5 Conclusion and Future Perspectives

As demonstrated above, the lithic assemblage from Scord of Brouster adds valuable elements to the discussion of regionality in the Scottish Neolithic period. By comparing this Neolithic Shetland collection with contemporary material from other regions of Scotland, it has been possible to define two distinctly different raw material provinces, as well as a third, hybrid form. The quartz province, to the north and west, and the flint/chert province, covering the eastern, central and southern parts of the country, have been characterized as techno-complexes:

> A techno-complex is composed of a number of social territories between which there is usually a low degree of social interaction. The social territories forming part of a techno-complex share essential functional artefact types and, first of all, technological elements based on a common general subsistence strategy, usually geographically delimited to an area with a uniform topography and ecology (Ballin, forthcoming d).

It is uncertain which status to attach to the mixed quartz/flint province of the west mainland and the Southern Hebrides. Most likely, more research into the material culture of the main techno-complexes will allow further subdivision of these territorial units, but this requires an increase in the available lithic finds (for example, in eastern and southern Scotland), the addition of larger, more representative assemblages. The present 'State of the Art' is summed up in Table 6, specifying the main typological, technological and size differences between the complexes.

As implied by the definition of a techno-complex, the above subdivision of Neolithic Scotland is based mainly on topographical, ecological and subsistence-economic differences, and only to a minor degree social differences, or ethnicity. To investigate the social division (the social territories) of Neolithic Scotland, it would be necessary to compare chronologically 'clean', representative, contemporary assemblages within one techno-complex, focusing on the possible presence of stylistically different artefact types, as opposed to the functionally different types characterizing techno-complexes.

Similarities and differences between the Neolithic assemblage from Scord of Brouster and Scottish Mesolithic and Bronze Age quartz assemblages were only touched upon briefly in this paper (for example, Table 5 and Illus 35), but a detailed discussion of temporal variation within the Scottish quartz province is planned to form part of the concluding paper from the project Quartz Technology in Scottish Prehistory.