



At the Center of the World: Polar Symbolism Discovered in Celtic, Norse and Other Ritualized Landscapes

John F. Michell

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The powers of ancient rulers emanated from the ritual centre of the tribal territory. This centre was also regarded as the birthplace of the tribe and belonged to the people. Installed upon this sacred rock (the omphalos or "navel of the world"), at the axis around which all revolved, the king could survey his realm, ordered from the centre according to the divisions of the cosmos itself, reflecting the harmony and balance of paradise. The cities of Megalopolis of Ancient Greece, Akhetaten of Ancient Egypt, the "world-centres" of Roman Gaul and Celtic Cornwall, all provide clues to lead John Michell to the geographical and sacred criteria for locating a centre. From studies of symbolic geography, particularly that of Celtic and Norse territories, he has discovered the leading principle for the siting of the "thing" places, main centres of religious and state ritual in Shetland, Orkney, the Faroe Islands and the Isle of Man. He considers possible locations of the most hallowed centres of ancient Druidry and of the High Kings of Ireland. Finally, the esoteric foundation plan for the ancient societies is disclosed: the sacred geometry, the symbolic numbers. Symbols of the centre are among the most persistent elements of myth and belief between cultures widely separated in time and space. Now John Michell traces their genesis, and suggests that their reflection of the ideal Platonic order of the universe can be relevant to the modern world. Other work by the author includes "The New View over Atlantis" (1986), "The Dimensions of Paradise" (1988) and "Twelve-tribe Nations" (with Christine Rhone, 1991).

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