

MOVEMENT & SOCIAL CHANGE

Examples from early prehistoric Ireland

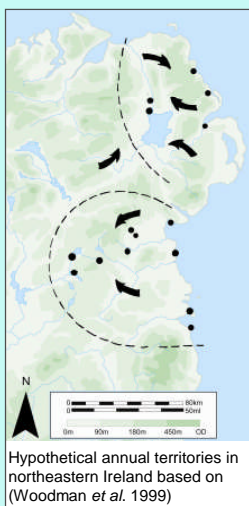
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Routine or catalyst?

Human movement could be viewed as one of the most habitual and routine activities, often carried out unthinkingly. But on the other hand it can also act as a powerful catalyst for social change.

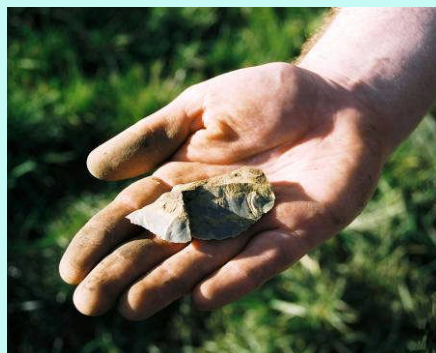
Modelling movement in archaeology

Models of mobility in early pre-history rarely reflect these competing aspects of movement. Instead they tend to view it as a means of bringing 'consumers' to resources and vice versa, while all but ignoring the physical, social and political significance of the practice.



Lithics and movement

The material record for early prehistoric northwest Europe, dominated by lithic artefacts, makes identifying movement rather difficult and would seem to rule out an interpretive investigation of the practice beyond the strictly functional domain.



Yet their size and shape makes lithics inherently mobile and frequently it would seem that movement played a significant part in their life history. Thus we could suggest that in making these objects people had movement on their minds.

The middle Barrow Valley

Mesolithic collections from the Barrow Valley, dominated by poor quality chert, contain a number of large flints of high quality, most likely originating in coastal areas of north-east Ireland located 150 to 200 kilometres due north.



These objects

are consistently found at fords and confluences; places emphasising movement and suggesting the existence of networks that linked people in the Barrow Valley with other parts of Ireland.



Moving to and from Tievebullagh

In neolithic Co. Antrim people climbed to the porcellanite outcrop, located beneath the striking summit of Tievebullagh, carrying back down with them heavy loads of rough-outs.



Their journeys can be contrasted with those of the polished stone axes, made from the rock, which extended all over Ireland and across the Irish Sea.



In their movements to distant communities these objects may also have brought ideas of change and new ways of life.

