

## **A Landscape of Rocks: the Symbolism of Stone Monuments in Neolithic Ireland**

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This work aims to explore the symbolic and ritual perspective on the selection of stones as a basis for building monuments. These constructions are here understood on the grounds of agency for the construction of prehistoric landscapes. The range of Atlantic European monuments will be considered as reference in order to analyze the case of Newgrange (Ireland), for the creation of landscapes with circular stone monuments as part of the exclusive cosmovision of the Neolithic Atlantic Europe.

Stones and monuments had a particular agency in Neolithic Europe. The option for stone monuments is closely related to the representation of the community of ancestors, once the choice of the material reflects one purpose: to endure. The selection of material is important due to its physical (touch, sight, and hearing), metaphysical and ritual impressions, which created symbolic markings on the material culture, as well as on the lives of prehistoric populations.

The stones were deliberately and carefully chosen, worked, designed, marked and positioned (as the monuments themselves). All these actions must also have shaped rituals (both during the construction of the monument and after the monument construction). In fact, it is possible to comprehend the importance of such structures in social dynamics once one understands that they mediated and intervened on ritual action.

In this sense, ritual intervention is considered as part of funerary rites (burial and monument construction integrated), as well as of the creation of liminal places (places where the ritual creates the realm of the ancestors, where time is suspended: the presence of the past in the present). Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the landscape as a sociocultural construction, a byproduct of a dynamic interaction between people, places and materials that shaped prehistoric worldview.