



Prehistoric Belief: Shamans, Trance and the Afterlife

Mike Williams

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Unlike modern people, those in prehistory were adept at entering trance; what we now call shamanism. This gave access to alternative realms where people met and befriended entities that they thought of as spirits. To the people of the past, the otherworld of trance, and the spirits that resided there, were as real to them as anything else they encountered. Until recently, this otherworldly realm was closed to archaeology; there was no way to reconstruct ancient thought. This changed with the advent of modern neurology. For the first time we can now enter the minds of those who lived thousands of years ago and begin to unravel their lives: the world as they would have believed it to be. In this bold and groundbreaking book, Dr Williams tackles all the big subjects in archaeology: the spread of humans from Africa, the rise of social groups, the adoption of agriculture, the construction of monuments, the emergence of metal, and the fall of the Celtic tribes. Showing that belief was central to these epic changes, as well as influencing the most mundane, everyday task, a new understanding of our prehistoric past emerges. Whilst being extensively researched, a fast-paced and engaging narrative makes this a page-turning read. Evocative vignettes supplement the text and take readers back in time to experience for themselves the sights, smells, and sounds of the past. This is a new way to approach prehistory, putting people and the beliefs that they held centre stage. For without understanding people's beliefs, we will never comprehend their world.

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