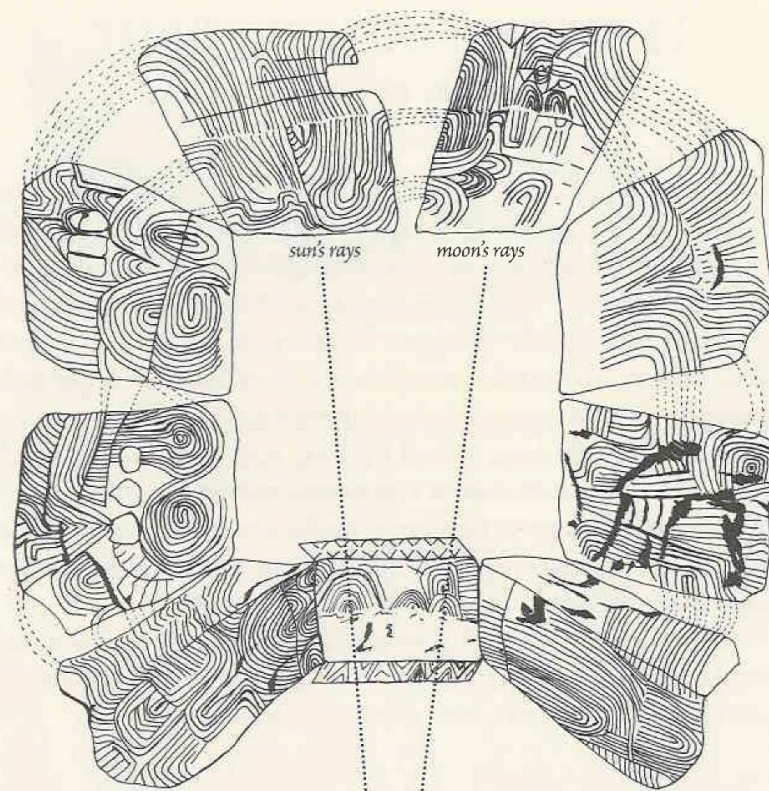
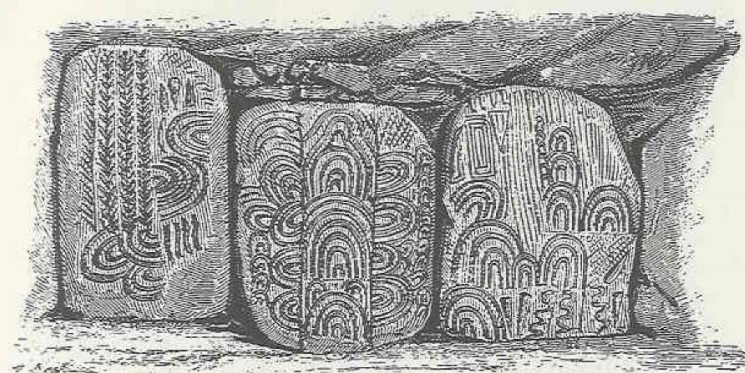


GAVRINIS

a womb with a view

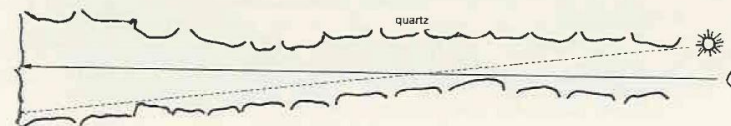
Along the island of Gavrinis in the Morbihan Gulf flows one of the strongest currents in Europe. Permanent whirlpools announce one of the best preserved and finest architectural masterpieces of the Carnac builders' culture. The cairn of Gavrinis, an urchin-shaped mound with an average diameter of about 30m, covers a dolmen built with 1 quartz and 29 granite upright stones, 27 of which are covered with engravings. A long (13.4m), very slightly winding corridor leads to a small chamber (2m x 3m and 1.8m high) comprising 8 menhirs and a massive cover stone, supported by the cairn and not by the uprights.

On sunrise at winter solstice, the Sun's first rays redden an engraving of semicircles on the last stone before the chamber on the left hand side of the corridor. Then, a laser-like beam runs along the floor of the chamber and hits the left side of the left of the two stones which form the back wall. As the Sun comes up, the beam slowly widens and sinks, illuminating the left stone before it hits the floor (*see too pp. 378–382*).



Above: The end chamber at Gavrinis (drawing AAK). The stone at the top right receives moonlight every 18.6 years when the Moon rises at its most southerly point (witnessed by the author in March 2007.) The engravings on these two stones link together at the centre, seemingly expressing a mystical marriage of the Sun and the Moon. Their hypothetical crossing point in the corridor is marked by a quartz stone (below).

'Gavrinis' may derive from Breton-Welsh roots; Gawr = giant or powerful man and Inis = island.

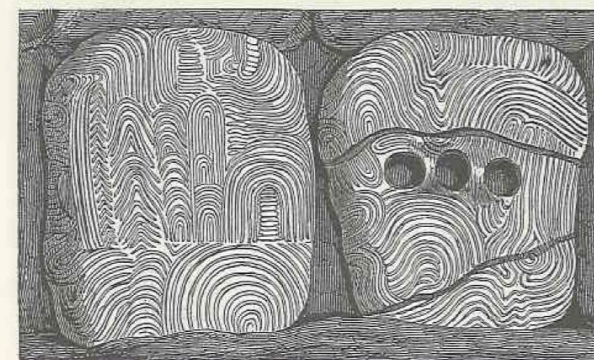
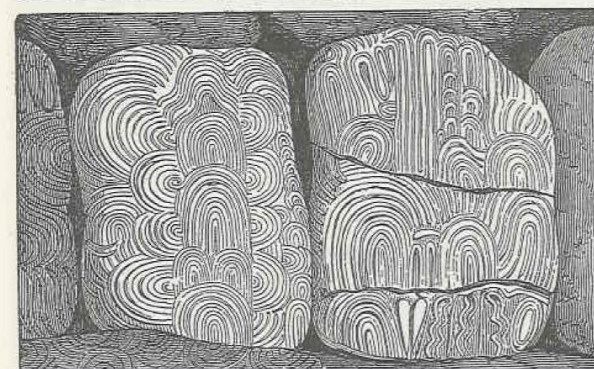
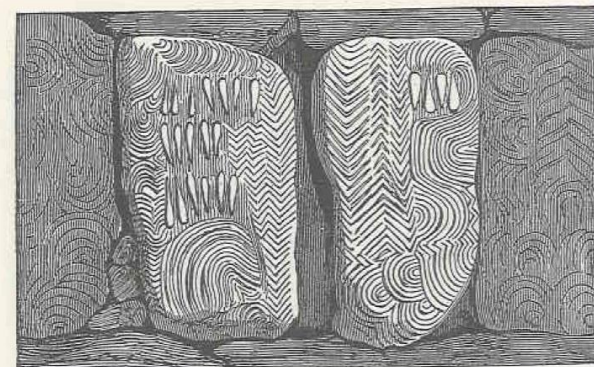
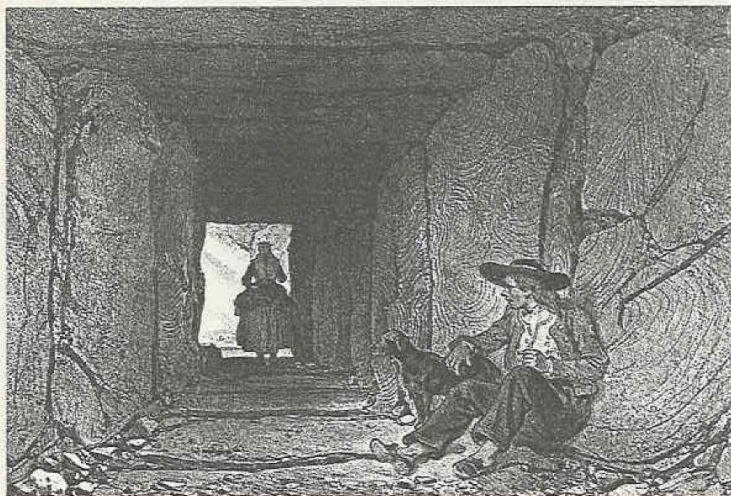


GAVRINIS

Gavrinis Passage Tomb, Morbihan, Brittany

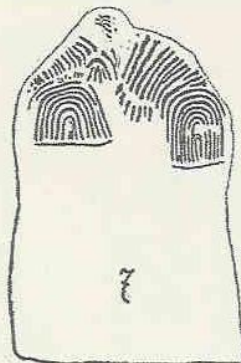
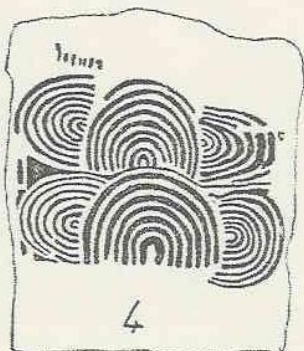
The extensive 3500BC carvings at Gavrinis display flowing, abstract designs which take account of the shapes of the stones they cover. Are these simply decorative patterns or do they contain clues to some forgotten perception? Perhaps the stones were decorated before being positioned, but they were certainly intended to create a specific impact on the inside of the cairn and to perform a visual function. We may also wonder about the intended viewer, as these structures are primarily houses of the dead—did they have a wider function?

In the end very little is really known about any archaic sculpturings, merely their age. I hope, however, that I have managed to convey something of their mystery, majesty and beauty in these pages.

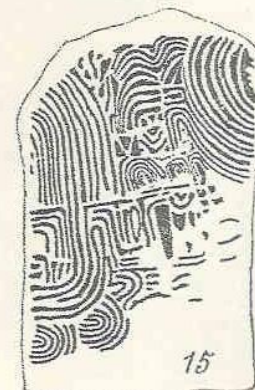
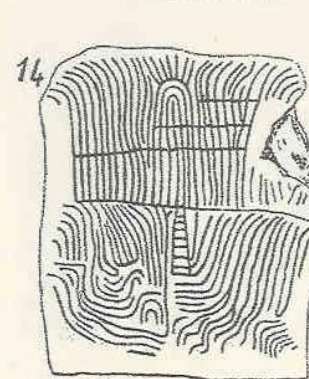


Gavrinis, Brittany, France

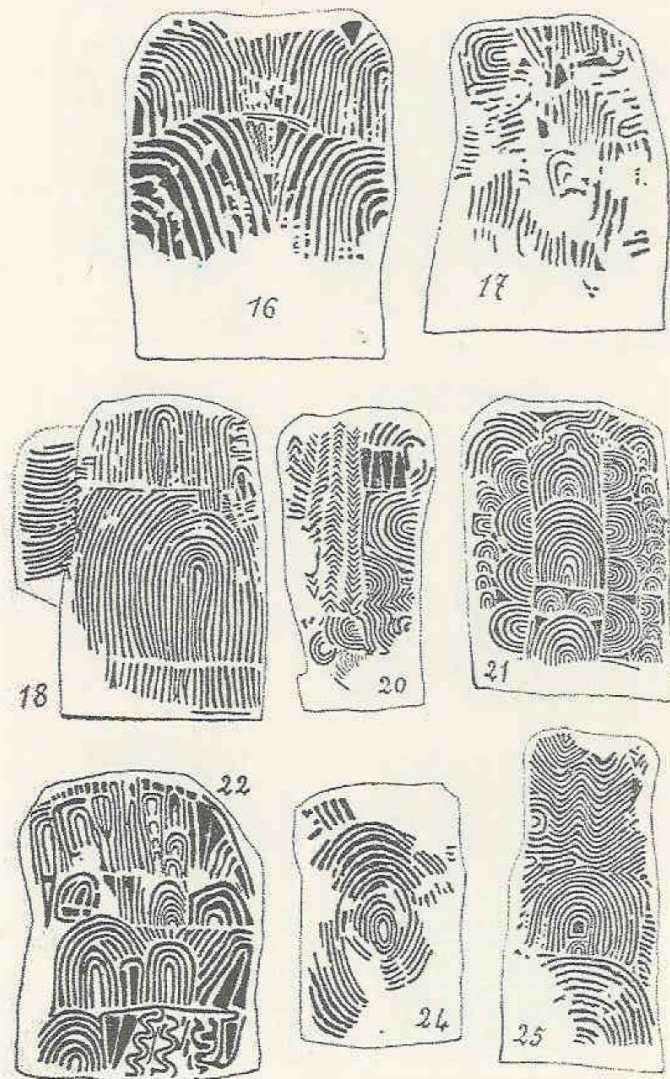
0 0.5c 1m



Gavrinis,
Brittany,
France

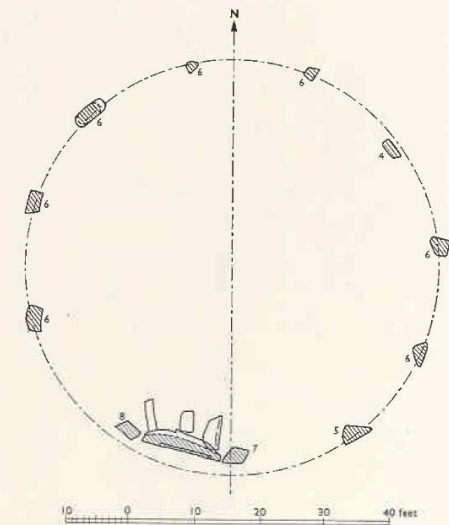


Gavrinis,
Brittany,
France

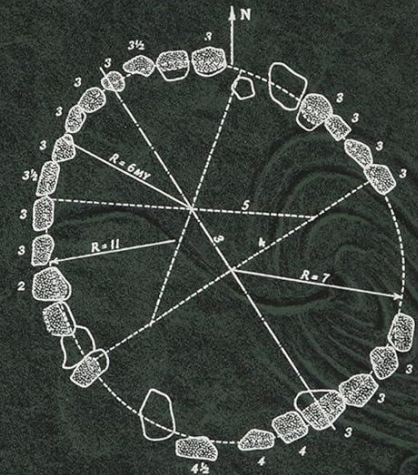
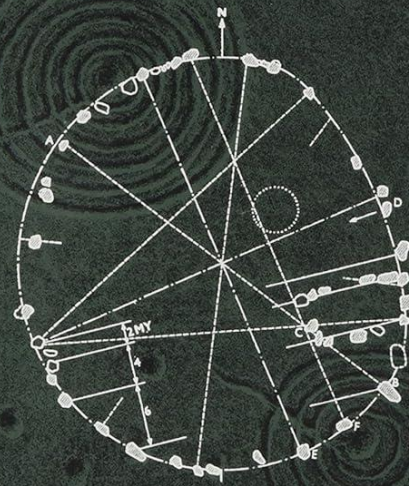


Gavrinis,
Brittany,
France

SURVEYS OF STONE CIRCLES



Alexander Thom



MEGALITH

STUDIES IN STONE

