



# **New Stone Age**

## **Neolithic Age**

**The latter portion of the Stone Age, a time period beginning around 10,000 B.C.E., when many areas were developing agriculture, especially the Middle East.**

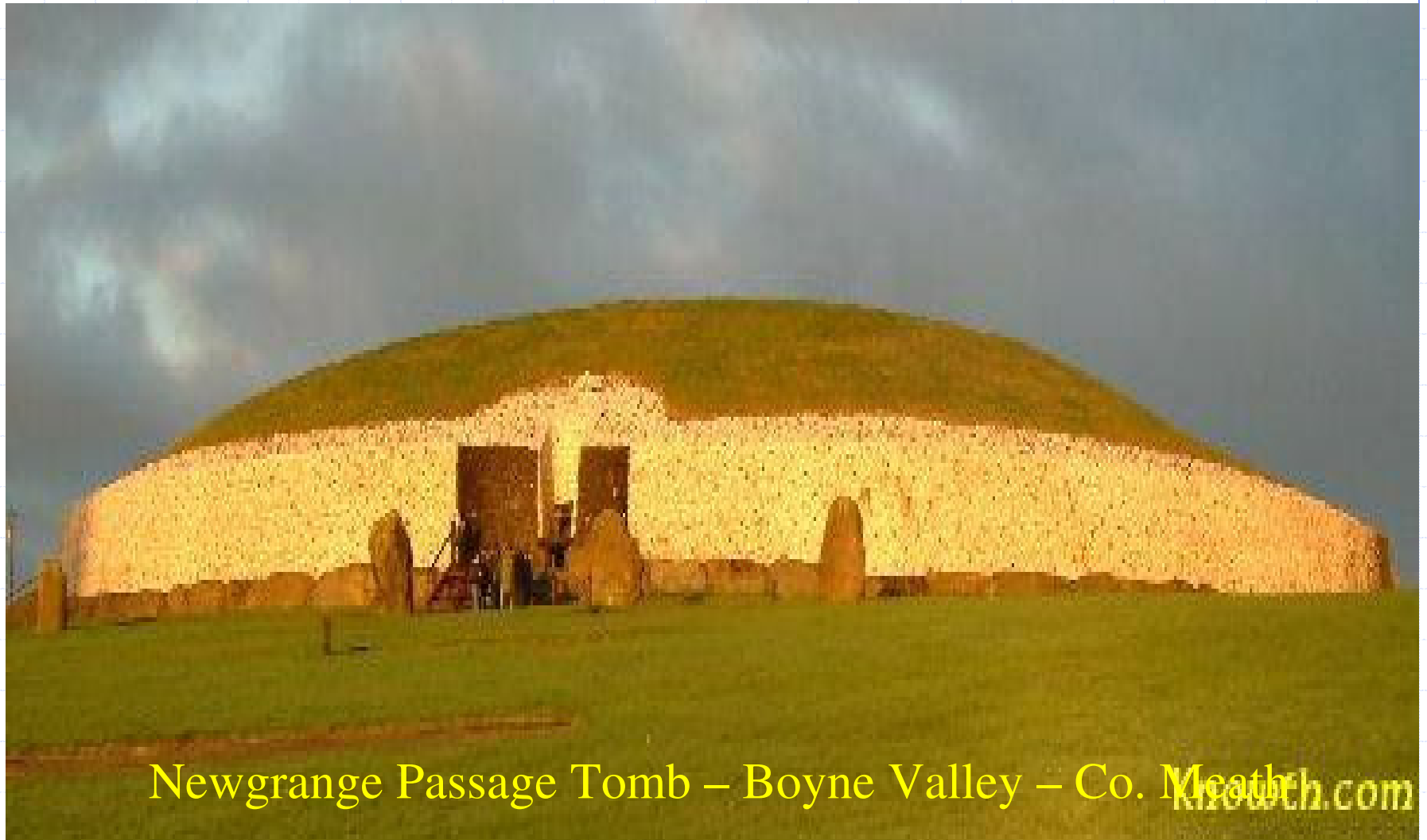


**An artist's impression of the first farmers**

**The first farmers practiced a mixed economy combining crops such as wheat, barley and vegetables with the keeping of cattle, sheep, goats and pigs. Settlements at this time were usually small and consisted of farmsteads housing family groups. The communities were linked through a system of exchange of goods which gave access to new ideas and resources not locally available.**

**The first farmers also introduced an important new type of container - the pot. Unlike previous containers made from organic materials, such as hide or wood, the baked clay pots could stand the direct heat from a fire during cooking.**

**Because of a relatively settled existence, Neolithic people could organise their communities to build the Island's first large monuments, such as Newgrange Passage Tomb.**



Newgrange Passage Tomb – Boyne Valley – Co. Meath [knowch.com](http://knowch.com)

## **The Neolithic Age**

This period began in Ireland with the arrival of the first farmers around 3500 BC

- a. Organised farming methods and crops and animals
- b. New house types
- c. New crafts
- d. Burials rituals – megalithic (great stones)

## a. Farming Methods

The Neolithic **farmers** began to build permanent settlements and, by using fire and more advanced stone tools like polished stone axes, began the deforestation of large sections of land for the planting of crops.



## b. Neolithic House Types



**In 3000 BC, some Neolithic farmers lived in stone houses set into existing middens.**



**When life had become more settled, and sturdier, more permanent houses were built.**

c. New Crafts



Household Goods –  
needle and button



Pottery - containers

*Балтимачалдарак,  
Со. Ансят*

*Балтимеаггаре,  
Со. Анмагх*

*Аудтегстолун,  
Со. Оохун*

## d. Burial Rituals and megaliths



**court tomb**



**wedge tomb**



**stone circle**

The people of the Neolithic were also the **builders** of the stone circles, the henges and burial Cairns that pepper the landscape.

**Court tombs consist of a stone chamber covered in earth with a courtyard in front of it. Portal tombs, or dolmens, consist of three or more vertical stones with a large capstone on top. Passage tombs consist of a stone passage into the centre of a large earthen mound. The most famous passage tombs in Ireland are Newgrange and Knowth. While definitely used for burials, there is evidence that the megaliths also had other uses, eg religious or political functions. The Neolithic era ended around 2000BC.**

**Court Cairn**



**Passage Grave**

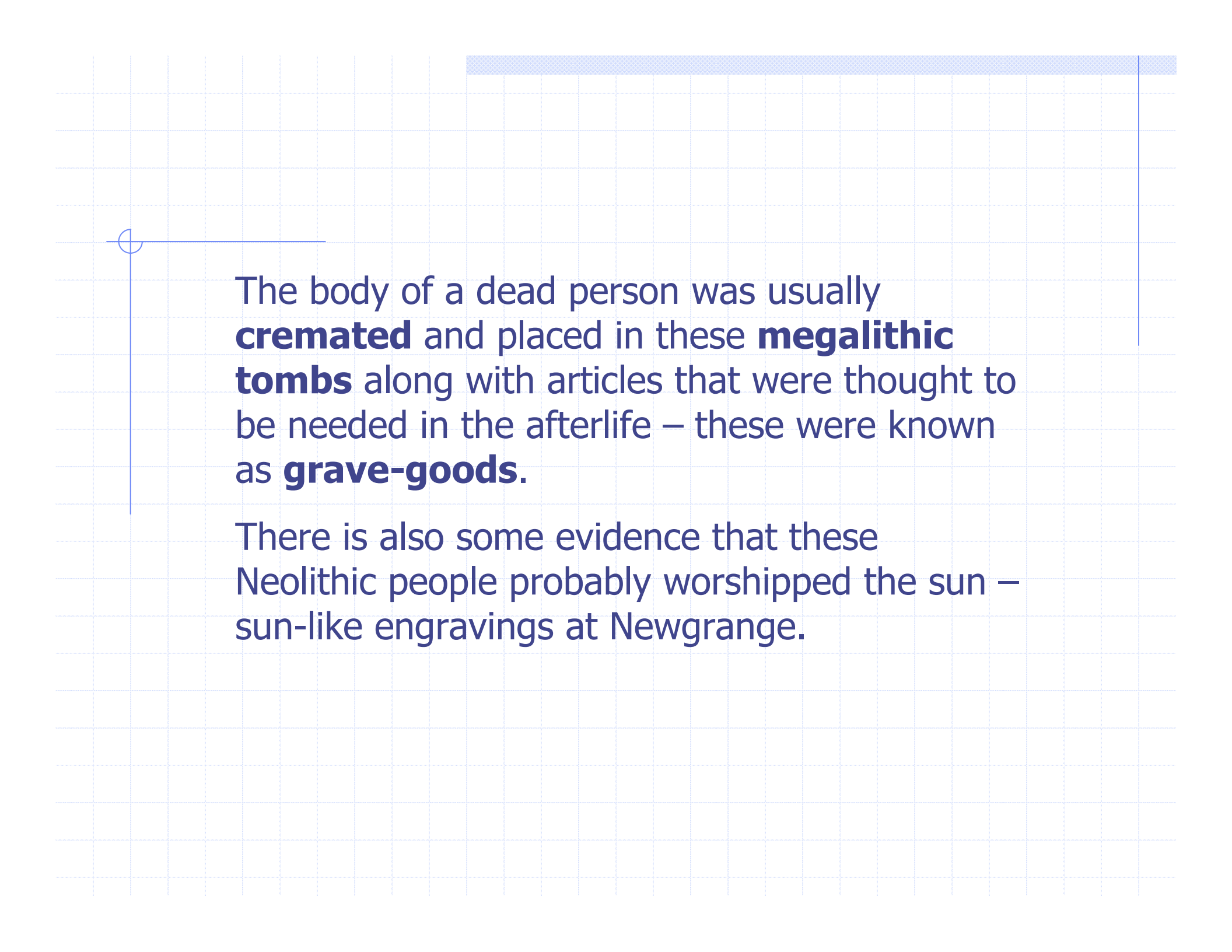


**Newgrange Passage Grave**



**Portal Dolmen**





The body of a dead person was usually **cremated** and placed in these **megalithic tombs** along with articles that were thought to be needed in the afterlife – these were known as **grave-goods**.

There is also some evidence that these Neolithic people probably worshipped the sun – sun-like engravings at Newgrange.

## Questions

1. When did the first farmers arrive in Ireland?
2. List two (2) of the new ways of life introduced to Ireland by these Neolithic people?
3. List one (1) type of megalithic tomb and describe it?
4. What do we know about the burial customs of the Neolithic people?