpenetrating landscapes, or of 'nested' landscapes, the features and implications of which change as the subject moves through material and conceptual space. So from the smallest scale, the locales which can be seen attached to particular tombs on Carnbane East, we can conceive of a series of concentric landscapes embracing ever wider locales: the distinct focal areas, the individual summits, the deep bowl enclosed by the crescent of the hills, Loughcrew as one of a number of higher, intervisible viewpoints in Meath and the surrounding counties. Each of these landscapes maintains its own identity and may be in some senses separated by zones of liminality, but these are not worlds which stand alone: each instead draws significance from the other landscapes which penetrate it and which it blends into. Through time people develop the spaces and perspectives of these locales, drawing more and more on the interrelations of landscape and architecture. A complex interlinking results with, *inter alia*, cairn entrances aligned on other cairns or on other summits, or towards celestial movements; passage tombs oriented inward to the focal area they define or outward towards more distant referents; monuments which enhance a spatial quality already established by topography and earlier monumentality, and others which alter the focus of the locale. This interconnection, or interpenetration, is intensified by the relationship of the human body to these natural and architectonic spaces as, for example, individuals moving about on one summit can just be made out from another, permitting dynamic forward, back and cross-referencing. Interrelations of this kind are possible among Carnbane East, Newtown and Carnbane West, and between Carnbane East and Patrickstown.

At Loughcrew there is also an emphasis on the interplay of exterior and interior landscapes, or of backspace and frontspace, and on the liminal areas in between. The peaks are an ever present force in the landscape, of long distance visibility, but from some perspectives the individual is excluded and effectively placed in a backspace. I have already noted the invisibility of many of the smaller

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summit cairns from outwith the range of hills. On the upward approach the subject often loses sight of the summits entirely, even of their largest cairns, until very nearly at the top. Even when a slightly more extended view of the summit edge cairns is possible, as on the northern approach to Carnbane West, the observer remains excluded from the interior space until the final moments. For example, after losing Cairns K and L in the immediate vicinity of the hills, these cairns reappear, prominent on the skyline, at just over 200m distance. The interior remains invisible until very late on, when Cairn J appears, closely followed by F and G. But even at this point, the massive bulk of the architecture and the way in which the nearer monuments effectively curve away from the observer engender a strong feeling of marginality, of being held outside; it is only as the subject moves between the cairns, onto the summit, that an interior world is revealed. This sense of contrast and of transformation is accentuated by the action of the topography upon the individual. The strenuous nature of the approach to the summits means one arrives somewhat at a disadvantage -- out of breath, perspiring, calves tingling -- all of which is heightened if the time of year necessitates heavy layers of clothing or if objects have to be carried up the hill. This is a strong reminder of the fragility of the body, standing in opposition to the silent, timeless and unchanging presence of ancestors and mythical beings who simply wait for the arrival of the living.

Passage between these exterior and interior landscapes through domains of liminality will have had a multitude of potential repercussions for the spiritual and physical wellbeing of the human groups implicated, and as such will have been strictly rule bound; as I have noted above, one of the manifestations of this would have been the formalized movement of people through the Loughcrew hills, under the direction of particular individuals. Prescribed routes doubtless existed long before any monumental modifications were made to the landscape. A human presence of deep antiquity is attested by finds at Loughcrew of lithic tools of both early and later mesolithic industries, the chronological transition between which is presumed to occur in the mid sixth millennium BC (Cooney & Grogan 1994, 10;

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13). It would seem more than likely that these distinctive peaks, encountered in cyclical spatial and temporal patterns of movement, were also imbued with particular significance by these earlier populations, the resonances of which would have carried through into the neolithic.

The final layout of the cemetery -- or rather the remnants we have of it today -- may provide a glimpse of the spatial organization of such processional journeys. Movement between the cairn groupings on the summits may have followed routes of passage that were physically easier than other potential pathways, marked by, for example, the progression of Cairns Q, P₂, P₁ and N between Carnbane East and Newtown, the monumental 'thresholds' of Areas 3 and 8 on Carnbane West and, possibly, the group of cairns at the western edge of Patrickstown summit (X₁, X₂, X₃). This may have had less to do with physical comfort than with the more extended visual references to the various summits which are made possible by following such a course through the landscape. Whether or not an intended consequence, the gradual accretion of monumentality will have acted to restrict flexibility of movement and access within the complex, contributing perhaps to increasing precision and formalism. This may well have been a reflexive process whereby the application of strict processional formulae meant that particular points on the journey acquired heightened significance and eventually architectural embellishment, these elements of artificial topography in turn amplifying the formulaic nature of the encounter as a succession of additional, visible goals for mental and physical movement. But however controlled the engagement with forces embedded in the Loughcrew landscape may have become, and however dominant the role of authoritative figures within it, interpretation of the ritual discourse will always have been dependent to some extent on the specifics of individual encounters. Thus I want to look briefly at a specific event which, although at a considerable temporal and spatial remove from prehistoric Loughcrew, demonstrates the element of contingency involved in any directed meeting of the living community with the 'other' in a landscape context.

The Auvergne, in the mid fifth century AD. Having arranged the translation

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of the relics of Saints Agricola and Vitalis from Bologna to his episcopal seat at Clermont-Ferrand, Bishop Namatius decides to lead a procession out into the countryside to greet the two martyrs near the end of their journey, rather than simply waiting for them to come to him. By this public display of reverence Namatius intensifies his powerful aura of personal holiness. When the procession meets the party transporting the relics, Namatius further demonstrates his devotion -- and again enhances his position of authority -- by refusing to look at the sacred objects in order to verify their authenticity. Rather, Namatius validates the power of the holy martyrs by believing what he has not seen. The bishop's public demonstration of faith is rewarded by a physical manifestation of the power of God in the form of a cloudburst which narrowly misses drenching the procession. As Peter Brown remarks, 'Namatius had backed into the limelight of Agricola and Vitalis' (1982, 240). But how might this event have been interpreted if the rainstorm *had* caught the procession? Even when highly orchestrated, encounters with metaphysical powers in the public eye, in the open air, are subject to the circumstances of the moment and the concomitant flexibility of interpretation. It is here that those guiding the ritual find potential power and yet perhaps their greatest vulnerability, and it is in this context that we should view the formalized encounters with ancestral and mythical communities at Loughcrew.

Returning to the specific, material setting of Loughcrew then, and its developing complexity through time, we can look at the interrelations between landscape and architecture and their implications for communal ceremonial activity and the role within this of leading figures. The Loughcrew cairns can be broadly divided into two groups: a *sympathetic* group, comprised of monuments that draw upon the features of the landscape to intensify the definition of pre-existing spaces, and a *constructive* group, in which the landscape is more actively used to create new, often substantially different spatial patterns. The first group may be further subdivided into a series of *organic* monuments which extend natural form almost seamlessly, such as Cairns I and K rising from their knolls, and an *emphatic* group, the components of which add weight to pre-existing topographical features but

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without assuming the appearance of an organic whole. Examples of the latter would be Cairn M on the summit of Newtown and Cairns F and G emerging from the central ridge on Carnbane West. Some of the emphatic cairns may also be *associative*, in that they repeat natural forms in close proximity to them but are not necessarily situated *upon* them. Thus Cairn B, while emphasizing the natural break-of-slope boundary demarcating the edge of the summit, additionally mimics the form of the nearby knolls which also stand at this boundary.

These various groupings should not be considered to constitute a hard and fast classificatory scheme, particularly as the ruinous state of many of the cairns means ascription to categories is far from precise, and one third of the extant cairns are unclassified according to these principles.⁷ In addition, monuments of one group may build upon or incorporate characteristic aspects of another -- so, for example, although the size and placement of Cairn D, one of the constructive group, largely creates the deeply enclosed atmosphere and limited spatial extent of Area 6, this monument also rises from a natural boundary in the form of a break of slope/local horizon, thus operating for Area 7 in a similar manner to the other, sympathetic cairns which delimit the latter locale. This categorization of the Loughcrew monuments does, however, highlight two main trends in monument building which would seem to follow on from one another, moving from drawing forward the potentialities of the landscape to a more manipulative exploitation of the interaction among natural and architectural form and the human body. Whereas the passage tombs of the sympathetic group correspond to those Sheridan (1986) assigns to her Phases 2 and 3 (*circa* 3600-2900 BC), the monuments of the constructive group (Cairns D, L, T, and possibly Y) all fall within Phases 4 and 5 (*circa* 3500-2900 BC) and are likely to mark the final spatial developments within the cemetery. (The chronological and morphological resolution, particularly of the earlier phases, is too indistinct to permit more detailed identification of a succession of themes or more precise mapping of the increasing spatial complexity of the passage tomb cemetery.)

The earlier, smaller tombs, by emphasizing topographical features and

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boundaries, loosely define a series of large, 'clear' spaces in which communal activity can take place -- the encircling bowl of the Loughcrew hills and the individual focal areas within it. Although the monuments are foci in themselves, it is these spaces, the particular peaks acting as referents for them, and the natural features of which the cairns sometimes seem organic extensions which retain a certain priority, so that it is still very much the landscape setting which is central to the subject's perception. The large, late tombs, however, begin to appropriate this natural focus. On the one hand, since these cairns are much more prominent from farther away, from within the wider landscape the Loughcrew range is now identified *by* its striking architectural embellishments -- the monuments themselves have become literal landmarks. They may make much more unequivocal statements concerning the role of humanity within the fabric of material and metaphysical existence than do the earlier cairns, which are more fully integrated into the landscape. On the other hand, the big tombs exert their presence over the various focal areas and dominate the transitional areas between them. So, for example, the placement of Cairn T creates a new focus for Areas 1 and 2 on Carnbane East, intensifies the opposition of their respective natural referents (Patrickstown for Area 1, Carnbane West for Area 2), and places greater limitations on passage between the two -- it in effect controls the liminal zone.

John Barrett has written of the increasingly restricted operation of the Wessex henge, causewayed and pit-dug enclosures from the mid third millennium BC (1994b, 101-5), in terms which may be usefully applied to developments at Loughcrew. Considering the Mount Pleasant henge and associated features, he notes the way in which possibilities for movement within the enclosure and interior structures become progressively limited, as do physical and visual access to them, with entrances that eventually permit the passage of only one person at a time and prevent sight of what lies beyond. Barrett regards this as a process by which the definition of the locale becomes increasingly regionalized, ultimately centring on the individual agent (1994b, 104-5).

Returning to our example of Cairn T, then, from the perspective of

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Carnbane East this passage tomb introduces a much stronger element of regionalization, both in terms of conceptualizing the cemetery as a whole and of the individual moving through space, with narrowed paths of access between the focal areas limiting the numbers of people who can walk together from one to the other. Reducing freedom of movement and dominating vistas, the biggest cairns have a profound effect on communal, public space which will alter the way in which community gatherings physically take place, the visual and intellectual references they are able to make, and therefore the possible interpretations of the ritual discourse which reflexively arise from and inform them. A series of smaller, more defined, sometimes more circumscribed spaces are being created, within which the words and actions of particular individuals might achieve enhanced resonance, their control of proceedings perhaps become more absolute. The inward-looking Area 6 illustrates this well, with its dramatic focus on Cairn D and its intensely close atmosphere. As the public spaces get smaller, so might communal participation become more restricted, with implications for the position of élite groups, whether these be based on kin relations, gender, age-sets or other solidarities.⁸ These new locales might well be media for increasingly formulaic, prescribed ritual activity which requires ever greater guidance by certain group members. In this context, gatherings of people would enter into a more formally precise discourse with higher authorities, mediation in which would require progressively specialized and esoteric knowledges.

In the later stages of the complex, movement through the successive locales of the Loughcrew hills is articulated by more strongly differentiated time-space regions in which certain places, governed by massive architectural form -- in particular transitional, transformational areas -- attain heightened significance. The construction of Cairn L, for example, creates an access route to the summit which is limited in breadth, strikingly symmetrical and profoundly monumental. Previously, progression would have moved the subject through a sequence of interconnected, fairly evenly-balanced loci; now the individual encounters hierarchically ordered time-space regions which continually refer forward and back

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to the dominant tombs. A geography is created in which the mass and siting of these major cairns will be conceived of ultimately in terms of 'focal cairns' with smaller 'satellites' (e.g. Cooney 1990; Eogan 1984; Herity 1974; McMann 1991; O'Kelly 1989). The constructive cairns move beyond the refinement of natural spaces, creating a more overtly 'humanized' sense of place.

These monuments, with their dramatic impact on visibility, movement and perception in general, drastically alter interpretive options. The most overt example of this is the way in which the placement of Cairn L closes down the central space ringed by Cairns H, J and K, blocking lines of vision and movement among them and taking over the focus of Cairn J. A similar appropriation of space can be seen at the passage tomb cemetery at Knowth. Through time, a series of small cairns probably formed an increasingly well-defined circular enclosure, *circa* 90-100m in internal diameter, which was later almost entirely occupied by a massive passage tomb (Eogan 1984). Rather than being situated within a large open space with a monumental periphery, the subject now had to move through the dark, closed-in spaces between the kerb of the vast new mound and the smaller cairns. As most of the tombs faced in towards a central point, large assemblies of people could no longer make direct contact with the passage entrances; in addition, many of the smaller tombs lost their visual references to each other.

An important point to note here, however, is that although the enactment of ritual activities according to previous principles was seriously inhibited, it was not completely shut down. When the main mound at Knowth was erected, its circumference impinged upon two of the earlier tombs. Although the kerb of the new passage tomb was curved inward somewhat to avoid the first of these (Site 13), a section of the latter's kerb and some of the cairn material was removed to make way for the larger monument, and a very slight, essentially symbolic kerb put up as a replacement. The second small tomb (Site 16) was more drastically altered, a 90 degree bend being introduced into the passage so as to allow continued access (Eogan 1984, 79; 109). Thus these earlier monuments were still being actively drawn upon, and pre-existing principles maintained -- it was the

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nature of the engagement and the references made within it that had changed. Similarly, at Loughcrew, access to the chamber of Cairn J is still possible, but group ritual can no longer take place in the liminal entry area, and passage between the tomb's private, inner world and the exterior, public domain must now occur in the shadow of Cairn L, rather than referring to other points of significance within the wider complex.

Writing histories

Having approached Loughcrew from the perspective of a familiar landscape and having tried to grasp, however partially, the motion of landscape, architecture and the body in time and space, at what level is it possible to tie in this materiality with the unfolding of social life in this part of Ireland during the neolithic? Sheridan has proposed a model for the fourth millennium in which the construction of Irish passage tombs is integral to developing social competition, with concomitant changes in the nature and distribution of power (1986). She envisages a gradual shift from egalitarian to highly stratified communities, one of the mechanisms for this being competitive construction of ever more elaborate funerary monuments. Among other motivations, this conspicuous consumption of labour is intended to demonstrate the prestige of the groups concerned, while those who control and direct this expenditure increasingly validate their authority by reference to the ancestral powers to whom they dedicate such overt veneration. Sheridan sees this process culminating in diverse communities pooling their resources to erect massive passage tombs, in which a progressively restricted number of individuals are actually placed at death. As in most models of spiralling consumption sustaining social hierarchies, a collapse in the system of power relations, allied to an inability to further intensify labour investment, is postulated to have brought this particular cycle of competition to an end (Sheridan 1986, 27-9).

By focusing exclusively on the tomb architecture and contents, Sheridan relegates the landscape setting of the monuments to the status of a backdrop to

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social action. In failing to recognize that the interaction of the subject with architectural and 'natural' space is one of the very means by which groups and individuals carry out social projects, acquire and manifest knowledges and create, maintain or challenge authorities, Sheridan never really demonstrates the ways in which the negotiation of power might be carried forward. In her scheme of 'competitive ancestor worship' (Sheridan 1986, 28), the massive monuments of Stages 4 and 5 are simply spectacular labour investments. Cooney, further developing her line of argument, points out that these tombs are sited in dominating positions (1990, 751). But surely the crucial point to note here is that discussed above: that these monuments have a far-reaching effect on the way the passage of ritual can unfold, with previous foci and possibilities for communal action being altered, restricted or shut down, and more intensely theatrical spaces being created in which the force of individual agents might be heightened. This bears directly on the perception and interpretation of invocations of ancestral and mythic powers, and of the position of leading figures. After all, these are moments that penetrate the very core of the group's existence, in which commitments, obligations and solidarities are reaffirmed. Individual authority, carried through into everyday life, can be enhanced in such an atmosphere -- just as it can be broken.

What other interpretations might therefore be placed on the inhabiting of Loughcrew? I would suggest that we consider the passage tomb complex with regard to changing perceptions of the place and role of humanity within a cosmological whole; in other words, to a hermeneutics of existence. Ethnographic studies of hunter-gatherers and subsistence cultivators have demonstrated a strong tendency for these small-scale societies to conceive of themselves as completely integrated into physical and intellectual landscapes, in which mythical, ancestral forces run through the fabric of everyday life. Among aboriginal communities of western Arnhem Land, for example, the characteristics of a person's body, topographical features and life forces emanating from ancestral powers are tightly interwoven; certain central Australian populations perceive each individual as

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personifying an ancestral being, the relationship being governed by the point in the landscape at which the stump of the umbilical cord falls off, and where the power of a particular ancestor resides (Taylor 1989; Layton 1995; discussed in Tilley 1994, 47; 52). These are deeply personal links with features of the landscape which, as embodiments of mythic origin figures, are the ever present beginning of time. The short cycles of human time are therefore caught up in the immeasurable time of existence. Thus movement along specific trackways in routines of hunting or collecting may be viewed as following in the footsteps of ancestral beings. This repetition and recreation of movement in mythical time draws upon ancestral powers to ensure the continued wellbeing of the community.

I would argue that, in general terms, a profoundly cultured landscape of this sort is likely to form a framework for living during the mesolithic and earlier neolithic in Ireland.⁹ The introduction of monumentality into these essentially *timeless* surroundings makes tangible and visible the human temporal scale. For although it has become almost commonplace to refer to monuments as the insertion of a permanent human presence in the landscape, I think the concept of 'permanence' must be considered carefully. Once erected, no construction will sustain itself, being subject to forces of decay. Whether this be on a small scale -- encroachment of vegetation upon a cairn, animal burrowing, minor subsidence -- or of a more dramatic nature -- consider the massive collapse of the quartz and granite revetment wall at Newgrange passage tomb, for example (O'Kelly 1982) -- monuments such as the Loughcrew chambered cairns require periodic maintenance if they are to continue in operation, in effect to remain permanent. By investing places of prior significance with a point of explicitly human origin, and by adding a more overtly physical element to the essentially intellectual maintenance these places demand, the more ephemeral timescales of humanity are emphasized. Rather than a conceptual scheme which wholly integrates human groups into the physical and metaphysical spheres of time and landscape, here stress may be placed upon the distinct nature of human life within the perceived entirety of existence. The beginnings and gradual development of the Loughcrew complex may be the

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expression of a growing concern with the individual biographies of specific communities within a landscape suffused with mythical meaning, a sentient landscape of the ever present 'other'.

I would see as concomitant to this a gradual shift in the nature of metaphysical connections of living populations to past and present landscapes, and of the discourse between human and ancestral communities. Monument building may form part of a process whereby a substantial part of the material world is progressively 'decultured', as people invest more and more spiritual and physical energy in a smaller number of mythically significant locations. This builds upon the suggestion that the long term development of perceptual engagement of human groups with their physical surroundings is characterized by movement away from an entirely cultured landscape, towards conceptions of a 'natural' environment within which human, cultural life is articulated (J. Barrett, pers. comm.). 'Culture' is gradually withdrawn from the land, leaving 'nature' in its place. This is to reverse the traditional view which envisages nature and the wild being transformed over time into cultural objects, a context in which studies concerned with the emergence of monumentality are often situated. For example, Richard Bradley discusses the ultimately monumental elaboration of topographical features with long histories of veneration in terms of the 'translation' of these locales 'from the natural world to the world of human culture' (1993, 29), while Ian Hodder's extended study of the creation of European society *via* the domestication of the wild identifies long barrows and megalithic tombs as massive transformers of natural materials into cultural products, as mechanisms for social control of the non-social, or the wild (1990; see above p. 44).

I think control is an important issue here, but that the context and motivations are different. If the landscapes of mesolithic and earlier neolithic groups are infused with cultural forces, then the unfolding of daily life must work around the ever present possibility of an encounter with the deep streams of mythic power running through the land. Such considerations can substantially affect resource strategies, even where human relationships with the land are largely non-

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interventionist. Elizabeth Povinelli, for example, in a fascinating account of the collecting trips of Belyuen women, describes the complexities of negotiating what, where and when to collect in the unusually 'lively' landscape of northern Australia, in which they run the continual risk of treading 'on the fingers of a Dreaming' (1993, 682-3). As human populations begin to act increasingly *upon* the land, clearing larger tracts of woodland and beginning to break the soil, it may be that, consciously or unconsciously, they start to draw these forces into ever more tightly-defined locales, in effect fixing various metaphysical currents at a few specific points and leaving 'freer' spaces of 'nature' in between, over which human groups might more easily exert control. It is in this context that we might envisage the eventual construction of passage tombs at Loughcrew and the intensive accretion of monumentality here over time.¹⁰ In this way various strands of existence may become less closely entwined, its human element becoming more removed from other animate, inanimate and metaphysical categories.

Whereas the distance between people and mythic beings becomes greater, the discourse between them becomes increasingly humanized. The construction of monuments creates manmade points of contact between living and ancestral communities, where past, present and future can be given specifically human connotations. Moving from the earlier, more direct, personal and immediate contact with mythical powers through landscape, communication with these forces is now through the mediation of an ancestral community composed of past members of individual human groups, the power of which resides within the chambered cairns. Direct recourse to this generalized community of ancestors can be made by entry into the passage tombs, where the cremated remains of at least a representative group of people are housed.¹¹

Two possible developments may be considered here. Firstly, the number of individuals who make direct contact with the ancestors on behalf of the wider community may become increasingly limited, as ancestral validation of authority becomes more overtly linked to particular interest groups and specific individuals within them. Alongside this we might see a continued distancing of the human

5 *Loughcrew, County Meath*

group from the mythic forces it requires to sustain it, with approaches to these powers hedged round by more intensively prescriptive and esoteric knowledges, which in turn are more strongly monopolized by particular groups within the community. It is in this context that we might view the construction of massive tombs and the developing regionalization of the Loughcrew landscape. Continued wellbeing is now ensured through a strictly defined chain of contact, in which key figures belonging to certain solidarities appeal to ancestral authority, which itself stands between the living and greater forces. The human element of the discourse is here becoming ever more prominent; indeed ultimately, direct contact with the ancestors is eliminated, as in the potentially purely sculptural Cairn D at Loughcrew, with no access to an interior structure, and in the possible later blocking of some tomb passages and chambers (Sheridan 1986, 27). Commerce with the ancestral community now centres on the public, human space of the cemetery.

An important factor here, drawing us forward into the third millennium with the more internally inaccessible cist burials, ring-ditched barrows and cemetery mounds of the Irish later neolithic and early bronze age, may well be a growing concern with *ancestry* as opposed to the ahistorical, more generalized community of ancestors. (Paul Garwood draws this distinction with regard to the final neolithic/early bronze age barrows of southern Britain and the preceding megalithic monuments [1991]). It may be that the importance of kinship groupings with respect to ritual discourse becomes magnified, particularly in a context such as Loughcrew where a number of scattered communities are likely to have situated their points of mythical contact. Not only might ritual become articulated with stronger regard to lineage but, in a highly humanized context of ancestral mediation, relations of the living to mythical communities may be expressed genealogically. To illustrate this with a much later example, the genealogy Asser records for King Alfred, which will in part reflect genealogies constructed through generations of oral narrative, relates him ultimately, from the royal lineage and through a long line of named West Saxon heroes, to mythical figures of Germanic

5 *Loughcrew, County Meath*

cosmology and the origin myths of Genesis:

His genealogy is woven in this way: King Alfred was the son of King Aethelwulf, the son of Egbert, the son of ... [intervening generations] ... Ine, the famous king of the West Saxons, ... the son of ... [intervening generations] ... Woden, the son of ... [intervening generations] ... Seth, the son of Adam (Asser, *Life of King Alfred*).

The social memory of named individuals could be preserved in a material point of origin in the form of individual burial mounds or cairns, inscribing a historical, human-centred order into the landscape. The progress of generations through various lineages might be marked by the accretion of such monuments, or by repeated burials within primary mounds (cf. Barrett 1994b, 124-7). These named individuals would eventually become distant symbolic figures, threaded into legend and historical narrative and incorporated into mythologies. Reference could still be made within this scheme to the even more temporally distanced communities of the chambered cairns, many of which were by now ancient. Rituals and narratives centred on the ring barrows and round cairns placed around rather than on the Loughcrew hills would surely have drawn upon the passage tombs which had come to identify these peaks, and there is certainly evidence for continued deposition at some of these tombs into the late neolithic and early bronze age.

In one sense, then, Loughcrew will still operate as a transformational locus where the routines of everyday life can touch the deeper rhythms of existence. Over the course of the fourth millennium, in a cultural landscape which becomes increasingly naturalized and humanized, moving from a mythically significant locale into which the passage of individual lives is integrated, towards an architectural complex which articulates generations of human attachment to place, Loughcrew remains an expression of being *in place*, a focus for memory and narrative, for personal and communal biographies.

NOTES

¹In the recent literature the Newtown summit is not referred to by name. However, its importance within the Loughcrew range demands specific identification for ease of reference within the text. McMann's (1993) use of the traditional local appellation 'Carrigbrack' is unsatisfactory since it does not appear on modern OS maps. Thus, in keeping with the use of townland divisions as the identification basis for modern inventories of the Loughcrew cairns -- in particular the *Archaeological Inventory of County Meath* (Moore 1987; Herity 1974; Shee Twohig 1981) -- Newtown refers to the townland within which this particular summit lies.

²The provision of artwork on the kerbs of Irish passage tombs seems to have been of a generally limited occurrence. At present only fourteen tombs are positively known to possess decorated kerbs, from a total of about three hundred. Just 6.3% of the kerb stones surrounding the smaller tombs at Knowth are decorated; of these, tombs with largely complete kerbs may include only two to four decorated stones (Eogan 1984). At the main mounds at Knowth and Newgrange, respectively 57% and 32% of the kerb stones possess decorative motifs. Three kerb stones are decorated at Baltinglass (Shee Twohig 1981, 223), while at Dowth half of the kerb is hidden by cairn slippage; of the visible stones, 25% are decorated (O'Kelly 1973).

The kerb art at these tombs may have been preferentially preserved by such cairn collapse. At Newgrange, for example, the kerb was exposed for at most a millennium before being buried by cairn material, and possibly for a much shorter period of time (O'Kelly 1982; 1989). At Loughcrew the kerb stones may have been open to the elements for much longer as, unlike the mounds at Knowth, Dowth and Newgrange, the Loughcrew monuments are comprised exclusively of stone and may thus have been inherently more stable over time. In addition, McMann has noted the very rapid rate of erosion of the carboniferous limestone used at Loughcrew (1991); some of the motifs illustrated in the 1860s have completely weathered away.

The absence of kerb art does not of course preclude formulaic movement around the perimeter of the monuments. Rather, that some kerb stones *were* decorated seems indicative of a more general tradition of such a focus on the monuments' exteriors.

³Although modern authors all base identification of individual cairns on Eugene Conwell's original lettering scheme (1866), there are slight variations among them. Here I have followed the *Archaeological Inventory of County Meath* (Moore 1987).

5 *Loughcrew, County Meath*

⁹The earlier neolithic in Ireland, stretching from *circa* 4750 to *circa* 3950 BC, may be envisaged as a period of diverse economic practice in which hunting and gathering and agricultural strategies are carried forward side by side, along with various combinations of the two (Williams 1989).

¹⁰See Tilley 1994, 202-4 for a slightly different view of monuments anchoring human-ancestral-mythic connections in the landscape.

¹¹Running alongside the construction of chambered tombs in Ireland is a tradition of burial in individual graves, which stretches back at least into the mid fourth millennium BC (ApSimon 1986, Table 2).

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We keep passing unseen through little moments of other people's lives.

Robert Pirsig
Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance

The past is a complex in which the relations among time and place, space and distance, structure and event, potential and consequence, and individual and community, in passing from the realm of 'is' to 'has been', have become resources which are drawn upon actively to ensure the continuing possibility of 'may be' and 'might be'. In other words, the past provides us with expectations of how things are and how they should be, which allow us to make sense of the present and make commitments to possible futures. An individual draws on past experiences to build a forward trajectory of intention, continually recreating him or herself in the process. A community's narrative of existence establishes a contemporary pathway into a desired future -- which may or may not materialize -- by creating an interwoven web of references among past and present knowledges of living. The past as a tool of meaning, therefore, has to answer to the demands of the present; its realities are crafted and recrafted in response to contemporary needs, motivations and desires.

One of the themes which has emerged with some clarity among recent interpretive archaeologies is the temporal readjustment of perceptions of being in the world which are founded upon communal and individual identities of exclusion and which consequently focus upon the tenurial appropriation of strongly defined, bounded surface areas. Traditionally linked to the emergence of agricultural

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practices in Britain and Ireland during the fifth millennium BC, these conceptions of the relationship among various human communities and the landscape are being associated more and more with the apparent expansion and intensification of agriculture, particularly arable cultivation, in the early bronze age. At the same time, images of encultured landscapes in whose materiality both humans and mythic beings and/or powers are embedded and embodied are beginning to be applied not only to the hunting and collecting groups of the mesolithic, but to be drawn to a certain extent into considerations of communities of the fifth and fourth millennia and the first half of the third whose resource strategies, retaining a mobile dimension, include small-scale, shifting cultivation. The present study, placing emphasis upon the elaboration of pre-existing principles concerning the place of humanity within the cosmos, and the ultimate development of quite new conceptions of relationships among people and the land, rather than upon the introduction of new economic strategies *per se*, attempts to make sense of some aspects of 'the neolithic' on a similar basis, by constructing a series of small, extremely localized 'neolithics' which at a very broad temporal and regional scale can still be seen to move in a similar perceptual direction.

These interpretive archaeologies endeavour to build workable pasts: pasts that are internally consistent and constrained by given material and historical conditions and so are potentially liveable. At the same time, they form part of broader trends within the developed world of the late twentieth century, whereby particular aspects of the human and ecological past as well as rapidly disappearing elements of the present are drawn upon in an attempt to make sense of the contemporary world and ensure a liveable future. One of the central concerns, especially in the West, is the accelerating diminution of both biological and cultural diversity, processes which are in many cases interlocked. In recent decades the sophisticated knowledges of remnant ethnic groups have obtained renewed credence, particularly in the fields of nutrition and medicine, and international initiatives established to preserve the associated natural resources we had forgotten we needed. These groups have in turn taken advantage of such exposure, using the

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opportunity to give the reconstitution of traditional ways of life and the reassertion of distinct cultural identities political voice. In the heavily urbanized 'First World', where resource strategies are carried out on an industrial scale, we feel we are losing touch with the land; we suspect, uneasily, that our present condition is in some ways making less and less sense, leading us towards a future whose rationality we are beginning to question. Development, separating large sectors of the population from direct involvement in the land, is now seen as more than a loss of innocence: much worse, it is the abandonment of some of our practical and discursive knowledges of how to go on, and in some instances their irrevocable loss.

As it becomes increasingly apparent that the integral bonds between people and their environment, of which we have begun to feel the lack, are a strong thematic link among remaining small-scale agriculturalists and hunting and gathering communities, their general ethos seems to us to make more and more sense. It is surely no coincidence that the last twenty to thirty years have seen an ever increasing focus on the study of more mobile peoples within anthropology and latterly archaeology. In the writing of the journalist and traveller Bruce Chatwin, for example, the ethics -- as opposed to specific practice -- expressed in his elegant, celebratory evocation of the inextricably entwined threads of Australian Aboriginal kinship, landscape and being seem here, in our place and time, to simply *feel* right:

... like a baby's cry, each Ancestor opened his mouth and called out 'I AM!' I am -- Snake ... Cockatoo ... Honey Ant ... Honeysuckle' Each of the Ancients ... put his left foot forward and called out a second name. He put his right foot forward and called out a third name. He named the waterhole, the reedbeds, the gum trees -- calling to right and left, calling all things into being and weaving their names into verses.

...

[The Aboriginal's] religious life had a single aim: to keep the land the way it was and should be. The man who went 'walkabout' trod in the footprints of his Ancestor. He

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sang the Ancestor's stanzas without changing a word or a note -- and so recreated the Creation.

. . .

By spending his whole life walking and singing his Ancestor's Songline, a man eventually became the track, the Ancestor and the song (Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines*).

The chord this strikes with present sensibilities in the developed world is formalized in our contemporary concept of 'heritage', which has recently taken on more holistic connotations, encompassing a recursive relation between culture and ecology and recognition that sites of 'cultural importance' do not stand in isolation, but are connected by the movement of people across the surface of the earth along pathways of economic and moral significance. For example, in 1993 the World Heritage Committee redefined New Zealand's Tongariro National Park, already inscribed on the World Heritage List as a site of environmental importance, as a 'natural and cultural landscape', being of ritual significance to the Maori but not obviously altered by them. This was later codified in the inscription categories as an 'associative landscape', the criteria for which are the existence of intrinsic cultural, artistic or religious values with or without evidence for human intervention (Ucko 1994, xxi). The same Committee added the first linear route of movement to the List, the medieval pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela.

To place particular connotations upon elements of our past, bestowing them with values which respond to the need to make sense of contemporary events, is a strategic political activity which has material effects in the present. As the perceptual and conceptual worlds we build act upon the worlds that are, and *vice versa*, ironies and contradictions inevitably arise. It is this recursive dialectic -- which itself both carries forward the dynamic of understanding who we are and is the means by which we express this social knowledge -- that readily breaks down any apparent coherence within the trends outlined above.

Among the hunting and gathering groups and those practising small-scale agriculture which are becoming increasingly important within our constructed pasts, a sense of identity and 'belonging' may be established on inclusive principles,

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whereby 'being' is defined less by lines of descent than by drawing the material world -- including other people -- into the individual's own ambience (see above pp. 145-6). Maurice Bloch notes, for example, the way in which Zafimaniry communities of shifting cultivators regard the gradual disappearance of their rainforests, a result of overly intensive swiddening, in terms of an ethnic shift (1995, 64). The Zafimaniry are not simply becoming 'like' neighbouring Betsileo groups who practice terraced agriculture in areas of steppe grassland, but are actually 'becoming' Betsileo as the qualities of the landscape are transformed. On the one hand, even as Western powers meeting at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro directed attention to the loss of these tropical rainforests in developing countries, the last virgin rainforests in the temperate, predominantly developed zone began to be opened by the logging industry. On the other hand, contemporary reclamation of ethnic and cultural identities in the West is based around themes of difference and opposition, exclusive bloodlines and competing claims to particular, bounded areas of country. The armed conflicts and consequent abuse and starvation which are often the practical result of such claims in turn provoke large-scale migration, being one of the relatively few modern impulses for communal movement through the landscape.

This makes little sense to most of the people directly involved. The problem with the Krajina, according to the small group of Croatians who were born there, is that they no longer know anyone. The Bosnians alongside whom they grew up, who comprised 90% of the region's former population, have vanished. And these unfamiliar, perhaps not entirely welcome new neighbours ...? In theory, ethnic and religious soulmates: Croatians who have themselves been displaced from wherever they once felt at home. Fundamentalist ethnocentrism centred on solidarities of exclusivity has in fact become one of the keynotes for the end of the millennium -- so much so that after the latest Quebec referendum on secession, an offshoot of the long-standing *Québécois* demand for recognition as a distinct cultural entity within Canada, a spokesman who blamed the failure of the separatist campaign on the 'ethnic vote' seemed utterly unaware of the irony of his statement.

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So much for cultural diversity.

As ever, 'making sense' is inextricably embedded in the dialogue of competing interests. Thus, with regard to the ethnographic and archaeological input to the increasingly holistic orientation of attitudes towards the natural and cultural 'heritage', it is hardly surprising -- indeed it makes a bizarre sort of sense -- that the running controversy surrounding the 'respectful treatment' of the World Heritage Site of Stonehenge should focus upon the route of a kind of trackway, the A303.

Although fraught with contradiction, this hermeneutic task of creating coherent and liveable worlds -- the reflexive process whereby perceptions of material existence alter that materiality, which in turn acts back upon conceptual schemata -- is of paramount importance for the perceived wellbeing of human groups. Ways of knowing simply *have* to make sense. The interpretive challenge is to continue to draw social knowledges forward, so that ultimately they maintain enough sense, and the right sense. The emergence of monumentality within the three areas examined in this study, and the subsequent gradual shift in the nature of monumentality through the neolithic and into the early bronze age, are integral to such ongoing projects of interpretation; the monuments are dynamic media for local strategies which attempt to situate human groups, in specific times and places, within an ordered universe. In each region the megalithic tombs form part of material means of knowing how the interrelations among landscape, living and ancestral communities, and mythical life forces mesh in a unified whole. They contribute to a vision of existence which must be perceived as valid, at least for the time being, by the people involved; the social images they evoke both derive from and act upon existing social relations. At the same time, these historically and materially specific ways of knowing need not necessarily have been entirely mutually unintelligible. A general long-term dynamic may be proposed to extend through the neolithic in both Scotland and Ireland, whereby conceptualizations of society founded upon personal embeddedness in a thoroughly cultured landscape may gradually give way to those expressive of relations to the land in generational

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and ultimately genealogical terms.

The initial construction of chambered cairns develops within worlds of which the logic is revealed during and reaffirmed by routine and non-routine movement through the landscape. The Clyde cairns on Arran, possibly in tandem with single monoliths, emerge within a network of paths traversing the earth's surface, perhaps intensifying the sense of arrival and departure at particular points where trackways meet. Travelling from one significant locus to another along specified routes, the individual binds together diverse elements of the universe -- the land, the sea and the sky and their animate and inanimate qualities and inhabitants -- into an integrated physical and moral whole whose components are categorized not so much by their individual essence but by their relation to other constituent elements. The introduction, in the form of tombs, of an ancestral presence, force or value derived from specific human communities into nodal points in this framework marks the beginning of a process by which perceptions of the land become increasingly centred upon its human element.

The Arran tombs operate at a relatively large scale, directing the subject's focus onto distant and/or dramatic natural features -- islands, mountain peaks, the mainland -- and contrasts between land and sea, or between broad regions of rugged and more gentle terrain. The neolithic cairns in the Black Isle appear to mark transitional points of movement through a landscape regionalized at a rather smaller scale. Placed at or near the boundaries of a series of locales whose ecological and economic identities are almost completely masked by modern patterns of land use, the tombs, and potentially a number of standing stones before them, act as landmarks of passage among worlds both visible and invisible, as mnemonics for the interconnected existence of other communities, mythic, ancestral and living. The latter may not be physically far away, but may be to a certain extent isolated by topography, and so perhaps in some senses perceptually distant. The monumental elaboration of liminal areas in the landscape, which frequently carry connotations of risk, with a certain consistency of celestial orientation and internalized references to the preparation of food in the form of quernstones

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possibly built into the fabric of the cairns, may be an attempt to draw the more ephemeral, transitory and unpredictable elements of living such as the character of the seasons, the consequent level of success of diverse resource strategies and the health of the group into the reach of past communities. In particular, increasingly interventionist land management practices with roots in the mesolithic, which potentially disrupt the created order of myth, may be perceived to receive sanction and legitimation from the ever-present ancestral voice, which may mediate with higher authorities on behalf of the living. Here again we may see part of a process of humanization of the land, in which the character and values bestowed upon it are envisaged as in some way dependent upon the time scales and life trajectories of its human element, rather than as integral constituents bound into the timeless reciprocity of mythic creation.

The distinctive nature of the Loughcrew hills, rising from a broad expanse of rolling lowland terrain, suggests they were likely to have been accorded strong mythic significance by the hunting and gathering communities into whose ambit they extended. The architectural embellishment of the summits serves to further concentrate energies and powers within a primary locus, intensifying the delineation of a 'ceremonial country' which may be visited periodically by a number of widely scattered and still relatively mobile populations. The hills and the developing passage tomb cemetery upon them may therefore act as a metaphorical bond stretching across time and space to connect various human groups with each other and with the land. Whether these communities, which are likely to have been interlinked through a complex web of kin relations, converged upon Loughcrew at the same times of year, in tune with the passing of the seasons and mythical cycles, or rather incorporated their traditional veneration into varied and disparate communal journeys of which the spatio-temporal specifics may not often have coincided, each group of people would have been withdrawn from their own familiar landscapes into a shared country of ancestral and mythic importance, which had inscribed upon it material reminders of the inhabited worlds of others.

The topographical distinction between the inner landscape of the Loughcrew

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range and the wider world beyond is enhanced by the specific configuration of built form established upon the summits. The earlier, smaller tombs draw out qualities latent within the landscape, placing particular emphasis on prior, natural boundaries. Through time, the regionalization of this small stretch of upland landscape acquires increasing architectural definition, by means of which a series of interconnecting spaces emerge at a much more human scale. Movement among these focal areas may be constrained to follow ever more precise routes under the direction of authoritative figures, guiding the individual's perception of both inner and outer worlds and of their human inhabitants, and controlling his or her encounter with the mythical and ancestral forces embodied and/or embedded within the hills. Eventually the human element at Loughcrew becomes dominant: massive cairns are erected which project their presence far beyond the immediate locale, their long-distance visibility extended by the effects of increasingly intensive woodland clearance in the surrounding landscape.

Emphasis on bounding and the demarcation of place by means of the amplification of the land's given characteristics can also be identified in the Black Isle, where the tombs, often poised at perceptual, topographical and probably ecological transitional areas, are material foci which, as at Loughcrew, may serve to formalize routes of passage among the varied locales that make up the peninsula; these latter may take on more strongly delineated physical and conceptual boundaries as a result. This may be part of a process by which land comes to be conceived of in terms of two-dimensional surface area rather than as a sequence of interleaving or overlapping zones held together by a filigree of paths. Over time, the importance of the cairns and the boundaries themselves may come to reside less in their reference to moments of passage in personal and communal biographies, more in their definition of *domains* with clear peripheries that become focal points, and ultimately anchors, for biographical narratives entwining people and the land. 'Place', formerly evoked in terms of inclusive conceptual relations to other places, begins to be envisaged from a 'central point' perspective, as a locus from which the world is viewed and through which time passes, processes of mental and

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sensual perception that endow it with a particular and exclusive identity.

The Arran chambered cairns also draw out inherent characteristics of their surroundings, creating a naturally and architecturally enclosed area which, as with the passage tomb complex, both removes the subject to a small, inner world and encourages particular ways of seeing, interpreting and understanding the larger whole. Potential physical and intellectual structures become formalized within the landscape, rather than imposed upon it. Here too, however, the evocation of place may eventually centre upon the actual *site* of interpretive practice. The tombs and their integral inner landscapes may eventually attain greater significance than the moral and physical journeys they originally facilitated. Whereas individuals may once have sustained metaphorical bonds of being with specific yet interconnected points in the landscape, the symbolic resources of social knowledge are concentrated ultimately at primary points of communal, ancestral origin. The threads of commitment and obligation which embed people within the land have moved from the internalized discourse of an ongoing and generalized human community with the mythical forces of the cosmos, to articulation within the mediatory discourse of past knowledgeable members of specific human groups. The initial act of monumental construction and its subsequent elaboration, here as in the other study areas, would appear to mark a growing concern with the biographical narratives of individual communities, as opposed to narratives of living which bind the past, present and future wellbeing of humanity in a more general sense to that of the life forces running through material elements of the earth.

In all three areas, these long-term trends move into a higher register from the later neolithic onwards. The blocking of some cairn chambers, passages and/or forecourt areas prevents direct recourse to the symbolic resources of ancestral power. An effective boundary has been drawn between past and present members of the community, neither of whom may pass physically into the realm of the other; metaphors of movement seem now of diminished importance. As the undifferentiated communal ancestors become more remote, the role of specific

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ancestry -- in which emphasis is placed upon the relations of the community to the personal biographies of deceased individuals -- becomes implicated in efforts to 'place' people within social, material and metaphysical frameworks. The latest architectural and spatial developments at the Loughcrew complex, for example, may well have formed part of material strategies through which were engendered particular structures of authority carrying the potential for substantially heightened individual prominence within increasingly exclusive kinship solidarities.

The landscape begins to take on a historical, human-centred order which may be mapped by means of disparate local strategies: the construction of internally inaccessible round cairns and earthen mounds over the remains of these more 'personal' ancestors, for example, or the insertion of individual burials into the chambers or fabric of earlier tombs, may be regarded as media for the establishment of specific temporal and 'biological' points of origin for various descent groups. Diverse genealogically-oriented social orders, and their structural relation to earlier, more general ancestral groups and mythical origins, may be expressed by the clustering of round cairns near megalithic monuments, or by their distinctly separate and contrasting placement, as well as by successive interments in and/or around the early bronze age cairns.

Not only does the landscape now carry within it material reminders of particular life spans and the specific relation of individuals, but its spatial configuration and regionalization is sustained with reference to that record of memory. As agricultural practices become more intensive and parts of the land begin to be divided into more linear patterns of grassland and arable cultivation, two-dimensional tenorial appropriation of the land surface may operate at the level of distinct lines of descent within the community, rather than on a larger-scale, communal basis. The specific location of material references to various lineages may be of crucial import in the spatio-temporal legitimation of tenure. So, for example, the placement of some bronze age round cairns near ancient boundaries in the Black Isle, in close proximity to the mortuary monuments of antiquity, is perhaps concerned less with the transitional character of their locations -- which in

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any case may have become less physically apparent by this time -- than with the role of named ancestors, mediating with older, higher authorities, in the maintenance of traditional rights and obligations of resource appropriation in the fixed, demarcated locales they overlook. Gradually, during the course of the neolithic, the connotation of statements like 'this is our country' seem to have shifted from 'we are in the features of this landscape and they are in us, and our wellbeing is a matter of reciprocal caring and obligation', to 'we make an exclusive claim over this area of land, and our wellbeing depends upon the maintenance of our responsibilities towards our forebears who laid a like claim upon it'.

Such shifting perceptions of the interrelations among people and the land are engendered by the routine practices of inhabiting the landscape, by engaging with its specific materiality from day to day, season to season, lifetime to lifetime. People, by 'living in the world as they found it', enter into an ongoing dialectic of dynamic interpretation. The world each generation finds is, after all, different from that which existed before. But moments of other, past lives are inextricably bound into the physical, social and intellectual landscapes of these created worlds; the echoes of their voices and their knowledges are drawn forward along various interpretive pathways in the project of putting the present 'in place', of making sense of what is, now.

'Sometimes,' said Arkady, 'I'll be driving my [Aboriginal] "old men" through the desert, and we'll come to a ridge of sandhills, and suddenly they'll all start singing they'll say, "Singing up the country, boss. Makes the country come up quicker."

...

'Then I suppose ... three hundred miles of steel, slicing through innumerable songs, are bound to upset your "old men's" mental balance?'

'Yes and no,' he said 'Besides, they've seen far worse than a railway'

'Perhaps,' I suggested, 'they could sing the railway back into the created world of God?'

'You bet' ... (Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines*).

Appendix A

View characteristic analysis

Following the methodology established by David Fraser in his study of the Orkney chambered cairns (1983), the views of the surrounding landscape from the monuments on Arran and the Black Isle were examined with regard to distance visibility. The extent of the view was recorded around the compass in sectors of 30 degrees, in terms of three distance bands: *close*, maximum visibility 500m; *medium*, visibility 500m-5km; *far*, visibility beyond 5km. Readings were taken from the entrance area of the chambers wherever possible, and from in front of the broader end of the non-megalithic long cairn Glenurquhart I. The results of this analysis are illustrated in Figures 7.1-7.12, the monuments appearing in the order in which they are discussed in the main body of the text.

The form of these circular view characteristic diagrams is intended to represent in graphic form the nature of the subject's field of vision at each monument. The individual's point of view, standing in the entrance area, is the centre of the circle; the arrow indicating the alignment of the passage and/or chamber points towards the entrance and the interior of the monument. To take the diagram for East Bennan as an example (Fig. 7.1), the observer facing the tomb entrance has a medium distance view to his or her left (here the rolling ground at the south coast of the island) and a far view to the right (the sea, the Scottish mainland, Ailsa Craig), while beyond the body of the tomb visibility does not extend beyond 500m. Standing at the entrance looking out, the view ahead is again a close one, extending to medium distance on the subject's right hand.

Occasionally the view in some directions was entirely blocked by the unnatural density of modern forestry plantation. Distance visibility estimates were

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possible for some sites by reference to contour maps and old photographs, but in a few cases view assessments were simply too uncertain -- the relevant sectors are indicated on the diagrams.

The view characteristics most clearly defined among the Arran tombs are that close views frequently confront the observer looking out from the tomb entrance area (e.g. Figs. 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4a, 7.6a), and that it is when the subject stands facing the monument that long distance views are generally revealed, often extending directly behind the silhouette of the cairn mound (e.g. Figs. 7.2, 7.3b, 7.4a, 7.5b, 7.6b). This correlates to, on the one hand, the establishment of a curtailed, withdrawn, dramatic focal area stretching out in front of the entrance/forecourt area and, on the other, to the directed contemplation of the wider world beyond with reference to -- in effect visually and perceptually 'through' -- the chambered cairn.

Because this type of analysis considers only the *extent* of visibility in terms of distance and width of view, not the *nature* of landscape visibility, the image of the monumental locale which emerges is of a very coarse resolution, with the subtleties of the relationship between the monument and the land remaining elusive. The diagram for Torrylin cairn (Fig. 7.2a), because it cannot take account of the physically constraining effect of the Torrylin Water to the west and northwest, does not reflect the opposition between the enclosed dramatic area fronting the entrance and the distant world beyond the tomb as clearly as, for example, the same configuration is delineated in the diagram for Monamore (Fig. 7.3b). Similarly, the diagrams for Tormore II and Moss Farm (Fig. 7.6), unable to distinguish uninterrupted views from glimpses of the farther landscape beyond a strong local horizon, fail to capture the interplay between the more closed-in, intimate view of the world obtained *from* the monument looking out, and the view of the world beyond, which is revealed to the observer from the perspective of this small, immediate locale, looking *on* at the tomb itself in relation to the wider landscape.

Among the sites in the Black Isle there is a notable tendency for panoramic

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views of several kilometres depth to be opposed around the rest of the compass by views extending to only 500m, and for chamber entrance orientation to be independent of these particular visual and physical qualities of the landscape, maintaining with one exception an easterly directionality between northeast and east southeast (e.g. Figs. 7.7b, 7.8, 7.10, 7.11a, 7.12a). In part this reflects the topography of the peninsula as a whole, dominated by the central, linear mass of the Millbuie Ridge, with the tombs in many cases situated high up on its flanks, looking out over rolling firthlands backed by the distant highland massif. But real choices are also indicated: the geographical nature of the Black Isle cannot be regarded as determinant, since it would have been perfectly possible to position the monuments in locations without wide, extensive views over the surrounding landscape, or where there is no contraposition of closed and open views.

Two of the diagrams which stand out particularly are those for Carn Urnan and Muir of Conan (Fig. 7.9). The effect of the hillcrest location of the Clava passage grave is reflected in the 300 degree extent of views exceeding 5km depth of visibility. A very similar diagram results for the completely differently situated Muir of Conan chambered cairn, on the side of a minor undulation in a broad, flat landscape. As before, because the distance bands do not differentiate long distance views stretching beyond more immediate horizons, the nature of the land-monument-person relationship does not emerge with great clarity: the diagram does not register the directionality of the locale towards which the monument seems to gravitate, which in reality falls predominantly in the southern half of the compass, between northeast and southwest.

Fraser's view characteristic methodology will not allow for the fractured, incomplete and biased worlds we create for ourselves. Rather, it strives to lay bare the whole, to regard it from a detached and neutral stance. But what I think has emerged from my application of a methodology of inhabitation is that these monuments only work *because* they play on our expectations and desires, on our susceptibility to suggestion, on the uneven nature of impression in time and space and on the ambiguity of interpretation. The individual becomes implicated in an

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intellectual universe through his or her active physical engagement with its material elements. To try to isolate each of these elements, to categorize them and in so doing to attempt to endow them with a secure and independent objective existence, is to create another world, but one of reduced dimensions, simplistic and yet at the same time often inaccessible, which bears little relation to our own sophisticated, sensual experience. Views are not, after all, apprehended in 30 degree sectors, still less in the 10 degree slices of Fraser's original analysis, but in broad sweeps of the eye, in the interplay of the body with light, air, mass and density, and in the often unexpected insistence of peripheral sensation.

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that this type of analysis simply reiterates some of the most obvious elements of the interaction among subject, architecture and landscape that were, in fact, among the first to impress themselves upon mind and body during the field encounters with the monuments, which included the on-site recording of detailed written descriptions and general reflections. I would argue that the textual medium communicates much more effectively the nature of physical engagement with the landscape, in terms of both natural and built form, in that it can embody the fragmented yet interwoven character of sensual perception, in which expectations of and sensitivity towards aspects of the material world blend with mental suggestion and physical sensation to create a particular *impression*, rather than a fixed *image*, of place. Rather than viewing the world as a series of clearly definable components, the reader inhabits the more familiar, more challenging world of flexible categories and shifting boundaries, of the dialectic between subjectivity and objectivity, and of things felt more than seen.

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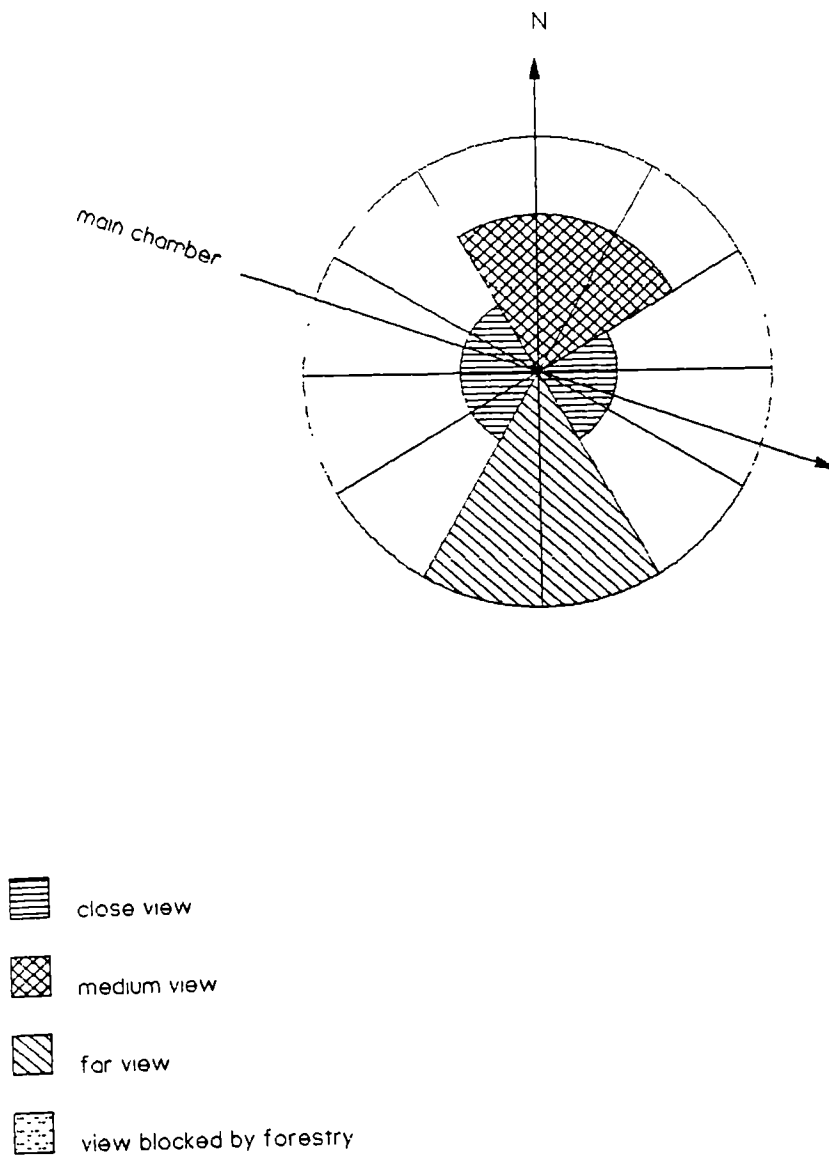


Figure 7.1 View characteristic diagram: East Bennan.

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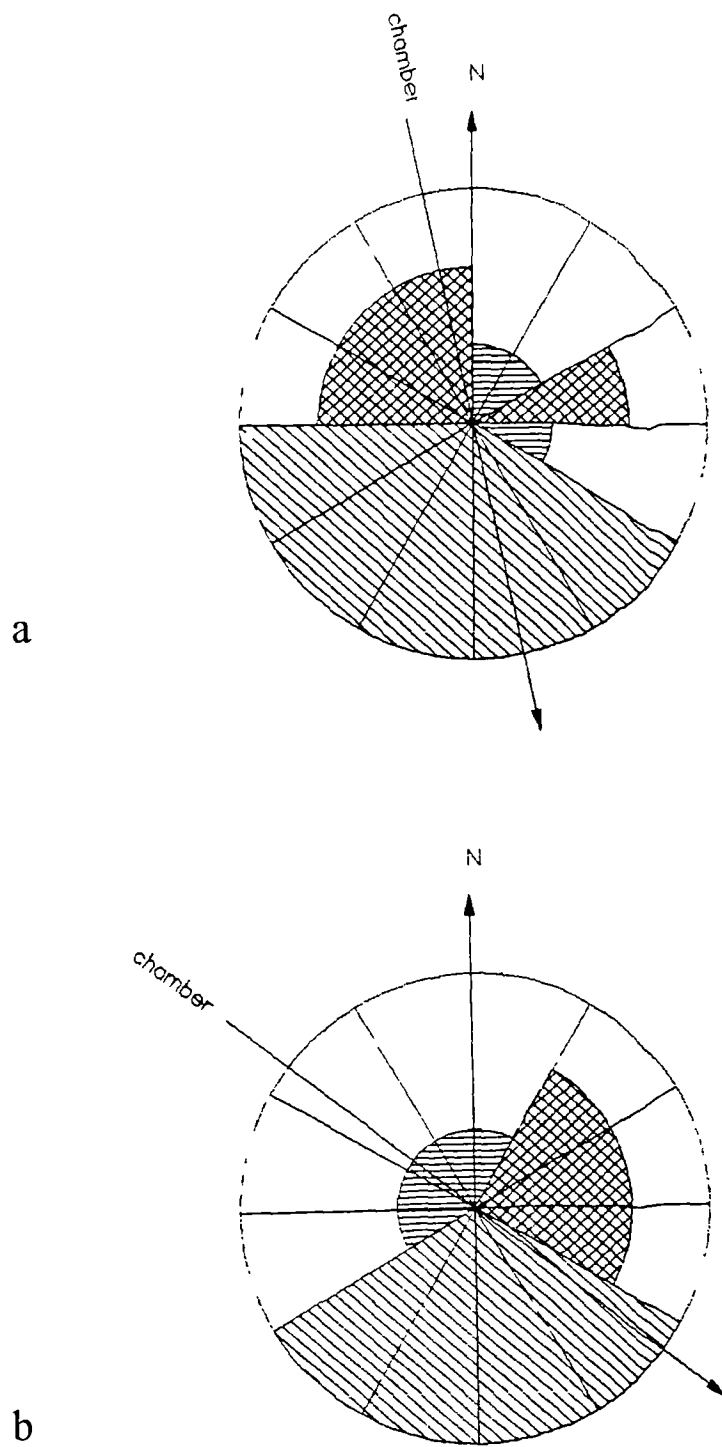


Figure 7.2 View characteristic diagrams. a: Torrylin b: Clachaig.

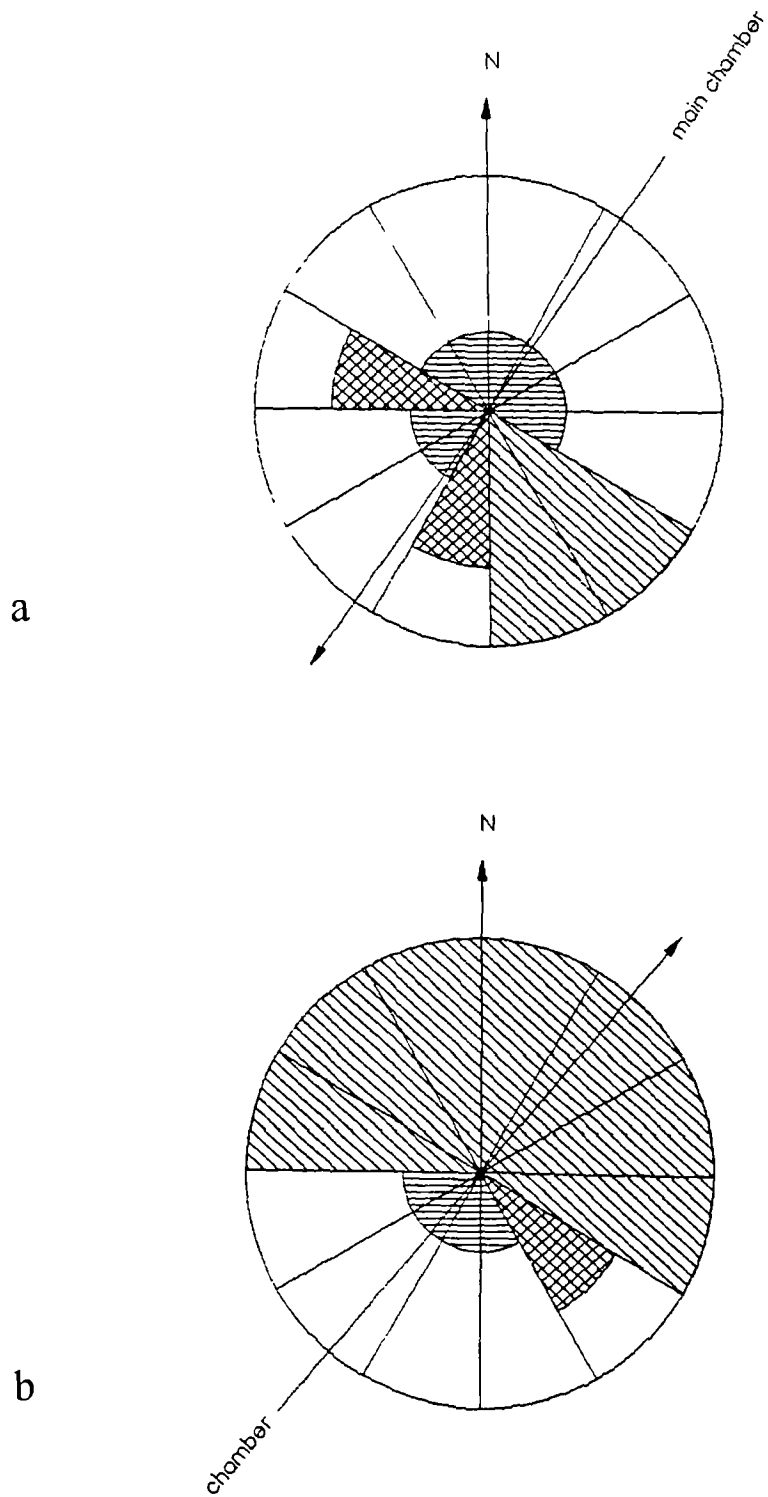


Figure 7.3 View characteristic diagrams. a: Carn Ban b: Monamore

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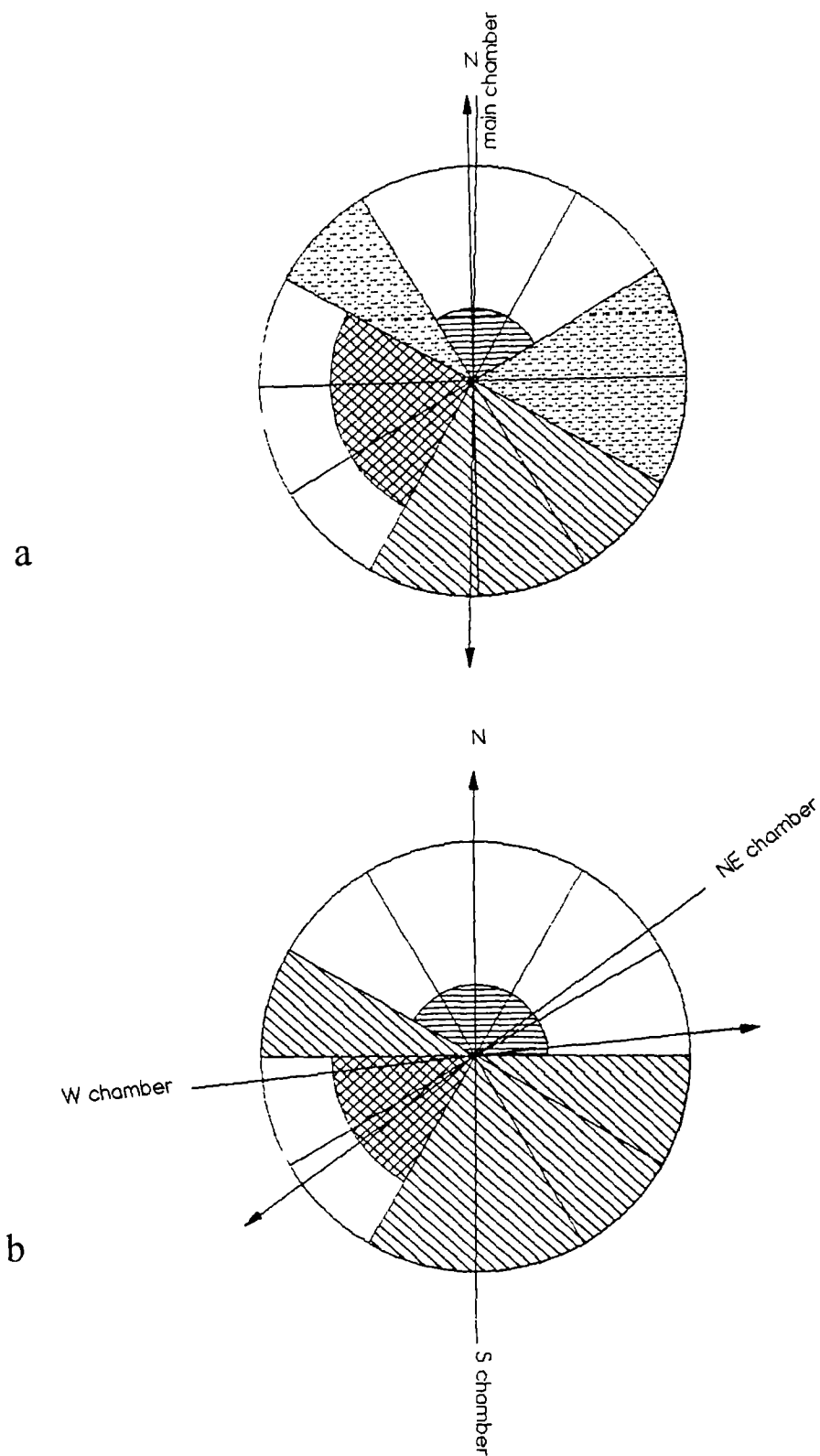


Figure 7.4 View characteristic diagrams. a: Dunan Beag b: Dunan Mor

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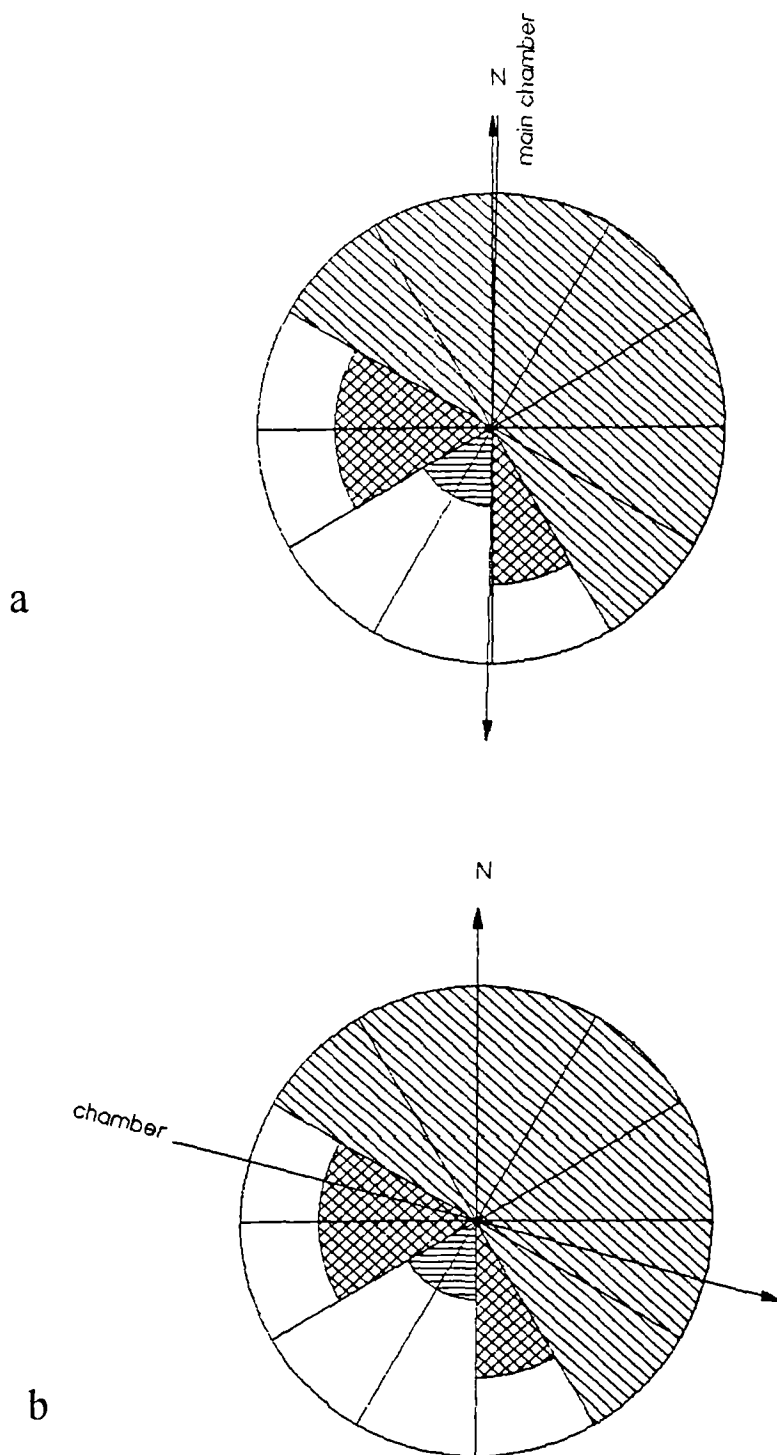


Figure 7.5 View characteristic diagrams. a: Giants' Graves b: Giants' Graves South

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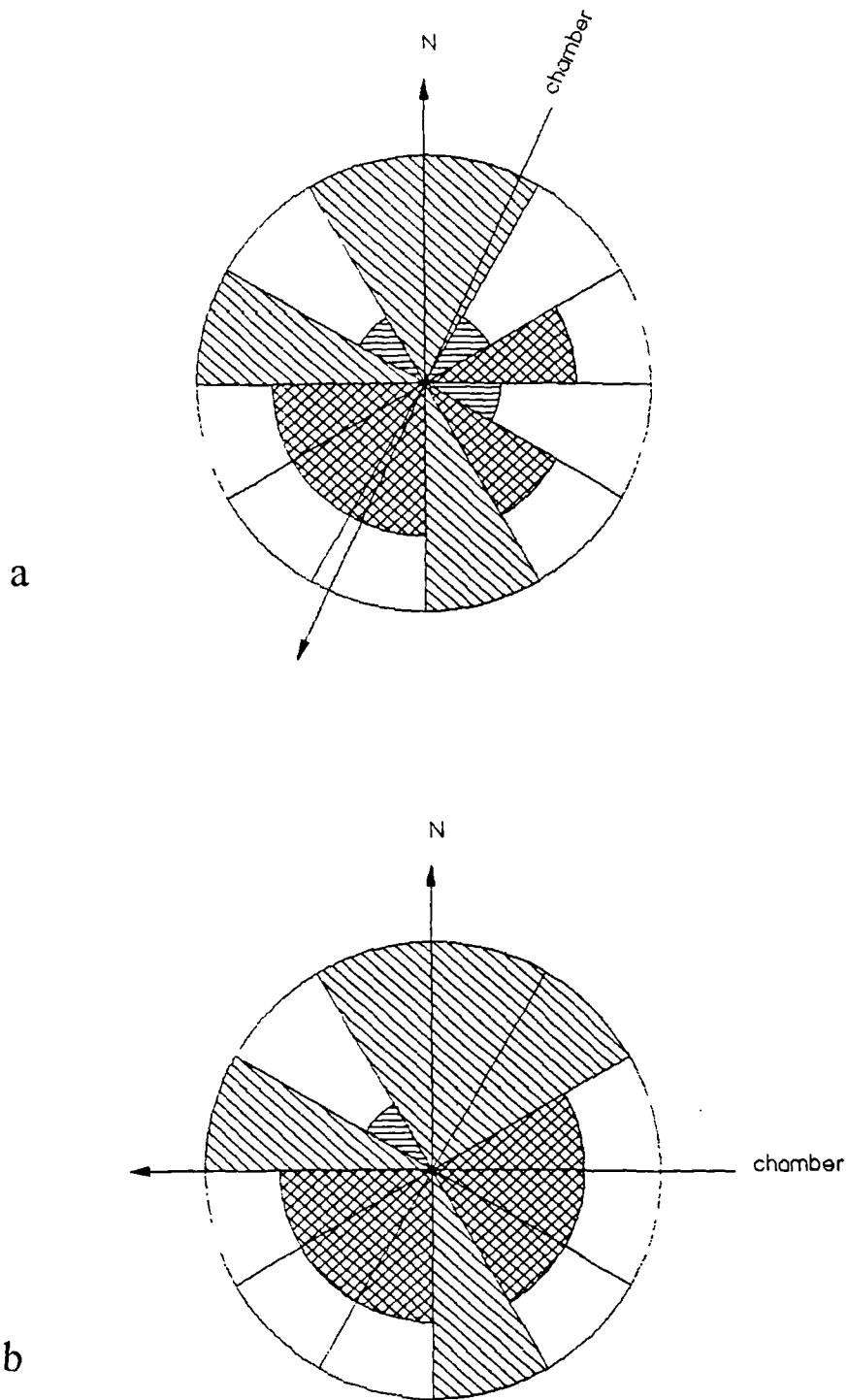


Figure 7.6 View characteristic diagrams. a: Tormore II b: Moss Farm

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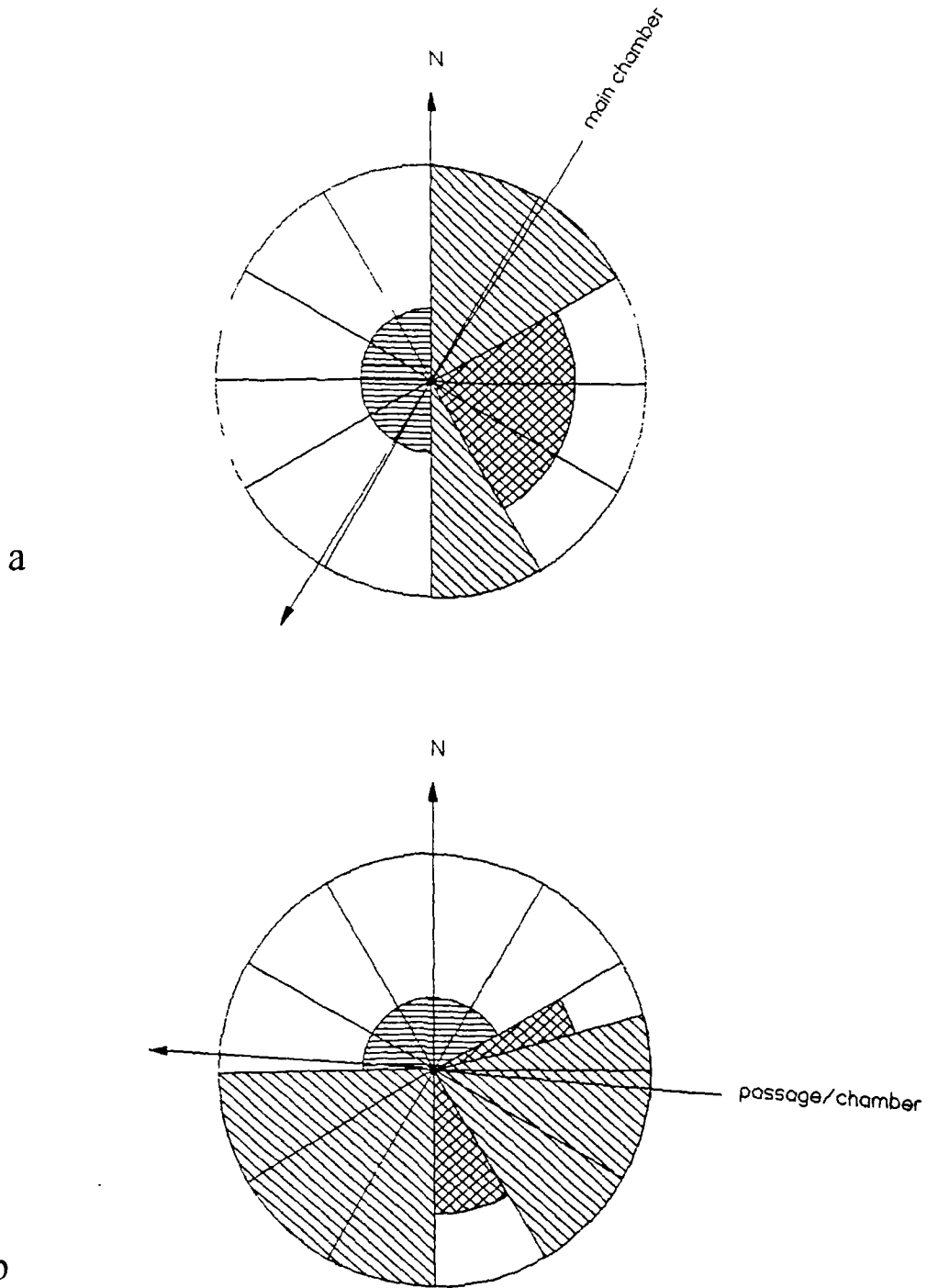


Figure 7.7 View characteristic diagrams. a: Tormore I b: Kilcoy North.

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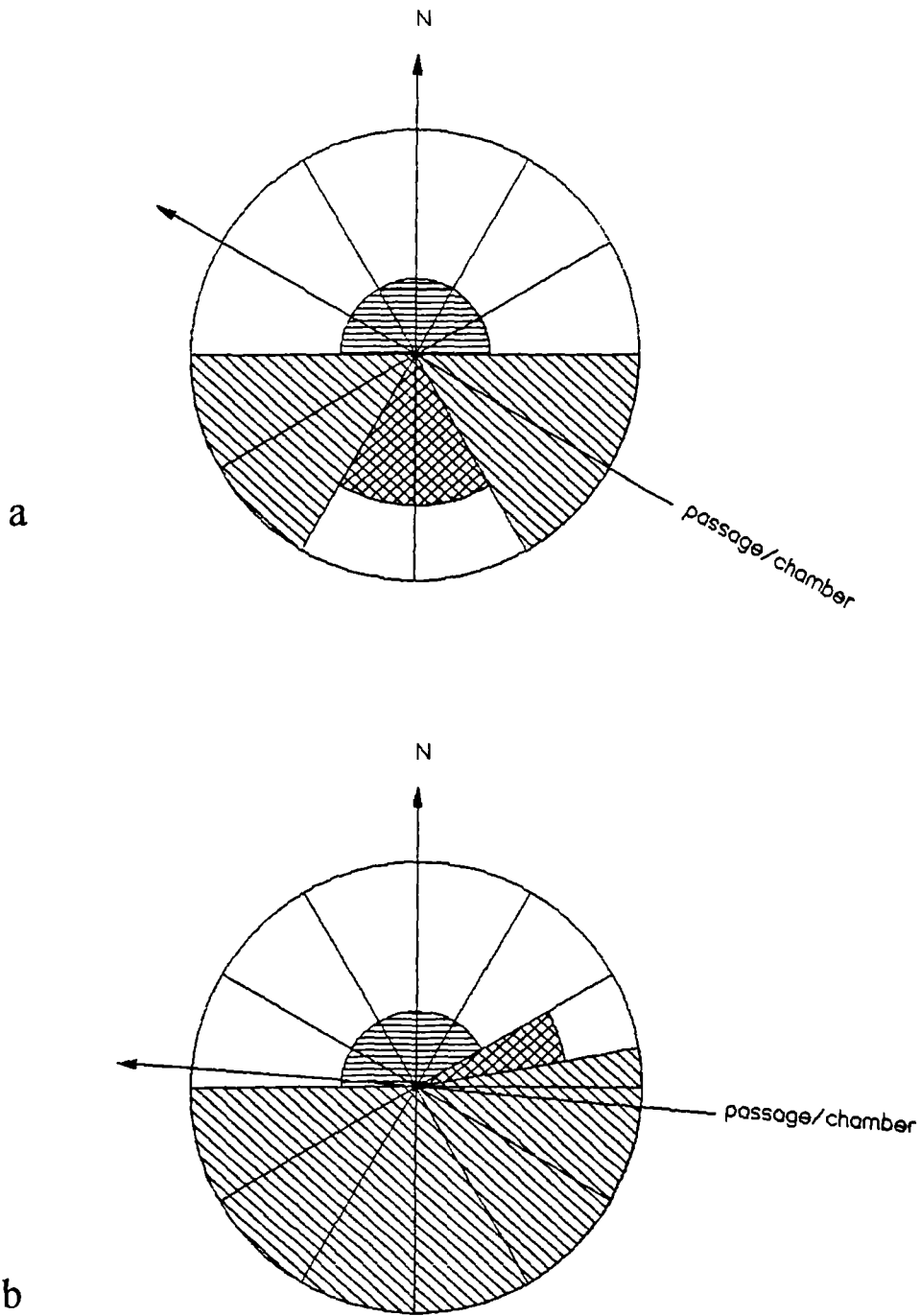


Figure 7.8 View characteristic diagrams. a: Kilcoy South b: Carn Glas.

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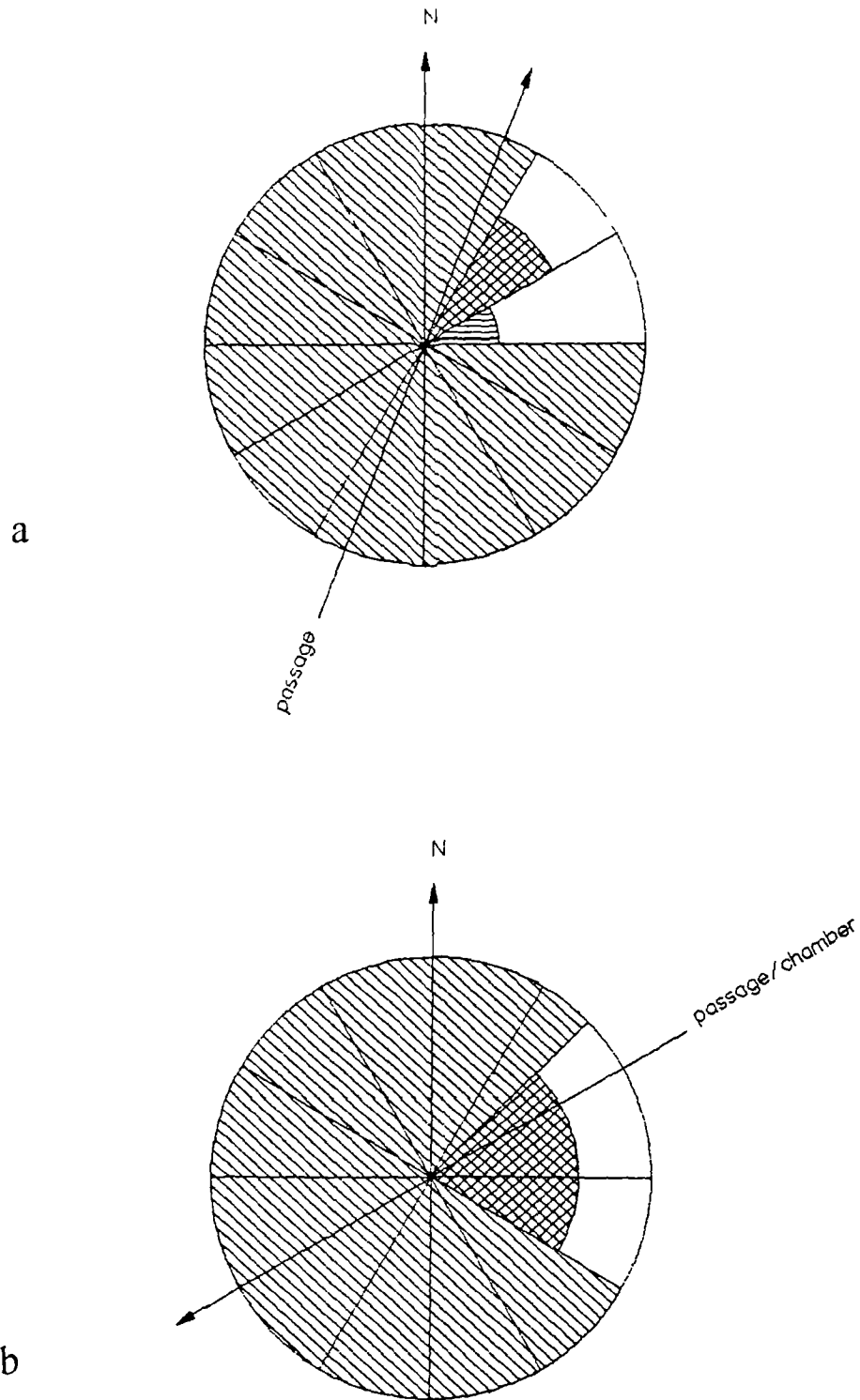


Figure 7.9 View characteristic diagrams. a: Carn Urnan b: Muir of Conan

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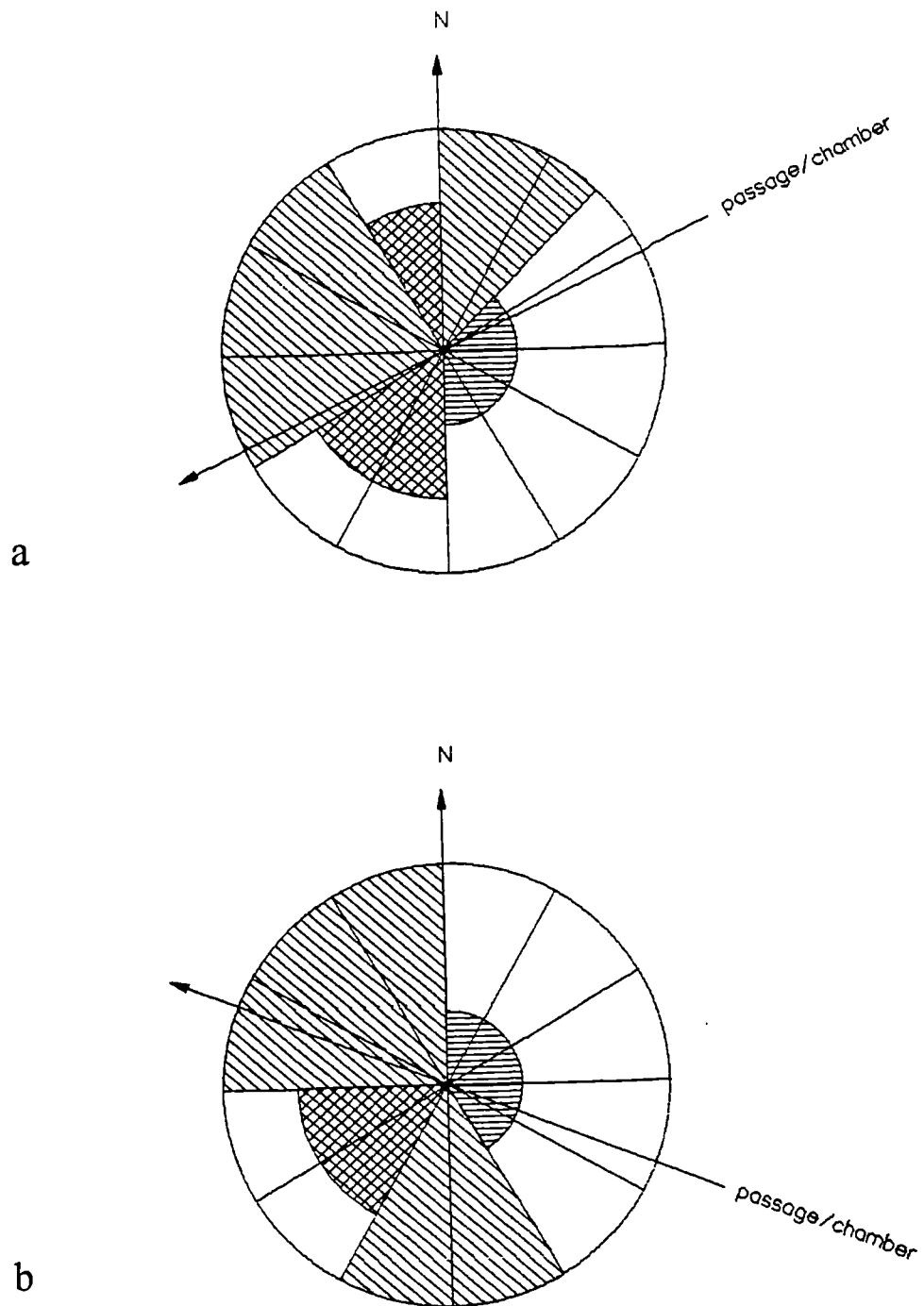


Figure 7.10 View characteristic diagrams. a: Bishop Kinkell b: Balvaird.

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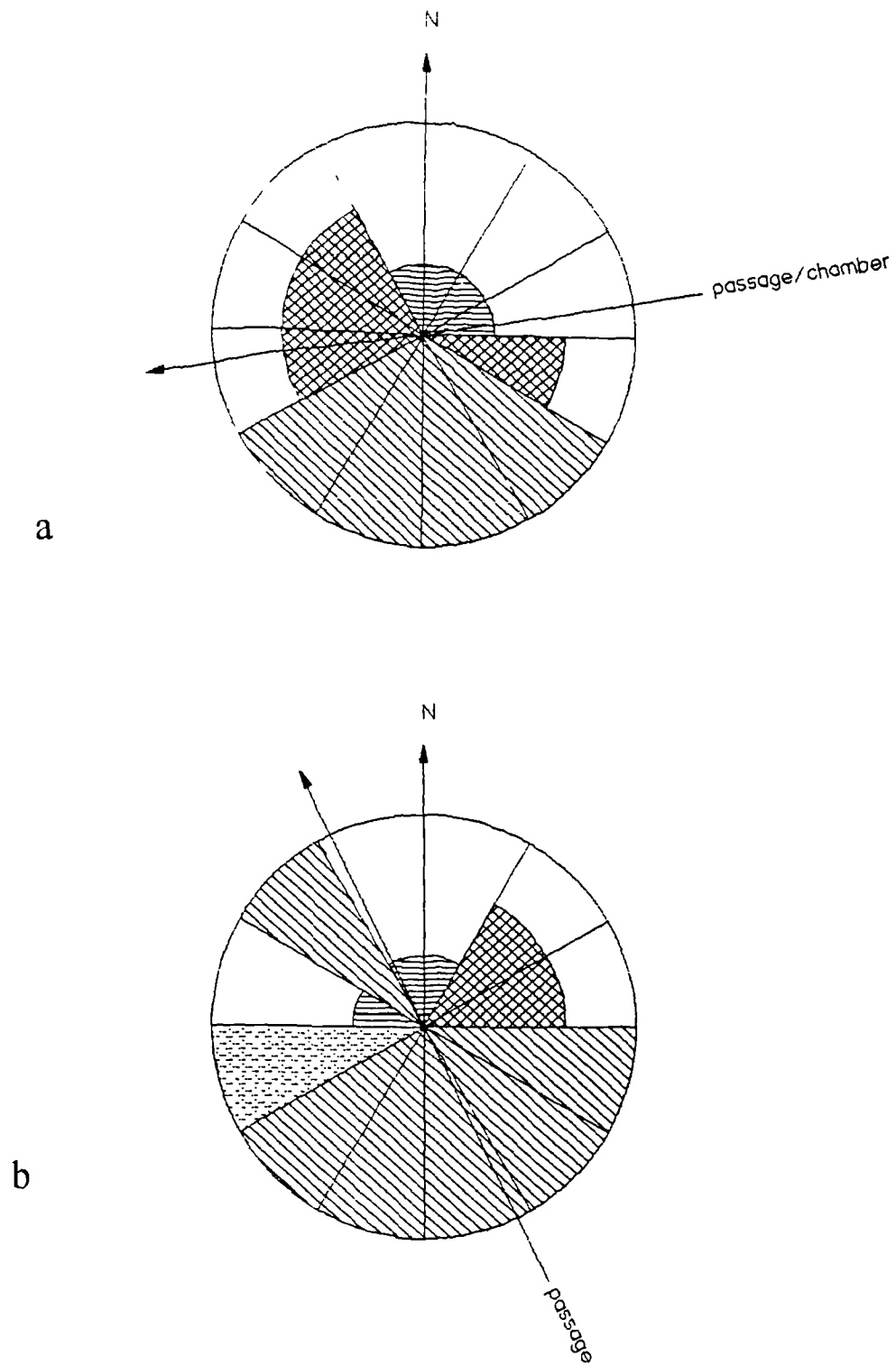


Figure 7.11 View characteristic diagrams. a: Balnaguie b: Belmaduthy.

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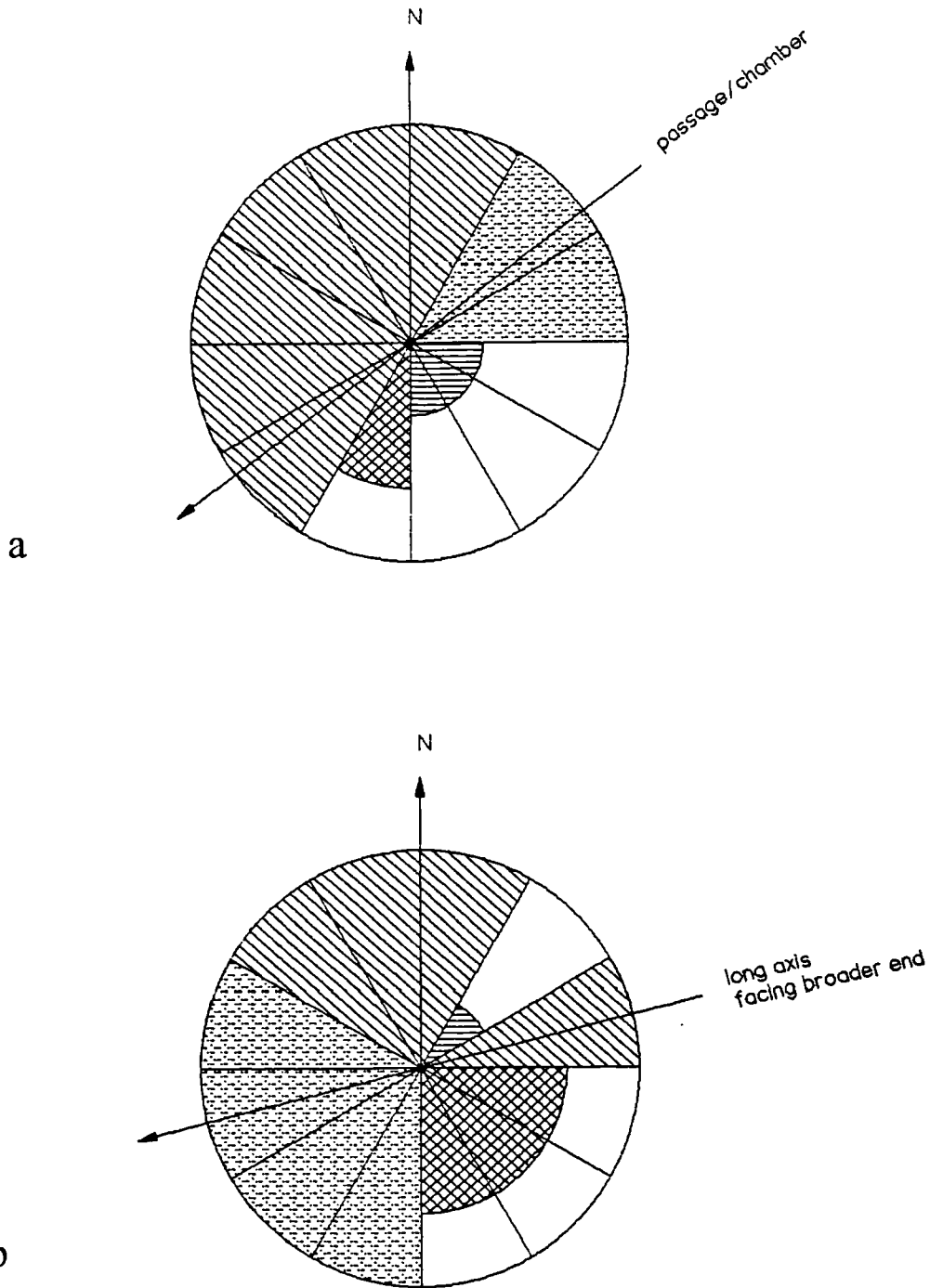


Figure 7.12 View characteristic diagrams. a: Woodhead Round b: Glenurquhart I.

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Environmental reconstruction

The Isle of Arran

There are four pollen diagrams relevant to the reconstruction of the prehistoric landscape within which the chambered cairns on Arran operated (Fig. 8.1): Auchareoch, 1.5km south southeast of Carn Ban (Affleck, Edwards & Clarke 1988); Machrie Moor, 550m north northeast of Tormore I (Robinson 1981, 1983; Robinson & Dickson 1988); Monamore, at the site of the cairn itself (Durno 1964) and Moorlands, 375m southwest of Moss Farm and 400m west of Tormore II (McIntosh 1986).

The Machrie Moor diagram is the most informative of these, acting as a foundation to which the others add support and occasional details. The sampling interval is relatively small (4-8cm), there is a series of radiocarbon dates which follow a consistent, rational sequence, and a wide range of species is represented, providing good biostratigraphic detail. Interpretation of the other diagrams must take into account various associated problems and so can only operate on a more general level. Two other pollen diagrams from cores in the north of the island provide a comparison with the landscapes of the chambered tombs -- Glen Domhain (Steven & Dickson 1991) and Loch a'Mhuilinn (Boyd & Dickson 1987).

Machrie Moor

The peat core from Machrie Moor covers an extensive time scale in terms of vegetational history. Robinson's palynological zones 4a (earlier sixth to later fifth millennium BC) and 4b (later fifth to mid fourth millennium) are of interest here, as they bracket the period of establishment of the chambered cairns. The

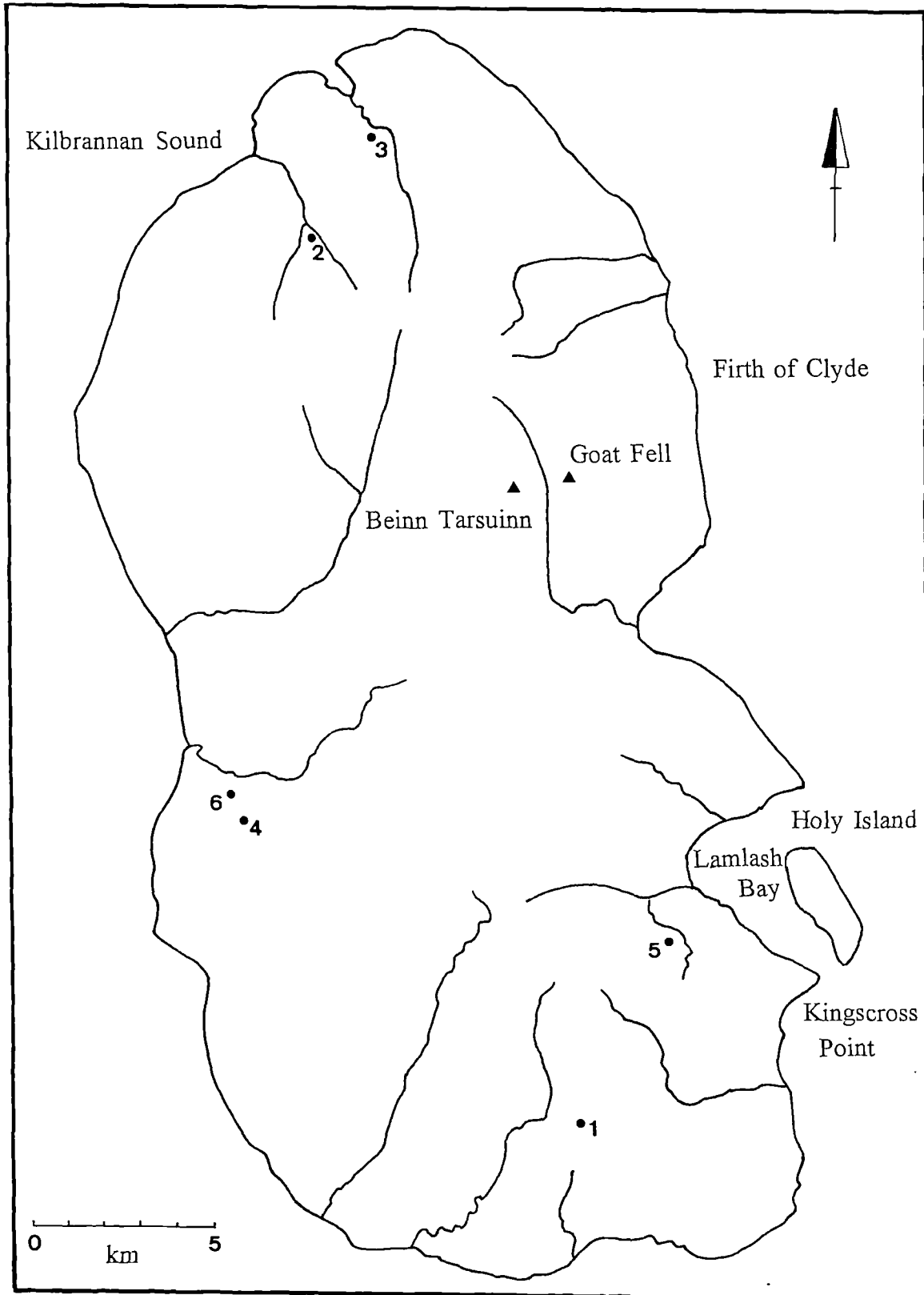


Figure 8.1 Pollen cores and column samples on Arran: sites mentioned in the text. 1: Auchareoch; 2: Glen Domhain; 3: Loch a'Mhuilinn; 4: Machrie Moor; 5: Monamore; 6: Moorlands.

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pollen spectra indicate an open environment for the Shiskine Valley, of either sparse woodland or scrub. Arboreal pollen levels are extremely low: the maximum, excluding consistently over-represented Coryloid, is only 45% of the total land pollen. Coryloid (probably *Corylus avellana*, hazel) values exceed 25% in Zone 4a, indicating local and extra-local abundance.¹ Hazel would therefore seem to have been the predominant canopy species. *Betula* (birch) is also well represented, being only slightly less abundant than hazel. The dominant vegetation, then, is mixed hazel-birch woodland, the strong representation of herbs (30-50%) supporting the hypothesis of an open canopy. *Plantago* (plantain), for example, is absent from closed woodland, *Filipendula* (meadow-sweet) is widespread in open woods and *Rumex* (sorrels and docks) are characteristic of meadows, pastures and disturbed ground, as is *Lotus* (birdsfoot trefoil), which avoids woodland altogether.²

Alnus (alder) will have colonized the wetter areas, along the banks of the burns and in boggy expanses, and thus will have been of localized distribution. Alder is a light-demanding species, again suggesting an open habitat. Local and extra-local stands of *Quercus* (oak) and *Ulmus* (elm) will have been present on the deeper, better-drained and more fertile soils (e.g. brown earths) in more sheltered positions off the valley floor, while the percentages of *Fraxinus* (ash) and *Salix* (willow) are so low as to indicate only the occasional specimen. The exposed nature of the site is likely to have discouraged colonization by the larger, more mature tree species. *Pinus* (pine) values do not exceed 5%; its consistent and massive over-representation among pollen spectra means that here its pollen can be assumed to be of mainland origin.

The immediate environment will have been comprised of fen-carr vegetation, with the water table very close to the land surface. Alder will tolerate standing water, and many of the herb taxa represented in the diagram prefer wet conditions, such as *Sphagnum* and *Equisetum* (horsetail).

It would seem that the extremely open character of the landscape was due in large part to long-standing human interference in and management of the woodland

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canopy. Robinson suggests this begins during the later eighth millennium BC, with peaks in *Empetrum* (crowberry) and *Calluna* (heather) values demonstrating the spread of heathland, possibly encouraged by the increasing acidification of soils consequent upon artificial fire clearance. The occurrence of species which frequent grassy, open habitats (e.g. sorrels and docks, Ranunculaceae) indicate woodland clearance on a small scale continuing through the seventh and into the sixth millennium. In this connection it is interesting to note the possible link between human disturbance and the spread of alder, in particular where the initial rise to high levels of alder pollen is preceded by charcoal in the profile (Chambers & Elliott 1989). This occurs in the Machrie Moor diagram, where the alder rise dates to 5750-5310 BC,³ and at Loch a'Mhuilinn sometime during the earlier to mid sixth millennium. At Machrie Moor another clearance episode falls in the earlier to mid fifth millennium (Zone 4a), with oak, birch and elm values falling, Coryloid pollen reaching a peak, and the occurrence of *Hedera* (ivy) and ash, both of which respond favourably to a reduction in the arboreal canopy. Robinson postulates a time scale for this episode of less than two hundred years.

More consistent management strategies seem to be represented by the fluctuations in arboreal pollen evident in Zone 4b. The pollen curves suggest that oak and alder are in decline, while light-seeking herbs are on the increase. Coryloid pollen levels continue to rise and high percentages of charcoal are recorded. (Hazel colonization may in fact be facilitated by fire in some cases.) The increase in *Calluna* and other Ericaceae (heaths) probably reflects colonization of cleared, acidic soils; *Potentilla* (common tormentil, barren strawberry), another taxon which favours acidic heathland and grassland, is also present. Although the first definitive evidence for cereal cultivation occurs at the end of Zone 4a (cf. *Hordeum* -- barley), pastoral agriculture was probably of greater impact, following through into Zone 4b. Plants recognized as classic 'followers of humans' such as *Plantago lanceolata* (ribwort plantain) and *Urtica* (nettles) are consistently represented in this latter period.

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Moorlands

Although the resolution of the pollen diagram prepared for the Moorlands coring site on Machrie Moor is not as fine-grained as Robinson's due to increased sampling intervals, it essentially confirms his vegetational reconstruction, with generally decreasing levels of arboreal pollen, a Coryloid peak and an increasing charcoal count, and the presence of species common to open grassland and moorland, both grazed and ungrazed, such as Gramineae (grasses), heather, crowberry, common tormentil/barren strawberry and *Rumex acetosa* (common sorrel). In addition, Cerealia (cereal type) pollen grains have been tentatively identified as barley and wheat (cf. *Triticum*).

It should be noted, however, that the dating of McIntosh's diagram derives from the correlation of pollen curves to Robinson's diagram for Machrie Moor (1981). This is notoriously difficult given that both sedimentation rates and percentages of pollen from local, extra-local and regional source areas vary between different localities within the same basin; in addition, this procedure is based on the assumption that the same vegetational events are synchronous in the same general area, a premise which is not necessarily valid over even a very restricted geographic distance (Watkins n.d.). One other point to note with regard to the Moorlands diagram is the similarity among the tree pollen curves, which suggests that pollen percentage variation may be due more to occasional disturbance within the sedimentation sequence than to actual vegetational change -- though at this fairly coarse level of resolution this is not so significant as to alter the overall interpretation radically (R. Watkins, pers. comm.).

Auchareoch

Auchareoch is a mesolithic occupation area defined by dense lithic scatters and fire spots, from which dates spanning the seventh millennium BC have been obtained. The site sits on a sand and gravel terrace and has been heavily disturbed by quarrying. The pollen diagram derives from a soil monolith taken from one of the quarry faces and is not directly dated; the relationship between the monolith stratigraphy and a radiocarbon assay giving a date range of 7040-6560 BC⁴ from

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the same quarry face is as yet unclear.

On the basis of combined pedological and palynological considerations the diagram has been divided into three zones, in all of which lithic artefacts occur. Zones I and III, the latest and earliest respectively, show a preponderance of heather and grasses, while Zone II is dominated by Coryloid and grass pollens, with significant representation of alder, ribwort plantain, *Pteridium aquilinum* (bracken), Cyperaceae (sedges) and Filicales (ferns). Charcoal concentrations are generally high, and cereal type pollen was identified within each zone.

The sandy, mineral matrices at Auchareoch are not conducive to pollen preservation, so the diagram may be biased by preferential preservation or degradation whereby some species have survived better than others. There is, for example, no willow present in the diagram, which is significant in that this is a pollen which corrodes easily -- although granted the representation of willow at Machrie Moor was never particularly high. On the other hand, resistant *Polypodium* spores are represented. The prominence of easily identifiable Coryloid and alder pollens and the high percentages of damaged and indeterminate spores and pollen grains also strongly suggest pollen degradation on a substantial scale. The reliability of interpretation of Zones I and III in particular is questionable, given that preservation was so poor as to permit only two counts for each zone. Thus, vegetational reconstruction can provide only a very general picture, potentially biased and incomplete.

Given these limitations, it is still possible to extract some general information from Zone II of the diagram. The indications are for open scrubland or very sparse woodland, dominated by hazel -- probably small, isolated stands of trees scattered over grassland. At this altitude the vegetation may well have been more stunted than in the Shiskine basin. Birch seems to have formed a very occasional component of the arboreal vegetation, while alder will have been restricted to the banks of the burns nearby. Although oak charcoal was recovered from the site, oak and elm are not represented in the pollen profile. Even if this is due to pollen degradation, these species are likely to have been insignificant within

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the immediate landscape, their pollen probably deriving primarily from regional source areas (R. Watkins, pers. comm.). The high percentage of herb pollen in relation to arboreal pollen, as well as the presence of open ground taxa such as plantain, *Succisa* (scabious) and Ranunculaceae, would tend to confirm the extremely open nature of the site.

This environmental reconstruction can be held to be generally applicable for the landscape around Carn Ban chambered cairn, 1.5km to the north northwest; here an even more open locale may be envisaged due to the extreme gradient of the slope upon which the monument lies, with perhaps a greater component of heaths and bracken.

The accumulation of hillwash to a depth of perhaps 1.5m within the forecourt area of Carn Ban may be the result of clearance and/or cultivation upslope. Audrey Henshall suggests that the portal stones and facade orthostats were set into eroded soil which had already begun to build up against the cairn, since the bases of the portals are positioned 80cm above the chamber floor (1972, 61). At Auchareoch, the presence of cereal type pollen in each zone -- in particular its representation in excess of 2% of the total land pollen in Zone II -- and of pollen from plants characteristic of disturbed ground, such as *Artemisia* (mugwort and wormwood) and Cruciferae, is taken to indicate agricultural activity at or near the site; the apparent increase through time of heathland may be associated with anthropogenically induced environmental pressure (Affleck, Edwards & Clarke 1988, 53; 56). Unfortunately, the problematic nature of the pollen stratigraphy at Auchareoch prevents a date being assigned to these developments, with which the soil erosion at Carn Ban may be connected.⁵

Monamore

Two pollen diagrams were prepared for this site. One sample was taken from the upper part of a layer of colluvium overlying turf which had formed on top of the forecourt blocking, while the second sample derived from blanket peat farther up the hillside.

There are several problems to be considered here. Firstly, there are no

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radiocarbon dates tied into the sequence. Durno links the two diagrams by means of pollen curve correlation, whereby the forecourt sequence begins prior to and overlaps with the initiation of the blanket peat sequence. The event he uses for this correlation is a sharp decrease in arboreal pollen accompanied by increasing heaths, which is ascribed to the mid first millennium sub-Boreal/sub-Atlantic transition. However, in addition to the difficulties of curve correlation noted above, the situation is exacerbated by the dissimilar matrices of the two samples. It is assumed that sedimentation rates are constant between the diagrams, but there is a possibility that the forecourt soil profile is in fact condensed, thereby altering the relative positions of pollen fluctuations (R. Watkins, pers. comm.). In addition, comparison is difficult given the potentially biased environmental indications derived from soil pollen percentages. In the absence of a good chronostratigraphic framework for each profile, all that can really be said is that as the forecourt sample is post-blocking, it should date to some time after the first half of the third millennium BC, the date range obtained for charcoal directly beneath the blocking material.

Other problems are the restricted range of species identified, which constrains interpretive resolution, and the use of a different pollen sum than the other Arran diagrams, which makes comparison difficult. This permits only a limited interpretation, and one which does not relate to the earliest phases of monument construction and use.

Again, the major arboreal components are hazel, birch and alder, the latter probably fairly dense along the burns. As postulated for the landscape around Carn Ban, woodland was likely to have been relatively open on the steep slopes, including the immediate environs of the chambered cairn, while on the flatter areas the occasional stand of oak and elm may have formed part of the canopy. In the lowest section of the forecourt sample (accepting Durno's relative chronology, the earliest deposits), the percentage of arboreal pollen is low, while grasses are fairly well represented. Small percentages of ribwort plantain and Compositae also occur here. These are taxa of open habitats and disturbed ground -- ribwort plantain in

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particular has long been associated with human activity, including cultivation.

Through time we see increasing deforestation, with good representation of sedges, grasses and heaths. Herbs such as sorrels, docks, common tormentil/barren strawberry, *Succisa pratensis* (devil's-bit scabious) and *Galium* (goosegrass, crosswort and bedstraw) occur in the diagrams, all characteristic of pasture and/or ungrazed grassland.

Other soil columns analyzed from this site tend to confirm the hypothesis of relatively open ground which may be extended back into the earlier neolithic. The accumulation of hillwash in the forecourt area seems to have begun not long after the construction of the cairn; it is suggested that this erosion may have resulted from cultivation, over-grazing or burning of the hillside to improve grazing (MacKie 1964, 12; 30; 33). The establishment of an open landscape may considerably antedate monument construction at Monamore, given that the cairn was built upon a turf ground surface. For turf to form, stable, open conditions must persist for some length of time, which correlates well with evidence for possible clearance episodes on Arran from the later eighth millennium.

Glen Domhain

The peat core from which this pollen diagram was produced was taken from the point at which Glen Domhain, a gorge of V-shaped profile in northwestern Arran, adjoins the wider, shallower valley of Glen Catacol. Lithics of mesolithic type have been recorded from Catacol Bay, just over 2km to the northwest (Lacaille 1954). The diagram has been dated by analogy with the radiocarbon-dated diagrams for Machrie Moor and Loch a'Mhuilinn, with reference to events such as the primary elm decline and rational limits for various tree species. The problems with pollen curve correlation noted above are applicable here, although the use of two separate diagrams from the north and south of the island should give somewhat tighter chronological control.⁶

The palynological results indicate the absence of closed woodland in the glen over the last nine thousand years. Alder will have colonized the valley floor along the stream banks, open hazel-birch woodland will have covered part of the

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glen slopes, while *Calluna* heath seems to have formed a major component of the immediate landscape. The woodland canopy appears to have reached its most mature development on Arran during Zone 2 (earlier sixth to earlier fourth millennium BC); within this local pollen zone the total arboreal pollen (excluding Coryloid) is extremely low, never exceeding 40% of the total. The proportions of open ground taxa are significant during this phase, the species represented including birdsfoot trefoil, devil's-bit scabious and/or *Scabiosa columbaria* (small scabious), *Polygala* (milkwort) and *Drosera* (sundew). The authors refer particularly to the latter, which are so intolerant of shade that they will survive only in full sun or in an open shrub community (Steven & Dickson 1991, 504). Disturbance indicators such as ribwort plantain, mugwort and/or wormwood make their first appearance during the fifth millennium; Steven and Dickson see this, together with decreasing values of already sparse oak, as representative of regional woodland clearance.

In the following zone (earlier fourth to earlier second millennium BC), light-demanding heaths and herbs continue in importance while tree and shrub values decrease over the period from a maximum, excluding Coryloid, of 30% total pollen.

The landscape around Glen Domhain and Glen Catacol, then, seems to have been similar to that of Machrie Moor in the period under discussion -- if anything, even more open than the latter. The nature of this landscape would seem to result from a combination of anthropogenic factors, soil and climatic conditions and possible natural burning and grazing.

Loch a'Mhuilinn

Loch a'Mhuilinn lies at the edge of Glen Chalmadale, in the far north of the island. The core stratigraphy extends over some eight millennia and has been directly dated by a series of radiocarbon assays. Two local pollen zones are of relevance here: Zone 4 (early sixth to early fourth millennium BC) and Zone 5 (early to mid fourth millennium).

In Zone 4, moderate birch, oak and alder values are maintained (10-22%,

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10-24% and 15-25% respectively) while Coryloid levels centre on 30% of the total land pollen. Fluctuations in the birch and oak curves can be correlated, whereas those for alder and Coryloid pollen have different profiles. This is taken to indicate separate areas of woodland of different character in the vicinity of the loch: mixed birch-oak, alder-rich and hazel-rich. Total arboreal pollen excluding Coryloid reaches a maximum of 60% in this zone, suggesting a denser canopy than that postulated for the sites discussed above. Heather and grass pollen values remain steady but fairly low throughout the period (average 2.5% and 9% respectively).

The following zone is dominated by a series of substantial fluctuations in pollen values in which peaks of alder, birch and Coryloid pollens alternate with those of grasses, with relatively low values maintained in between. The authors discuss the implications of these fluctuations at some length, concluding that either sedimentation processes affecting this part of the core are responsible or that the diagram does in fact reflect local and extra-local vegetational change in the form of a continuing sequence of woodland clearance and regeneration. Although the paucity of charcoal fragments and weed taxa in this zone might suggest that natural factors are affecting the pollen profile, Boyd and Dickson ultimately favour human intervention, citing peaks in the bracken curve -- a species which responds to opening up of the canopy -- and in that of corroded pollen, which seems to be predominantly of grasses.

Conclusions

The existence of six separate pollen diagrams for an area of roughly 400 square km permits an extremely detailed assessment of the prehistoric landscape. The picture which emerges indicates that the traditional view of the Arran chambered cairns being inserted into largely closed-canopy woodland (e.g. Fairhurst 1981) can no longer be sustained. Rather, it is evident that these monuments were erected within a landscape of which the extremely open character is likely to have been of considerable antiquity.

The post-glacial forest never attained the maturity seen elsewhere in

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southwest Scotland, partly due to the delaying effects of the ocean barrier in species colonization and dispersal, and partly as a result of human interference. The exposed nature of much of the island is not optimal for tree growth or regeneration, therefore even low density, seasonal occupation and clearance episodes of relatively short duration would have substantial long term effects on the fragile island ecosystem (Robinson 1983). Once the woodland canopy was removed, low-lying soils would tend towards acidification as a result of exposure and the oceanic climate, encouraging the development of blanket peat and colonization by heath and moorland plants (Robinson & Dickson 1988). A current programme of field survey on Arran is beginning to add weight to the palynological framework, producing evidence for mesolithic occupation on a scale far greater than previously recognized, some in close proximity to the later chambered cairns (H. MacKerrell, pers. comm.; see Gorman, Lambie and Bowd's entries for Cunninghame District in *Discovery Excav. Scotl.* 1993).

These observations have important ramifications. First, dense arboreal vegetation will not have impeded various sightlines to and from the Arran monuments to any great extent, allowing visual connections to be made between the architecture and natural landscape features. The evocation of place at and around these monuments during the neolithic and later periods was not based upon the visual solitude and instantaneous impact which applies today to those cairns confined within forestry plantations. Secondly, the chambered tombs can no longer be regarded as a type of marker denoting substantial change in economic practice and land management. Rather, they drew upon and formed part of perceptions of the environment which had been developing over three millennia, perceptions which encompassed the concept of active intervention in the 'natural' locale.

The Black Isle

The northeast of Scotland has seen relatively little palynological research concerned with reconstruction of the Holocene vegetation, so that our understanding of the area is largely restricted to regional generalities. There are no

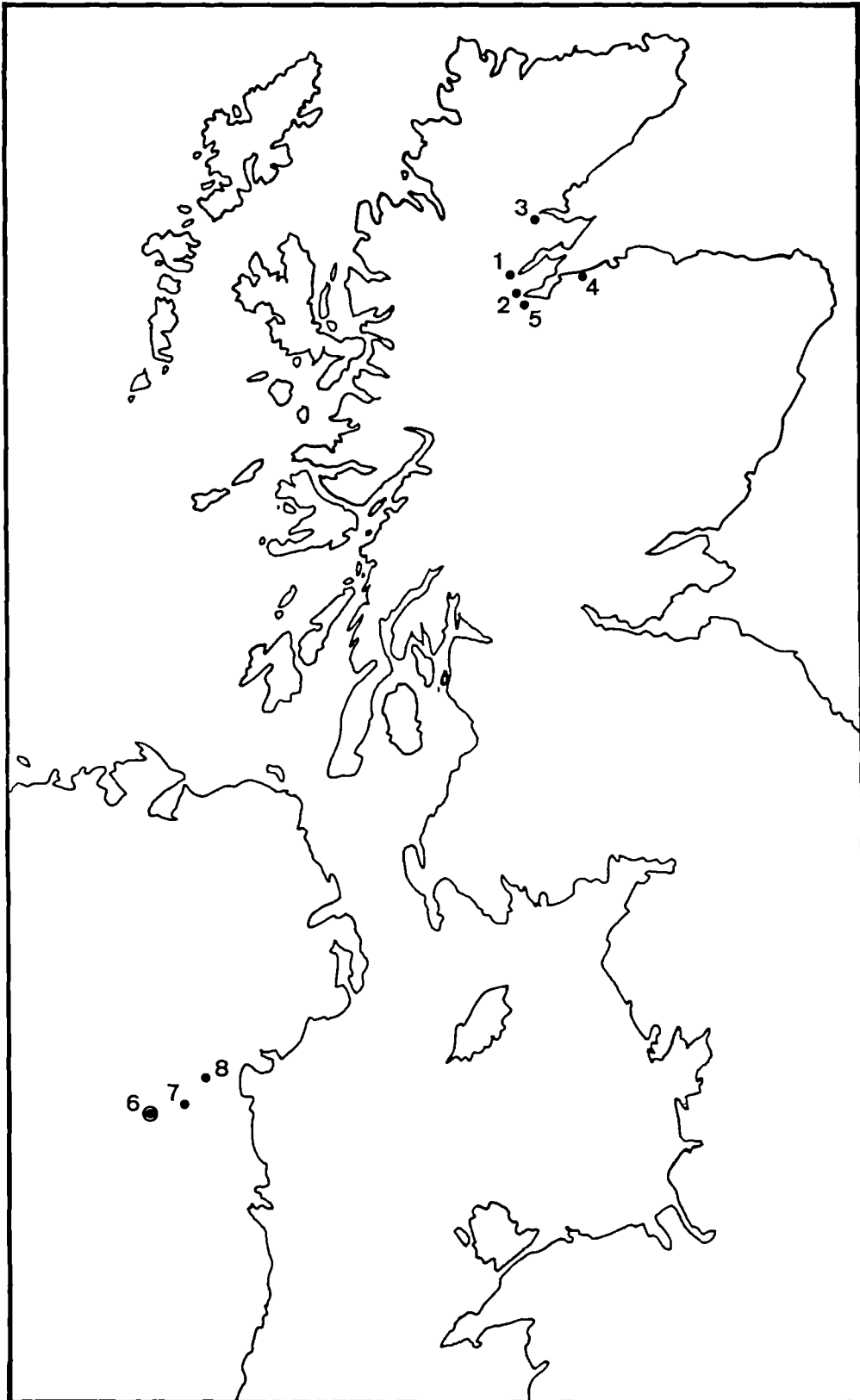


Figure 8.2 Pollen cores near the Black Isle and Loughcrew: sites mentioned in the text. 1: Arcan Mains; 2: Barnyards; 3: Coire Bog; 4: Kingsteps Quarry; 5: Moniack; 6: Loughcrew; 7: Moynagh Lough; 8: Redbog and Essexford Lough.

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pollen diagrams for the Black Isle peninsula itself, and studies from only two sites in the vicinity have any bearing on the landscape into which the non-megalithic long cairns and chambered tombs were inserted (Fig. 8.2): Moniack, 8km south of Balvaird and south southwest of Kilcoy North and South (Haggart 1987; Firth and Haggart 1990) and Coire Bog, 34km north of Carn Glas and Carn Urnan (Birks 1975). The considerable distances involved rule out extrapolation of the local habitat at these sites to the immediate environs of the neolithic monuments; the most that can be said is that in this part of Scotland, given the right conditions, similar plant communities may have flourished in parts of the Black Isle (R. Watkins, pers. comm.).

Moniack

Two pollen diagrams were prepared for this site, from cores taken at the edge of a broad alluvial fan around the Moniack Burn. Situated at the head of the Beaully Firth, the site is today 4km from its southern shoreline; the interleaving bands of silts and clays, peat and alluvial deposits revealed by a series of boreholes indicate that shifting sea levels have affected past conditions at the site, with fluctuations among marine, estuarine, freshwater and terrestrial habitats.

The dating of related vegetational shifts is not unproblematic. Although four radiocarbon dates are associated with one of the pollen diagrams (Core 4), they bracket a considerable gap in which pollen has not been preserved within the mineral matrices. This interruption of the pollen curves is so substantial as to make any attempt at correlation with those of the undated diagram (Core 29), and consequent estimation of a chronological sequence for the latter, impossible. Lithostratigraphic and biostratigraphic comparisons have been drawn instead from two sites near the neck of the Black Isle peninsula, Barnyards and Arcan Mains (Haggart 1987, 92). However, this introduces further problems of interpretation, as the peat layer corresponding to the final regression of marine conditions, estimated to fall in the mid fifth millennium BC at Moniack Core 29, gives a radiocarbon date in the earlier to mid fourth millennium at Core 4. Haggart proposes that either peat initiation around Core 4 occurred substantially later than at the higher

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altitude of Core 29, or that the penetration of the peat by tree roots from a higher level has resulted in a date perhaps a millennium too young (Haggart 1987, 92; Firth & Haggart 1990, 129).

The result of these ambiguities is that the chronostratigraphic framework for vegetational zones of potential relevance to the present study is extremely hazy. At Core 4, Zone 4 correlates to a band of organic clay which lies in the uppermost levels of a stratigraphic sequence dated to the late seventh to early sixth millennium BC at the bottom, and to the earlier to mid fourth millennium at the top. It is this latter date range which is potentially five hundred to a thousand years too young. At Core 29, the initiation of Zone 5 is estimated to lie in the mid fifth millennium; bearing in mind the difficulties involved in identifying the elm decline in a region in which elm was never plentiful (Edwards & Ralston 1984, 21-2), it is possible that the zone ends with the primary elm decline, an event which seems generally to fall in the earlier fourth millennium. The following zone sees subsequent fluctuation in elm values, before the final disappearance of elm from the pollen spectra in Zone 7.

The percentages of arboreal pollen in Zone 4 of the diagram for Core 4 are strongly influenced by local environmental conditions. Although total tree pollen excluding Coryloid reaches 85%, alder values account for 55-60% of all pollen, the species thriving in the damp soils around the Moniack Burn. Density estimates for the surrounding woodland are therefore not feasible on the basis of the pollen diagram. We can, however, note the suggestion that whereas closed-canopy forest seems to predominate in northeast Scotland between the Firth of Tay and the Moray Firth in the earlier fourth millennium, woodland cover becomes increasingly open from the Black Isle northward (Tipping 1994, 29). The local alder woods at Moniack are not likely to have been of entirely closed character either: alder itself is light demanding, while among the dominant grasses and ferns of the immediate environment, the pollen of species largely absent from closed-canopy woods occurs, including ribwort plantain, meadow-sweet, *Crataegus* (hawthorn) and Compositae: *Liguliflorae* (dandelion type).

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The extra-local and regional woodland would seem to be dominated by hazel, with Coryloid values fluctuating between 10 and 15% of the total pollen. Very low values of birch and oak (maximum 5% and 2% respectively) suggest these trees formed a relatively minor component of the canopy, concentrating in the drier areas, while elm values are so low as to indicate only infrequent occurrence on deeper, more fertile soils. Pine pollen values do not exceed 18% and so represent regional presence, with just possibly the occasional extra-local stand.

In the vicinity of Core 29, during Zone 5, the local habitat seems to have consisted of comparatively open alder woodland: alder values peak at 35% total land pollen in the middle of the zone, while grass pollens fluctuate between 20 and 60%. Other open-ground taxa have been identified, such as plantains, dandelion types, *Senecio* (ragworts, groundsels and fleaworts), Ranunculaceae and Rosaceae. The extra-local and regional vegetation is mixed hazel-birch-oak woodland, with some elm and very occasional pine. As the total arboreal pollen excluding Coryloid attains a maximum of only 50%, the regional woodland structure may again have been relatively open.

In the following zone at Core 29, willow is dominant in the pollen spectra, reaching a peak of 60% total pollen in the middle of the zone. This may well reflect the local replacement of alder, values of which are reduced to 5-10%. High grass pollen values are maintained (maximum 40%), and once again there are several other vegetational indicators for a reasonably open landscape in the immediate vicinity, in the form of the pollen of ivy, hawthorn, meadow-sweet and Ranunculaceae. The extra-local and regional hazel-birch-oak woodland continues through this zone, with birch values slightly depressed in comparison with the preceding zone (5-10%) and oak apparently becoming a more significant component of the canopy. Pine values decline to 5%, suggesting the species is of infrequent occurrence within the landscape, as is elm.

Coire Bog

Coire Bog is a large area of blanket peat in the Cairngorm region, situated in the Wester Fearn Glen at an altitude of about 260m OD. The relevant pollen

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zones here are Zone 6, which seems to extend very approximately from the early fifth to the mid fourth millennium BC -- a radiocarbon assay from twigs in the middle of the zone stratigraphy gave a date in the earlier fourth millennium -- and the lower levels of the following zone. Comparison with the Moniack diagrams is complicated by Birks's use of a different pollen sum in the calculation of values for the various taxa, but it has been possible to convert at least arboreal values into percentages of total pollen.

In Zone 6 birch and pine form the main woodland components, at local to regional scale -- birch twigs have been preserved within the peat at this level, while pine values nearing a maximum of 30% indicate local presence. The spread of *Calluna* heath in the immediate landscape is suggested by strongly rising heather values in the lower two thirds of the zone, reaching a peak of 40% total pollen. Other species which favour open habitats like moorland and wood margins have been identified, including common tormentil/barren strawberry, sorrel, *Melampyrum* (cow-wheat) and Ranunculaceae. Hazel would seem to be abundant at the extra-local to regional level, its pollen reaching a maximum of 25%, whereas oak, elm and ash remain very minor elements of the arboreal canopy. Alder, so strongly represented at Moniack, never rises above 6% -- a likely reflection of the lowland-riverine-coastal/upland-inland locational contrast between the two sites.

Whereas total arboreal pollen excluding Coryloid fluctuates between 50 and 70% in Zone 5 at Coire Bog, the following zone begins with a rapid drop to 40%, after which tree pollen values continue to decrease steadily. Moderate birch values are maintained through the zone (maximum 14%), remaining the predominant tree pollen, while percentages of pine pollen are substantially reduced. Oak, elm and alder will probably have been of low-level occurrence, while Coryloid values are maintained at *circa* 10%. Birks relates these falling arboreal values to anthropogenic reduction of the regional forests, and suggests that incipient peat formation linked to the spread of blanket bog colonized by sedges and heather prevented arboreal regeneration. The resultant open landscape allowed for the representation at Coire Bog of pollen from species associated with clearance,

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pasture and arable cultivation (e.g. mugwort/wormwood, cow-wheat, ribwort plantain, *Plantago major/P. media* -- greater or hoary plantain), windblown pollen likely to derive from the lowlands around the Dornoch Firth.⁷ Considering the remoteness of the site and the initial sharp reduction in arboreal pollen, the implication is that both woodland clearance and pastoral/agricultural activity were carried out on a large scale by the mid fourth millennium BC, since these herb pollens are represented in the lower levels of Zone 7.

Conclusions

A feature which emerges strongly from the vegetational reconstruction for these sites to the north and south of the Black Isle is the contrasting character of the regional woodland: pine-birch in the highlands surrounding Coire Bog and mixed hazel-birch-oak in the low-lying ground at the head of the Beaully Firth. The occurrence of the latter supports the proposition that by the beginning of the fourth millennium BC, the point of maximal woodland development in much of Scotland, hazel-birch-oak woods extended along a narrow coastal strip from the area around the Beaully and Moray Firths, northwards into Caithness.⁸ This type of woodland canopy is likely to have been predominant in the Black Isle, with alder-rich communities in moist soils around the coasts and along stream courses. A very tentative suggestion is that pine may have colonized the highest altitudes, growing in association with birch along the spine of the Millbuie Ridge. The remnants of a once extensive peat bog lie near the southwestern tip of the ridge at Monadh Mor; if the existence of a wetland environment here stretches back into the fourth and fifth millennia BC, plant communities similar to those indicated locally at Coire Bog may have been established. But without palynological investigation of sites on the Black Isle itself, this geographical division between ecological zones -- possibly connected to perceptions of the different qualitative aspects of the land to which the neolithic monuments may refer -- remains speculative.

Similarly, estimates of woodland density on the Black Isle cannot be made with any precision. Considering the hospitable nature of the peninsula in

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comparison to the surrounding highland massif, as well as evidence for mesolithic activity in the vicinity -- which at the Kingsteps Quarry site on the Moray Firth includes the possibility that human interference in and/or manipulation of the environment resulted in an opening of the arboreal canopy (Knox 1954; Edwards & Ralston 1984, 23) -- I would suggest that intervention in the natural woodland on a reasonable scale may have been initiated at a relatively early date. The Moniak pollen diagrams are so strongly influenced by local conditions (the coastal, stream bank location and the ecological progression from saltmarsh to alder fen which immediately precedes the pollen zones in question) that it is difficult to determine whether the seemingly increasingly open canopy is an entirely natural development. It is perhaps just possible that the effects of larger-scale clearance and the establishment of grazing land are beginning to be manifested in Zone 5 at Moniak Core 29, from sometime in the second half of the fifth millennium BC, most likely the latter part of the period. That woodland reduction is reflected in the Coire Bog diagram somewhat later is perhaps to be expected, since the cumulative effects of clearance activities originating in predominantly coastal areas are not likely to emerge in the pollen spectra in the remote upper reaches of the Wester Fearn Glen until they are of a much more substantial nature, and so comparatively late.

The locales overlooked by the chambered cairns on the Black Isle, then, may have seen a considerable level of clearance by the time the monuments were inserted into the landscape. However, the image of the prehistoric landscape which emerges is by no means precise enough to permit assessment of the cairns' immediate environment. Thus it is impossible to state whether the chambered cairns would initially have been visible from any great distance within their various locales, or if instead they were surrounded and screened by stands of trees marking an ecotone.

Loughcrew, County Meath

Since no independently dated pollen diagrams are available for the area around the Loughcrew passage tomb complex, only a very coarse-grained image of

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the neolithic landscape surrounding the range of hills can be obtained. Here I have drawn upon information from palynological studies at Redbog and Essexford Lough (Fig. 8.2), two sites which lie 35km to the northeast, in County Louth (Weir 1995). Although the specific character of the local environment at these sites may not be extrapolated to the Loughcrew hills and their immediate landscape, the fluctuating relationship between woodland and open-ground taxa does shed some light on regional vegetational changes, since both sampling basins are likely to register arboreal pollen originating from plant communities more than 30km away (Weir 1995, 81). These environmental studies are directed towards the refinement of our understanding of the development of land management techniques and agricultural practice in Ireland from the prehistoric to the early historic period. Thus, not only are the issues which they address of more direct relevance to the present study than, for example, those covered in the Moniack report, which was concerned to elucidate Late Glacial and Holocene sea level movements, but the thoughtful and detailed discussion draws on comparative environmental and archaeological evidence from a wide range of sites throughout Ireland.⁹

Redbog

The core stratigraphy from the large raised bog at Redbog has a time depth of over five and a half thousand years. The chronological sequence has been established by a series of radiocarbon dates, tephrochronological analysis and estimation of the primary elm decline at 3980 BC, the average date for this relatively synchronous event in Ireland (Weir 1995, 84). Zones 1a (*circa* 4700-3800 BC) and 1b (*circa* 3800-2650 BC) cover the period of development of the passage tomb cemetery.

The pollen spectra from the greater part of Zone 1a are taken to originate from relatively undisturbed woodland composed predominantly of hazel (values decrease across the zone from 60 to 35%), with oak and elm the other major components and alder colonizing the wetter soils. Abundant Coryloid pollen is generally considered to represent the widespread presence of hazel scrub in Ireland, but Weir notes the possibility that the species formed part of the arboreal canopy.

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Pine, contributing a maximum 12% total land pollen, may have been a more minor element in the regional woodland, while birch values are so low (maximum 5%) as to suggest relatively insignificant populations of the species; both pine and birch are likely to have concentrated in more upland areas (Mitchell 1976, 105).¹⁰

The minimal contribution of herbs to the pollen spectra supports the view of the earlier neolithic in Ireland as involving only relatively minor intervention in the natural vegetation, with hunting and collecting strategies most likely remaining of prime importance. But although Weir stresses the paucity of evidence in the lower strata of the zone for anthropogenic activity accompanying high charcoal levels, a peak in heather and complementary depressed values for arboreal pollen, and the occurrence of grasses and ivy, the possibility cannot be discounted that these features reflect low-level manipulation of the surrounding woodland resources.

The upper levels of Zone 1a reflect considerably intensified intervention in the landscape which begins the middle neolithic. The primary elm decline is accompanied by falling values of ash and hazel and is ascribed to human interference by comparison with other pollen diagrams from Irish sites.¹¹ Hazel values then increase once more, along with birch, oak and alder; more prolific flowering and pollen production seems to be a response to the increased light availability accompanying initial clearance of relatively closed-canopy woodland (Weir 1995, 88). High charcoal levels are recorded from about 3950 BC, as are disturbance indicators -- nettles and ribwort plantain suggest both arable and pastoral activities.

Continued clearance activities are suggested by the pollen curves in the lower levels of Zone 1b: elm values are reduced to 3% and oak to 5%, while the pollen of grasses and ribwort plantain exceeds 5%. Rising hazel and ash curves probably represent opportunistic colonization of an opening landscape structure, in particular around the margins of cleared areas. A subsequent period of woodland regeneration centres on 3250 BC, with total arboreal pollen at 50% reaching its highest level for the zone.

Further human disturbance would seem to affect the pollen spectra from the

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early third millennium, as the arboreal canopy appears to be substantially reduced: elm falls to insignificant values and oak pollen to about 7%, while hazel rises strongly to 70%. The empirical limit for ash lies at about 2850 BC, with a marked presence of two other light-demanding tree species, *Taxus baccata* (yew) and *Sorbus* (rowan, whitebeam). Grasses are consistently represented throughout the zone, while other herbs of grassland such as common tormentil/barren strawberry, ribwort plantain, and devil's-bit scabious tend to cluster on either side of the period of woodland expansion. A cereal type pollen grain occurs at the top of Zone 1b; other possible indicators of arable cultivation are nettles, *Lamium* (dead-nettles) and *Rumex acetosella* (sheep sorrel).

Essexford Lough

The site of a former small lake basin, Essexford Lough lies only a kilometre from Redbog. The chronostratigraphic framework will be slightly less secure than that for the raised bog, since it has been established primarily by correlation to distinctive vegetational horizons in the latter diagram.

The relevant pollen zone is Zone 1, dating to *circa* 3400-2300 BC. Hazel is again the dominant tree pollen type (45-50%), with oak (15-20%) and some elm (maximum 10%) forming the other main components of the woodland. Birch and pine together constitute only about 3% of the total land pollen. An open woodland canopy is suggested by the generally low values for arboreal pollen, the total excluding Coryloid never rising much above 40%, and by the consistent representation of ash, yew and, to a lesser extent, rowan/whitebeam.

Grass values of 1-3% and the occurrence at various levels of species such as nettles, devil's-bit scabious and *Ranunculus acris* type (meadow buttercup) suggest the existence of pastures and meadows. Low-level cultivation is reflected in the occurrence of two cereal type pollen grains in the upper and lower strata, with common arable weeds also represented -- *Papaver rhoeas* type (common poppy) and *Polygonum aviculare*/*P. persicaria* (knotgrass/redshank). The period of woodland regeneration apparent at Redbog at the end of the fourth millennium is not so strongly manifested in the pollen diagram for Essexford Lough. Although in

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the latter the total arboreal pollen peaks just before 3000 BC, with most of the taxa of disturbed soil occurring after this event, open-ground indicators such as sorrels, docks, ragworts, groundsels and fleaworts accompany the higher tree pollen values.

Conclusions

In contrast to the Scottish landscapes discussed above, extensive areas of the mosaic of hazel-oak-elm woodland in central and eastern Ireland seem generally not to have disappeared until the late neolithic, from the later third millennium BC (Weir 1995, 102). During the period under consideration here, *circa* 3600-2900 BC, land management practices appear to have sustained much of the original lowland woodland area. We may envisage a patchwork of hazel scrub and considerable tree cover (albeit with a reasonable component of regenerating woodland, of a much more open character than the primary, native woods), stretches of grazed and ungrazed grassland, and tillage clearings on the more friable, drier soils. Pastoral stock management is most likely to have been predominant among agricultural resource strategies, with arable cultivation at a lesser scale, perhaps following a shifting pattern for much of the period.

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NOTES

¹Jacobson and Bradshaw (1981) define pollen source areas as follows: local, origin within 20m of the edge of the sampling basin; extra-local, origin between 20m and several 100m from the basin; regional, origin at greater distances.

²Species habitat preferences have been defined with reference to Clapham, Tutin & Moore 1987 and Grime, Hodgson & Hunt 1988.

³GU-1425; Robinson & Dickson 1988.

⁴OxA-1600; Affleck, Edwards & Clarke 1988.

⁵The association of cereal type pollen with flint implements of mesolithic type is discussed by the excavators with regard to possible downward movement of pollen through the profile in mineral matrices -- a process which would make the lithics older than pollen found at the same level.

⁶It should also be noted that the reliability of the concepts of the 'empirical limit' -- the point at which a particular species becomes a consistent trace in the pollen profile -- and the 'rational limit' -- its initial rise to high values -- as indicators of a species' first arrival has been questioned (Watkins n.d.; see discussion in Chambers & Elliott 1989).

⁷It has been noted, however, that the sampling resolution for the Coire Bog diagram (10cm intervals) is of too low a level to permit identification of shorter periods of regeneration interspersed among periods of clearance (Tipping 1994, 25).

⁸The estimated distribution of the major Scottish woodland types in this period has been most recently updated and mapped by Richard Tipping (1994).

⁹Current palynological investigations at the site of a mesolithic 'hunting platform' at Moynagh Lough, some 20km northeast of Loughcrew, should give a good indication of the applicability of Weir's conclusions to the area surrounding the Loughcrew hills. The core stratigraphy, which has been radiocarbon dated, stretches from glacial deposits right through the neolithic (R. Stewart, in

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preparation).

¹⁰Weir in fact suggests that pine was relatively abundant, perhaps colonizing the bog surface; this is somewhat surprising considering the accepted estimate of values of 20-30% total pollen as denoting the local presence of pine (Huntley & Birks 1983).

¹¹Weir provides an in-depth discussion of the character and cause of the multiple elm declines identified in Irish pollen diagrams (1995, 113-4).

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Machrie Moor stone circles: Sites I, II, III, IV, V, XI

The six stone circles which cluster in the northern part of Machrie Moor are all sited within 350m of each other. This area takes in the lowest, northeast-facing slope of the central ridge on which Moss Farm and Tormore II cairns are situated, as well as flat, low-lying moorland (Fig. 9.1). In their detailed survey of the area, Barnatt and Pierpoint (1983) identified three 'visually prominent' locales -- that is, areas visible from a high percentage of localities within the landscape and from fairly long distances. They found that whereas the Machrie Moor circles were located in the largest of these locales, the placement of the chambered cairns had not sought areas of high visual prominence. If we consider the landscape from the perspective of the individual at the monument, however, it is apparent that a contrast also exists in terms of directional focus. Moss Farm and Tormore II sit within a fairly 'immediate' landscape, their entrances facing out onto areas of ground which are to a certain extent visually curtailed by hill crests forming close skylines and other local horizons. The extensive views are those afforded by standing within this bounded landscape looking towards the tomb entrances: the broad expanse of the western flats and the sea horizon come into focus from this position, but at a remove, distanced from the observer by the bulk of the monuments themselves and the dropping ground immediately beyond and behind the cairns. In contrast, rather than being abstracted *from* a certain part of the landscape through the creation of 'place' on a small scale, the stone circles are situated firmly *within* a large, expansive locale.

The dominant focus for the latter monuments is clearly the mouth of

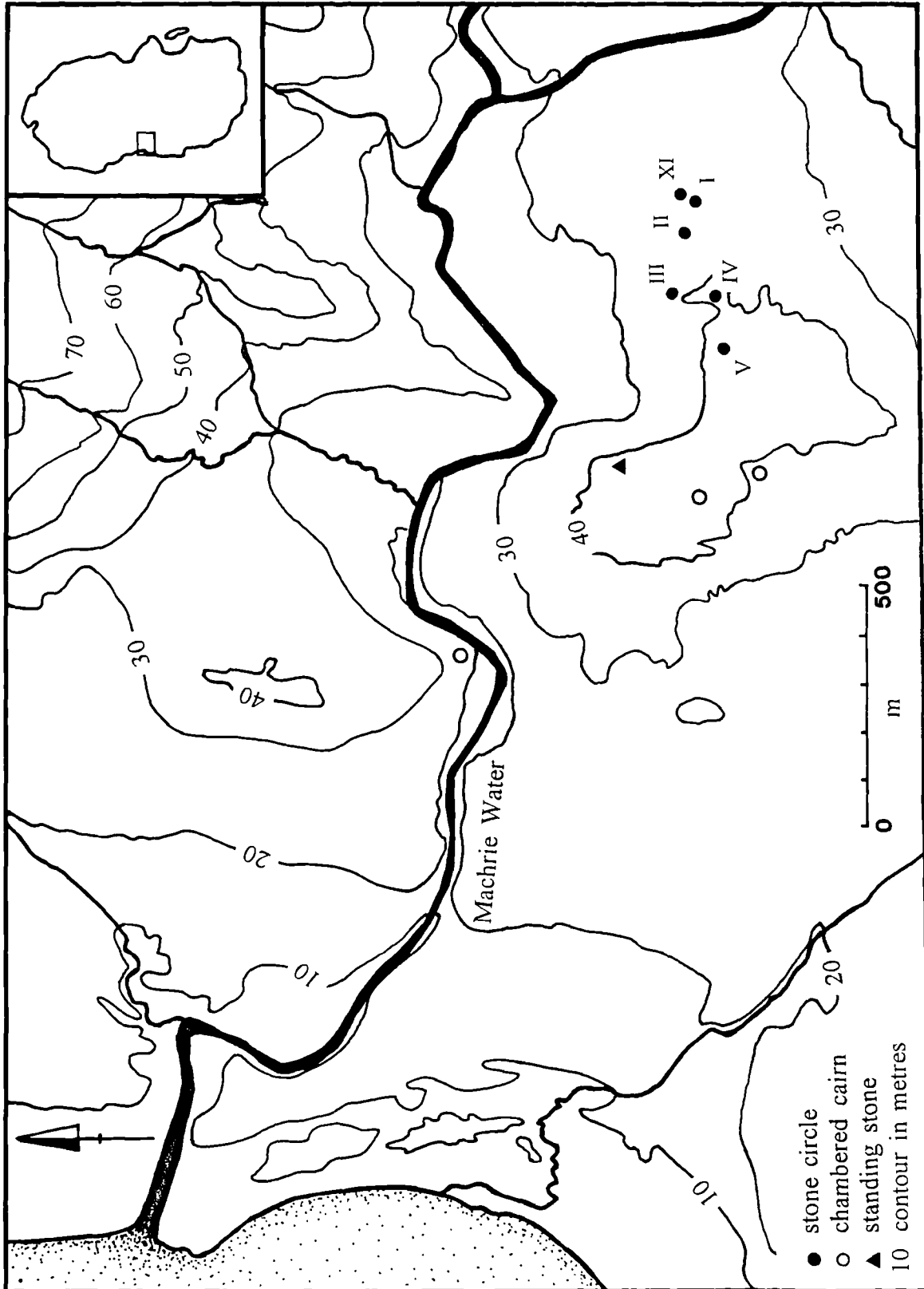


Figure 9.1 Plan of the northern part of Machrie Moor.

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Machrie Glen to the northeast, framing the distant, rugged peaks of Goat Fell and Beinn Tarsuinn. As we have seen in Chapter Three, this focal point is important at Tormore I but is partially or wholly obscured from Tormore II and Moss Farm. Conversely, from the circles, rising land from the southwest through the west to the northwest prevents sight of the chambered cairns and the moorland and sea beyond, emphasizing the inland focus. The siting of the ceremonial monuments binds together the subject, celestial movements and the land, as from their enclosed spaces the midsummer sun would be seen to rise from within the V-shaped profile of Machrie Glen; seen from four of the circles, in fact, the sun would break the horizon at a distinctive notch on the northeastern skyline, framed by the valley sides (Barnatt & Pierpoint 1983, 111). It may also be worth noting that the larger stones of the outer ring of the double Circle V seem to be oriented to the northeast-southwest axis; at Circle XI the single granite boulder in a ring otherwise entirely composed of sandstone slabs is to the northeast from the centre of the monument, while a gap between two stones at Circle I, where an orthostat was presumed to have stood but for which no clear evidence of a stone-hole has been retrieved through excavation (Haggarty 1991, 72), is also found in the northeastern sector of the circuit. In addition, the largest posts of a timber circle found to underlie Circle I seem also to have clustered in this sector.

This latter point highlights the long-term nature of the specific identity of place in this part of the moor, an identity which would seem to be taking on material aspects at least as early as the construction of the nearby chambered cairns. Excavations in the 1980s at Circles I and XI revealed a complex and extended sequence of activity (Haggarty 1991). The earliest features were a number of pits and gullies containing a variety of Grimston/Lyles Hill series pottery, lithic tools and hazelnut shells. Radiocarbon determinations indicate activity during the mid fifth to mid fourth millennium BC. The excavator, Alison Haggarty, notes the difficulty of identifying these features as of either purely domestic or ceremonial origin -- or a combination of the two -- citing as an example the occurrence of sherds from six different vessels in one pit, later

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incorporated within Circle XI (Haggarty 1991, 83). In this regard, it may be significant that these early features do concentrate within the areas defined by later timber and stone constructions; a relatively substantial area opened up between the two circles revealed no similar evidence of this earliest phase of activity.

A double ring of timber posts was erected at Site I sometime during the later fourth to mid third millennium BC -- a small, sub-circular setting of posts within the circuit may predate the main, inner ring, while a centrally-placed, horseshoe-shaped setting is tied into this phase stratigraphically but without fine resolution. At Site XI, a single circle of posts is presumed to be roughly contemporaneous with the timber monument at Site I. In addition, a single large post standing midway between the two circles may have been erected during this phase.

A period of ard ploughing ensued over the area, accompanied by activity which resulted in numerous stakeholes, some of which formed long lines. Radiocarbon dates associated with these stakeholes span the second half of the third millennium BC. The intermediate post would seem to have continued in existence during this period; a line of stakeholes encircling it presumably represents an enclosing fence (Haggarty 1991, 71), while stones were later piled up around its base.

Haggarty sees the subsequent precise placement of stone circles I and XI over the sites of the timber circles, from which the posts had been removed and which had been subjected to ploughing and 'an extensive programme of apparently continuously changing subdivision of the land', as an 'unlikely but stratigraphically proven' series of events which 'perhaps implies an oral tradition which recorded the precise locations of the timber circles' (1991, 86-7). I would view the situation somewhat differently, placing more emphasis upon the long-term special significance not only of the immediate locale but of very specific places within it. Haggarty admits that individual field boundaries cannot be distinguished; more importantly, the greatest concentrations of stakeholes are found, in the main, outwith the confines of the timber circles (Fig. 9.2) -- at Site XI, the clustering of

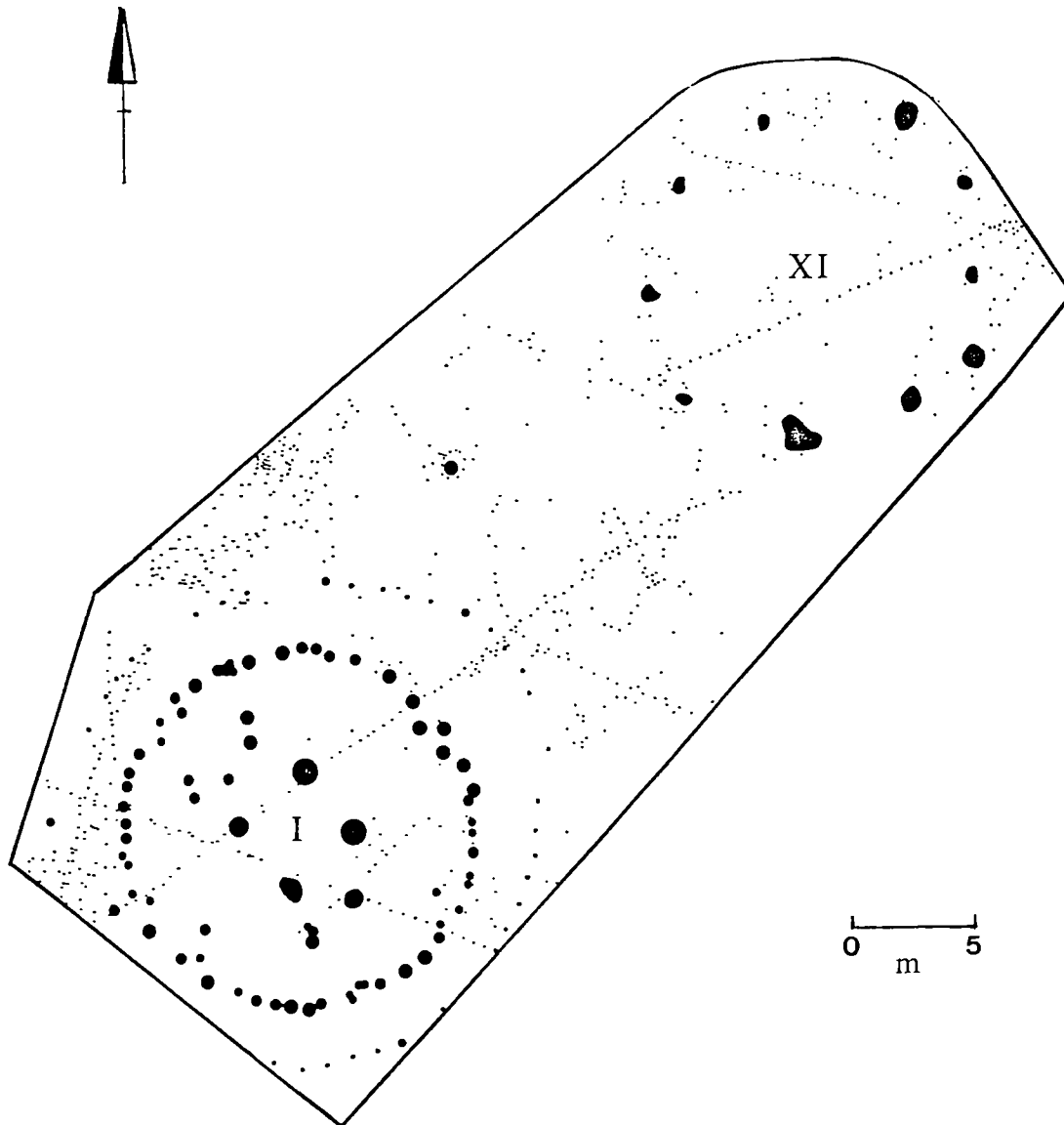


Figure 9.2 Timber circles and overlying stakeholes at sites I and XI.

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These features around the margins of the circuit is particularly noticeable. Furthermore, encroachment upon the inner space is of a largely specific character, as of the six major stake lines detected, two dissect the interior area of the timber circles at Site I, while two more do the same at Site XI.

I would argue that what we are seeing with the construction of stone circles not only accurately recreating the perimeters of previous timber circles but, at Circle XI, placing stones precisely in the spaces *between* former postholes, amounts to much more than a history of oral tradition and a generalized significance of place marked only by the prolonged existence of the large post standing between the sites of the two timber circles. In opposition to Haggarty's suggestion that a system of crop and stock management occurred at random over a locality of prior significance, I would propose that the *specific* loci within this landscape are being respected, in the sense that the sites of former monuments are being treated differently. Whatever may be going on around or over them, these places are still here.

Ways of looking at the world may be reassessed, they may be challenged or they may be reaffirmed. This process of thought finds expression in particular forms of action and materiality -- sometimes, as here, in the evocation of place through different forms of monumentality. But this does not occur as a series of planned steps in which one development occurs naturally or inevitably after another in a progression which can be ordered into a predictive chronological framework. Rather, as with the chambered cairns, the erection of stone circles on Machrie Moor is part of an ongoing engagement with the landscape, a continual reworking of principles which may involve contradiction or reinforcement; the later insertion of crouched inhumations associated with Tripartite Food Vessels and, at Circles I and XI, cremation deposits, one under an inverted Cordoned Urn, extends the chronological scale of this process even further. While the character of place may change, particularly with its late appropriation into the mortuary sphere, what remains constant is the point in physical space upon which ideas are focused and at which they are worked through.

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Since the identity of place at Circles II, III, IV and V may be of similar longevity, it is worth considering the complex interaction of all the stone circle sites with each other, their landscape, and the chambered cairns lying only 300m away. Each circle in this tightly clustered group both defines itself and is defined in relation to the others. Essentially, the monuments are positioned in a series of steps which carry the individual in a downward progression deeper and deeper into the moor. Each circle sits on level ground at or near a break of slope; thus not only is each one at a transitional point in the landscape, but the key focal point of Machrie Glen is always viewed beyond a local horizon as the land drops away behind each circle. Proximity, downward slope and this 'stepped' configuration draw the observer from one monument to the next, the bowl of the moor becoming gradually more enclosing and the mouth of the glen becoming an increasingly insistent landmark. Moving up from the moor towards the ridge, on the other hand, is to aim for a very close skyline, the landscape becoming broader in aspect as one climbs upward in stages. Although all the circles are visible from each element of the group as one ascends, one circle, usually the closest, always assumes priority on the nearest horizon, viewed against the sky or a distant backdrop. So, for example, from Circle II, Circle III appears on the crest of a gentle hill to the west, backed by a more distant hill line which forms the final horizon. But Circle IV, which is almost the same distance away, is not nearly so prominent, sitting in the middle of the rise to the south. One is thus drawn upwards from one dominant presence to the next, the horizon as the goal to be attained in effect moving with the individual, as each time it is reached another opens out beyond. Theoretically one could wander up the hillside as one pleased; practically, one encounters direction and control of movement, albeit of extremely subtle nature. Again, the interaction of observer, landscape and monument is a material engagement between thought and action in which what is thinkable and what is possible find somewhere a common ground.

A constant for the Machrie Moor circles is the single standing stone noted above in the discussion of Moss Farm chambered cairn (p. 126). This large granite

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slab is clearly visible on the western skyline from all of the circles and is situated at a key transitional point within the landscape: the crest of the ridge on which it stands marks a close, clear boundary for the locale, and it is at this point that from the west, the observer first glimpses the group of circles descending into the moor and, from the east, that the sea comes into view. Circles I, II and III form an alignment with this stone.

In contrast, the visual isolation of the landscape in which the chambered cairns Tormore II and Moss Farm are situated is important, in that the circles are partly defined not by direct visual reference to the tombs, but by a relation of absence, of mutual invisibility. Two quite different types of monument establish a presence within two quite different types of landscape; they evoke an opposing sense of place in which very different forms of ritual will have been enacted. The chambered cairns make reference to the wider cosmos by abstracting the subject somewhat from his or her surroundings, in one sense drawing the living community and mythic features of the landscape, the sea and perhaps the sky into a close relation with another community which is also withdrawn, both in space and time - that of the ancestors whose power resides, at least in part, within the confines of the tomb. The stone circles and their timber predecessors also integrate human activity with the land, the passing of the seasons and metaphysical powers, but seemingly without an element of ultimate withdrawal at the heart of the monuments. The circles are more open monuments, both in terms of the potential for public visibility of the communal rites enacted there, and of the way in which they situate the individual firmly *within* the expansive locale at the opening of the mountain pass to the east. Geographically adjacent, the two monumental locales are separated visually -- and intellectually. At the same time, it is through the experiences derived from one of these locales that the individual makes sense of actions carried on in the other, and *vice versa* -- just as he or she draws on experiences from other times and places. This is a reciprocal, appropriative dynamic which, with regard to the specific dialectic of place on Machrie Moor, might well extend over two thousand years, demonstrating a complexity of which

Appendix C

we have only just scratched the surface.

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