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Pl. I, a — Rock No. 4 as it was found. Only a small part of it appeared at the surface, the rest was covered by earth and grass. (EUR. 62 : XVIII-12).



Pl. I, b — Rock No. 4, after cleaning. The lighter section is the same part that can be seen in the previous photograph (EUR. 62 : XIX-6).

Journal of the
Cork Historical and Archæological Society

(Seventy-first year of issue)

New Petroglyphs at Derrynablaha,
County Kerry, Ireland

By EMMANUEL G. ANATI, M.A., D. LIT.

I INTRODUCTION

In April 1962, while on a research trip to Ireland from Jerusalem, Israel, to visit sites of petroglyphs and megalithic art, Mrs E. Anati and myself stopped at Cork, to meet Prof. M. J. O'Kelly and have his good advice concerning our itinerary in the southern counties.¹ In addition to his expert and most kind guidance to the known sites of prehistoric art, this visit contained for us a pleasant surprise. A few days before our visit, Prof. O'Kelly had received from Mr Daniel O'Sullivan, of Derrynablaha, Co. Kerry, a report on the existence of previously unnoticed rock-carvings. Most kindly, Prof. O'Kelly suggested that we should visit Mr. O'Sullivan's farm. Should the rock-carvings be of some interest, he generously proposed that I should write about them in the *Journal* of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society. With the pleasure of acknowledging Prof. O'Kelly's kindness I now present the following report. During our visit at Derrynablaha we were guided by Mr O'Sullivan to whom we are indebted for showing us the petroglyphs and for helping us in tracing them.

¹ Our Irish trip was part of a research project for "A Comparative study of Post-Palaeolithic prehistoric art in Western Europe", which is being carried on with a Fellowship of the Bollingen Foundation of New York.

II THE SITE

Derrynablaha is located in the middle of the Iveragh peninsula, on the road from Blackwater Bridge to Caragh Lake, about two miles south of Ballaghbeama Gap². This peninsula, facing the Atlantic Ocean, between Kenmare River and Dingle Bay, is the region of major concentration of Bronze Age petroglyphs in Ireland. Most of these rock-carvings are concentrated along the sea coast.³ Until now two main sites were known more to the interior, one at Glencar,⁴ the other, recently studied by Prof. O'Kelly, near Lake Coomasaharn.⁵ Derrynablaha is the third site to be found in the interior of the peninsula and lies at a distance of over ten miles from the sea.

Fifteen carved rocks were found there, divided into three main groups. The first one includes the rocks numbered 1 to 9, and is on the hill at the foot of which Mr O'Sullivan's house is located. To the west, this hill is dominated by Mullaghanattin Mountain, to the east it faces Lough Brin. The second group includes the rocks numbered 10 to 12, and is about one mile to the south of the previous group, on a hill separating River Blackwater from Kealduff River. The third group includes the rocks numbered 13 to 15, and is located below Mr. O'Sullivan's house, near Kealduff River.

III DESCRIPTION OF THE ENGRAVED ROCKS

Rock No. 1—Three cup-and-ring marks are visible on a slab which was squared, probably recently, and is now used as the threshold of Mr O'Sullivan's stable (fig. 1).

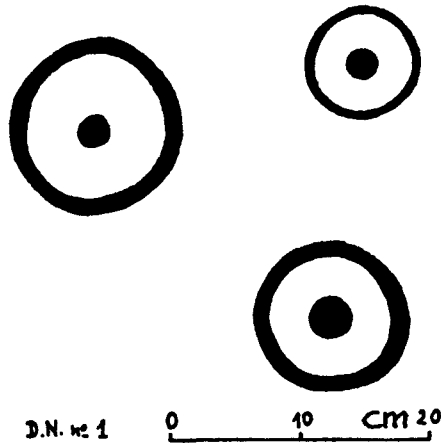


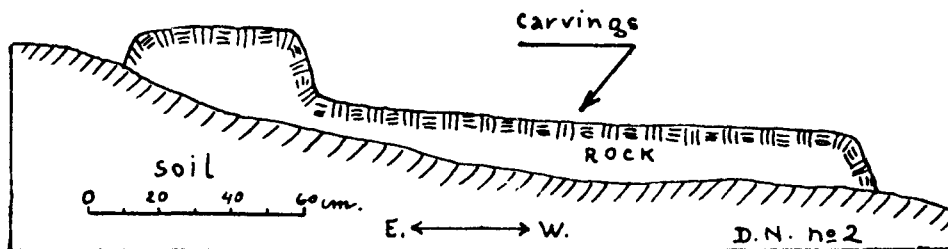
Fig. 1 — Cup-and-ring marks from rock No. 1.

² The townland of Derrynablaha is found on O.S. 6" scale sheet Kerry no. 82. Parish: Templenoe; Barony: Dunkerron South.

³ E. MacWhite, A New View on Irish Bronze Age Rock-Scribings, *JRSAI*, LXXXVI, (1946), 76-78.

⁴ *PRIA*, XXVI, C, (1906-7), 9.

⁵ M. J. O'Kelly: "A new group of Rock-Scribings in Co. Kerry," *JCHAS*, LXIII, (1958), 1-4.



Section of rock no 2.

Fig. 2 — Section of rock No. 2.

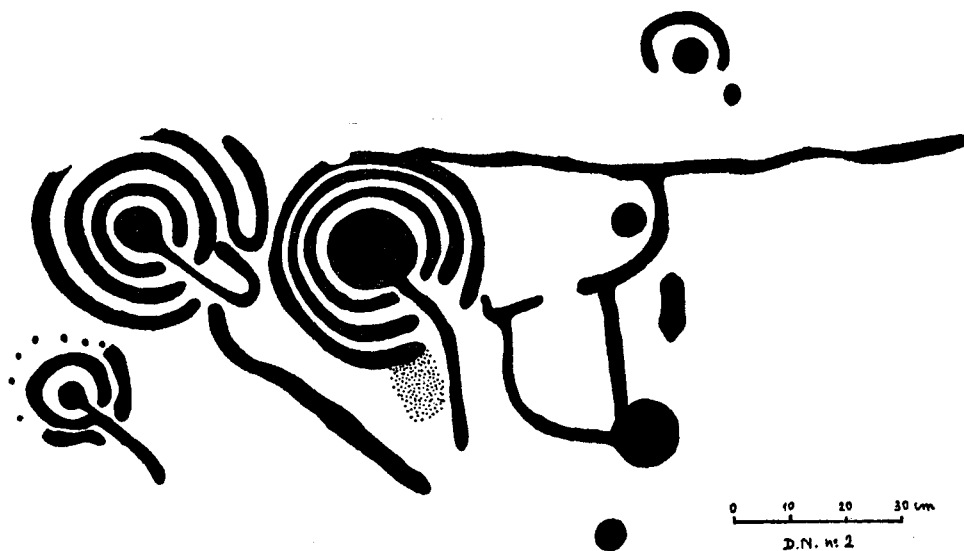


Fig. 3 — Central part of rock No. 2.

Rock No. 2—Rock of about 2.30 by 1.80m in size, smooth surface, with a straight step at its eastern end, forming an “altar-like” natural platform (fig. 2). The petroglyphs are all in the lower western part and the elevated eastern part, though no less smooth, was totally neglected by the prehistoric engravers.

The carvings include three cup-marks, two cup-and-groovemarks with deriving grooves, two simple cup-and-ring marks (type No. 2 of typology), and three cup-groove-and-ring carvings. One of the latter appears to be unfinished, with one ring entirely carved and a second ring half carved and half marked with dots. The other two have three rings each around the cup-and-groove (fig. 3). (For typological definitions of figures see part IV and fig. No. 10).

Rock No. 3—Quasi-rectangular rock of about 2.50 by 1.50m with crude, irregular surface sloping down westward. The eastern side is the highest, and there is a simple cup-and-ring mark. Most of the carvings are concentrated in the south-western side, within a large engraved circle of about 65cm in diameter. In it are found 18 small cup-marks and 4 simple cup-and-ring marks. In the western end of the rock there is an additional cup-and-ring mark.

Rock No. 4—Flat rock which was more than three-quarters covered with turf (pl. I). One edge of the rock was artificially cut straight in ancient times. The patination of the cut edge is equal to that of the surfaces of the carvings. The size of the rock is about 2.50 by 1.70m and it is roughly trapezoidal in shape. In it are found 61 small and superficial cup-marks, 1 snake-like groove, 13 simple cup-and-ring marks, 1 cup-and-ring with two concentric rings, and 1 with four rings and a “spectacle-marking” (fig. 4).

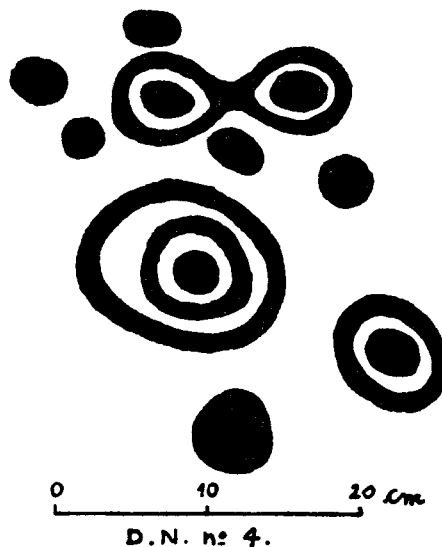


Fig. 4 — Rock No. 4, the “spectacle-making” and surrounding petroglyphs.

Rock No. 5—At one end of the rock are found two simple cup-and-ring marks connected by two parallel lines of about 90cm in length. Other worn grooves are visible all round.

Rock No. 6—Small slab, about 1.00m in length. The surface is worn and rough. On it are found 2 cup-marks, 2 grooves, 8 simple cup-and-ring marks, 2 cup-and-ring marks with two rings each, and one with three rings, 3 simple rings. It seems that these figures are engraved in a certain order and pair by pair. However none of them is a typical “spectacle-marking” (fig. 5).

Rock No. 7—Small rock of about 1.00 by 1.30m with crude surface. On it 7 simple cup-and-ring marks.

Rock No. 8—Small rock with 1 cup-and-ring mark, and 1 simple ring.

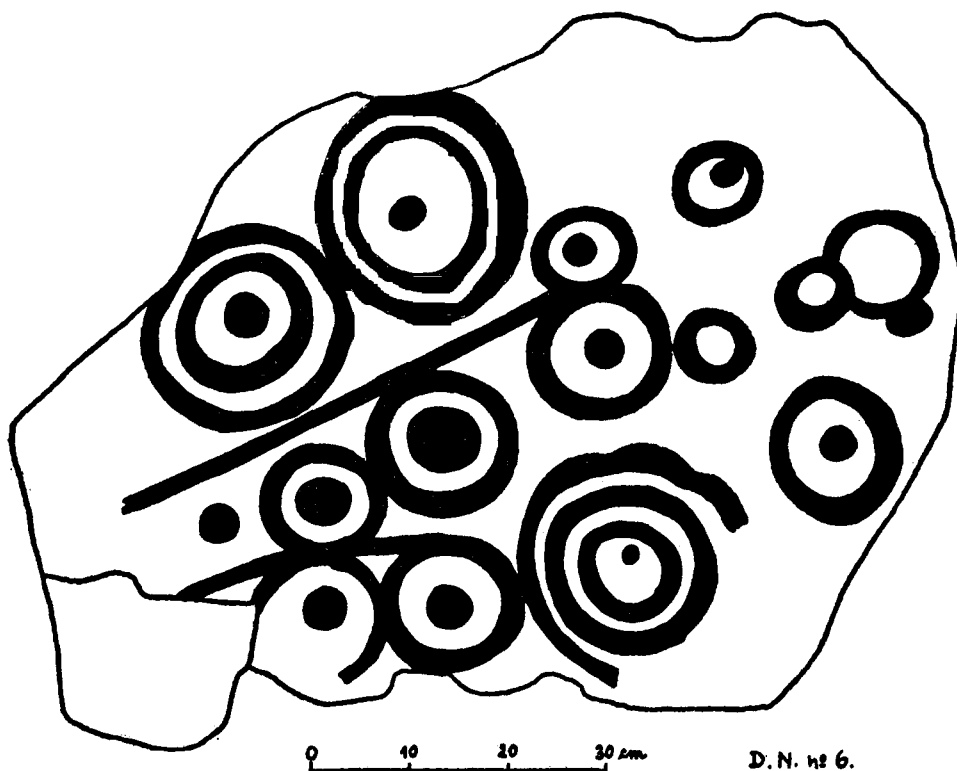


Fig. 5 — Rock No. 6.

Rock No. 9—Rock of about 2.00 by 1.50m at a distance of about 5m west of the previous two rocks. Very worn surface with traces of 12 small and superficial cup-marks and 4 cup-and-ring marks.

Rock No. 10—This is the largest, richest, and most interesting rock at Derrynablaha measuring about 3.50 by 2.50m. It emerges from its surroundings as a clear landmark and slopes down westward, its highest point facing east (pl. II). It has several cases of superpositions, and different degrees of wear of the carvings, thus showing that the petroglyphs on it were executed at various times during a long period. For this reason, the assemblage of figures found here cannot be considered as a single unity, but rather as the work of various people who returned again and again to this spot to make their marks upon it. It is divided in three parallel, almost rectangular sections, separated from each other by natural splits.

The southern section includes 15 cup marks, 4 of which are isolated, the other 11 are grouped in two lots. One of these groups has a central larger cup mark surrounded in a circle by 5 cup-marks and 1 cup-and-ring mark. The other, again has a central cup mark ; four other cup-marks are arranged in a half-circle, while the other half-circle is marked by half a ring. In the southern area there are also 3 simple cup-and-ring marks, one simple circle, 2 cup-ring-and-groove marks with two rings, 2 with three rings, 3 with four rings and 1 with five rings. In addition to this, there is a peculiar figure of two rings enclosing a central cup-mark surrounded by six smaller cup marks (pl. III, a).

The central section includes 2 isolated cup marks, 7 simple cup-ring-and-groove marks, 4 cup-and-groove marks, 4 cup-ring-and-groove marks with 3 rings each, and 1 with five rings. In addition to these, the central section also has six grooves of various shapes, and 3 other peculiar figures composed of grooves and cup marks in various orders (pl. II, b).



Fig. 6 — Cup-groove-and-rings marking from rock No. 10.



Pl. II, a — Rocks Nos. 10 and 10a, looking East (EUR. 62 : XX-11).



Pl. II, b — Central section of Rock No. 10 (EUR. 62 : XX-6).
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Pl. III, a — Southern section of rock No. 10 (EUR. 62 : XX-8).



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Pl. III, a — Southern section of rock No. 10 (EUR. 62 : XX-8).

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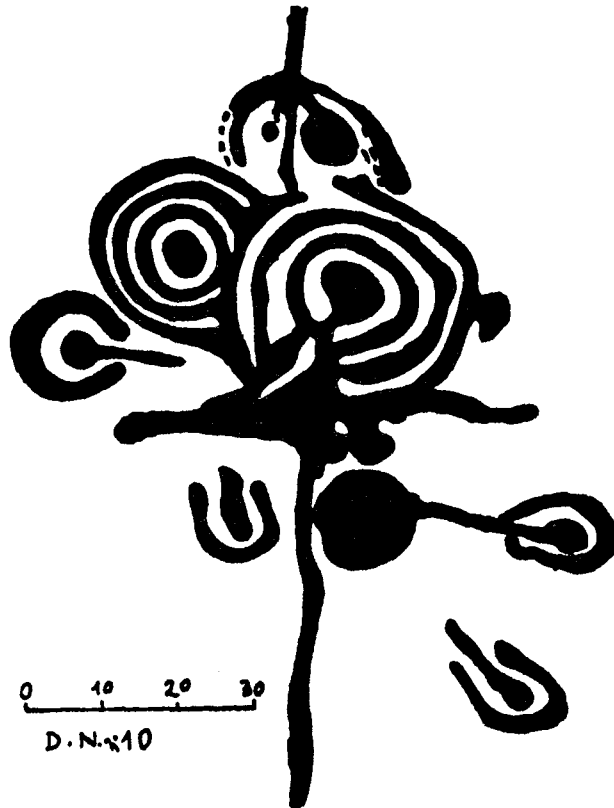


Fig. 7 — The “anthropomorphic” figure from rock No. 10.

The most peculiar figure of this section, and indeed one of the most peculiar figures ever found in these kinds of petroglyphs, is a composition of several of the commonly found patterns into a complex figure giving a vague “anthropomorphic” impression, (fig. 7). This figure is of the greatest interest in that it shows how common patterns such as cup-groove-and-ring marks were used to represent various parts of the human body, probably in a symbolic, conventionalised manner. For instance, from this figure it appears that cup-and-ring marks with several concentric rings, symbolize the breast of this being; the cup-groove-and-ring of simple type seems to represent the female sex organ, while the cup-and-groove mark indicates the male organ (fig. 7). It is likely that these schematic figures may represent more than one subject in the symbolic depiction of this art cycle; therefore in my opinion one should not apply to *all* such figures the meanings they seem to have in this specific representation.

The northern section has a group of 5 small cup-marks.

Rock No. 10, a—Touching rock No. 10, there is a small, standing, square rock with a “shield-like” figure composed of 4 rings, of 1 cup-mark in the centre, and 9 smaller cup-marks between the outer and the second ring (fig. 8 and pl. II, a).

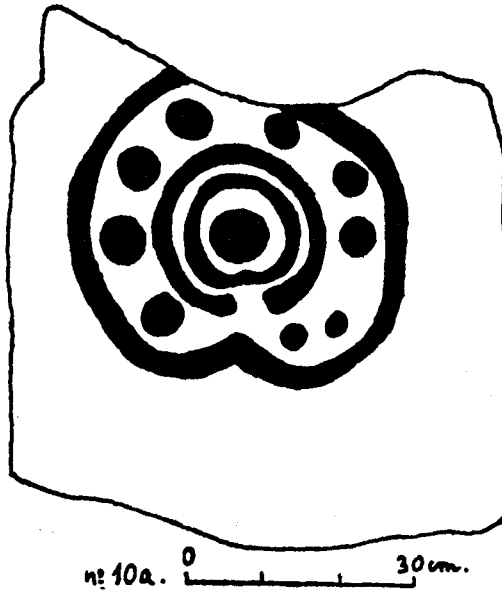


Fig. 8 — Shield-like figure from rock No. 10a.

Rock No. 11—This rock is near a stone-circle of small stones and in front of it, facing east, there is a standing stone, which is incorporated inside the stone circle. The rock is about 0.60 by 1.20m and in it there is a simple cup-and-ring mark and 5 cup-marks.

Rock No. 12—This rock is in the middle of a circular, flat area defined to the east by a megalithic wall and to the west by some natural rocks and the hill-slopes (pl. IV, a). Near the rock there is a stone circle and a low, probably half destroyed, round barrow. It would probably be of some interest to excavate this structure and to verify whether it has some archaeological remains still *in situ*, since the engraved rock seems to belong to the archaeological complex surrounding it.

The rock is altar-like, flat on top, it has one straight side ; the rest of the edge is irregular.

Apart from a small solar-like round figure in the centre of the rock, which is engraved more delicately, all the other figures and marks seem to belong to a single complex, forming some sort of composition, the meaning of which totally escapes us (fig.9). Deep and irregularly engraved grooves form the outline of one vaguely anthropomorphic figure, on the side of which 2 semicircular areas are again enclosed within grooves. These areas are covered with cup-marks of various sizes. There are 61 large and many more smaller ones. Other current elements appear here as part of this puzzling composition : there are 4 simple rings, 1 cup-and-ring, 1 ring-and-groove with 2 concentric open rings, and a ring with a series of regularly organized cup-marks inside.

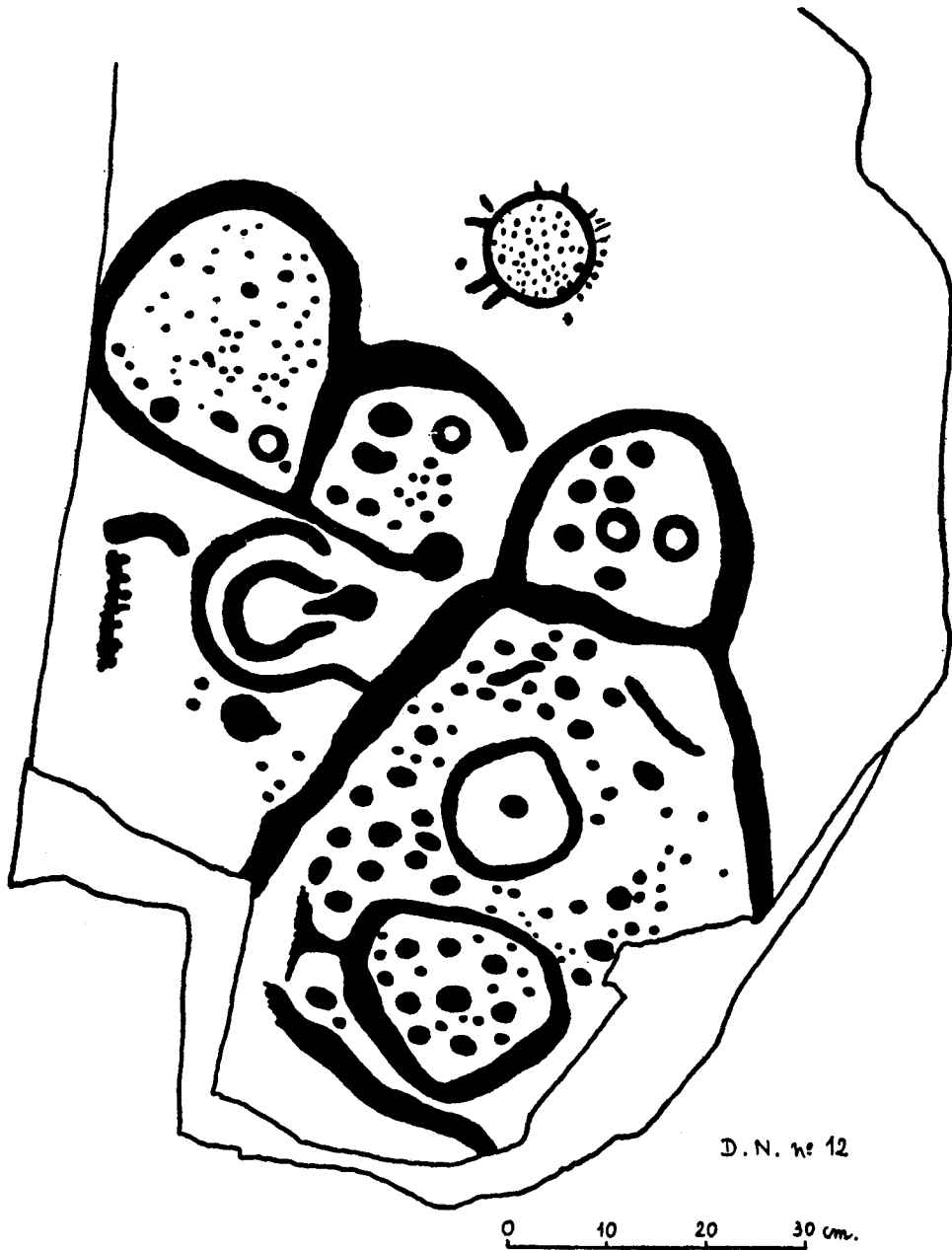


Fig. 9 — Figures of rock No. 12.

Rocks No. 13 to 15—Nos. 13 and 14 are two large rocks near which is a menhir-like standing stone. No. 13 continues under earth and on the visible (southern) side there are 4 cupmarks, and 4 cup-and-ring marks. One of the cup-and-ring marks has two concentric rings, the others have one. Rock No. 14 is near the previous example, on the edge of the torrent. It is a flat, smooth rock of about 2.50 by 1.50m and it has only 2 cup-and-ring marks, of simple type horizontally located near each other. Rock No. 15 was not visited. According to Mr O'Sullivan, it is located about 400m east of rocks No. 13 and 14, and it has only one simple cup-and-ring mark.

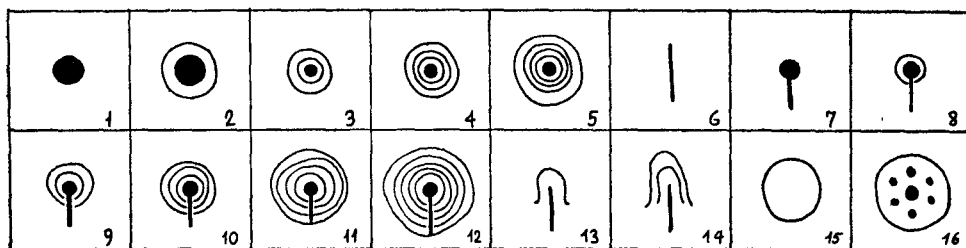


Fig. 10 — Basic types of figures represented at Derrynablaha.

IV TYPOLOGY OF FIGURES

Derrynablaha has yielded in all 320 rock-carvings of rather repetitious patterns. They can be divided into 17 basic types according to the following list :

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 — Cup-mark ; | 9 — 12 — Cup-groove-and-rings |
| 2 — Cup-and-ring mark ; | (2, 3, 4, and 5 rings) ; |
| 3 — Cup-and-two-rings ; | 13 — Groove-and-open-ring ; |
| 4 — Cup-and-three-rings ; | 14 — Groove-and-open-rings ; |
| 5 — Cup-and-four-rings ; | 15 — Ring ; |
| 6 — Groove ; | 16 — Ring-and-cups ; |
| 7 — Cup-and-groove ; | 17 — Rings-and-cups ; |
| 8 — Cup-groove-and-ring ; | 18 — Others. |

There are of course several variants of each of these basic types, but this typology is enough to give a general idea of the quantitative ratio, and the repetitiousness of these types at Derrynablaha. There are also a few figures that cannot be included in any of these types, but they are a great minority, only 5, all coming from the same rock, and probably not having the same significance as the repetitious types. They have been listed under the label " Others " at the end of our typological table.

Chart of typological distribution—Derrynablaha

Rocks No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	10a	11	12	13	14	15	Total of each type of figure
No. 1		3	18	61		2			12	22		5	61	4			188
2	3	2	6	13	2	8	7	1	4	7		1	1	3	2	1	61
3				1		2								1			4
4						1											1
5				1													1
6				1	6	2				8							17
7		2								4							6
8										7							7
9		1								2							3
10		2								5							7
11										3							3
12										2							2
13												1					1
14													1				1
15			1		3			1		1			4				10
16													1				1
17										1	1						2
Others										5							5
Total in each rock	3	10	25	77	11	15	7	2	16	67	1	7	68	8	2	1	320

This table is illustrated in a visual manner, in the quantitative graph of typology, which gives us a clear impression on the type of assemblage found at Derrynablaha, in which the preponderant majority of figures is formed by cup-marks (ca. 57%) and simple cup-and-ring marks (ca. 18%) together being 75% of the total number of figures (fig. 11). This graph will enable quantitative comparisons with other groups of similar rock-carvings to be made in the future, thus making it possible to establish similarities and differences. However, the present graph was made for the particular elements found here, and it is likely that a graph for more general use in the comparative study of other groups of related petroglyphs, would have to be enlarged to include motifs occurring elsewhere and not found at Derrynablaha.

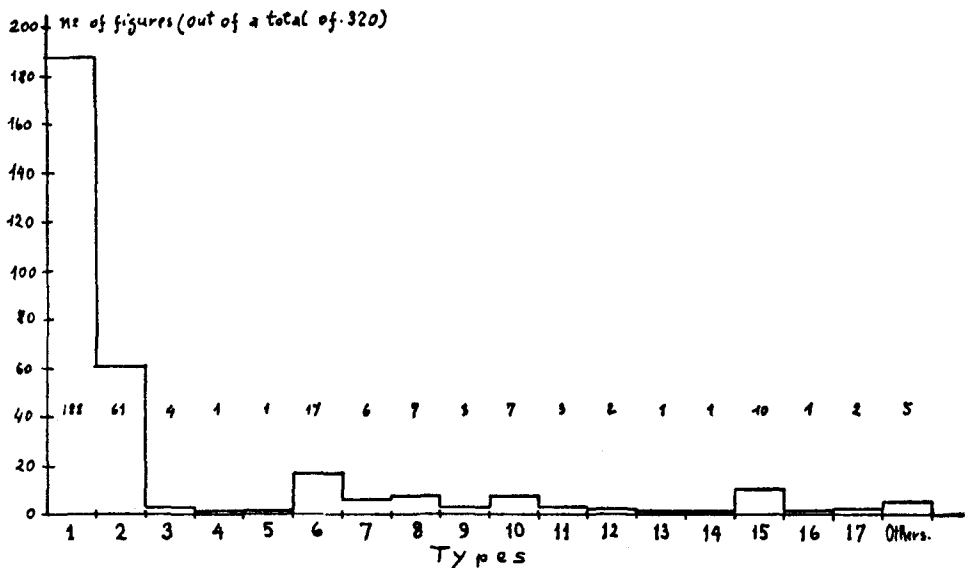


Fig. 11 — Quantitative graph of typology for the basic types of figures at Derrynablaha. The horizontal axis indicates types, the vertical axis indicates their quantities.

V CHRONOLOGY AND ORIGIN OF IRISH PETROGLYPHS

From local superpositions it was established that the Derrynablaha group was not executed all at the same time. Rather it would seem, here as elsewhere, that this kind of Irish petroglyph was made during a relatively long period. From local evidence very little can be inferred about the absolute dating of this "art," but several considerations may help us to obtain a general outlook on the problem. At Derrynablaha we have noted in two different spots the connection between rock-carvings and standing monoliths or menhirs. This same connection is repeated in other sites of south-Irish petroglyphs. Of special interest, for establishing this connection, is Glencar, about six miles north of Derrynablaha, where a now fallen slab is covered with petroglyphs of current type (pl. IV, b). At Ardcanaght, near Castlemaine, a typical menhir, still standing *in situ*, is covered with cup-and-ring marks and other typical petroglyphs, At Miltown, and at Kinard, both near Dingle, again petroglyphs and menhirs are found in clear connection with each other. These repetitious connections establish the contemporaneity, of some of the Irish rock-pictures, with some of the menhirs. The dating in the Bronze Age of some menhirs, or standing stones, has been long established.⁶ However, like other kinds of megalithic monuments, standing stones first appeared in Ireland, as elsewhere in Western Europe, in the Neolithic period, and the Bronze Age examples are persistances of Neolithic traditions.⁷ This fact is relevant for the understanding of the general background of the Irish petroglyphs.

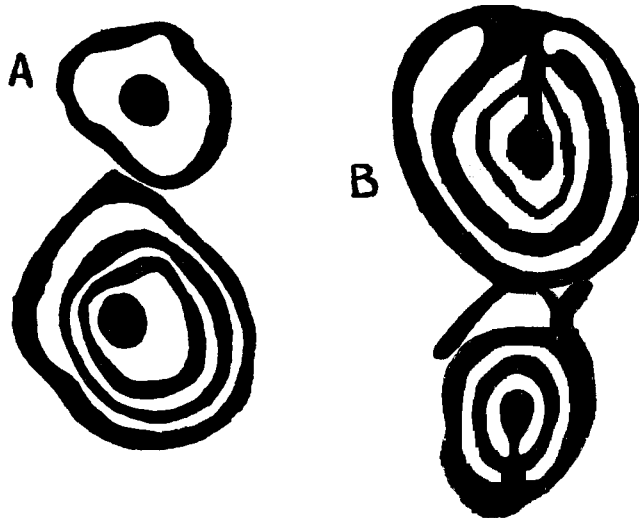


Fig. 12 — Cup-and-ring marks and cup-groove-and-ring marks from megalithic art, Lough Crew, Tomb T.

⁶ R. A. S. Macalister, Armstrong and Praeger: "A Bronze Age interment with associated standing-stone and earthen-ring, near Naas, Co. Kildare," *PRIA*, XXX, c, (1912-13), 351.

⁷ See: G. Daniel: "The Dual Nature of Megalithic Colonization of Prehistoric Europe," *PPS*, VII (1941), 1 ff.

When rock-carvings, from Ireland and from elsewhere in the British Isles, are compared to the other known assemblages of similar petroglyphs, two main "art-groups" appear to be the nearest, in figurative approach, in subject matter, and in technique: the carvings decorating some of the Passage Graves, and the rock-carvings of North-Western Iberia, or the Galician cycle. Both these groups have been compared to the Irish petroglyphs, and on them are based the two main theories concerning their origins. One is that they were directly inspired from the art of the Passage Graves.⁸ The other is that they mainly derived from the North-Western Iberian group.⁹ E. MacWhite had also proposed that both influences—from the Passage Graves, and from the Galician cycle—were present in the Irish petroglyphs.¹⁰

The connections with Passage-Grave art are undoubted, and the discoveries at Derrynablaha come to stress this point once more. Not a single one of the seventeen basic types of figures from Derrynablaha does not find its parallels in the megalithic art (fig. 12). Of importance for these comparisons are tombs T and L at Lough Crew,¹¹ and the Hill of Tara, but also in other Irish megaliths, elements similar to the petroglyphs are found.¹² The problem seems to be rather of a quantitative character, since figurative elements very abundant in the petroglyphs are rare in megalithic art, while common elements in megalithic art are rare or absent in the petroglyphs. On the whole the Irish megalithic decoration is much richer, more varied in type and subject than the petroglyphs. These are repetitious, and have a more limited gamut of figures. On the other hand, the difference from slab to slab in the megalithic art sometimes is considerable, and some of the slabs, for instance in tomb T at Lough Crew, are nearer in type to some petroglyphs, than to other decorated slabs found *in the same tomb*.

Rock-carvings, much similar to the petroglyphs, are sometimes found to decorate cist-graves, in Northern Ireland, in Northern England, and in Scotland. Some of these are connected with the Food Vessel culture, and from this a connection was inferred between that culture and this kind of petroglyphs.¹³ It is likely that these petroglyphs started before the Food Vessel culture and persisted thereafter. The people of the cist-graves, were just one of several human groups that had adopted these figures—and probably also the ideology connected with them, whatever this may have been.

The various mentioned connections: the frequent relation with standing-stones, or menhirs, in Ireland; the similarity with some of the Passage-Grave decorations; and the connection with Food Vessel cist-graves, seem to point to a certain continuity of these petroglyphs in the British Isles and their probable derivation from the megalithic art. Not unlikely this derivation was indirect, probably in the form of influence of an ideological kind, from megalithic invaders upon a local population that accepted the ideas behind these depictions in their own way while giving them their own meaning and emphasizing the motives that most appealed to them.

⁸ H. Breuil and R.A.S. Macalister, "A study of the Chronology of Bronze Age Rock-Sculptures in Ireland," *PRIA*, XXXVI, C, (1921), 6-7; H. Breuil, "The oldest decorative art in Ireland," Presidential address, Prehistoric Society of East Anglia, *PPS*, 1934, pp. 311-22.

⁹ E. MacWhite, *Estudios sobre las relaciones Atlánticas de la península Hispánica en la edad del Bronce*, Seminario de Historia Primitiva, Madrid, (1951,) p. 124.

¹⁰ E. MacWhite, *JRSAI*, LXXVI, (1946) 59-80.

¹¹ A detailed study of the megalithic carvings at Lough Crew would be of considerable interest in the research on these connections.

¹² Cf. E. MacWhite, *JRSAI*, LXXVI, (1946), p. 68.

¹³ C. Hawkes, *The Prehistoric Foundations of Europe to the Mycenaean Age*, London, 1940, pp. 321-22; V. G. Childe, *The Dawn of European Civilization*, London, 1957, p. 383.



Pl. IV, a — General view of rock No. 12 (EUR. 62 : XXI-7).



Pl. IV, b — The Glencar decorated slab (EUR. 62 : XXI-11).

The problem of similarity with the North-Western Iberian groups remains to be examined. Though far from being identical, the two groups—the Irish and the Galician—show indeed numerous similar points.¹⁴ The two current explanations for these similarities are connections or parallel evolution. In my view both these elements played their own role. As emphasized by Childe and MacWhite¹⁵ connections between the British Isles, and the Atlantic shores of France and Iberia were very active in the Bronze Age. Undoubtedly, with trade in metal objects and tools of various types, ideas also travelled from shore to shore, but the main question arising is to what extent did these international contacts touch half-peripheral people, living on hunting and pastoralism, of the type illustrated by the petroglyphs? It is likely that some exotic ideas reached these human groups, but it is unlikely that these connections could be the only cause for the ideological and psychological similarities reflected by the rock-pictures.

Parallel evolution is stressed by the fact that as in the petroglyphs of the British Isles, there are also in those of North-Western Iberia strong connections with motives and patterns of megalithic art. The main differences between the two groups of petroglyphs—for instance the presence of realistic figures of animals in Galicia, which do not exist in the British Isles, the numerous oculi-faces of the Iberian group, absent in the British Isles, and the abundance of simple cup-and-ring marks here, as compared to their secondary occurrence in Galicia—are all differences to be remarked also in the megalithic art of the two regions. The main common denominator of these two art-groups is that they evolved a similar figurative approach, both developing a similar (but not identical) pattern, out of the similar (but not identical) repertoires of ideas and symbols of local megalithic art.

It seems that these two groups represent a similar, parallel development that took place for the most part separately in the two areas. In both, the megalithic invaders introduced a new ideology—and with it a new figurative approach—that was in part accepted and adopted by local populations. From this point, the local populations developed them in their own way, occasionally alighting the basic concepts (and figurative patterns) with new contacts, some of which *might* have been direct, from Galicia to Ireland and vice-versa. Therefore, like the Galician group, the Irish one should represent the expression of a local people whose ideology and figurative approach were shaped by contacts with the megalithic invaders as well as by long distance casual connections.

¹⁴ R. Sobrino Buhigas, *Corpus Petroglyphorum Gallaecia*, Seminario de Estudos Galegos, Santiago de Compostela, 1935.

¹⁵ V. G. Childe, *Prehistoric Communities of the British Isles*, Edinburgh, 1940, p. 123, and *The Dawn of European Civilization*, p. 338; also E. MacWhite, op. cit., in footnote 8 above.