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The Implications of a Phenomenology of Landscape

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What I would like to do in this article, is to take the currently fashionable approach termed the *Phenomenology of Landscape*, essentially introduced to Archaeological Theory by the English archaeologist CHRIS TILLEY in a book with this title in 1994, and contextualise it by setting its appearance and popularity into the contemporary historical circumstances, especially in relation to the changing nature of the English countryside and society's perceptions of it. Finally I shall relate this to the Landscape Archaeology and Historical Geography of Ancient Greece.

TILLEY's book of 1994 begins with a now traditional dismissal of the failings of modernist or ›New Geography‹ and ›New Archaeology‹, but now specifically in misunderstanding of the human relationship to Space. Their errors include totalizing models, a pretence of being objective and neutral-politically, a search for coherent systemic behaviour, models believed to be of global application and an a-temporal approach. TILLEY's new vision, instead sees humans in space as entirely variable by historical context – specific to each local group, specific to each phase of the past, contradictory, and importantly accessible to the modern researcher only through subjective re-experiencing of the past sensibility of the society under focus.

Actually many of these criticisms seem reasonable modifications to the grander claims of modern, ›New‹ or ›Processual‹ Archaeology in its revolutionary early pronouncements. Indeed Ecology has also developed over the last 40 years away from a focus on 30 or so supposed Laws of global validity to a nuanced version where local ecosystems are studied as a unique dialectic between specific historical conditions and general ecological tendencies. But let us see where TILLEY actually takes us, having deleted Scientific ›Processualism‹ from our intellectual database.

The next gnomic utterance of importance: »space does not and cannot exist, apart from the events and activities within which it is implicated. Space is socially produced« (*Phenomenology*: 10), also reflects a standard Post-Modernist worldview: space is a social construct. The implication of course is that we should not only try and see past space as associated only with one past community in a particular space and time (reasonable again ...) rather than purely through modern eyes, but must reject absolutely the approach of Human Ecology (cf. for the archaeological form, HIGGS 1972), which treats humans as merely one player in an ecology with other animal, plant and physical landscape components. The land, rather, is a mere blank sheet onto which the human intellect writes its character and this is done in terms of purely human social concerns. As a humorous comment, we now realize that this also leaves the inhabitants of the pre-human Earth in a sorry state of not having any space at all to live in!

Well, as Archaeologists we don't have any responsibility to empower Dinosaurs, so let us continue to hold TILLEY's hand and be taken into his new spatial paradigm. Our next stop-place is to touch base with specific philosophical gurus of the past, who got it all right but were not appreciated till now in Archaeological circles. MERLEAU-PONTY is a 'good thing' and so is HEIDEGGER, who is quoted to give a succinct image of how we should now see humans in past spaces. Reading the selected HEIDEGGER text certainly broadens our thinking about space, but on the other hand much of it sounds rather familiar. The use of wood for shelter, furniture, shrine and altar is a thought-provoking insight into the multiplicity of meanings a dominant natural material can take in a woodland society, bridging functional and symbolic life effortlessly. But at the same time, the equally-valid reference to adaptive behaviour in the form, micro- and macro-location of the house would be perfectly at home in a paper from one of the Palaeoeconomy volumes issued in the 1970's-1980's by the Cambridge School of Palaeoecological archaeologists.

Actually, we are right to be puzzled: TILLEY's focus will not remain so broad, his preferred view of human space is definitely much more restricted:

The aim is to underline the affective, emotional and symbolic significance of the landscape.

(*Phenomenology*: 34)

What is clear ... is the symbolic, ancestral and temporal significance of the landscape. Writing about an economic 'base' in relation to resource utilization or landscape use seems quite irrelevant here.

(*Phenomenology*: 66).

Thus it appears that landscape is really just about feelings, and symbolic behaviour, whilst time means thinking about the ancestors. It is totally erroneous to examine something called resource utilisation or the economics of land use. In any case this new way of approaching humans in space or landscape is then very succinctly presented by TILLEY [Table 1] as nothing less than an entire philosophy for human space, in the past, contrasted to that of the present.

<i>capitalist, western space</i>	<i>pre-capitalist space, non-western space</i>
infinitely open	different densities
desanctified	sanctified
control	sensuousness
surveillance/partitioning	ritualized/anthropomorphic
economic	cosmological
'useful' to act	'useful' to think
architectural forms resemble each other in	architecture an embodiment of myth and
'disciplinary' space	cosmology
landscape as background to action	landscape as sedimented ritual form
time linear and divorced from space	time constitutive of rhythms of social action
	in space-time

Table 1: TILLEY's world of the Past versus the Modern World (*Phenomenology*: 20f.)

Be that as it may ... I shall leave you wondering how that can be, and focus on the very particular emphasis TILLEY chooses for his pre-capitalist global list (on the right of Table 1): landscapes are places of human social interactions and ritual behaviours. Thus the method-

ology TILLEY will now propose for us is to undertake physical journeys around the landscape between the sites of past activity, trying to recapture the emotional and religious experience of past individuals as they walked along prehistoric cursus monuments, or sighted the barrows of their ancestors on the crests of hills, while they travelled from farm to farm. The model of Australian aborigine Dreamtime is generalized so that the entire landscape is asked to reveal its lost sacred names and legendary associations, or ties of certain kin groups or individuals to places and spaces.

Now that we have been shown the correct way to view the global pre-capitalist landscape, we realize that it was not – it seems, a place where people, let us be plain – 'work' [Figure 1], or co-evolve with other species, or adapt to changing weather, or manage the constraints and possibilities of the physical landscape in order to sustain their families and attain a stable economy or even economic prosperity.

Now you might rightly respond back to me: maybe these things were of little importance to past societies compared to their social life, or their relations to the spirits of the ancestors and to immortal supernatural forces or deities? I am simply not going to bother to react to your challenge – I shall leave you once again to think over that question for yourselves, because what I find more interesting here, and thus what I am prepared to tell you about, are what I am firmly convinced are the underlying reasons for TILLEY's very particular and dogmatic views on the meaning of landscape for all past societies.

To do that requires me to position CHRIS TILLEY and followers such as BARBARA BENDER into the history of the English landscape, because that is what they are talking about and doing research within, and as TILLEY would surely ask us to do – we should contextualize TILLEY and BENDER themselves into their own time and space.

In the Middle Ages urban populations were a small percentage of the English populace. Towns and fortified centres of power were also small, so that those who did not work the land lived on islands immediately surrounded by a rural sea filled with farmer and herders [Figure 2]. What happened afterwards has been the subject of many studies, one of the most influential being that of RAYMOND WILLIAMS in 1973, *The Country and the City* (cf. also FLEMING and GORE, 1979; WILLIAMSON and BELLAMY, 1987). From the 16th century onwards English landowners began to enclose the land, and for two reasons. Firstly [Figure 3] they were inspired by new concepts of the aesthetic pleasure derivable from long vistas and fake ruins around their country mansions. Secondly, capitalism began to encroach into farming, encouraging the displacement of small subsistence peasants and the creation of larger specialist estates [Figure 4]. While the great landowners got richer and cultivated their Romantic sensibilities, the rural labourers got poorer or fled to the growing cities. They are painted by radical artists with strong social consciences, like Courbet or Millet [Figure 5], whereas the landowners commission pictures [Figure 6] where the peasants are dozing, happy shepherds from the literary genre of classical pastoral poetry. Till the end of the 19th century English peasants were still numerous, though the balance of national population was inexorably shifting to the giant new industrial and commercial cities.

During the 20th century British farms have become dominated by giant estates, whilst small farmers are dwindling and survive increasingly through diversification into non-agricultural pursuits, subsidies and rural tourism [Table 2]. Rural workforces are tiny compared to pre-Modern times, making landscapes vast, open and depopulated, ripe for exploration by the millions of sentimental city-dwellers in search of the authentic traditional country-

side experience. Indeed since Britain has moved from around 1 million farming population 50 years ago to predictions of 12,000 in a generation or two from now, half to more of all rural houses are now being bought by town-dwellers, either as weekend retreats or as retirement homes.

English countryside realities

Of the 25m hectares of land in the UK, 16m belong to 6,000 landowners.

5.8% of the land is occupied by 46m town-dwellers.

100,000 small farmers have 20% of the land.

Almost 60% of income for European farmers comes from subsidies, most in Britain go to the largest estates.

Modern farms have very small workforces, the small farmers increasingly live from subsidies, non-farming products, and rural heritage or »countryside themepark« income.

Table 2 (Statistics from VIDAL 1998, 2001)

The British landscape is increasingly becoming an enormous themepark for the urban millions. As a recent tourist brochure for the Yorkshire Dales makes clear: »The whole region is a giant adventure playground«. If older town-dwellers like to hike to enjoy rural beauty, the younger generation in the same brochure seem to prefer to contemplate it with a bottle of champagne – perhaps imitating the lords and ladies of the great country-houses of the last century [Figure 7].

Public archaeologists have begun to seize their moment to benefit from the decline of rural productivity and the disappearance of farms and farmers, as well as the appearance of gigantic European subsidies, to reclassify United Kingdom landscapes according to a new concept called »Landscape Character« (FAIRCLOUGH and RIPPON, 2002) [Figure 8]. Each region is mapped to reveal the distribution of varied types of historic land use or natural environments, so as not only to conserve as many of them as possible as a mosaic of past ways of using the landscape, but equally to utilize cultural landscapes for leisure and tourism.

We have briefly run through the story of the English countryside up to the current extraordinary emphasis – an urban, middle class vision of it as a lost paradise of past lifeways, a place to rediscover a romantic response to nature, landscapes to visit for the weekend, holidays and to retire to – but not of course to work in. The following developments should now require little further explanation: two middle-class archaeological theorists from archaeological and anthropological institutes in Central London, neither associated with practical archaeology, CHRIS TILLEY and BARBARA BENDER, set out into the remote English countryside to recapture the experience of being a Neolithic or Bronze Age person in that environment. TILLEY walks along and around prehistoric monuments and collates the emotions and reactions to what becomes visible and intervisible to the receptive hiker. BENDER and TILLEY (BENDER, HAMILTON and TILLEY, 1997) [Figure 9] ironically deploy a picture-frame as the methodology to reach into the mind of an ancient farmer or herder.

It is not my business here to argue that such an approach, which tries to reconstruct sacred and social landscapes, is suspect. In fact, I see it as an important new perspective. But if there is a moral to be drawn from my contextual analysis of the Phenomenology of Land-

million farming population now, half to more of all weekend retreats or as retire-

scape movement it is surely this: archaeological theorists project contemporary preoccupations in their society into dogmatic and absolute ideologies of how the world worked in the past, excluding other approaches as irrelevant and erroneous. What is consistently lacking in the history of Archaeological Theory has been a holistic vision of human society in its natural environment.

But is such a holistic worldview tenable? Let me take you to a beautifully-detailed painting of a country scene around 1700 AD [Figure 10a]. It is still a full countryside, with people busy harvesting, thus a working landscape. [10b] But move in, and amidst the labourers something else is going on, in the bottom of the close-up. [10c] Home in once more, and we see some villagers dancing a traditional Morris dance through the fields – with its origins in fertility rituals. These pre-Modern countryside people would not have agreed to collapse these varied activities into a rural world dominated by hard work, or one of social groups, or one of ceremonies, rather the countryside has complementary and overlapping facets, each worthy of individual study and then analysis of their mutual interactions.

How do I know this? Let the rural farmers speak for themselves. For example our earliest personal statement of the countryman's vision in the whole of Europe, is by the Greek farmer-poet Hesiod (ca. 700 BC), who was blissfully unaware that Environmentalism, Functionalism and Culturalism cannot co-exist. He wrote in his *Works and Days* an holistic month by month calendar of his activities, shifting his focus from severely practical hints on mending fences and carving a plough, through observations on women and neighbours, to advice on rituals to follow through the day and at specific places in the landscape:

When the Pleiads ... start to rise begin your harvest; plough when they go down ... To sow your seed go naked; strip to plough and strip to reap, if you would harvest all Demeter's yield in season.
(Hes. erg. 383–393)

Make prayers to Zeus the farmer's god and to Holy Demeter, for her sacred grain, to make it ripe and heavy, when you start to plough, and hold the handles in your hand, and strike the oxen as they tug the straps.
(Hes. erg. 465–469)

Never pass through, on foot, a lovely brook of ever-flowing water, till you pray and look into the beauty of the stream, and in her clean, sweet water, wash your hands, for if you cross a river with your hands and crimes uncleansed, the gods will punish you.
(Hes. erg. 757–759)

There is a final irony. When TILLEY and BENDER walk a Neolithic cursus or sit to meditate on a landscape from a prehistoric settlement, they are not, as they fondly imagine, demonstrating the dominance and autonomy of the conscious human intellect in 'creating nature'. There is very good reason to argue (BINTLIFF 2004), that they are just as much responding to deep subconscious drives and satisfactions we have inherited from our evolutionary hunter-gatherer past, where 'reading the landscape' and taking physical exercise and pleasure in its exploration and contemplation are adaptive human traits hard-wired into our brain-chemistry.

In the context of this conference of the Ernst Kirsten Gesellschaft it is a pleasure to be able to include discussion of the German *Landeskunde* tradition of research. A neglected but wonderful example is the remarkable volume of HERBERT LEHMANN (1937), a physical, human and historical geography of the great Plain of Argos in the North-East Peloponnese. It is so little known, that although I had read and used it during my PhD research in the British School of Archaeology at Athens, when I was able just a couple of years ago, to

modern farms have very small workforces, the small farmers increasingly live from subsidies, non-farming products, and rural heritage or countryside themepark income.

themepark for the urban miles clear: »The whole region to hike to enjoy rural beauty, contemplate it with a bottle of great country-houses of the

benefit from the decline of rural as well as the appearance of landscapes according to a new (ON, 2002) [Figure 8]. Each historic land use or natural environment as a mosaic of past ways for leisure and tourism.

countryside up to the current exist as a paradise of past lifeways, to visit for the weekend, showing developments should be understood by archaeological theorists from around, neither associated with the past, set out into the remote Neolithic or Bronze Age person or prehistoric monuments and collates visible to the receptive hiker. (7) [Figure 9] ironically deconstructs the view of an ancient farmer or

which tries to reconstruct a new perspective. But the Phenomenology of Land-

buy a copy for myself from a secondhand book dealer, I discovered that the pages had never been cut!

LEHMANN and the author of his Introduction, WREDE, show us from more than 70 years ago, that the borders of functional life, social and political structures, religious and emotional behaviours, are all embedded into a single society living in the same landscape, not to be partitioned-off by scholars anxious to police the boundaries of their ideologies. Let me finally illustrate this with LEHMANN's images from that landscape and their words, enriched with a few of my own photographs, taken like LEHMANN, when I was an impressionable researcher in that powerfully emotive landscape [Figures 11–16].

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Figure 1: 19th century French peasants seen secretly working the land

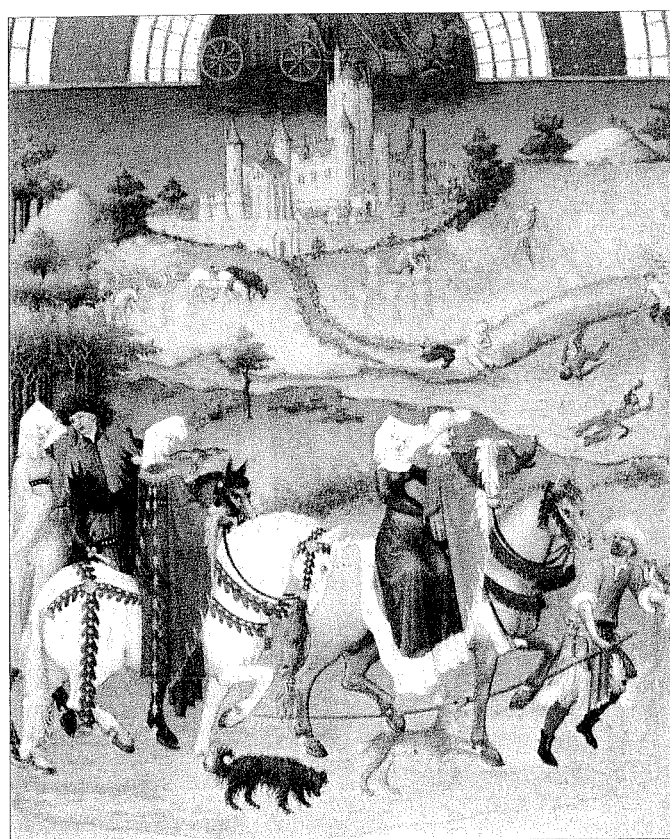


Figure 2: The elite ride through the working peasantry beyond the castle gate

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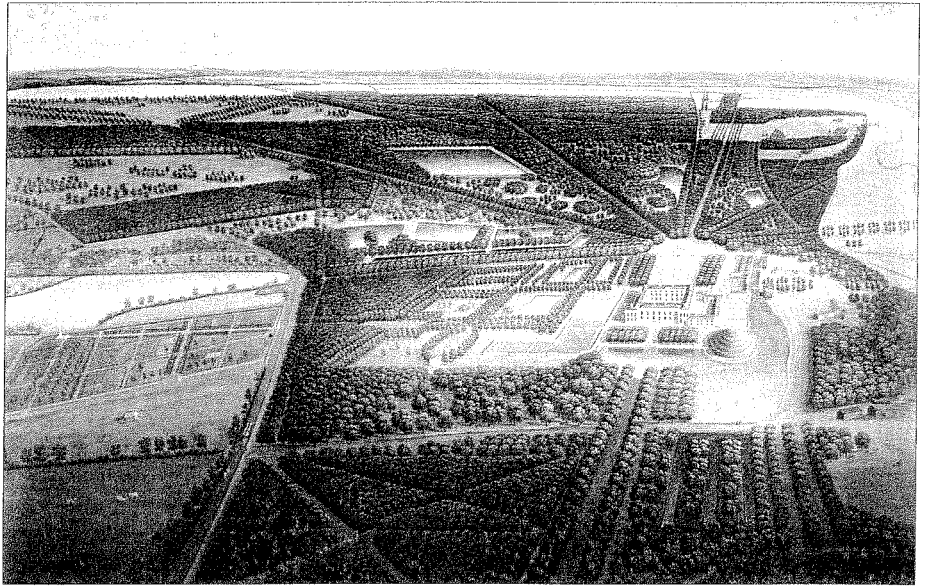
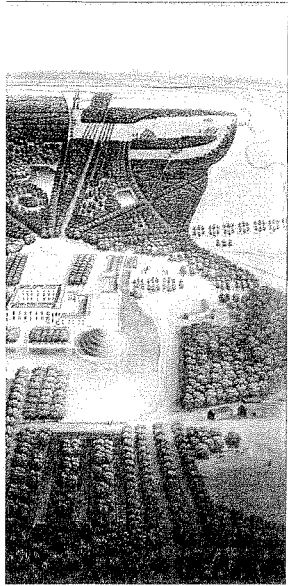


Figure 3: A great English estate ca. 1750, expanding its leisure zone and erecting Romantic vistas and earthworks



Figure 4: The former strip fields owned by individual peasants as earthworks under a large sheep estate



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Figure 5a and b: The rural poor, 19th century



Figure 6: Country mansion, landscaped park and idle shepherd, ca. 1770



Figure 7: Young people populating the countryside at the start of the 3rd millennium AD

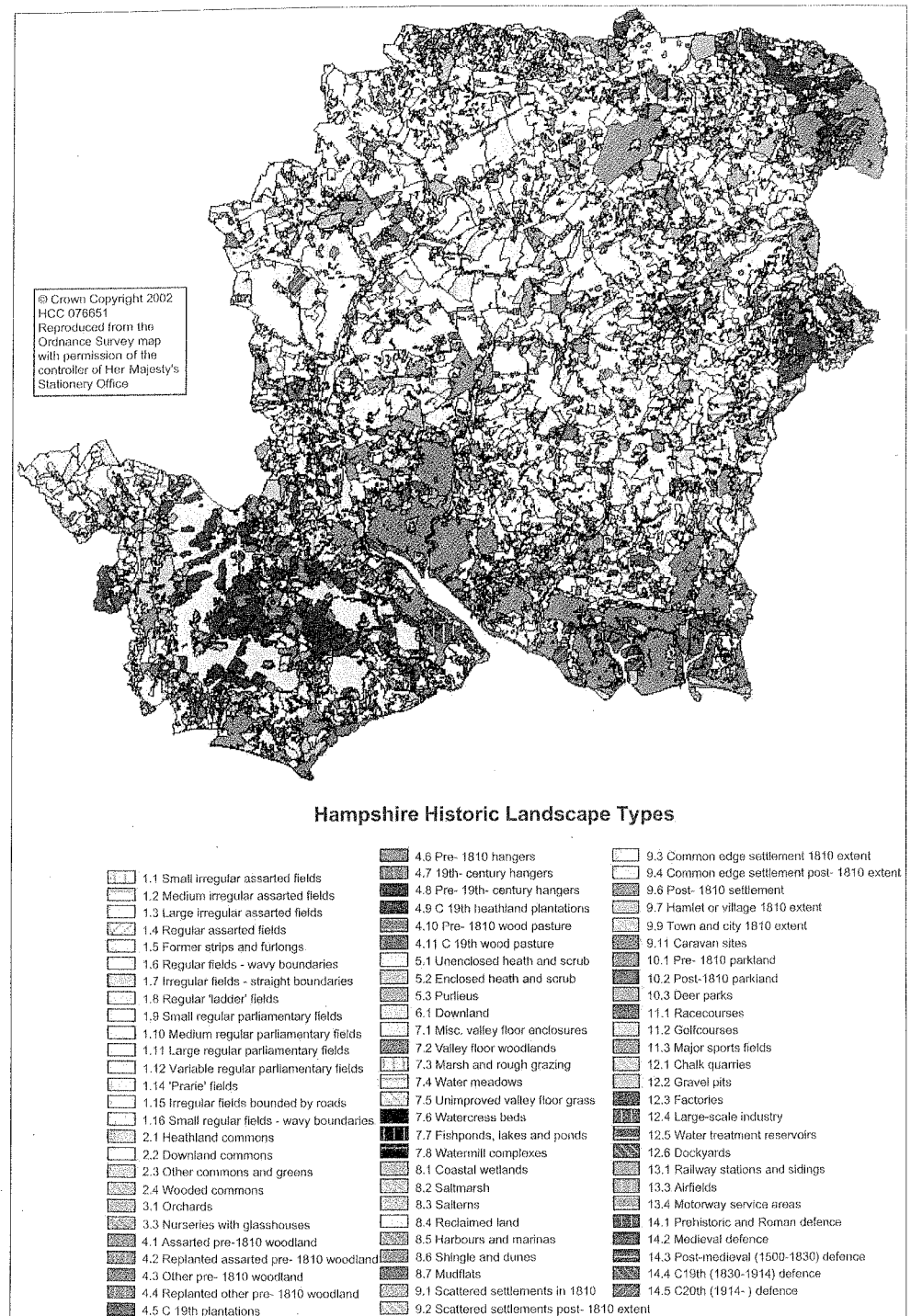


Figure 8: A giant themepark for the future: rural counties (FAIRCLOUGH, RIPPON 2002)



Figure 9a and b: Barbara Bender, Chris Tilley and friends, from the Institute of Archaeology in Central London re-enacting the Bronze Age viewpoint on the countryside: the Leskernick Project (BENDER, HAMILTON et al. 1997)

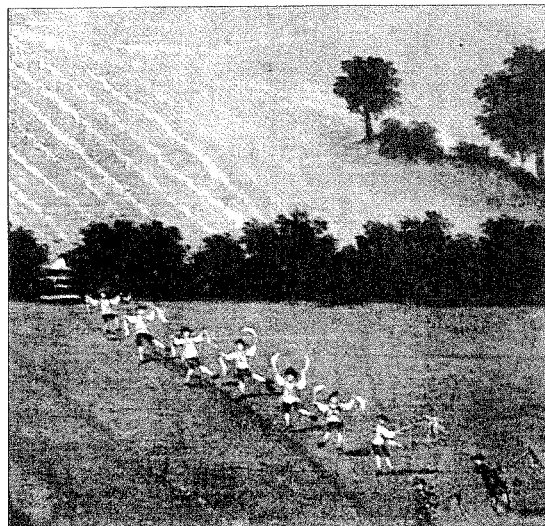
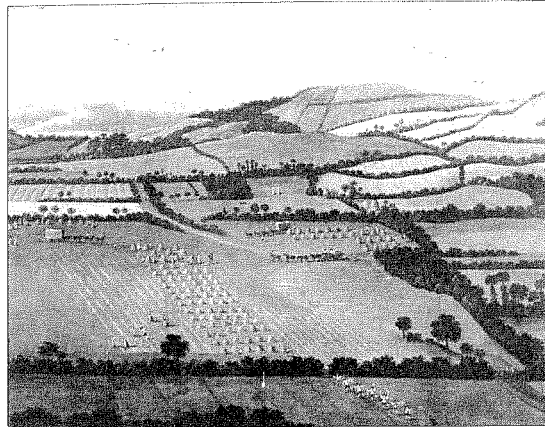
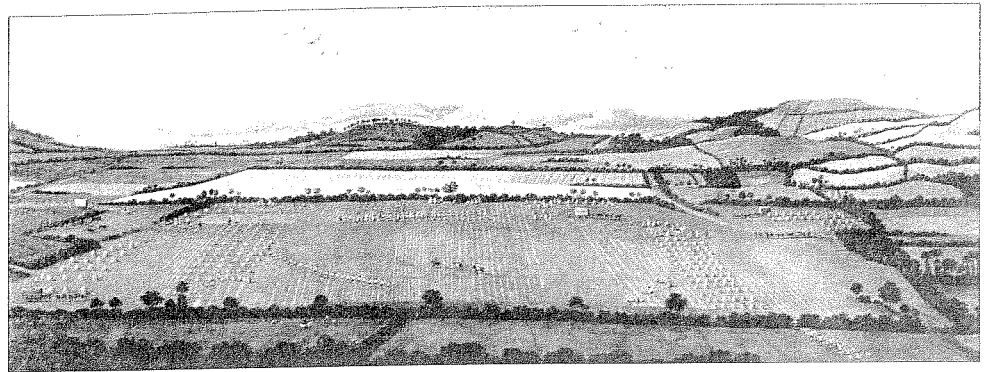


Figure 10: (a) An English working landscape painted around 1700 AD (painter anonym.). – (b) In more detail, other things are going on at the same time (bottom right hand field). – (c) In yet more detail, Morris dancers perform through the fields during busy harvesttime.



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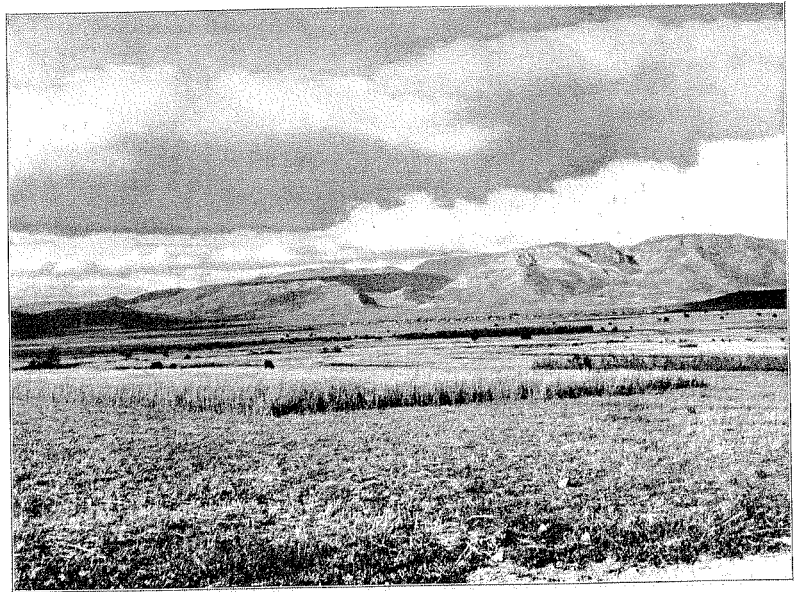
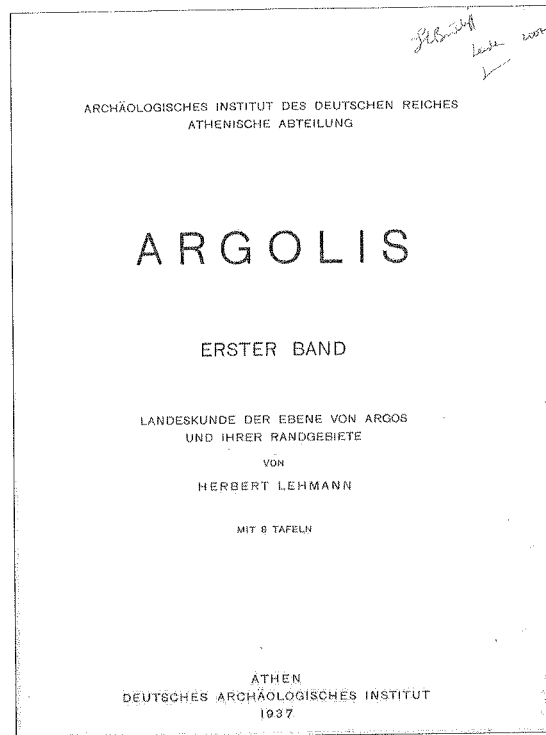
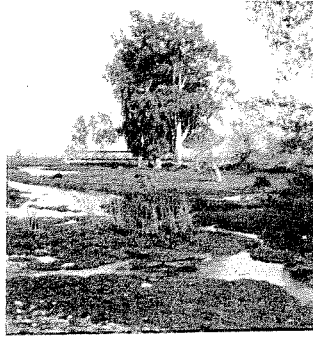


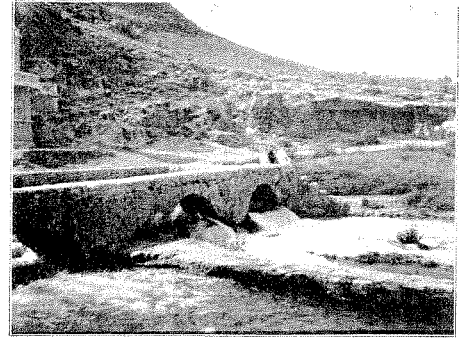
Photo H. Lehmann.

1. Der obere Teil der Ebene von Argos und ihr westlicher Gebirgsrahmen; gesehen von Mykenai nach S.W.

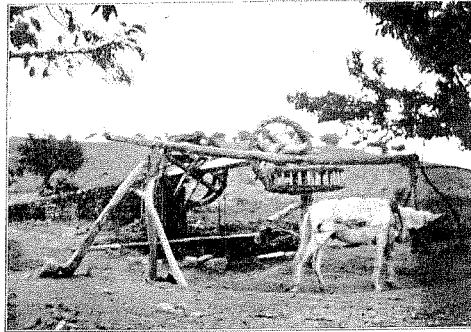
Figure 11a and b: Title page and landscape photograph from LEHMANN 1937



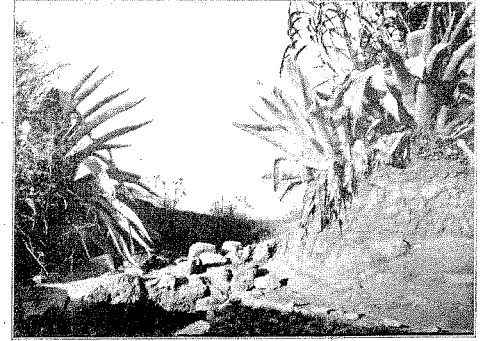
2. Der Iernäische Sumpf bei Myll.



3. Die Quelle des Erasinos bei Kephalari.



4. Alter Schöpfbrunnen der Ebene von Argos in seiner Holzkonstruktion.



5. Trockenes Bachbett bei Tiryns.

Figure 12: LEHMANN photograph 1937. WREDE, Introduction to LEHMANN 1937: »Die alte ›Reisebeschreibung‹ in ihrer klassischen Epoche geht aus vom Aufsuchen antiker Denkmäler sowie von der Festlegung der geschichtlich überlieferten Städte oder Heiligtümer im Gelände und der Veranschaulichung ihrer baulichen Reste. Sie beschreibt dabei Formen und Farben der Landschaft nur selten im eigentlichen Sinne und beschränkt sich auf die einfachen Begriffe wie Fels, Ebene, Schlucht, Ackerland, Küste, um topographische Lagen knapp zu bestimmen. Sie belebt das Bild gern durch Schilderung des gegenwärtigen Daseins der Menschen, dessen Reiz ebenso sehr in seiner bunten Fremdartigkeit wie in seiner naturnahen Schlichtheit gegeben ist, und das vor allem in einem seltsamen Kontrast um die ideal empfundenen, in grandioser Einsamkeit trauernden antiken Ruinen spielt. Die unmittelbare Schilderung des Erlebnisses und die oft behaglich verweilende Ausmalung südlichen Daseins ersetzt so das beschreibende Wort, und der Leser fühlt sich doch umfassen vom Licht und Duft der Meeresküsten, Gärten und Gebirge.«

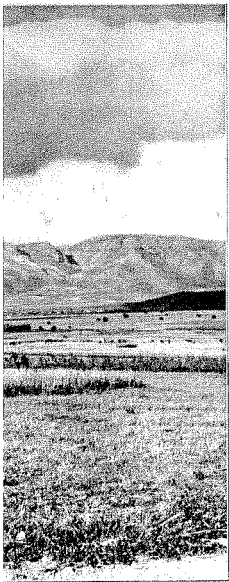


Photo H. Lehmann.

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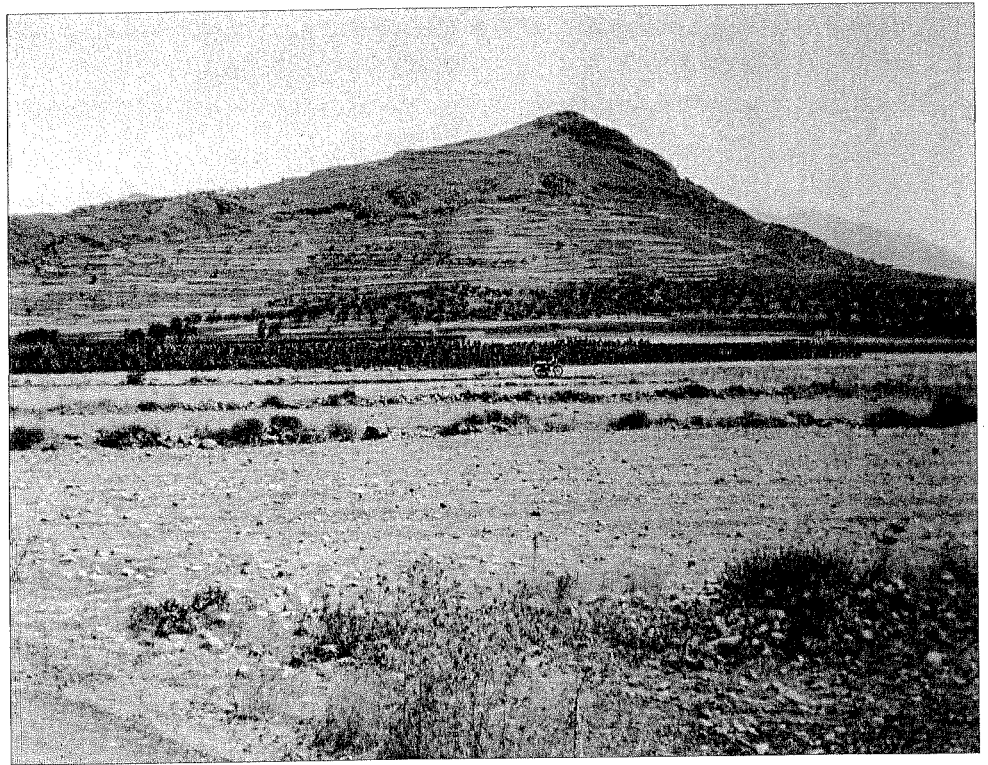


Figure 13: My own early 1970's photograph of the acropolis of prehistoric Midea. WREDE, Introduction to LEHMANN 1937: »Wenn wir jetzt, nach jahrzehntelangen Untersuchungen einzelner Plätze, wieder die Beschreibung und Deutung einer ganzen Kulturlandschaft wagen, sind Blickpunkt, Mittel und Ziele neue geworden. Das Zeitalter der Ausgrabungen hat nicht nur das Wissen um die untersuchten Stätten gefördert. Die Funde haben unsere Anschauung vom Hellenentum verändert, die Epochen seines Daseins heben sich von einander ab, der Blick in die Jahrhunderte seiner Frühzeit und in die Jahrtausende vorhellenischer Besiedlung hat sich geöffnet. Wir entziffern im Boden Zeugnisse, die früher unlesbar waren. Wir müssen ihn also Schritt für Schritt abtasten nach jeder Spur menschlicher Tätigkeit, nach Scherbenfeldern, Gräbergruppen, alten Wegen und Ackerterrassen, um deren Art und Zeitalter zu erkennen und danach das Gesamtbild zu gewinnen.«

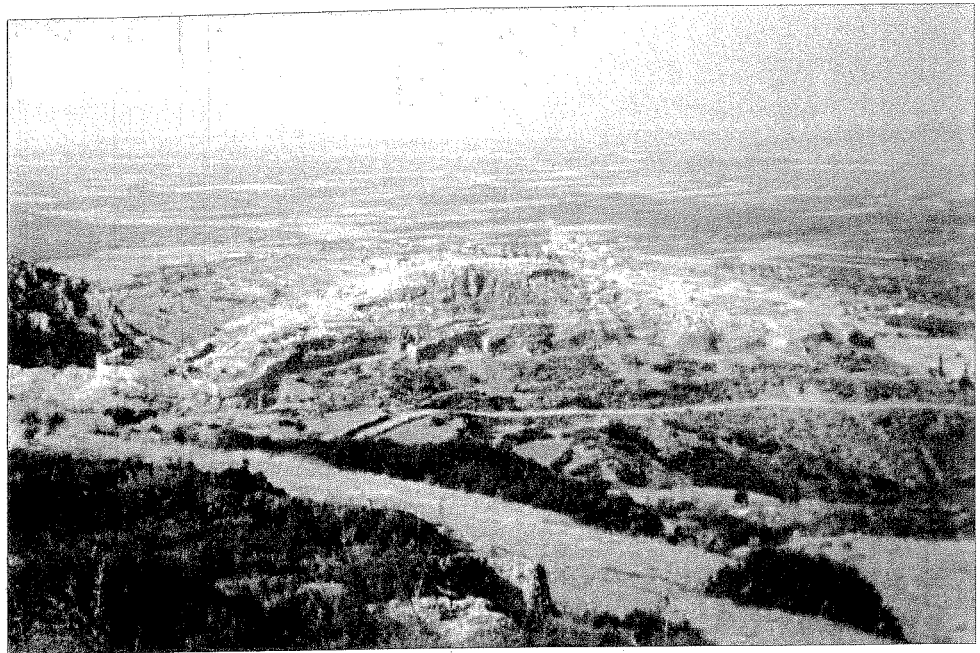
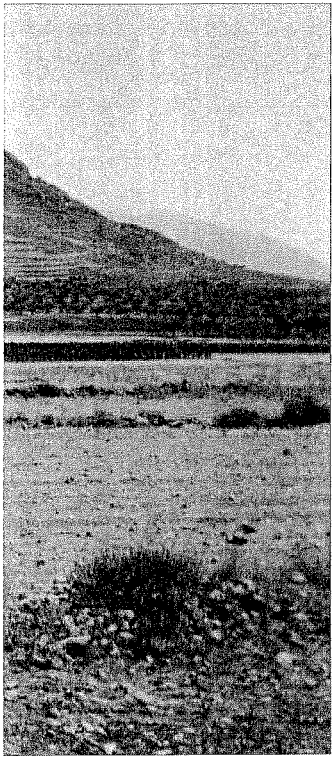
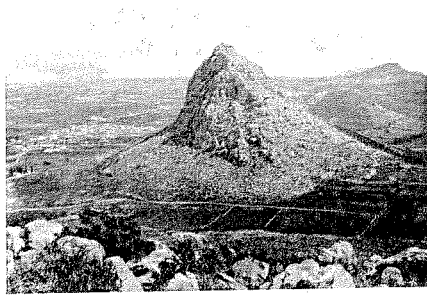
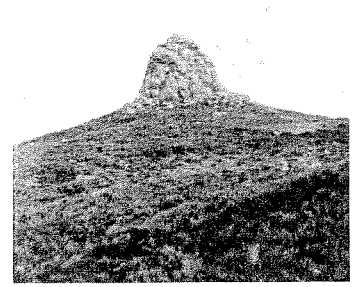


Figure 14: My own early 1970's photograph of Mycenae. WREDE, Introduction to LEHMANN 1937: »Wir empfinden daher die Landschaft nicht nur in ihren Ausmassen und Forms Schönheiten mit den Augen des Kunstbetrachters, auch nicht lediglich als grossartige Trägerin mythischer und geschichtlicher Namen. Vielmehr fühlen wir den Stein des Gebirges und der Hügel und sein Gewordensein; Karst und Ackerkrume und Sandstrand mit allem Leben, das sie in Pflanzen emporsenden; Bäume, Dornensträucher und Zuchtgewächse in ihren Gemeinschaften und in ihren Bindungen an Boden und Licht, Dürre und Regen; in dem Ganzen aber den kulturschaffenden Menschen in seinen Beziehungen zu allen diesen lebendigen Teilen. Die ›Urlandschaft‹, die in der einsamen Grösse der argolischen Berge und Küsten stets erschreckend nahe bleibt, wird durch grosses Geschehen, durch menschliche Formung und Sinngebung selbst zum verkörperten Mythos, zur heroischen Landschaft.«

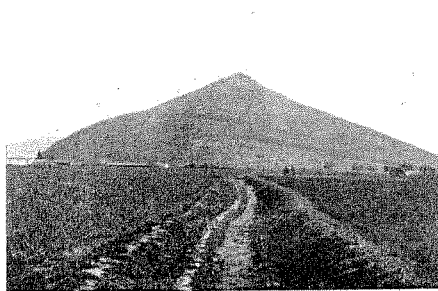
of prehistoric Midea. WREDE, zehntelangen Untersuchungen r ganzen Kulturlandschaft wa- Zeitalter der Ausgrabungen hat . Die Funde haben unsere An- Daseins heben sich von einan- n die Jahrtausende vorhelleni- Zeugnisse, die früher unlesbar jeder Spur menschlicher Tätig- und Ackerterrassen, um deren u gewinnen.«



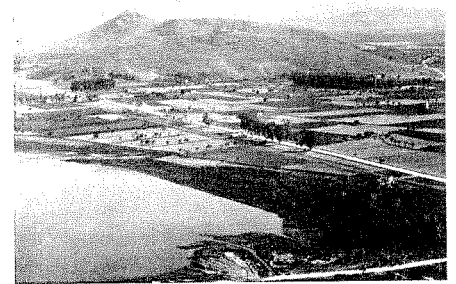
5. Die Kalkklippe Ajos Elias bei Asini (Tsefernga), im Hintergrund der Argolische Golf.



6. Herauspräparierte Kalklinse im Schiefergelände östlich Katsingri.

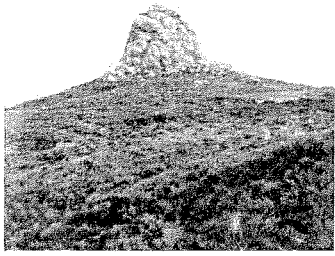


7. Der Kalkkegel Ajos Elias bei Tiryns.

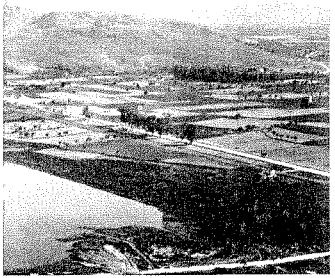


8. Kegelberg Ajos Elias bei Tiryns, gesehen von Nauplia.

Figure 15: LEHMANN photograph 1937. WREDE, Introduction to LEHMANN 1937: »Zudem gilt es, die Kenntnis so vieler Denkmäler aller Epochen noch einmal festzuhalten und weiterzureichen in einem Augenblick, da Verkehrserschließung und moderne Bodennutzung, Steinbrüche und Fabriken, Fremdenindustrie und ›Fortschritt‹ unaufhaltsam das Bild für immer verändern.«

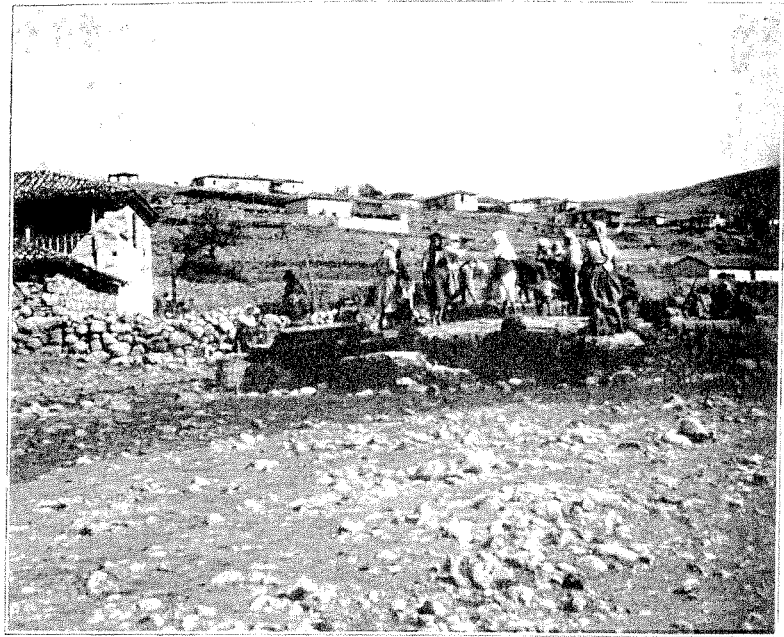


6. Herauspräparierte Kalklinse
im Schiefergelände östlich Katsingri.



Ajos Elias bei Tiryns, gesehen von Nauplia.

tion to LEHMANN 1937: »Zu-
1 noch einmal festzuhalten und
ssung und moderne Bodennut-
«Fortschritt» unaufhaltsam das



5. Limnaes, ein typisches Gebirgsdorf. Waschende Frauen am Dorfbrunnen.

Figure 16: LEHMANN photograph 1937. LEHMANN 1937, preface: »Dankbar gedenke ich
schliesslich des griechischen Landmannes, der mit mir Wein, Oliven und Bröt geteilt und
mich in die Seele seiner Heimat hat blicken lassen.«