

## Revolution in Carnac

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One of the most intriguing areas in the region of Bretagne, France, is the Gulf of Morbihan. Here you find the largest concentration of megalithic ruins in Europe. Until a few decades ago, one believed that these large stones were erected by the Celts, who populated the region in the times of the Roman conquests. Nowadays, we know that these monuments have been erected at least one thousand years before the arrival of those Celts, and probably between 5000 and 3000 years BC.

If not the Celts, who were these people of megalith builders? This is essentially a mystery, as well as the time of their construction, the plan, the purpose and the means. There is no written record. There are not even significant organic remains. As no single hypothesis can be proven unambiguously true or false, panoply of extravagant and esoteric theories have been devised, including theories of extraterrestrial colonization.

### Locmariaquer and Gavrinis

In 1980 the team that was performing a thorough archeological investigation at the site of Locmariaquer, in the center of the Morbihan, stumbled upon a remarkable coincidence. At last, a minute detail, telling us something concrete about the people that built the megaliths.

What was this finding? Not more than the fact that the covering stone (roof stone) of the dolmen<sup>1</sup> of Locmariaquer (also known as "la Table des Marchands") and the covering stone of the dolmen inside the cairn of Gavrinis, are pieces of one and the same megalith. Such a relation was completely unexpected. In fact, this relation could not reasonably have been discovered given so few clues. It proves the astonishing competence and alertness of the chief archeologist who associated the vague horns of a cattle-like animal on the roof stone of Gavrinis with the chiseled legs of apparently the same animal on the roof of la Table des Marchands. Today the site Locmariaquer and the isle of Gavrinis both lie in the Gulf of Morbihan, in bird's eye view on a mere distance of 5 km, over land it's a distance of 20 km. The covering stone of *la Table des Marchands* weighs 50 tons; the one of *Gavrinis* slightly less. One does not separate pieces of bas-reliefs without a very good reason. Which reason?

Later excavations and study has yielded further details:

- ⇒ The original stone from which both covering stones have been made, was a massive, wing-shaped menhir 14 meters high. It stood erected in Locmariaquer. At some moment in prehistory it has been cut in three pieces. The third and smallest piece has been found as well: it is one of the standing stones in the entrance corridor of *la Table des Marchands*. The original menhir probably displayed two oxen pulling a plough.
- ⇒ Apart from the dolmen, the site of Locmariaquer embraces a tumulus (*called* tumulus, burial hill, just in the supposition that it is a burial monument) and 4 giant pieces of a menhir, once 21 meters high and weighting 350 tons. This menhir is the only remains of an "*alignement*" (alignment) of 19 menhirs that have been thrown over and recuperated for the construction of "la Table des Marchands". The chronology of these events was confirmed by findings of craters of stones in the bottom, which obviously have served as support for the row of menhirs. The cairn of Locmariaquer has been neglectingly built over it.

It is extremely probable that the menhir with the two oxen and the plough was the 18th menhir of the alignment. The 19th and largest menhir has been thrown over and cleaved in pieces too, but even those smaller pieces were probably too heavy for immediate reuse.

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<sup>1</sup> A "cairn" is a prehistoric stone hill, containing a megalith structure called "dolmen". A dolmen is typically a "table-like" structure, consisting of a three or more standing stones and one huge covering stone. The dolmen is thus the inside room of the cairn. It is believed that all dolmens are in fact cairns stripped from their smaller stones. The cairn of Locmariaquer is reconstructed in recent times upon and around the dolmen "la Table des Marchands".

The tourist brochures of Locmariaquer and Gavrinis mention that these cairns probably were burial monuments. Nothing confirms this hypothesis. To my opinion, it is rather unlikely at all. On entering the restaurated building, you get the overwhelming impression to be in a sacred place. The central room is ample and wide, it offers standing places for at least ten persons. The entrance corridor is straight, high enough for an average-sized person and two persons wide - not narrow as would be expected for a grave. Above all: the floors, walls and ceilings consists solely of heavy monoliths - thus where are the graves?

The impression of a true sacred place is enhanced specifically by the standing wall stones. Some of them are covered with bas-reliefs. In the *Table des Marchands* a single greenish wall stone pops out (green, being orthogneiss instead of the granite of the rest of the building). This one standing monolith faces the entrance corridor to the central room. One cannot avoid the spontaneous association with the altar or tabernacle in a Christian chapel of church, or other sacred places in other religions. It doesn't require much imagination to admit that the carvings in the stone must have something to do with the god or goddess. This green stone is covered up with small curved lines, more or less symmetrically organized around the central vertical axis. The guide tells you that there exist many hypotheses about the meaning of these lines: the figure (or stone) as a whole could be the face of a god. The small lines represent stalks of corn, or weapons, of horns of cattle, of waves on the water.

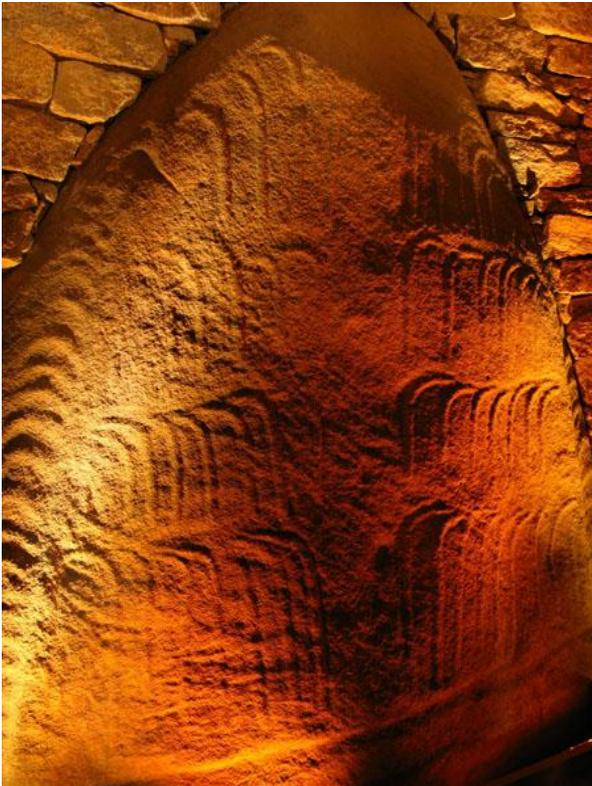


figure 1 Orthogneiss stone inside the Cairn of La Table des Marchands (Locmariaquer)

In the cairn of Gavrinis *all* standing wall stones are covered with bas-reliefs, but of a different kind. Here also the motifs are non-figurative and supposed to be symbolic. The dominant motifs are compositions of many parallel curved lines, concentric half circles and ovals. At sparse places a "normal" object can be recognized: an ax, a bow, arrows. The parallel curved lines remain a mystery. What do they mean?



Figure 2 Inside Gavrinis, details on 2 wall stones

The complete absence of an explanation invites us to not to feel hindered to probe for the underlying motivation of the people that once erected these colossal buildings. Essential in this search is

- ⇒ At a certain moment in time the alignment of 19 menhirs ceases to be "sacred", and without scruples these stones were recycled. The fact that the large menhir has been intentionally cleaved, and yet has not been reused, suggests a fanatic hate.
- ⇒ The cairns of Locmariaquer and Gavrinis have obvious common features and constituent parts.

A first hypothesis that one can try to prove ("to prove" is an over-statement in this context, it should be read as: "to make plausible", or at least: "to make acceptable") is:

The cairns of Locmariaquer (Table des Marchands) and Gavrinis have been built in the same period, by members of the same tribe, from the remainders of a sanctuary of a previous cult.

"Reusing stones of previous cults" has happened frequently during recorded history. The two cairns containing parts of the same sacred stone convinces me that there must exist a strong symbolic link between the two cairns. Additional proof can be found in their obvious similarity in size and architecture. The object of the cult would be two times the same god, or aspects of the same divine power.

The figure in Locmariaquer represents a god, the face of this god is the field full of ears. This explains very elegantly the face-like figure covered with stalk-shaped motifs. Perhaps this cairn was a sanctuary that was used for sacred services during harvest? Perhaps it has even been used as shelter for the harvested grain? Is this an uttering of the organization of this semi-nomadic, semi-sedentary community, that was about to become increasingly dependent from farming?

The figures in the cairn of Gavrinis also represent fields, but in this case just *before* sowing. The parallel traces are nothing else but the furrows made by the plough. Have these figurines been intended as examples for the ploughers? It is the alter ego, the other face of the same divinity (named agriculture, fertility, Ceres, wealth), in a different season. If this is the case, then this sanctuary has been used for the festivities confirming the end of the winter? Are these

figures, much more numerous than the single sculpted stone of Locmariaquer, "examples for the apprentice"? Was this cairn perhaps at the same time the storage room of the sowing-seed? (We visited this cairn during a hot summer noon. Inside it was pleasantly cool)

The hypothesis has its weaknesses too: e.g., why are most of these figurines of furrows curved, halve circles? In our days ploughing is done in straight lines. The motif is perhaps even less symbolic than we suppose. The halve circles may represent the field covered hills, or the furrows around a hill.

Anyway, also "normal" objects feature on the bas-reliefs of Gavrinis. They are represented in a realistic way, be it in the margin of the dominant parallel-lines motif. This must encourage us to look for a realistic representation of something in the parallel-lines motif. Furrows are then indeed the most obvious candidate.

Would there be a deeper meaning behind the axes and the bows or arrows? They feature on only a few stones in the corridor. No two stones are at first glance similar, and they certainly do not give the impression to be conceived to be identical. Even *if* several of these bas-reliefs are sculpted by the hands of the same artist, this is not obvious. Could it be possible that each of these stones has been made or has been paid by a different group in the community? By a family of by a professional category? We are tempted to compare this with the situation of our medieval guilds which each were in charge of their own chapel in the town's cathedral. This association is too speculative.

The dominating god, the god of Locmariaquer and Gavrinis, was the god of corn fields.

All stones carry his motifs (furrows and grain), but in the margin some artist could not refrain from adding specific symbols: axe, bow, plough, and other symbols that are not understood by us.

### **The Alignements of Carnac**

At a few kilometers of Locmariaquer and Gavrinis lies the city of Carnac that is famous for its *alignements*. Nowhere else in the world one finds such an impressive collection of large stones. Especially the alignments in the hamlets Ménéac, Kermario and Kerleskan are beyond comparison. Here, over a distance of more than three kilometer, up to 4 meter high stones stand in 10 to 13 parallel rows.



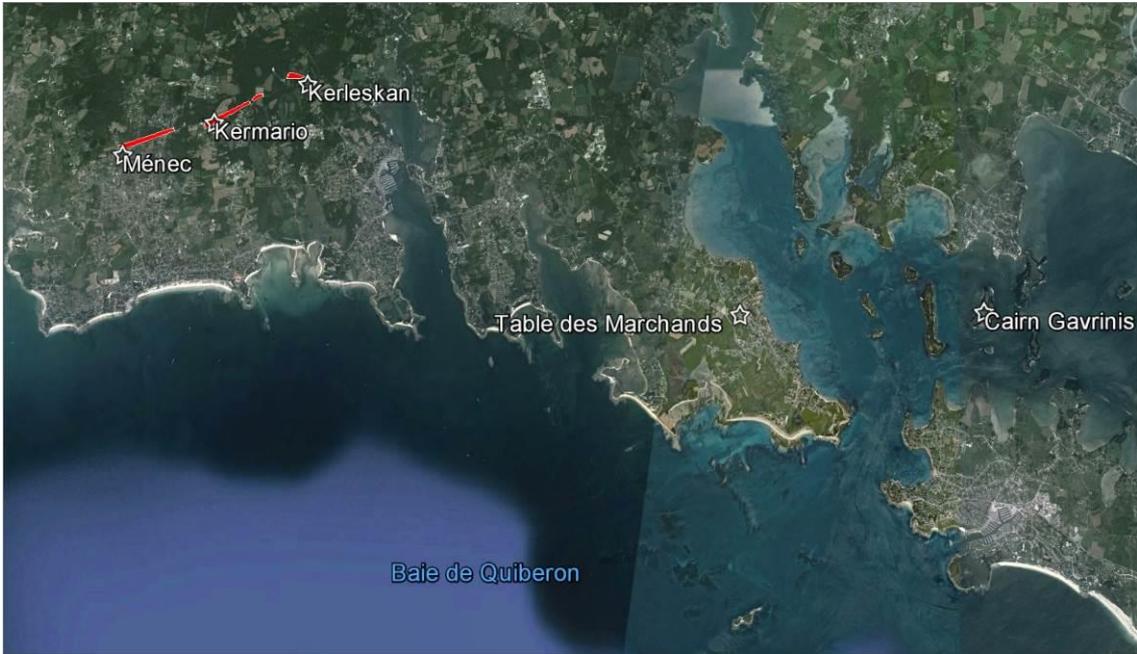


figure 3 Location of the Carnac site © Google Earth. the distance between Méneac and Gavrinis is 13km.





figure 4 Alignements in Carnac, Mézec, overview and detail ©2011 Dierickx-Bourgain

Next to the alignment of Kermario there is a small wooden pavilion, displaying a model of these three alignments in their environment. It strikes the eye that the overall structure is not one continuous band. There are in reality at least 4 or 5 alignments. Mézec is the largest, it has about the same orientation and shape as the combination of Kermario and the smaller part of Kerleskan. One could consider Mézec as consisting in fact of two distinct alignments that are connected head-to-head, although the separation is not as clear as with Kermario / Kerleskan that are separated by a brook. The other part of Kerleskan seems unrelated, and has even a different orientation.

The true meaning of these sites was never recovered. Nevertheless, one can find evident clues that tell us something about the reasons why these stones were erected, the sequence of erection, the initial plan, and why eventually the building activities ceased.

What are these clues?

- ⇒ Mézec1 and 2 are very similar to the couple Kermario and Kerleskan1. The sets are about as long and equally wide (the last two are slightly longer). They form two groups of two alignments with the small extremities nearly touching, and the wide extremities pointing outwards. They have two by two the same orientation east-west. Mézec 1 and 2 mutually, as well as Kermario and Kerleskan1 mutually, are not each other's prolongation; they point slightly to the north.
- ⇒ The 4 alignments have a variable number of rows. At the narrow ends, which I consider as the starting points, they have about 3 to 5 rows of, medium-sized (less than 1 meter high), stones. As the rows proceed, extra rows are bifurcating, and the stones become larger. The distance between the rows increases as the size of the stones increases. Kermario has 13 rows over the largest stretch of its length, the other alignments have 11 or 10 rows.

For me it is clear that the alignments have not been erected according to a pre-existing plan: in that case, the rows would have been parallel, and constant in number (at least that is my feeling). Besides, the rows would have been straighter - on the site, one sees that the rows are not straight at all, but they meander happily. Moreover on some places a row can split in two or more new rows in the direction of the extremity of the *alignment*, though here and there we see rows that discontinue, or that cease over a certain distance to pop up again somewhat further.

The explanation that these disappeared stones have been taken away in later times is quite improbable on places where the missing stones are surrounded by 4 meter high megaliths. Who would take these stones? The stones at the borders are much easier to reach and pull away? We must conclude that these stones have been missing right from the beginning.

The fact that there was apparently no predefined plan to build these *alignements*, that they seem to have grown organically starting from the smaller extremity, the fact that the rows meander, discontinue or split, and just the massiveness of the stones, convinces us that these *alignements* have been built over a time span of many years. With a high degree of probability they are built starting at the small extremity, with smaller stones, and only later more rows and larger stones were deployed. I can find no motif why the builders would have chosen the other direction (yes, smaller stones because the builders became tired or lazy, but why should they decrease the number of rows and converge, by coincidence at the place where the other alignment converged too?)

The *cromlechs* of the Ménéac

Another intriguing detail that supports a certain hypothesis is the presence of *cromlechs* at the beginning and at the end of the Ménéac (actually to be re-interpreted as: "at the extremities of the two *alignements* of Ménéac"). These *cromlechs* (circles, but rather ovals), consist of one meter high stones, closely packed, which gives the impression of a fence or wall. One thinks that they have a relation with the *alignements*. Obvious! But which relation? Let's try to reconstruct such relation

- (1) Have the *cromlechs* been built during the erection of the *alignements*? Possible, but there is a discrepancy in the duration, and the absence of a plan. The *cromlechs* are relatively small and consist of smaller stones. One can assume that they have been built in a short time span, a few weeks or a few months. The *alignements* are of a totally different scale, and took decades to build.
- (2) Have they been built before the *alignements*, and have the *alignements* been built in the direction of the *cromlechs*, until they finally "arrived" there?
- (3) Have they been built after the last stone of the *alignements* was erected?

I am very much in favor of this last hypothesis. If the *alignements* would have been built in the direction of the *cromlechs*, then I would expect the *cromlechs* in one straight line with the *alignements*. This is not the case; the *cromlechs* lie somewhat at the side.

At the broad extremities of Kermario and Kerleskan are no *cromlechs* (or, one can interpret the one at the east end of Ménéac being also intended for Kermario). At or next to the broad extremity of Kermario lies a little dolmen - little in comparison with the megaliths of Kermario, but also little in comparison with the dolmens of Locmariaquer and Gavrinis. We may assume that this dolmen once was a cairn, though of small format.

### **The revolution**

*Now we enter the terrain of the speculation.*

Suppose that these *cromlechs* and cairn are the relics of a revolution. Before the revolution one revered menhirs, and year after year the famous *alignements* were extended; after the revolution the menhir cult discontinued and a cult arose in sanctuaries inside cairns.

Who were these people? Was this revolution the consequence of a civil war or of an invasion? Was it a bloody revolution or one without bloodshed, initiated by the rise of a charismatic leader?

The fact that before as well as after the revolution stones of large format have been erected makes it improbable that the revolutionaries came from far away, at least not from outside the area of the megaliths. The fact that as well before as after the revolution the same places apparently were sacred, that before as well as after the revolution the region of the Morbihan was and remained the center of the culture, suggest that it was a revolution inside the same tribe or ethnic group.

The revolution was carefully planned.

Many, if not all, revolutions in history are the culmination of a social battle. The grasp at power of a suppressed class against a regime. Could something like that have happened in Carnac, and can we recognize the traces?

The cromlechs of Ménéac are then perhaps remains of fortifications, later as memorial rebuilt on the rests of wooden fortifications. The stones touch, which is different from many other cromlechs, where the stones as in the alignements are placed with several meters spacing.

What has possibly happened? My guess: The ruling class of these people, the nobility, was periodically absent during a few months of the year. The lower class may in frenzy have killed the elderly noblemen that stayed home. That was just the start. The revolutionaries needed to prepare for the return of the shepherds. The place to wait for their return was at the end of the alignements, as that was where they put their "little stone of homecoming". That sacred event should be avoided at all prices, and therefore they built two forts at the outer ends of the Ménéac. Whether these forts have been useful we don't know. Anyway, the alignements are abruptly stopped, and nobody has the removed the cromlechs to create place to continue the alignements.

Why was the nobility on journey? Not for warfare, as then one does not know the date of return. I find it more probable that the upper class simply possessed the cattle. They were nothing else but shepherds herding their animals during summer.

The oppressed class were those that were bound to the soil: slaves, agricultural workers and craftsmen. Such social combination is not improbable in early civilizations. Mankind was on the verge of becoming sedentary. In the Middle East the earliest cities had been founded already at that time. Here in Bretagne there was a significant population density around the Morbihan, but real sedentary life did not exist in the beginning. Maybe these nomads started to be sedentary during the coldest part of the year. The call of the traditional lifestyle of the ancestors is strong and is not easily given up, just observe present-day nomads. A part of the population however, the part not having right nor possessions and certainly no large animals, perhaps slaves, serfs, ground-bounds, might have become sedentary much sooner. Near the fertile fields of the plains of Morbihan.

The nobility, owning the oxen that pulled the ploughs, had an untouchable monopoly. The ownership of the powerful animal was the key in the cult that unified masters and slaves. For this hypothesis I suspect support in the drawing on the covering stone of the Table des Marchands.

At a certain time the demographic balance tipped to a majority of farmers. The shepherds couldn't prevent this.

Who were these shepherds?

They were the megalith builders. The tribe that initially controlled Carnac has persevered in megalith building during a century, and during that period made it into an art. The illustration thereof, which is not a proof of course, is precisely the existence of these alignements. They could be a kind of calendar. Not a calendar to predict the periods of the moon or some other esoteric thing. Just a calendar as the one Robinson Crusoe carved in a tree to keep track of the years that passed by.

It began as follows. Within living memory, a small but vigorous tribe of shepherds populated the plane of Morbihan. During the summer they sojourned to the pastures and hills, in winter they stayed close to the coast, enjoying the milder micro-climate. During the sedentary period they lived in villages, one harvested in autumns and sowed in spring. In summertime the shepherds started their journey, with their herds, per family or clan. These people, who were very much connected to and dependent on nature, that saw and lived the wonderful force of nature, probed for underlying reasons, let the dates of departure and return coincide with important festivities. The feast of spring, after ploughing and sowing, and before the yearly departure of the shepherds. The feast was one of joy, wishing each other all the best. But one realized also that one might never see each other again. At such an occasion the five headmen of one of the clans decided to erect five large stones on the left bank of the brook. They swore to erect another five on the right bank, on return in autumn. In autumn all five returned healthy, and these ten stones, founded the base of their prestige. The next year the same happened. Each family or flock put a new stone behind it's previous one. The symbolic value of this act it huge. Year after year stones were added. Soon these stones were named after their erectors. I can imagine that these people started counting years in the past using the stones erected by their ancestors. The little shepherd's children learned their sacred genealogy. Every stone carried it's own story - at this particular stone that particular event happened - a battle, a war, a plague.... The probability that a row of stones added year after year obtains the function of sacred calendar is very high, an obvious human reaction. In our time too, monuments are

meant to be a beacon in time, a *monument* of the past. Notice that e.g. the ancient Romans counted the chronology of years as "the years of consuls NN and MM". One row of an alignment is a family chronicle. The whole alignment is the history of a clan. This people had four rivaling clans, building thus four rivaling alignments. It might also be two clans, building each two alignments in parallel. One in the autumns, one in the springs; or one clan building all four alignments for one reason or another; at least, I have the conviction that all alignments have been built synchronously.

This hypothesis also explains elegantly the bifurcation of branches. Eventually a family could become so large that it was divided amongst two brothers. The absence of a stone can mean that the flock did not return from the summer grazing season, and hibernated somewhere else during one or more years. There are lines just discontinue - the reason is obvious. The number of families per clan increases fast, from 3, 4 or 5 at the beginning, and stabilizes around 10 to 13. This reminds of the 12 clans of Israel. Throughout the whole Old Testament the Jews, shepherd tribes too, had 12 clans. Yet, the names of these clans changed. Some disappear, and are silently replaced by others. However, always the total number is 12. Just as with the Seven Hills of Rome, they strive to maintain the sacred number. This could very well be the case with this stone building people. The number of families probably has increased in the successful beginning years, up to a number of about ten. As modern managers know, more than ten family heads make the clan meeting unmanageable. Apparently every clan has introduced a house rule imposing a *numerus clausus* for family representatives. This measure occurred together with a numeric expansion of this people, about 30 years (30 stones!) after the beginning of the erection of these alignments.

This shepherds tribe became more numerous, and more successful in war. Did they submit other tribe? Or did they create a slave class out of their own people? Or was there no such institution as slavery, but only a *nobilitas* and *plebs*, where everyone knew his place, and all power resided with the shepherds-noblemen, the owners of the animals.

Owning the animals meant owning the power, which is obvious for shepherds. But also for agriculture animals are essential, as ploughing is done with cattle. Pulling and erecting stones beyond any doubt was done with the force of animals too. Cutting the stones was probably slave labor, but the erection was an act of the free man using the force of his animals, under the supervision of the architects of the shepherds.

Experience helps to improve on previous achievements. Clever individuals (the "architects") amongst the shepherds have understood the advantage of oxen to transport heavy stones. During the whole winter season, except for the ploughing of the fields, time was available for this megalomaniac (!) goal. Perhaps it was intended as public work to refrain the lower classes from leisure, or was it part of a sacred cult, or a service to keep the gods happy? I cannot avoid comparing this with the pyramid construction in the ancient Egypt, which happened on semi-voluntary basis during the winter season.

A brilliant architect invented a new yoke technique, better ropes or belts, or ways to have many oxen simultaneously pulling the same load, or techniques to attach leather ropes firmly to a smooth megalith, or a lever to erect a heavyweight stone. Maybe this was one single person, maybe a priest or a priest dynasty, which maintained this know-how during a few generations. These heydays of menhir erection have not lasted longer than at most a few hundred years. The apparent routine erection of four meter high menhirs has ceased suddenly. What happened? An extinction or a revolution?

First we ask another question: did the same shepherd tribe erect the other menhirs too? Many of them stand solitaire or in small *alignements*. One has found out that a number of the tallest menhirs, situated on hill tops, stand on straight interconnecting lines. The purpose is obvious: these menhirs are beacons or pointers. They guide the errand shepherds the way home. The center of this beacon system seems to have been the large menhir of Locmariaquer.

There is no single hard indication that the builders of the solitary menhirs are also the builders of the alignments. But it is a supposition that makes the puzzle complete. It makes the revolution that halted the alignments, coincide with the event that preceded the construction of the Cairns of Locmariaquer and Gavrinis.

It explains that the menhir as cult object of *shepherds* has been replaced by the artificial cave being the sacred place of *farmers*.