

Early Architecture

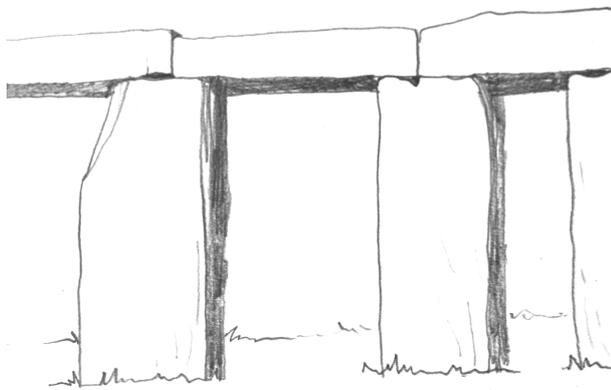
Architecture is the art or practice of designing and building structures, especially habitable ones. Any building is an arrangement of materials in a given environment, made up for a specific function.

Material, structure (the way the construction is put together), relationship with the **environment** and **function** are connected in the definition of the specific features of any piece of architecture.

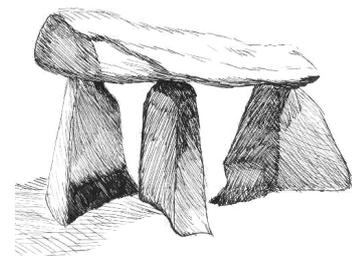


The first and simplest architecture made up by human beings to mark his presence within the natural setting is the **menhir**, a big stone stuck into the ground in order to stand up vertically like a human figure.

When they found out that two vertical elements can support a third horizontal one, prehistoric people invented a structure that has been having, and still have, a great importance in the building practice: the **post and lintel**.



Stonehenge

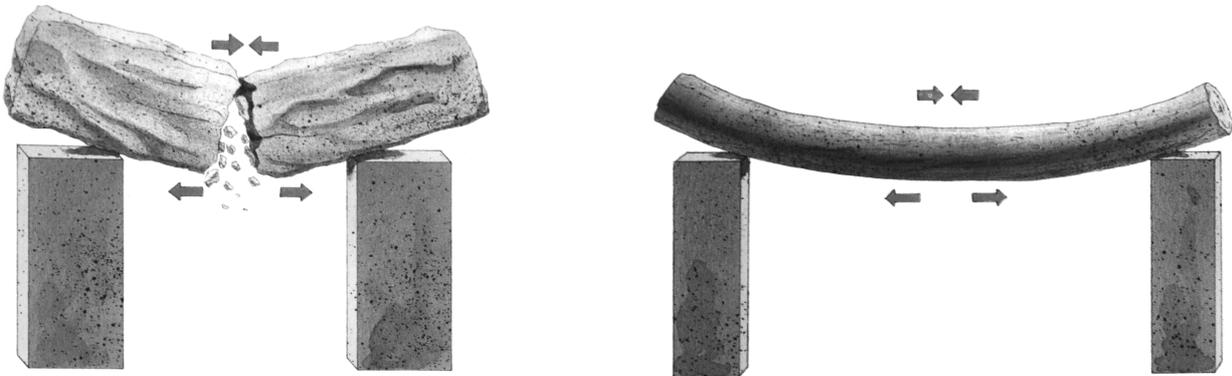


dolmen

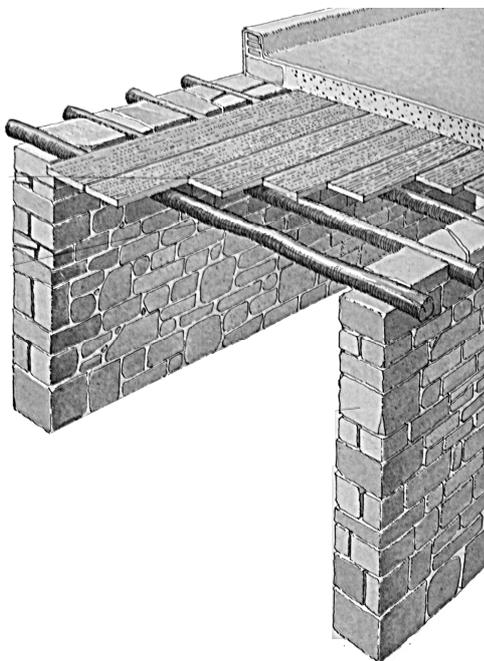
The famous prehistoric monument *Stonehenge*, located in England near Salisbury, was built during Neolithic time as a system of huge post and lintel elements connected together to form a circle. We do not know exactly which was the function of such a big building. Whatever religious, mystical or spiritual elements were central to Stonehenge, its design shows a very interesting way of interacting with the environment. Because of its position under the sun, the monument acts as a celestial observatory, that might have allowed prediction of eclipse, solstice, equinox and other celestial events important to religion.

Other early example of post and lintel structures are some tombs called **dolmen**.

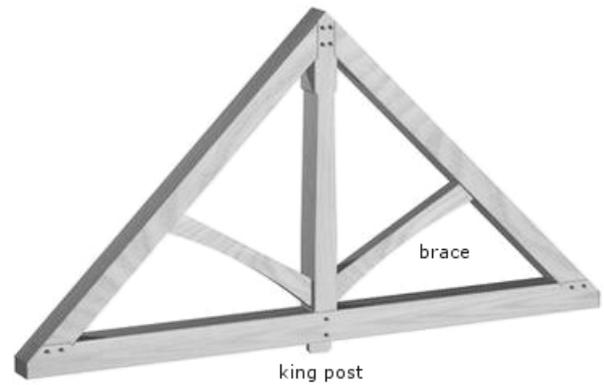
Post and lintel structure was improved by the use of wooden beams. Being wood a flexible material, light and not rigid, it responds better than stone to tensile and compressive forces.



Bricks and stone walls can easily stand a roof made up with wooden beams in a structure called the attic. The kind of house based on that structure is topped with a flat roof that, even if coated, can stand just very dry weather conditions. Houses built in rainy sites show an application of another basic structure of architecture called **truss**. A sloped roof is indeed supported by a series of trusses to allow the runoff of water or snow from its sides.



attic



truss