Chapter 2

Ten Years After—Megaliths, Mortuary Practices, and the Territorial Model

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INTRODUCTION

Ten years ago I published a paper (Chapman 1981) in which I developed the argument proposed by Colin Renfrew that the earliest West European megalithic tombs acted as symbols of territoriality among agricultural communities. This argument was presented as an alternative to the discredited diffusionist model by which formal similarities between such tombs, and the mortuary practices that they embodied, were interpreted as measures of the degree to which ritual practices and beliefs were shared between communities on a regional scale. I was keen to develop the ideas that the variability visible in the archaeological record of such tombs from southern Scandinavia to the Mediterranean required explanation, that understanding would only appear when we studied variables not cultural traits, and that our interest was in a variety of problems, using different models and measuring different data at different scales of analysis. Reaction to the territorial model has been both positive and negative, and is instructive of the ways

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MEGALITHS AND TERRITORIES: THE MODEL

In 1976 Colin Renfrew proposed that the appearance of megalithic tombs 7000–6000 years ago in Atlantic Europe represented the expression of territorial behavior in small-scale segmentary societies under conditions of population stress (Renfrew 1976:200). Segmentary societies were defined as lacking “the centralized, hierarchical structure of a chiefdom or state” and consisting of autonomous cellular and modular units (Renfrew 1976:204). Territorial behavior was defined biologically as “serving to regulate population densities at a lower level than the theoretical carrying capacity calculated on the basis of the available food supply” and implied “the habitual use of a specific, localized area which constitutes the sphere of influence of the individual or group” (Renfrew 1976:204, following Wynne-Edwards). Such behavior was triggered by the growth and expansion of colonizing farming communities spreading through Europe from southeast to northwest, where further expansion on the edges of the continent was limited and where stress was increased by the presence of “substantial” hunter-gatherer populations. Megalithic tombs became the symbolic means by which territorial behavior was expressed in the landscape. Such behavior would be expected to appear “almost simultaneously” over large areas and “several generations” after the initial adoption of farming. Renfrew proposed three criteria by which this territorial behavior could be recognized in the archaeological record of megalithic tombs: first, simultaneously functioning tombs should exhibit a regular rather than a clustered spatial distribution; second, “that the territories . . . are generated by the activities of the living members of such societies rather than by specialized territorial behavior of cross-cutting groups”; and third, that there be no evidence of a social or political hierarchy (Renfrew 1976:205). Renfrew recognized that the last criterion could not be met in a number of areas of western Europe, mainly during the later periods of construction and use of megalithic tombs (e.g., the Boyne valley in Ireland, the Orkneys), but that it seemed to be supported by the data from the earliest periods, with which he was concerned.

Renfrew’s model essentially combined social and demographic processes, and developed out of the view of European agricultural colonization embodied in the “wave of advance” model of Ammerman and Cavalli-Sforza (1973). He offered the generalization that megalithic tombs were territorial markers for segmentary societies to account for “many, although not for all,” such tombs. Using specific ethnographic analogies from Pacific island societies, and the generalization that the symbolic expression of territory focused on the middle of the “home range” (Renfrew 1976:206; note that he subsequently modified this position to argue that a territorial marker need not necessarily be centrally located—see Renfrew 1979:222), he applied his model to the archaeological record of two islands, Arran in west Scotland and Rousay in the Orkney islands off the north coast of Scotland. Following an earlier publication (Renfrew 1973:146–56), he used Thiessen poly-
gons to define roughly equally spaced territorial units around the known megalithic tombs (Figure 1). The existence of such units in the past was strengthened, in Renfrew's opinion, by the observation that the island of Arran had never been subjected to intensive farming. Thus the known distribution of tombs could be taken as directly representative of their distribution in the Neolithic. Even though settlement traces were absent from the archaeological record, it could be claimed that analysis of tomb distributions using the territorial model had led to the definition of social units.

Five years after the publication of Renfrew's paper, I used primarily anthropological, rather than demographic, arguments to examine the link between megalithic tombs and territoriality. Using cross-cultural ethnographic analyses by Arthur Saxe (the famous Hypothesis 8—Saxe 1970; see also Saxe and Gall 1977 for a study of the processes by which formal disposal areas emerged among the Temuan of Malaysia after the Second World War) as amplified by Lynne Goldstein (1976), I proposed that megalithic tombs, like cemeteries, were examples of formal disposal areas by which corporate groups utilized lineal ties to the ancestors to control access to crucial but restricted resources. Goldstein's cross-cultural analysis of 30 societies led her to reformulate Saxe's hypothesis as follows:

A. To the degree that corporate group rights to use and/or control crucial but restricted resource(s) are attained and/or legitimated by lineal descent from the dead (i.e., lineal ties to the ancestors), such groups will, by the popular religion and its ritualization, regularly reaffirm the lineal corporate group and its rights. One means of ritualization that is often but not always employed is the maintenance of a permanent, specialized, bounded area for the exclusive disposal of the dead.

B. If a permanent, specialized, bounded area for the exclusive disposal of the group's dead exists, then it is likely that the corporate group has rights over the use and/or control of crucial but restricted resource(s). This corporate control is most likely attained and/or legitimated by means of lineal descent from the dead, either through an actual lineage or through a strong, established tradition that the critical resource passes from parent to offspring. (Goldstein 1976:61)

This restatement of Saxe's hypothesis is very precisely formulated to specify the conditions under which it accounts for the ethnographic sample. Corporate groups have been defined by anthropologists according to different criteria, but, as has been suggested by Hayden and Cannon (1982:134), the most useful definition for archaeology is that proposed by Goodenough: "groups that function as individuals in relation to property." Lineages and descent groups are good examples of corporate groups. Crucial but restricted resources many range from land (e.g., arable, pasture, or forest) to sea (fishing rights), cattle, water, fruit trees, and traded materials. The hypothesis does not specify the conditions under which resources may become restricted, and it was no intention of either Saxe or

Figure 1. Territorial organization of megalithic tombs on the island of Arran, as defined through the use of Thiessen polygons (after Renfrew 1976: Figure 6). Contours at 100-m intervals, modern arable land stippled.
Goldstein to suggest that population pressure was the main cause. Also, it is emphasized that formalized disposal areas such as cemeteries or mounds are only one means of symbolizing the rights of lineal corporate groups. One alternative might be domestic shrines, as are known, for example, in the Far East. This means that the absence of formal disposal areas need not necessarily symbolize the absence of corporate groups with lineal ties to the ancestors. As Goldstein writes, “considering the wide range of variability in cultures, there is a low probability that certain groups, even in similar economic and environmental conditions, will all symbolize and ritualize in the same way” (Goldstein n.d.). In contexts in which formal disposal areas are absent, both Saxe and Goldstein recognized that other data on settlement patterns, subsistence, population density, resource distribution, and ritual practices needed to be compared with evidence for the treatment of the dead.

Such variability in symbolism encouraged a broad ranging analysis of the archaeological record as a whole. It would have been insufficient simply to take the presence of formal disposal areas as a guarantee that the other attributes of these cross-cultural ethnographic hypotheses would automatically have been present in all contexts in the past. Hypotheses derived from static, contemporary contexts are tools for us to evaluate in dynamic, past contexts. Consequently, I examined the available evidence for resource exploitation, settlement patterns, and population densities in relation to the data on mortuary practices for late hunter-gatherer and early agricultural communities in western Europe. Selected regional studies of megalithic tombs identified variable spatial correlations with restricted resources such as pasture, arable, and coasts. In the case of Denmark, the very early construction of monumental tombs in the Neolithic did not match up to Renfrew’s expectation that a few generations would elapse between the beginnings of agriculture and the appearance of such tombs. Pressures within preexisting hunter-gatherer populations, who were already disposing of their dead within cemeteries, were suggested as the cause of this observation.

Taken together, Renfrew’s work and my own acknowledged the key role of the ancestors in the everyday life of the late forager and early agricultural communities of northwest and western Europe. Mortuary practices were related to social, economic, and demographic variables. A model was provided by which the spatial patterning of tombs within local and regional landscapes could be understood. This model has been the starting point, or has been invoked as an explanation, for case studies analyzing the location and distribution of megalithic tombs in a number of parts of central and western Europe during the last decade. The model has also been the subject of criticism, but before considering such criticism in detail, I will give two examples of analyses that may be considered typical.

Gabriel Cooney (1983) studied the spatial relationship between megalithic tombs and environmental variables in the province of South Leitrim, Ireland. In particular he observed a close correlation between tombs and small (less than 10 ha), discrete patches of “rockland” soils, which are well drained and thought to be the best agricultural soils in the region. A total of 14 out of 21 tombs are located on rockland soils, and all but 1 of these tombs is located within 1 km of these soils (Figure 2). Here is a resource—agricultural land—that is spatially restricted and quite clearly of critical importance to prehistoric communities in this region. That this resource remained of importance can be seen by the construction and use of different types of megalithic tombs, possibly over a period of 1500 years.

A focus on access to resources also characterizes Torsten Madsen’s research on settlement and land use in Early Neolithic Denmark (Madsen 1982, Madsen and Jensen 1982). For the beginnings of agriculture at about 3100 B.C., Madsen argues for extensive cultivation associated with short-lived local clearances and an emphasis on pig husbandry. Settlement was dispersed. During the period ca. 3100-2800 B.C., low, earthen long mounds containing one to five individuals were constructed. By about 2700-2600 B.C., the first truly megalithic tombs appeared in the form of stone-built chambers surrounded by circular or rectangular stone settings (“dolmens”). Formal and constructional continuity, as well as the small number of individual interments, link these earliest examples of monumental tombs. The following Middle Neolithic period, beginning about 2600 B.C., witnessed an expansion of the settlement area, an increase in population density, permanent clearances, increased cereal production, a switch from pig to cattle breeding and an explosion in monument construction. Madsen has analyzed the distribution of Early Neolithic residential and funerary sites in relation to that of resource types. “The general conclusion was that low lying areas close to major watercourses and mainly in the coastal zone were preferred for settlement. Furthermore a diverse environment was sought after with a slight preference for sandy soil in the actual settlement area” (Madsen and Jensen 1982:78). Madsen argues for a relatively high dependence on animals, and the use of damp, low-lying areas for livestock grazing. These damp areas had a lighter, more open vegetation and were a scarcer, more confined resource than sandy or clayey soils. Analysis supports a consistently close spatial relationship between the Early Neolithic tombs, whether earthen mounds or stone-built chambers, and the main watercourses with these damp soils and more open vegetation. Madsen argues that the data support the inference that these early tombs acted as “symbolic markers of rights to land” (Madsen and Jensen 1982:83).

MEGALITHS AND TERRITORIES: THE MODEL CRITICIZED

How has the archaeological community in Europe reacted to the territorial model? What have we learned from critiques and case studies published during the last decade? To begin with, there has been the unsurprising revelation that archaeological debates can be programmatic and polemical, as each archaeologist sees what he or she wants to see in the work of others. At the same time, theoretical
and empirical challenges have been made, and can be made, to the basic assumptions of the model. In the sections that follow, I consider questions of generalization, symbolism, and meaning, the subsistence-settlement systems of the megalith builders of western Europe, the concept of territoriality, the archaeological record of megaliths, and the importance of surplus labor for the construction of these monuments.

Generalization, Symbolism, and Meaning

As part of a perceived debate between “processual” and “postprocessual” archaeology, it has been argued that a more context-specific and “internal” approach is required to gain an understanding of megalithic tombs. For example, Hodder has asserted that the territorial approach neglects “the meaning of the tombs, what they signified in a particular historical context,” and that “it can never be possible to ‘test’ the hypothesis, or support the analogy, that the tombs functioned as territorial markers or legitimized rights to resources without also having some hypotheses concerning the meaning of the tombs in the society and time period concerned” (Hodder 1984:53). However, the original publications and subsequent case studies have attempted to use a general model in particular archaeological contexts, as is done in any model-using exercise. It has also been stated explicitly, on more than one occasion, that the territorial model is one that may be used to try and increase our understanding of the archaeological record of which megaliths are a prominent and visible part (e.g., Chapman 1981, 1987a,b). More than one problem may be analyzed using the data of megaliths, and the data can be studied at different scales of analysis. Of course, there are no “laws” of human behavior (outside of Tucson, that is!), but by structuring our observations through general principles we are theoretically informed, and our analysis of particular archaeological contexts helps us to understand the limits of these principles. The archaeological record can, and often will, strike back.

With regard to meaning, I do not understand why we need to know this, nor how it can be determined from the archaeological record. The ethnographic analysis suggests a (not the) function for cemeteries and monumental tombs and this can be used as a tool for the study of the archaeological record. Whether the people who built the tombs were cognitively aware of that function, or thought that the tombs were built to stop the sky falling on their heads, is immaterial. Richards’s (1992:75–76) recent statement that “when Neolithic people conjured up images of tombs, or approached them with the dead, it is highly unlikely that they would have thought of them as territorial markers or in terms of rights over resources” is similarly irrelevant: when people participate in funerals at the present day, they do not necessarily think of their roles in rites of passage, but this does not make that an inappropriate perspective from which to try and understand the behavior observed.
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What we might call the "insider" perspective is also visible in Morris's (1991) recent evaluation of the Saxe/Goldstein hypothesis on data taken from the state societies of Greece and Rome. Morris gives a central role in the understanding of the evolution of human culture to "the beliefs and ideas of prehistoric actors" (1991:147-148), and argues that "we cannot pursue Saxe's hypothesis... without first treating it in terms of the actors' own perceptions" (1991:148). Whatever one's reaction to this position, there must be severe doubts as to the ability of an analysis of state societies to inform us about the utility of a hypothesis designed to account for nonstate societies. While it may be the case that the Classical data suggest that "the Saxe/Goldstein hypothesis only 'works' as a description of an ideological structure" (1991:158) this is hardly surprising given the more complex symbolic, behavioral, and ideological structures of state societies. This does not imply that there will be an unambiguous relationship between such structures in nonstate societies (e.g., Hodder 1980), as indeed Goldstein recognizes, and this is why contextual analysis of nonmortuary data is central to the evaluation of the territorial model.

Subsistence-Settlement Systems of the Megalith Builders

On more than one occasion, it has been stated that land, and agricultural land in particular, was the critical resource subject to spatial variability in the territorial model. For example, Julian Thomas (1991:20) has argued recently that "a growth of territorialism resulting from the adoption of agriculture has often been cited as a reason for the first construction of monuments (Chapman 1981; Renfrew 1976)." Agricultural land features in Sherratt's (1990) discussion of northwest European megaliths, while Tilley (1984) counters the territorial model by examining the distribution patterns of Swedish megaliths in relation to arable soils. However, it should be clear to the reader by now that, while agriculture and land were central to Renfrew's model, the same was not the case in my own presentation, which focused on a broader range of resources than these. Indeed, the examples that I chose to illustrate my argument showed something of the variability in subsistence-settlement systems among early megalith builders.

The last decade has seen a renewed debate about the adoption of agriculture within the European continent. Greater contrast is now made between the processes of change in southeast and central Europe, as opposed to northern and western Europe, as stressed, for example, in the substitution model for Atlantic Europe proposed by Marek Zvelebil and Peter Rowley-Conwy (1984, 1986). Whereas change from a hunter-gatherer to an agricultural economy in the former areas was rapid and marked, this does not appear to have been the case within the western and northern areas, where substitution of subsistence resources took place over millennia rather than centuries. Especially notable is the slower rate of adoption of cereals and open village farming, and the emphasis upon animal exploitation and mobility as the focal points of subsistence-settlement systems. This does not exclude the exploitation of cereals, for which there is archaeological evidence, but it does change our understanding of the context in which early megaliths were constructed. The example cited above from Early Neolithic Denmark makes this point clearly, as does the sequence for Neolithic Britain, with the initial emphasis on "transient hoe-based horticulture," with the exploitation of cereals among a broader range of plant foods, and mobile strategies based on large cattle herds (see Entwistle and Grant 1989, Thomas 1991). For Iberia, I have argued that the full-scale farming economy with open-air villages and year-round sedentism did not emerge in many areas until the later fourth and third millennia B.C., whereas the first cereals and domesticated animals had appeared in the peninsula by the beginning of the fifth millennium (Chapman 1990:221-227). These examples demonstrate that variability in the rates of adoption of agriculture has to be determined through analysis of particular contexts, that full-scale agriculture was more the exception than the rule among early megalith builders (an observation that Sherratt 1990 fails to discuss), and that pasture could have been just as important a resource to these populations as arable land. If territoriality existed, it was not as conceived in Renfrew's original formulation.

The Concept of Territoriality

How do we conceive of territoriality and is the concept useful to us when studying regional patterns in the location and spacing of megalithic tombs? If we look at the way territoriality figured in my model and that of Renfrew, it is clear that it was conceived of in ecological and functional terms (see Peterson 1975): this is the sense in which Dyson-Hudson and Smith (1978:22) defined a territory—as "an area occupied more or less exclusively by an individual or group by means of repulsion through overt defense or some form of communication." Hodder (1984:52) has argued that this approach is not very useful, since, he claims, all human societies and all animal species are territorial, and that all agricultural societies need to control critical resources. I am tempted to reply that such an argument is as justifiable as the assertion that all archaeologists are alcoholics (although I have observed some empirical support for this at the SAA meetings). There is a wide range of variability in the degree to which both humans and animals are territorial, and within individual groups there is variability in the degree to which different resources may be exploited territorially, as Dyson-Hudson and Smith (1978) make perfectly clear. Both Sack (1986) and Ingold (1986) point out that territoriality can be "turned on and off," while Binford's (1983:380) observations on the Nunamiat led him to conclude that they have "no cultural specification of territoriality."

While Hodder's criticism misses the mark, this does not imply that the concept of territoriality used in the study of megalithic tombs is necessarily secure.
A more productive source of criticism is found in the work of Ingold (1986:130–197), who makes a key distinction between the concepts of territoriality and tenure: "territorial behavior is basically a mode of communication, serving to convey information about the location of individuals dispersed in space...tenure is a mode of appropriation, by which persons exert claims over resources dispersed in space" (1986:133). In the case of territorial behavior, nature and the resources therein are appropriated collectively, and Ingold conceives of it more as a cooperative exercise than the usual conception of the defense of exclusive access to resources by particular groups. Thus, as he documents from the ethnographic record, "territoriality is a means of effecting cooperation over an extensive but common range in an ecological situation (the exploitation of dispersed fauna and flora) which precludes regular face-to-face contact between cooperating units in the course of extractive activities" (1986:143). In contrast to tenure, territoriality can be "switched on and off in response to circumstances, it presupposes no sense of past and future, no awareness of time, no commitments or intentions" (1986:138). Time and history are vital to tenure. In Ingold's terminology, our discussion of megalithic origins would have to be rephrased in terms of tenure rather than territoriality.

Ingold (1986:147–148) proceeds to distinguish between the geometry of tenure seen in hunter-gatherer and agricultural societies: in the former, tenure is "zero-dimensional" or "one-dimensional" (that is, to do with places, sites, or locations, or with paths and tracks), while in the latter it is two-dimensional (that is, to do with earth or the ground surface). Among hunters and gatherers, specific mythologies may be associated with the tracks and paths that link places. The mobility associated with these kinds of societies, and indeed with pastoralists, takes them along lines to locations and places in the landscape, and it is linked to "the tenure of moveable property instead of things fixed in the terrain" (Ingold 1986:168). With reduced mobility and sedentarization, as well as the transition to full agriculture, "land replaces animals as the material embodiment of the claims and counter-claims that persons exert over one another" (1986:170).

Ingold's discussion of tenure takes us on a new meaning when we think back to the changes that have taken place in our understanding of the subsistence-settlement systems of the Neolithic of Atlantic Europe. With the extension of the period of transition from mobile hunting and gathering economies to full, sedentary, farming societies, we can see how the earliest megalith builders straddled different kinds of tenure systems. We may propose that in many (although not necessarily all) areas there was still an emphasis upon moveable property rather than land, and that the earliest monuments were constructed at places in the landscape, rather than at the center of defended areas. The monuments become "things fixed in the terrain," to use Ingold's terms (I owe this suggestion to the research of Jan Harding on the British Neolithic). During the time that these monuments were used, or the later, more complex examples were constructed, land was to emerge as the basis of tenure in areas such as southern Scandinavia and southwestern and southeastern Iberia, although this was by no means a universal feature of the archaeological record of megaliths in western Europe. Mobility continued to exist in subsistence strategies, especially in highland zones (e.g., Bradley 1991), and more than one kind of tenure continued to exist, sometimes in close proximity.

These changes in our conception of territoriality and tenure, when placed alongside our understanding of the subsistence-settlement systems of the early megalith builders, require us to reassess the ways in which the spatial patterning of tombs has been analyzed in the archaeological record.

THE ARCHEOLOGICAL RECORD OF MEGALITHS AND ITS STUDY

Renfrew's (1973:146) application of the territorial model to analyze the spatial distribution of megalithic tombs on the islands of Arran and Rousay was based on the assumptions that "few if any have been destroyed" and that "in studying them, we may get as close an approximation to the original settlement pattern as we are likely to find anywhere." The use of Thiessen polygons enabled him to define a regular, rather than clustered, distribution of social units, each centered on what were supposed to "simultaneously functioning tombs." Such assumptions and methods were also employed on an even broader scale to the megalithic tombs of Ireland by Darvill (1979). The observation that megalithic tombs survive better, or are more visible in the archaeological record, than their associated settlements has encouraged such attempts to analyze their spatial distributions to reconstruct surrogate settlement and social systems. But how likely is it that a representative pattern of "simultaneously functioning sites" will have survived postdepositional processes in other areas of western Europe outside of Arran and Rousay?

Two of the most detailed studies of the preservation and discovery of megalithic tombs come from the Channel Islands and from the islands of Orkney. For the Channel Islands, Hibbs (1986) has studied the historical evidence for tombs that have been destroyed, and the human activities that have caused their destruction. For example, on the island of Jersey, there are 32 megaliths recorded at the present day, but some 40–50 sites were destroyed in the period ca. A.D. 1682–1800, while on the neighboring island of Guernsey, where 27 tombs are known, 68 additional tombs are represented by the evidence of place-names. The main causes of destruction were medieval and modern agriculture (although some sites were preserved in field boundaries) and quarrying (the use of megaliths as a source of building materials). The mainly coastal process of sand deposition has had the effect of preserving tombs from destruction (e.g., Les Fouaillages; Kinnes 1982). It has been argued that the best preservation of tombs occurs in areas that have not been subjected to agricultural exploitation, and that 5000 years ago such tombs were more evenly distributed across the island. Areas that contain larger
proportions of wasteland, or less constrained space, such as the Breton mainland, have been argued to possess a more representative sample of tombs.

Fraser (1983) analyzed the effects of modern fieldwork in creating the published archaeological record of megalithic tombs on the islands of Orkney to the north of Scotland. In 1935, Gordon Childe recorded the existence of c. 250 tombs in Scotland, including 21 in Orkney, but at the present day this figure has increased to over 600 tombs, of which 76 are now known in Orkney. Fraser argues that it is possible to estimate the degree to which the known tombs approach the total number of such tombs that may be preserved and awaiting discovery by the archaeologist. For any class of archaeological data, Fraser proposes that we might expect a pattern of discovery like that plotted in his “growth curve of recognition” (Figure 3, left): in period 1, few sites are known and the rate of discovery is low, while in period 2, there is a marked increase in the numbers of sites and their discovery rates, and in period 3, sites become more difficult to find and there may be fewer sites as a whole to find with the field methods that are in use. How does the pattern of discovery for megalithic tombs in Orkney correspond to this model curve? Figure 3, right, shows that the discovery rate for Orkney is still that of Fraser’s period 2, and that, consequently, there must be more sites still to be discovered before the curve levels off in period 3. A major contribution to the concealment of tombs from the archaeologist is the peat that has grown over large areas of Orkney since the Neolithic (Fraser 1983; Figure 2.4.). As has been seen in other parts of the British Isles, peat growth can cover both megalithic tombs and Neolithic field boundaries. In the Fenlands of East Anglia, Neolithic long barrows and Bronze Age barrow cemeteries have been sealed completely below peat and are only now being exposed for study by the drainage of the peat.

Thus, assessment of such postdepositional processes is an essential prerequisite to spatial analysis of tombs. The use of historical records of tomb destruction, as well as modern “recognition curves” of the discovery rates of archaeological sites, suggests that more marginal and/or less pressurized areas will have more representative samples. Also, it is the largest, or more substantially constructed, tombs involving increased labor inputs and, by normal inference, the greater importance for regional polities that survive best. Mercer (1992) has pointed out the ability of some megalithic tombs in Caithness and Orkney to survive encroaching cultivation during the last 150 years.

The recognition of spatial patterning does, of course, depend in part on the scale of the analysis. The definition of spacing, rather than clustering, among megalithic tombs on the islands of Arran and Rousay was essential to Renfrew’s model of a segmentary society, with its cellular and modular structure. But, as has been observed recently (Hughes 1988), when one “stands back” and views the tomb distribution in the context of the mainland of the Firth of Clyde surrounding Arran, the pattern appears markedly clustered (Figure 4). It is also worth pointing out that Renfrew’s case studies and his ethnographic analogies were all based on island communities, and it has yet to be discussed how far the processes of change
among insular farming communities, including their settlement patterns, demographic trends, and economic organization, differed from those experienced among contemporary mainland groups in Neolithic Europe (e.g., for Polynesian chiefdoms, territorial units, and monumental tombs, see Kirch 1990).

Thus there are grounds for arguing that the conditions that might allow a delimitation of territories between "simultaneously functioning sites" are by no means universal in the archaeological record of Europe. It is an assumption in need of evaluation that tomb distributions are surrogate settlement distributions (see Whittle 1987:36). Indeed, Renfrew (1981:75–77) recognized this in his later discussion of the spatial relationships between settlement patterns and burial locations. It is also an assumption that tombs, as containers for the ancestors, will have been located adjacent to settlements and at the centers of territories. Thus, for example, when Perry and Davidson (1987) observe the increased importance through time of arable land in tomb location on Arran, this could be indicative of an increased emphasis on cereal cultivation, or it could reflect the location of tombs more toward the center of community territories. Kalb’s (1981) maps of the distributions of groups of southern Portuguese megaliths show different relationships to soil quality, but in areas such as Montargil, where the tombs are located almost entirely on soils of the poorest quality, the majority are still within 1 km of the best soils. In northwestern Spain, the tombs of the Sierra de Barbanza are located in areas of present-day pasture, but immediately adjacent to dispersed areas of cultivable land (Criado, Aíra Rodríguez, and Díaz-Fierros Viqueira 1986). Finally, analysis of the spatial distributions of Early Neolithic burial mounds and surface flint scatters in the Peak District of north Derbyshire (Bradley and Hart 1983) supports the inference that the dead were located in areas that were peripheral to the settlements of the living. Clearly, the spatial patterning of tombs and settlement foci is a topic for determination within the limitations posed by our understanding of the archaeological record. The model scenario of equally sized modular units centered upon megalithic tombs and bounded by Thiessen polygons may be a more restricted case in the archaeological record. Indeed, in the light of the earlier discussions about tenure and subsistence-settlement systems, the concept of such units occupying discrete areas of space is more applicable to later tombs, constructed by full-scale farming communities, than it is to the earliest megaliths.

LAND, LABOR, AND COMPETITION

If we view the subsistence-settlement systems of the early megalith builders in the light of Ingold’s discussion of tenure and the transition to fully agricultural societies (see above), then there are grounds for taking up Hodder’s (1984) criticism that land was not a critical resource at this time. Even within the village farming Neolithic societies of central Europe, there is now greater stress on the unpredictability of early cereal cultivation, particularly as these cereals were taken further to the north, and away from their natural habitats. In such societies, labor has been argued, in recent publications by Bogucki (1988) and Gregg (1988), to have been the major constraining factor on agricultural production. Such an argument is based on the demands and risks of early cultivation, and on calculations of the availability of land in relation to the best current estimates of population density. Such estimates are, of course, open to debate, in the light of variability in the archaeological record, and it could be argued that it is the availability of cleared cultivable land or initially natural pasture as a resource that should be compared with population estimates, but for the moment let us pursue the use of labor in relation to mortuary practices.

Within the early farming communities of central Europe, the disposal of the dead in cemeteries began to occur, and has been argued to show the use of the ancestors to symbolize claims to resources. To the north and northwest, the construction of monumental tombs using stone, earth, and timber was taken, in
my 1981 paper, as a similar expression, but what was missing was an understanding of their implications for the manipulation of labor. While monumental tombs can be regarded as formal disposal areas, to do so exclusively is to disregard their differences from flat cemeteries. In other words, we miss out on their specificity. Monuments have the potential to communicate information to a wider audience in a more impressive way. In many cases, clear visual signals are given off at some distance. They can also be manipulated and appropriated by groups within society. Their incremental nature (Quilter 1991) is seen in the changes to their size and form through time. Monuments may be maintained, altered, or even superimposed by other kinds of monuments (for examples of superimposition in Neolithic Britain, see Bradley and Chapman 1986). All this requires the organization of surplus labor for nonutilitarian purposes (Trigger 1990). Given the labor requirements for even the smallest tombs (e.g., Barber 1992, for some recent estimates for the Orkney islands), and their implications for communal participation, it is clear that the commitment to monument construction increased the demands on the total energy budget within these societies. In some areas the energy consumption increases through time, as, for example, in Denmark with the utilization of stone as opposed to mainly timber and earth constructions. Furthermore, the initial use of such monuments is reserved for only small segments of the population, as has been calculated for regions such as Denmark, the British Isles, and Poland. Evidence for the existence of vertical status differences within the preceding Mesolithic foragers in northwest Europe has been deduced from analysis of their mortuary data, so the use of surplus labor to construct tombs for a minority would, at the very least, represent greater emphasis upon existing differences.

Variability in the use of surplus labor is observable from differences in the energy budgets devoted to megalithic tombs in different regions of northwest and western Europe. In some cases the scale of the monuments supports the inference of the use of large-scale labor derived from a regionally based polity (e.g., the Boyne valley in Ireland, Britanny). Of course, once there is the basis for the use of surplus labor for the benefit of the few, then this has implications for the exercise of power. Indeed, the increase in labor investment through time, or the comparatively short periods of such investment within whole regions (e.g., eastern Holland, Denmark), is also suggestive of more competitive social strategies. The relationship between the conspicuous consumption embodied in megalith construction and intergroup competition has been discussed for the cases of Neolithic Ireland by Sheridan (1986) and for southwest Sweden by Sjögren (1986). Ritual is seen as playing an important role in social control.

**DISCUSSION**

The territorial model was designed to help us understand the construction of west European megalithic tombs in the context of subsistence-settlement systems, demographic and social processes, and the invocation of the ancestors as a key element in social strategies. It was the context of the mortuary practices that was deemed to be important if we were to present a viable alternative to diffusionism. Given that we cannot know what was in the minds of the megalith builders, the use of specific models to structure analysis of the archaeological record seemed the best way forward. It was always clear that variability existed in that record, both in time and space, and that different models and analyses were appropriate at different scales of that record. Thus, for example, it was never claimed that the territorial model was sufficient to understand monument manipulation and appropriation, or the internal organization of the tombs, the structured deposition of human bones, or the specific locations of mural art (e.g., Bradley 1989; Richards 1992; Thomas 1991). The model, as a heuristic device, enabled us to examine the spatial distributions of megaliths, and their cultural contexts, in a new way. It depended on specific assumptions and relationships between variables, which, if not met, would lead to the revision of the model.

In this chapter, the critical appraisal of the territorial model has four key elements.

1. Changes in our understanding of the subsistence-settlement systems of the early megalith builders have taken place in the last decade. Emphasis is now being placed upon more extensive systems with later adoption of full-scale village farming in Atlantic Europe. In this context, arable land is only one resource that may be critical (i.e., restricted in distribution or amount) for local populations.

2. Given this different reconstruction of subsistence-settlement systems, and Ingold's clarification of the concepts of territoriality and tenure, the earliest megaliths were constructed during a period of transition in the appropriation of nature. The monuments were placed in the landscape and not necessarily the centers of defended areas, even though their usage was associated with particular groups. There is no reason why the rates of change in tenure systems should have been the same in different parts of Atlantic Europe.

3. We cannot assume that existing distributions of megaliths are surrogate settlement distributions, and we must recognize the variable relationship between tomb and settlement locations. Our first task is to understand the formation of the archaeological record of megaliths in our individual areas of study.

4. Megalithic tombs and other such monuments are more than just formal disposal areas. They possess the potential for communication, manipulation, and appropriation by groups within society who can organize the use of surplus labor for nonutilitarian purposes. Not all groups "maximize" this potential, as can be seen by differences of energy expenditure involved in the construction of megaliths through time. Within different
areas of Atlantic Europe, such surplus labor was invested in either domestic or ritual contexts, or in both.

Taken together, these critical points give us a rather different conception of the contexts in which megalithic tombs were first constructed in Atlantic Europe, and of the spatial patterning of these monuments in the regional landscape. The division of the known Neolithic landscape into exclusive territories with centrally located tombs is only one of a range of spatial patterns, and makes assumptions about subsistence-settlement strategies and patterns of tenure that do not appear to be supported empirically or theoretically for the earliest megaliths. To identify these tombs as formal disposal areas, used by corporate groups with lineal ties to the ancestors, is only a very small, initial step in the process of trying to understand their variability in time and space. Also, the use I made of Saxe’s Hypothesis 8 focused only on the similarities shared between megaliths and cemeteries, rather than their striking differences. Today I am more impressed by those differences, and by the need to understand the dynamics of change in monument size and morphology, and consequently the dynamics of change in the societies that constructed the monuments. Lineal ties to the ancestors were important in the lives of Neolithic societies in Atlantic Europe, and the tombs of these ancestors were key “reference points” in cultural landscapes. Using concepts such as territoriality and formal disposal areas did, I think, point us in the right theoretical direction, and led to research that highlighted relationships between different categories of archaeological data, but our thinking was often too static. Like other branches of the archaeological analysis of mortuary practices, much of the initial impetus for this approach came from the ethnographic record, but the key to developing our knowledge of the past can only come from understanding the archaeological record.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the British Academy and the University of Reading for enabling me to attend and enjoy the remarkable cultural experience of the SAA meetings in New Orleans! Thanks are also due to Lane Beck for inviting me to participate in the symposium, for making me welcome in Boston before the meetings, and for nudging me ever closer to the submission of the final version of this chapter.

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Edited by
LANE ANDERSON BECK
Florida Museum of Natural History
Gainesville, Florida

(1995)

PLENUM PRESS • NEW YORK AND LONDON