

Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Preface

Acknowledgements

1. From body to place to landscape: a phenomenological perspective
2. Sprouting rhizomes and giant axes: experiencing Breton menhirs
3. From honey to ochre: Maltese temples, stones, substances and the structuring of experience
4. Frozen waves and anomalous stones: rock carvings and cairns in a southern Swedish landscape
5. Conclusions: the past as dreamwork

References

Index

PREFACE

This book is the first in a projected series of three volumes concerned with landscape phenomenology and prehistory. It follows on from themes introduced in two previous works, A Phenomenology of Landscape (Tilley 1994) and Metaphor and Material Culture (Tilley 1999). All the studies presented here are concerned with the significance of 'natural' and 'cultural' stones in various landscapes of prehistoric Europe from the Neolithic to the Iron Age. Chapter 1 discusses the phenomenological perspective of Merleau-Ponty in relation to bodies, places and landscapes. It provides the theoretical and conceptual basis for Chapters 2-5 which are detailed case studies designed to show the manner in which a phenomenological approach works out in the practice of doing research and interpreting archaeological materials.

Chapter 2 is concerned with one generic class of Neolithic monuments, menhirs in the landscapes of Finistère, western Brittany and is a large-scale regional analysis. Chapters 3 and 4 consider small-scale landscapes, roughly equivalent in size. Chapter 3 discusses the internal spaces and landscape settings of Neolithic temples in the Maltese islands and interprets them in relation to artefacts and substances and related places of burial. Chapter 4 is concerned with Bronze Age rock carvings in the far south-east of Sweden and their relationship to barrows and cairns and places where artefacts were deposited. In the conclusions issues of research methodology and interpretation are considered.

The book attempts to demonstrate the manner in which a phenomenological perspective, in which the past is understood and interpreted from a sensuous human scale, as opposed to an abstracted analytical gaze, can provide a radically different way of thinking through the past in the present, and shed new light on old monuments.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Wayne Bennett who has acted as my research assistant and collaborator throughout the extended periods of fieldwork on which this book is based. Many of the ideas discussed here resulted directly from our constant dialogues while working in the field and in discussions in the evenings when we would often try together to write down the implications of what we had experienced during the day. A substantial amount of the text was written in a preliminary way while sitting on, moving between and encountering the stones in the landscape. I dictated various descriptions which Wayne wrote down- and modified or disputed, as we went along. We filled in various recording forms that had been devised to help us understand the sites together. We worked together to check visual fields and modes of encounter with the sites. We visited and studied artefacts in museums. All the fieldwork was very intensive and very much a joint enterprise of observation and encounter. We also kept each other going during the hard times, which was equally important. When I wanted to give up looking for a particular menhir, rock carving or cairn, Wayne would insist that we should continue to do so, or vice versa, and as a result we almost always found them. He has also drawn the line diagrams, contributed photographs, and provided critical comments on draft versions of the individual chapters. Were it not for his help, and enthusiasm for the project, this work would be much the poorer.

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Christopher Tilley, London, December 2002.