Handbook of Landscape Archaeology

Bruno David and Julian Thomas
Editors
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The Archaeology of Territory and Territoriality

Maria Nieves Zedeño

Interpretive framework about human societies is a unique characteristic of archaeological practice that manifests itself in contemporary studies of human use and territoriality.

Although territories encompass a vast range of human actions, archaeologists generally seek solutions to the problem of identifying territories from the material record by adapting the scales, content, and historical references of frameworks used by other disciplines in order to fit them into particular theoretical perspectives and research topics. For example, territorial models that employ principles of evolutionary biology and evolutionary and behavioral ecology (e.g., Allen and Hoekstra 1992; Dyson-Hudson and Smith 1978; Winterhalder and Smith 1981) are popular among archaeologists interested in territory formation via various hunter-gatherer adaptations (e.g., Betten 1991; Binford 1982; Eerkens 1999; Kelly 1995; Lee and DeVore 1980) and adoption of agricultural economies (e.g., Rosenberg 1990, 1998). Inquiries into long-term change in land-use strategies incorporate geological and ecological models (e.g., Rossignol and Wandsnider 1992), whereas spatial analyses of land and resource use draw heavily on geographic (e.g., Roebuck and Levy 1993; Morehouse 1996). Geographic Information Systems (GIS), in particular, have opened new avenues for comprehending and interpreting land and resource use at undifferentiated scales (e.g., Aldenderfer and Maschner 1996; Graham 1996; Hellen and Reid 2000). Recent advances also include agent-based modeling of land use efficiency (Koontz 2000).

Those interested in sociopolitical organization, in contrast, approach the study of territories and territorial behaviors from non-evolutionary perspectives to assess the effects of spatial circumstances on social and environmental stressors, conflict, and warfare (e.g., Bender 2001; Christolou and Smith 1998; Kleer 1996; Kim 2003; Saltman 2002; Walsh 1998). For the most part, archaeologists have combined anthropological models with elements from ecology, geography, and biology to interpret differential spatial distributions of material items as indicators of social, political, or ethnic boundaries (De Suetin and Findlow 1984; Graves 1994; Froessler 2000; Stark 1998; Sampson 1988; Wobst 1974). Postmodern structural theories of power, identity, and culture (e.g., Callou 1994; Forth 2003; Saltman 2002) also contribute to developing an understanding of the social and political construction of territories as well as the development of territorial boundaries and identities.

An innovative trend in contemporary archaeology is the integration of cultural landscape research into the study of territory (Garay and Charneser 1998; Heken and Reid 1998). Research on power struggles, inequality, and contested landscapes (Bender 2001) also testifies to the development of territorial strategies in the face of class and ethnic differences. Symbols and memory, too, are strongly linked to the prevalence of attachments to land and resources and to the maintenance of status quo in power relations (e.g., Krapp and Ashmore 1999; Lane 2003; Meddell 2003; Van Dyke and Alcock 2003). In this chapter, connections between territory and landscape are explored, as are other perspectives relevant to understanding human territoriality.

Concepts and Frameworks

Chief among key concepts used to discuss human-nature interactions is territory as a social aggregate (land + natural resources + human modifications) (Zedeño 1997: 69) and territoriality as the sum of actions and emotions toward a specific space, with an emphasis toward influence, control, and differential access (Malmberg 1986: 10; Sack 1985: 55; Soja 1971: 19). Commonsense usage of territory presupposes the existence of more or less homogeneous spaces with recognizable boundaries or at least some type of distinctive marking intended to prevent access by those who do not own or possess them. This view derives from modern Western geopolitical thought; however, the existence of diverse forms of human territorially observed by anthropologists, geographers, and ecologists shows that this usage does not directly apply to non-nation-state societies (Zedeño 1997, 2000).

Also key in conceptualizing archaeological territories is the distinction between territory as space and territory as land. Scholars of various disciplines who focus on territorial behaviors address territory in terms of space, which allows them to discuss a broad range of behavioral contexts, from personal space to a state's territorial base (Garand 1999; Malmberg 1980; Sack 1983; Valentine 2001). Land, therefore, a type of space. Inconveniently enough, land has many ambiguous meanings. Here, land is used as synonym of terrain, upon which lie natural resources and objects of human manufacture. Perhaps the most useful result of decoupling land from resources is that human actions vary in nature, extent, and intensity according to the properties and significance of specific resources and singular landforms (Zedeño 1997, 2000; Zedeño et al. 1997). At least in principle, ties to land or resources subsequently lead to
and trappers of the Subarctic interlakes (Belanger 2003), which were defined by the habitats of target species (e.g., long-tailed duck, bald eagle). For example, in the 15th century, for example, frequently forced hunting groups to anticipate the seasonal movement of herds; hunting often required penetration of large, exclusive hunting grounds, leading to violence along territorial boundaries of competing groups (Bowers 2004; Ewens 1998). Facilities associated with resource uses—such as hunting, caribou, and offering locations—were scattered across the landscape where they would be most useful agriculturally to the host, hunt, and process game. Key landscape features, such as buffalo pools, may have been used over long periods of time by successive hunting groups. Cross-cutting buffalo herd ranges of 19th-century northern Plains hunters were territories of other animal species that required alternative territorial strategies. For example, bear dens and trails were considered exclusive to bears and thus avoided by those groups with religious taboos against bear consumption (Bowers 1998: 85). However, eagle trapping rights belonged to individuals with ceremonial rights to them and their trapping territories were strictly respected by all others (Zedeño 1997). Many plant habitats (for example, berry patches, as well as mineral sources for instance, flint and pigment, rock licks) were also approached from the perspective of individual and group use rights (Bowers 2004). Among trappers, ownership of wildlife rice beds was a family affair; however, the actual harvesting process was orchestrated by supra-family leaders (Williams 1997). Territorial future studies of territory is the application of life history strategies to the modeling of territory life spans relative to specific forms of territoriality that do not follow the old social evolutionary model but that consider agency, practice, and historical contingency alongside systematic processes of territory formation.

Human-nature relations that result in the social construction of landscape, including individual and group identity as well as memory, imply that individuals and groups were able to engage in direct interactions with their surroundings. These, in turn, may have introduced temporary or permanent modifications into the natural setting (Ge Garcia 2003; Zedeño and Stolle 2003). Landscape, for example, assume that the ancestors of the group who inhabited a landscape had access and opportunity for effective interaction (e.g., Freire 2003; Larson 2003). There is little doubt in the mind of the contemporary Palestinian of the historical speakers or of any conquered, dispossessed, or relocated people for that matter, that the landscape, as expressed in oral tradition, historic documents, sacred texts, maps, monuments, or memories, was...
Chapter 13: The Archaeology of Territory and Territory

Conclusions

Essential to any archaeological study of territories is the understanding that these spaces encompass the historical record of human interactions with land and resources and are multidimensional and even non-anthropocentric. Through time, humans may create different kinds of object aggregates that require specific forms of access and that represent multifaceted individual and social relationships with land and resources. Although territories undergo transformations often leading to abandonment, attachments to territorial units of different ages and geographies generally remain and evolve in the history, memory, and practice of individuals and groups—these are socially constructed landscapes.

Thus, landscape formation cannot be fully understood without explicit reference to territory. While it is tempting to explain territory simply as a special kind of landscape—that which expresses effective use, influence, and control of land and resources over a specific period of time, it is more useful to argue, instead, that for landscapes to exist they had to have been effectively and even exclusively used or experienced by individuals and groups. Given the ambiguity and multifacetedness of the landscape concept as it is used in archaeology, this argument is all the more compelling because it proposes that the study of territory can furnish insights into the ways in which humans socially construct landscapes as places rich in meaning and experience.

References
Part III: Thinking through Landscapes

Chapter 18: The Archaeology of Territory and Territoriality


