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RESISTANCE – AGENCY – LANDSCAPE – NARRATIVE

It is a little before midnight in the summer of 1885. An August moon shines across the threshing floors which run down a spur below the village of Mitsero in central Cyprus. On one of the floors stand two women, talking and laughing quietly as they sieve the winnowed grain. All around them lie the other threshing floors, with heaps of unthreshed sheaves, long piles of grain and the assortment of shovels, pitchforks and sledges which are needed for processing the harvest. As they shake and tip the heavy sieves the women glance down occasionally at a spare sieve lying beside them, stilling their conversation for a moment. A winnowing breeze from the north brings a first hint of coolness, and begins to dry the sweat on their chaff-encrusted arms. From a threshing floor down below them come the loud snores of a man, a foreigner from outside the village, sleeping amidst the sheaves with a half-empty goatskin of wine beside his limp right hand. The women pause and listen, smile at each other as they hear the snores, and continue their work.

What is going on? Why are these two women sieving at night all on their own? Who is the sleeping man, and why are they careful not to waken him? Is there someone missing who ought to be using the spare sieve? More to the point, what is a clearly fictional piece of narrative description doing in a supposedly scholarly book, particularly at the beginning of a theory chapter?

This chapter is intended to be a guide to interpreting the actions, experience and material culture of the colonized. It is theoretical, in the sense that it is generalized and derives from a wide body of abstract writing in archaeology and the social sciences. My purpose, though, is a very practical one. The theory which I explain in this chapter will be applied to concrete material and situations: state granaries, military roads, forest boundaries, illicit whisky stills. Like the moonlight on the threshing floors, theory can reveal patterns we would otherwise not notice. But those patterns are composed of human actions and material culture; they are the phenomenological realities which are the goal of my investigation (cf. Gosden 1994: 108).

Examining resistance is one of the keys to understanding the experience of colonized people, as some 40 years of postcolonial theorizing have demonstrated. This is a welcome alternative to the usual one-sided emphasis on elites

Figure 2.1 Sieving the threshed grain in Cyprus. Source: Tarsouli 1963: plate 54.4 (reproduced with permission of the Holy Archbishopric of Cyprus).

and modes of domination that still characterizes much archaeological writing. As we are focusing on the actions and decisions of individuals and particular social groups, it is clearly important to make use of agency theory. How can we use material culture such as tools, structures and waste materials to investigate how the colonized chose to resist, subvert, or accommodate colonial rule? Examining its context is crucial: it is not enough to pick out a few items or sites which seem to suit a particular argument. People's actions need to be understood across the whole landscape, to include their farming, hiding and travelling just as much as their living in the 'sites' to which archaeology often limits itself.

There is one more major component of my theoretical discussion. The judicious use of narrative can highlight the importance of human experience and decision-making, and greatly facilitate the communication which is so essential to any analytical exercise. The story of the two women on the threshing floor, for example, suggests that they have decided to process their crop in secret. As I will explain later in the chapter, examining this sort of activity is central to understanding the experience of the colonized. First, however, we need to scrutinize the concept of resistance, and develop a method of applying it to archaeological material.

Resistance

No longer can we lump together the colonized and stereotype them as passive, unthinking machines whose actions are determined by their masters. A range of ethnographic and historical studies and an ever-increasing body of post-colonial theory have demonstrated their rich, active and varied lives, in constant negotiation with the structures and officials of the colonial regime (e.g. Gosden and Knowles 2001; Scott 1990; Singer 1994). This is not to deny the staggering impact of extortionate taxation, official brutality, forced labour, and the regular and public humiliation of everyday colonized life. In many situations, the power and invasiveness of colonial regimes and regulations can severely limit people's freedom to act (Scham 2001: 199). However savage the oppression, nevertheless, there are always stories and parodies, little acts of resistance, the creation of alternative meanings and symbols, and the ability to find space for new social powers.

Understanding power is one of the problems. In our effort to interpret the world around us, it is all too easy to reduce the complexities of lived experience into binary pairs: power and incapacity; domination and resistance; colonizer and colonized. On one side is total, monolithic power, which manufactures dominant ideologies to convince the masses of its legitimacy. On the other is a mass of undifferentiated ciphers who have been oppressed out of any individuality or agency, whose only resistance, if it exists, is a passive reaction to the initiatives and ideologies of the powerful.

This binary world view is a denial of the complexity and richness of human dynamics, and a clear falsification of every colonial situation (Meskell 1998b; van Dommelen 1998: 24; 2002: 122–6). Worse than that, it is a continuation of colonial attempts to define the powerful self against the native other. European colonial societies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were fractured at every point, as can be seen not just in current postcolonial theory but in the newspapers of the period. Officials competed with private businessmen and among themselves, women and men had differing interpretations of the society round them, and 'poor whites' were considered almost as bad as natives (Given 2001; Paynter and McGuire 1991; Stoler 1989).

The same applies to the colonized. To see them as heroic defenders of their freedom and authentic culture is romantic and wildly unrealistic, little better than the noble savagism of an earlier generation of western writers (Ortner 1995: 176–80). Different social and ethnic groups competed and often fought among themselves, and individuals could choose whether they wanted to resist, ignore, accommodate or exploit colonial rule (Scham 2001: 191–2). The Senussi in North Africa, for example, quite happily taxed and oppressed their Bedouin subjects at the same time as leading them against the Italians who dominated them both (D. Atkinson 2000). Whether or not people chose to resist depended on a wide range of factors, including personal inclination, the ability of the colonized society to work together, and the availability of resources (Morrison 2001). 'Resistance' is multifaceted and complex, more a range of decisions and negotiations than a single activity.

One version of this stereotyping is the idea that resistance consists of clinging tenaciously to your traditional culture in the face of attempted assimilation by the colonizers. This is a tempting option for archaeologists, as they can detect continuity of material culture, social hierarchy or settlement patterns, existing alongside imperial styles and artefacts. Plantation slaves in South Carolina, for example, clung to their original African foodways and pottery styles (Ferguson L. 1991). Greek elites maintained their local loyalties and residence patterns in spite of the ideological power of their Roman masters (Alcock 1997). In both these cases, of course, people are still making active decisions and self-definitions. Yet 'continuity', 'tradition' and 'survival' are dangerous terms, used extensively in the archaeological and anthropological literature of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to characterize colonized societies and so justify the rule of 'dynamic' and 'progressive' Europeans (Adas 1995; Paynter and McGuire 1991: 1–3).

Part of the problem is that postcolonial theory and political correctness have combined to make 'resistance' an enormously trendy and popular term in anthropology and, increasingly, archaeology (M.F. Brown 1996). This book is a characteristic example. Resistance is everywhere, in what we eat, how we talk, when we arrive for work. The frenzied search for resistance in every aspect of daily life can lead to the neglect of other important explanations, such as survival strategies, collaboration, or ritual or social activities which might be largely unrelated to the experience of colonial rule. This is ultimately producing ethnographic 'thinness', a lack of context in our understanding of particular societies (Ortner 1995).

Another result of this proliferation of studies is that the term 'resistance' now embraces an enormously wide range of activities. At one end of the scale is outright and overt armed rebellion, often well-documented in the historical texts. At the other lie unconscious patterns of everyday behaviour which do not quite add up to what the rulers expect of their subjects (L. Ferguson 1991: 28). Somewhere in the middle of the scale lie deliberate but discrete acts of defiance such as tax evasion and pilfering, as well as boasting about them in safe locations. This broad spectrum of meanings seems to be making the term 'resistance' increasingly meaningless. Applying this spectrum, however, can actually provide a more contextual and nuanced understanding of the experiences of colonized people.

Many actions from the middle of that scale may not be very bold or ambitious, but they still constitute active decision-making on the part of the colonized. They are actions targeted directly at the colonizers, and so are acts of deliberate disobedience or avoidance. At this level, resistance is indeed made consciously and deliberately (cf. van Dommelen 1998: 27–8). Winnowing and sieving your grain at night to avoid it being measured by the tax

collector is one example; hiding the bones of meat pilfered from your masters in the root cellar of your house is another (chapter 7).

James C. Scott's 'hidden transcripts' are not just the wistful stories told in the privacy of the home or alehouse about answering back the bailiff or punching the landlord in the face. They are also practices such as secret meetings, parodies, petty crime and tax evasion, which take place in arenas away from the elite's surveillance (Scott 1990: 120–4, 187–92). Many of these practices are based on material culture, involving such things as hiding-places, tobacco pipes, alcohol bottles, and secret crop-processing facilities (Casella 2001; Hall 1992: 384–6). At this level, resistance is expressed in a range of activities which do have their correlates in the archaeological record.

Yet the precise motivation for such activities can be hard to identify. When we find evidence for the production of moonshine whisky, for example, that is clearly an example of deliberate defiance and resistance. But is it motivated by political dissent, a thirst for profit, or merely a vague desire to continue what your parents did before you? And who are you resisting? The local exciseman in person, the imperial government and all it stands for, or some vaguely conceived 'them' who get the blame for everything? Even though secret cultivation or hiding grain from the tax collector has to be a deliberate act of resistance at some level, it might be a straightforward survival strategy rather than a political protest against an exploitative regime (Adas 1986: 69; Fegan 1986: 104).

So how do we go about investigating such activities in the archaeological record? Before we even start, of course, we need a clear theoretical framework, with an ongoing deconstruction of our own assumptions, particularly when so many of them in the analytical literature derive from the western colonial experience. A fully contextual 'thick description' of the society under study will help to avoid giving to some explanations ('resistance', 'hegemony') more weight than they actually deserve, and also help us to interpret the meanings and motivations behind particular patterns of activity (Ortner 1995: 174, 190; van Dommelen 2002: 126–7).

When it comes to the actual material, the problem is of course that archaeology has traditionally focused on elite structures, monuments and public activity, at the expense of the non-elite and private. To look for acts of resistance, we need access to the secret arenas and hidden transcripts (Paynter and McGuire 1991: 13). The recent impressive growth in landscape archaeology provides evidence for a much wider range of activities, in much better context than that provided by the excavation of isolated sites. The other related approach is to look for the evidence of daily practice: the activity areas, refuse and artefacts from which we can interpret labour patterns and experience (Silliman 2001b: 384). These are the arenas where resistance took place, and where the colonized led their active and individual lives.

Agency

One of the main aims of postcolonial theory is to re-empower the colonized, at least in the analytical literature. Above all, we need to allow them individuality, choice and an active role in society. This is the task of agency theory. As with resistance, my use of agency theory is eclectic and firmly practical: it is intended for the very specific project of investigating the active role of the colonized. I am interested primarily in the ways in which groups and individuals choose to act in particular circumstances, and in doing so create their own identities and give meanings to the social and physical world round them (Dobres 2000: 141–3).

One thing I am not doing is hunting for named or known individuals, as identified from the material remains of themselves or their activities (Johnson 1989: 190). It is all too easy for this kind of study to slip into a study of the 'big men' who changed history, or else of a 'typical' person who is somehow a microcosm of society (Meskell 1998b: 157–8). The first is a retreat into elitism, and the second denies the subject any agency. Information from burials can sometimes demonstrate the varied experiences of life and death which create individual world views and identities within the same society (e.g. Hodder 2000; Tarlow 1999). For my purposes, it is more profitable to use contextual information to reconstruct the mechanisms by which the living created their own roles in society.

Whether or not it is possible to give names to specific people, we are dealing with real experiences of embodied people, rather than the dehumanized objects that critics have variously termed 'faceless blobs' (Tringham 1991: 94), 'cultural dopes' (Giddens 1979: 52) and 'uninhabited bodies' (Meskell 1998b: 140). There were certainly major constraints on how people acted, some of them imposed by colonial powers, for example, and the results of people's actions may not always have been as they intended. But they were still deeply involved in creating their own interpretations and identities. We may not know the names and faces of the Cypriot women sieving grain at night, or the Egyptian family bringing its wheat to the state granary, but we can still reconstruct their real, bodily experiences in the localities that they have made meaningful.

Agency theory, like all such trends, is very much a product of current concerns and conditions, and it is important not to impose anachronistic experiences on the people of other cultures. A particular danger of agency theory is projecting modern, western ideas of the free-thinking individual onto the past (Dobres and Robb 2000: 13). Some agents would explain past realities and their own decisions as determined by fate, or God (D. Carr 2001: 162–3). For some societies, groups such as the family or community are seen as the primary unit which takes decisions and establishes identities; in nineteenth- and twentieth-century rural Greece, for example, it was the peasant household (Forbes 1989: 88, 96). As with resistance, it is critically important to examine the entire social context.

Examining people's practices is an appropriate way of investigating agency and deliberate acts of resistance. The routine practices of everyday life are an expression of how people organize their society and personal relations. These bodily actions are often picked up unconsciously during childhood, and in normal circumstances seem to be relatively consistent and homogeneous (Bourdieu 1977; Dobres 2000: 136–8). Even so, it is through such bodily engagements with the world that people create meanings and identities for themselves: a skilled carpenter; a sharp trader; a cheerful worker. In particular, it is through working in a team and cooperating in a series of physical movements and personal relations that people create their place in the social network.

This is the concept of the *chaîne opératoire*, which has been much written about in the context of technological processes, particularly the manufacture of artefacts (e.g. Dobres 2000: 153–5; Gosden and Knowles 2001: 18–19). It applies equally well on a building site. By participating in a state building programme on the scale of the Giza pyramids or Hitler's planned reconstruction of Berlin, workers were playing a role in the social and political fabric of that state (chapter 6). On a smaller scale, a project such as a grain harvest incorporates all workers into an elaborate mesh of interactions, exchanges and initiatives that constitutes the community at the most intensive stage of its annual cycle. Abujaber's description of the harvest in early twentieth-century Jordan illustrates the sheer complexity of such a project (1989: 54–60). Archive footage and photographs of traditional agricultural tasks such as winnowing, flailing or scything vividly portray the skill, teamwork and pride of these groups of virtuoso labourers (Figure 2.2; Lajoux 1966). The pattering rhythm of flails striking the ground or scythes swishing in unison through the stalks of wheat can become an aural expression of agency, teamwork and community.

Normally the social and political relations that such practices create are not explicitly recognized or discussed. So when they include heavy labour for a landlord with no direct return, that unequal relationship becomes implicit within people's understanding of the world (Silliman 2001b: 383). This is not to say it is always accepted or seen as 'natural', just that it is part of people's everyday experience of the world. When a routine practice is suddenly challenged or disallowed, then unthinking routine becomes conscious thought, and the agent will suddenly face the decision of whether to submit, protest or resist (Gosden 1994: 125–6). An incompetent reaper might be mocked by a colleague, a building labourer whipped by an overseer, a villager pauper's right to glean suddenly taken away by a stingy landlord. All of these break the routine, and provide arenas and opportunities for active and deliberate change to the social order.

With this understanding of agency, it is clear that the colonized can play a major, active role in constituting their world and even the structure of the colonial society. They are constantly seizing, maintaining and enlarging the

Figure 2.2 Winnowing at Karavas, Cyprus, in the first half of the twentieth century. Photograph: Ververis (copyright, 'TO MATI' Collection, the Leventis Municipal Museum of Nicosia).

space in which they have power, and negotiating their position with the different representatives of colonial authority (Scott 1990: 132). One of the most common arenas for this negotiation of power is against that most ubiquitous and invasive of colonial operations, tax collection (chapter 3). Even without resorting to bribery or evasion, there is always considerable space for argument, negotiation and even exemption (e.g. Brand 1969: 44–5; Singer 1994). Attitudes to authority, of course, are as wide-ranging as a classroom full of schoolchildren. But there is always active negotiation, appropriation, transformation and resistance, and these take place in particular arenas which can be investigated archaeologically as well as historically.

The farmer confronts the tax collector; the agent confronts the colonial structure. All of these negotiations happen in very concrete arenas of activity: it is through material culture and at meaningful localities in the landscape that such negotiations take place (Johnson 1989: 199–200). Precisely because they are meaningful, these arenas in turn influence the relationship between agent and system. Places carry memories, precedents and counter-examples, and the availability of tools and raw materials limits people's choices and actions. This is why archaeology is so much more than a substitute for history or ethnography when other sources are not available. By focusing on patterns of artefact use and the attribution of meaning to structures and

landscapes, archaeology is central to understanding the active role of the colonized in constituting their own society.

The reconstruction of routine practices and labour patterns through the patterns and distribution of tools, processing areas and waste is a standard archaeological technique (e.g. Lightfoot *et al.* 1998; Silliman 2001b). Agricultural tools, for example, can be the central focus of the elite's attempts to control production and subordinates' strategies for transforming this attempted control to their own advantage. Paola Tabet argues that in many societies men systematically create a technological gap between themselves and women. Women are under-equipped; their labour is restricted to what they can do with their own bodies. Men, by contrast, have access to machinery which allows them to transcend their own physical limitations, and they are the ones who control the manufacture and use of weapons (Tabet 1979). Similar strategies can be used by colonizers, by restricting access to labour-saving machinery and using forced labour to create an image of the perfect, controlled ant-like society (chapter 6).

Yet this rather structuralist schema does not allow for the complexities of the colonial situation, or for the active role of the colonized in creating and maintaining the structure of their society. It may be that the authorities actually restrict the use of manual tools: it is easier to control and tax a harvest if it is being processed in central facilities owned and policed by the landlord. Conversely, the colonized often deliberately choose to use manual tools or apparently outmoded technology. Scottish landlords of the eighteenth century tried to ban the use of hand grinding mills, as tenants were refusing to have their grain ground at the landlords' mills where they had to pay dues (chapter 8; Dodgshon 1998: 116). Filipino tenants in the twentieth century continued to use outmoded foot-powered means of threshing, because it was quieter and they could thresh secretly without the overseers hearing them (Fegan 1986: 98). These are not merely matters of practicality for exploited tenants struggling to keep enough food for their families to survive. The deliberate use of old materials and technologies can be an active move on the part of the colonized to create their own cultural space and identity in the face of new, imposed artefacts and techniques which they associate with the colonizing power (Silliman 2001a: 201–4).

Contextual study is clearly vital here. A single hand mill is not evidence for secret grinding or the construction of an anti-colonial identity. We have to understand the whole system of agricultural practice and social control, and work out the range of choices and dilemmas faced by the people who lived in that society. Only then can we detect the exceptions, tensions and anomalies in the pattern (Dobres 2000: 135). This applies at a range of different scales, all of which are relevant when using daily practices to investigate the ongoing creation and maintenance of society (Lightfoot *et al.* 1998: 202–3). As well as materials and technologies, this approach works well for domestic architecture, particularly when there are a few clearly idiosyncratic structures

(E.R. Carr 2000), or when a period of social and stylistic transition creates a broad range of opportunities for individual choices and solutions (Johnson 1989: 196–206). At the broadest scale, we will only understand social patterns and exceptions to them by investigating practices and human agency across the entire landscape.

Landscape

Landscape studies are currently hugely popular within archaeology. There is widespread agreement that this is an appropriate scale at which to investigate a broad range of archaeological issues such as social organization, rural economy and sacred space (Anschuetz *et al.* 2001; Knapp and Ashmore 1999). As far as the archaeology of the colonized is concerned, it seems obvious to investigate labour, agency and resistance across the landscape, particularly because of the rural and non-elite nature of much of this activity (Paynter and McGuire 1991: 7). In spite of the vast literature, however, there is little agreement on what 'landscape' means in an archaeological context, and almost nothing on how we can use data such as site descriptions and pottery density charts to answer these perhaps ambitious questions.

A common-sense approach to landscape is to divide it up into analytical categories which can be identified from the material remains: economic (farms, mines); social (settlements); political (forts, palaces); and cultural (sanctuaries, memorials). Although rarely expressed as baldly as it is here, this is the commonest principle underlying archaeological discussions of landscape. However convenient and intuitive, this scheme is clearly an imposition of the modern western habit of pigeon-holing, and is totally inadequate for dealing with apparent contradictions such as sacred cities or bureaucratic palaces, let alone the sophisticated and often holistic conceptions that many past societies had of their worlds.

Another modern dichotomy is that between the physical and cultural landscape. Mountains, ore bodies and fertile soils are taken for granted as always in existence, and they are exploited or built upon to create a cultural landscape of fields, roads and buildings. At its most extreme this is environmental determinism, in its new guise of Geographic Information Systems analysis showing the relationship between site locations and natural resources (Blanton 2001: 629; Gaffney and van Leusen 1995). A more sophisticated version couples the constraints of the physical landscape on human society with the impact that people have on that landscape. People are attracted to well-watered hillslope soils, for example, but fail to protect them against erosion. This leads to a new physical landscape of denuded slopes and heavily sedimented plains, which provides its inhabitants with a new set of constraints (van Andel *et al.* 1986). This approach sets up a useful dynamic between people and their environment, but it still separates the two, and makes no allowance for perception or the individual creation of meaning.

An approach which is much more sensitive to the different cultures we study is the investigation of 'ideational' or 'associative' landscapes where people associate features in the natural and built landscape with their own memories, meanings or emotions (Alcock 2001: 326–7; Knapp and Ashmore 1999: 12–13). This is particularly appropriate for sacred landscapes where hilltop monuments, holy trees or whole vistas carry very specific associations for the people who live and move among them. Ethnographic information can provide a wealth of meanings for such elements of the landscapes. The elders of the Western Apache, for example, associated a series of didactic narratives with the rocks, trees and streams of their landscape, and used them for the instruction of their children: 'wisdom sits in places' (Basso 1996). Detecting such associations from purely archaeological data is much more of a challenge, requiring clear patterns of structures, dedicatory offerings or art work in a range of equivalent locations (Bradley 2000).

Our experience of the landscape is much more intense even than this. Climbing a mountain, feeling the weather, labouring together in the fields – all are physical and biological experiences by embodied individuals in real and meaningful places (Tilley 1994: 26). Our choices and previous experiences affect which of those places become or remain meaningful. As we continue to move, work and live we interact with our landscape, and its meanings constantly change and develop (Basso 1996: 83; Tilley 1994: 23). These changes are brought on by different people acting in different contexts, and even by ephemeral features such as haystacks, the colour of the crops and weather patterns (Brassley 1999). The experiences of hearing, smelling and touching can be as significant as seeing, and are often possible to reconstruct from the archaeological record. These are the sorts of meanings that we are looking for in the archaeological record: the arrays of related activity which Ingold refers to as 'taskscapes', and the linear experiences which are created by following paths and tracks (Ingold 1993: 158, 167; Tilley 1994: 27–31).

Tilley's phenomenological approach to prehistoric monuments (1994), while hugely stimulating, has been criticized for its poverty of contextual information, and its assumptions that prehistoric and modern viewers of monuments share the same cultural attitudes and perceptions (Brück 1998; Fleming 1999b). Ingold (1993) proposes more of a 'thick description' of a landscape of labour, though his example is a painting rather than real archaeological landscape data. Agricultural work and the many activities associated with it are clearly central experiences in the landscape. Through such experiences people build up a network of personal identities, stories and associations with the landscape. This is the field where my father broke the village scything record; this is the road where the bandits robbed the government tithe wagon; this is the cave where we distil our secret whisky.

The landscape, then, is an arena for social agency. 'Arena' is a better metaphor than 'stage'. There are still performers and spectators, but for the participants, the gladiatorial combats and wild animal hunts enacted there are very real dramas indeed. Activities such as harvesting and tool-making unfold in meaningful locations with constant interaction between people and material culture, in the context of family, community and society (Anschuetz *et al.* 2001: 161; Dobres 2000: 127–8). This is how people create their identities as skilled workers or clever tax avoiders, and how experiences of oppression, hard labour and successful resistance become embedded in a local culture.

The landscape is an arena for resistance. As with any other activity, resistance consists of a series of actions, stories and associations by which particular places are given meaning. Historical resistance movements tend to be associated with specific regions, often remote areas away from the centre of power where an alternative set of meanings can be built (Paynter and McGuire 1991: 15). Mountain areas and broken-up terrain can provide ample opportunities for autonomy and distinct local identities (chapter 4), though it is all too easy to slip into a simple deterministic framework of law-abiding farmers in the plains and bandits in the mountains (e.g. Shaw 1990). Landscapes of resistance are created by the actions and decisions of specific people and groups.

The 'public transcripts' and 'hidden transcripts' by which people choose their occasions for submitting to authority or protesting against it have clear spatial correlates; they are materialized in the landscape (Scott 1990: 120–4). The village square and infields, and the threshing floors during tithe division, can be associated with obedience and submission. Remote fields and working-class cafés – and the threshing floors at night – become associated with resistance and a different, more powerful and proactive identity. Because of its privacy, the home or courtyard can also provide an arena for the hidden transcript (Silliman 2001b: 385).

As the case of the threshing floor shows, the same location can have different meanings at different times and for different people. Features in the landscape may carry narratives of resistance to colonial rule, such as the stories of Saint Mamas in Cyprus which I will tell in chapter 7. But they are not universally legible; they are told to some but not to others. This particularly applies to natural features such as rocks. Just outside the village of Spilia in the Troodos Mountains of Cyprus is a large perched boulder, with a strikingly flat surface where it sits on the bedrock beneath it. To a visiting colonial official or other outsider, this is merely a curious rock. To a member of the community, and those they wish to share the story with, it is the millstone on which the Virgin Mary ground to death a plague which had attacked the village. Different social groups, particularly colonized and colonizers, experience alternative landscapes; they participate in 'rival geographies' (Sparke 1998: 305).

There remains the challenge of interpreting these experienced landscapes using archaeological data. The key here is 'activity'. Different activities leave different traces, in terms of artefacts, waste products, structures and alterations of the terrain. These all need to be mapped systematically and carefully.