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Symposium: MATERIAL AND SYMBOLIC LANDSCAPES

Abstract Package

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In the past decade, 'landscape' has often been presented as a master concept which can unite the disparate elements of contemporary archaeology. Accordingly, we have discussions of ecological landscapes, landscapes of production, symbolic landscapes and ritual landscapes. However, it is often the case that these different approaches have few points in common. In this session, the intention is to draw together different aspects of the debate on landscape. In particular, the papers will attempt to connect the materiality and the meanings of places, and the experiential and economic significance of land.

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Boundaries, personhood and human-environment relations

Brück, Joanna, UK
Clare Hall, Cambridge

This paper explores the widespread assumption that ancient sites can be conceptualised as distinct and spatially circumscribed locations, set apart from the landscapes in which they were placed. Yet, it has often proved impossible to identify the limits or edges of sites on the ground. The source of this problem is situated within the intellectual legacy of Enlightenment thought. The notion that nature and culture are fundamentally opposed locates the environment outside the social space of human history. In turn, this encourages the application of a supposedly universally-applicable functionalist logic to explain human-environment relationships. Enlightenment understanding of the human individual as a bounded, autonomous subject is also reflected in archaeological understanding of the 'site'. Drawing on anthropological research, the universality of the dichotomies between culture and nature and between individual and society is questioned. In many societies, nature and culture are not opposed but are thought of as complementary (or even undifferentiated) elements of a unified cosmography. Similarly, many cultures conceptualise the 'person' or 'self' in relational terms. In other words, an essential element of personhood is located outside of the human body in the web of social relationships that constitute self identity. The implications of these insights for archaeological contexts where boundaries between site and surroundings cannot be identified are explored. Where this is the case, sites may not be conceptualized as bastions of culture to be protected from the wilderness outside, but may form part of an extensive and fluid social landscape in which topographical features, animals and humans each play a role in the creation of cultural meaning. Moreover, this indicates that there is no fundamental functionalist logic that can be applied in all places or all times to explain human-environment relations.

Negotiated Landscapes: a view of prehistoric landscapes from the edge of Europe.

Cooney, Gabriel IRELAND

A marked feature of recent research on prehistoric settlement and society in Ireland (7,000 BC -AD 500) has been a focus on a landscape perspective. This is particularly the case of the Neolithic (4000-2,500 BC and the later period (1200 BC-AD500). There are a number of reasons why this approach has come to the fore, one being the quality of the archaeological evidence surviving in the modern Irish landscape compared to the situation in adjacent areas of western Europe. Interpretation of prehistoric landscaped in Ireland by archaeologists has led to a different perspective on Neolithic settlement and society, for example, to that proposed for western Europe and particularly for Britain. This raises the question as to whether these differences are to do with prehistoric realities or modern archaeological interpretations. If the former is the case this indicates a distinct, insular development of the social landscape in Ireland. If the latter is the case then perhaps we need to reassess the basis of our archaeological interpretations and the need to reconcile

regional differences with the applicability of a 'grand narrative' view of the archaeological data. In either case it will be argued that the Irish evidence has wider implications for understanding prehistoric social landscapes in western Europe.

Mobility in African settlement patterns - global implications

Associate Professor Roland Fletcher

The pattern of mobility in Ethiopian and Yoruba urban life suggest that the sedentary trajectories towards urbanism are not the only or necessary route to the formation of large, complex communities with an agrarian base. The African evidence suggests that mobility may have played a far larger role in agrarian-based societies than we have tended to assume and this leads to the conclusion that the sedentary path to urbanism can no longer be presumed normal or inevitable. Our concepts of sedentary urbanism therefore require substantial reappraisal. Once sedentary urbanism is no longer an unproblematic development we need to ask again why that rather peculiar option came into being and then prevailed.

Prehistoric Materialities of the Isle of Man

Fowler, Chris, UK

Patterns of material in the landscape are often clustered together in locations where practices were repeated. Tracing these citations of activity for the Neolithic on the Isle of Man (UK), I outline a way of looking at materiality which focuses on how these patterns emerged from their landscapes. I argue that movement is key to the use of sites in the Manx Neolithic; movements of artefacts, substances, animals, people. These movements may have characterised a means of bringing different experiences, times and places close to each other in a specific location.

Past materialities may have been very different from those experienced anywhere in the world today. Using archaeological material I create a set of context-specific interpretations which argue that different materialities were being generated in the Manx Neolithic. In doing so I critique normative phenomenology centred on a universal subject by setting up alternative perspectives of persons and things, alternative matter-realities.

The Thames as Landscape

Haughey, Fiona, UK

The Thames valley drainage system cuts a great swathe across Southern Britain with its many tributaries. The lower part of the valley, which runs right through the Greater London conurbation, is tidal and, at low tide, former dry land surfaces are exposed revealing parts of a series of ancient landscapes. On the non-tidal stretches, it is only by dry-land excavation through the alluvial deposits that the material culture

can be uncovered. Below the lock at Teddington, the Thames excavates itself by the twice-daily tidal surge. This process along with earlier dredging of a central channel to aid navigation, has resulted in the recovery of several thousand artifacts, most noticeably of the prehistoric periods. Current work on the foreshore itself has also recorded many structures and palaeoenvironments of similar date. This paper, by examining these two strands will discuss those stretches and places with potential special importance as land, both adjacent to and within the river (in the form of eyots), may have held symbolic meaning and have had economic significance during the prehistoric period.

Material culture, place, landscape and their "effect-in-history": A biography of a place and its material culture

Karlsson, Håkan, SWEDEN

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the biography - the life history - of a place located in northern Halland, Sweden. During its life this place, and the megalith "The Dwarf's House" located at it, has existed in different contexts. Accordingly the meaning ascribed to the place and to the material culture have changed in accordance with the views advocated by various persons and groups within these contexts.

However, drawing its inspiration from the reasonings of the German philosophers Martin Heidegger and Hans-Georg Gadamer this paper will stress that the place and the megalith discussed have not been, and are not, passive parts in the creation of the meaning ascribed to them or to the landscape surrounding them. The place and its material culture are not passively interpreted by an experiencing subject situated in a specific context, rather the place and the material culture have acted in history and they have been, and will continue to be, active parts of the possibility to ascribe meaning to them, i.e. both place, material culture and landscape are actively involved in the creation of the interpretative horizon through its "effect-in-history". Thus, they are also, in a more active manner than commonly recognized, responsible for our possibility to orientate ourselves in the world.

Landscape and field systems.

Kitchen, Willy

The inheritance of lived places: An approach to long term history in the western Simpson Desert, central Australia

Ingereth Macfarlane

In this paper I explore places which are remembered today as pastoral homesteads and overland telegraph stations. They were components of the European cultural and economic expansion into the central Australian desert in the late nineteenth century. Diverse forms of memory about them endure: histories told by Indigenous people of the area, written histories, journals, records, photographs and archaeological material

culture. Juxtaposition of these has allowed me to reintegrate archaeology into the other ways in which people relate to the past.

Archaeology has the capacity to access aspects of these places that are no longer alive in contemporary oral or textual memories. This allows investigation of the continuities and transformations through time, which surround the insertion of these places into the pre-colonial landscape. I discuss the historical processes by which these locales come to be constituted as places by people, and how they are further connected into relational, lived landscapes via the movement of people, stories and things.

I argue that for European people, these are 'proper' places in de Certeau's sense, which order spaces through 'strategies' of boundedness. However, these boundaries were 'leaky', and complex cross-cultural exchanges between Indigenous and European people were orchestrated through, and constituted, these places. Using the evidences of the material outcomes of their actions, I will show how the imposed organisation of these places has been resisted in the practices of Indigenous people.

Richards, Colin, UK

Neolithic monuments and the archaeology of place in south-west Scotland

Thomas, Julian, UK

In the recent archaeological literature, monumental architecture has been discussed in terms of an indelible marking of the land, which leaves an enduring imprint of a human presence. In this contribution, I discuss the results of fieldwork in south-west Scotland, focused on the henge monument of the Pict's Knowe and the cursus complexes at Holywood and Holm Farm. These structures are the outcome of numerous phases of activity, played out over a considerable period of time. While it is clear that these locations were of enduring significance, in some cases the actions concerned would have left little recognisable trace. Some of the 'monuments' concerned appear to have been temporary, and may have been built for a single event or performance, and then deliberately destroyed. I will argue that this destruction, possibly spectacular in character, represents an alternative means of securing the memorability of a place. Further, I will suggest that part of the significance of these locations derived from the events which took place there (initiations, funerals, marriages, or whatever), and that the later re-use of these sites represented an opportunity to appropriate and 're-write' that history.

The Social Landscape of Mining: Archaeological Tales from Prehistoric Cyprus

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The study of social and cultural landscapes makes it possible to consider how people interact with a landscape in terms of their own individual experience. A focus on human settlements - from the individuals and households that comprise them, to the social landscape that contextualizes them - is central to a social archaeology. People use the landscape for everything from producing food to expressing formal design to making social statements. Ethnographic and historical evidence shows that mining can be a very significant factor in this relationship: e.g., a huge modern spoil heap within the modern Cypriot village of Mitsero stands as a monumental example of how human modification of the landscape can define a village, give its inhabitants a sense of identity, and provide an economic basis which ensures their survival. Recent excavations at the Cypriot Bronze Age smelting site of Politiko Phorades reveal archaeometallurgical and pyrotechnological developments unprecedented on an island that has been a centre for Mediterranean copper production for over 4000 years. Geobotanical, geomorphological and archaeological data indicate a distinctive landscape around this smelting site, and help to substantiate the idea of specialised production units represented by various 'sites' (agricultural support villages, pyrotechnological installations) in this 'micro' region of the Troodos Mountain. What we propose is a self-contained metallurgical area with essential raw materials, a distinct social organisation, and a viable communication network, all of which fuelled the rapid technological revolution already known on other grounds have emerged during the Late Bronze Age.

Changing self-identity and changing cemeteryscape: a case from the Yayoi period of Japan, 6th c. B.C. -3rd c.A.D.

Koji Mizoguchi(Graduate School of Social and Cultural Studies, Kyushu University, Japan)

This paper focuses upon as to how changes in the spatial configuration of cemetery(cemeteryscape) can be understood in terms of changes in the technology with which people acquired their self-identities.

The Yayoi period of Japanese archipelago saw the beginning of systematic rise agriculture and of interactions of various sorts with polities in Korean peninsula and mainland China, hence saw a rapid transformation in the structure and the organisation of the society. In terms of the spatial configuration of the cemetery, the middle phase of the middle Yayoi period witnessed a dramatic change from a linear to an agglomerated pattern. The author tries to understand this dramatic change as a result of the way in which the bodily movement of the mourners who participated in the mortuary rite conducted in the cemetery locale was changed. Being mediated with a particular mode of bodily movement the mourners were led to identifying themselves by connecting themselves to the imagery ancestors in a particular way.

By fully utilising well-excavated and well-recorded cemetery sites as a data-set, the author aims to illustrate the meticulous application of a social theory-oriented framework can make a significant contribution to mortuary archaeology in general.

Bronze Age stone worlds: distinguishing between culture and nature in the granitic uplands of SW England.

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Many archaeological investigations and reconstructions of the uplands of south-west England have concentrated on the recognition of cultural overprinting in the landscape. Implicit in these studies has been the ability to differentiate between culturally affected landscapes and those created by geomorphological processes. The paper addresses the problem of how to distinguish between natural and humanly modified features of the cultural landscape with particular reference to clutter (boulder and stone) masses in the south-west of England. It uses the example of Leskernick Hill, Bodmin Moor with its well-preserved Bronze Age settlement comprising more than 50 circular stone-walled houses and stone-walled field systems, together with an associated ritual complex of two stone circles, cairns and a stone row. The paper attempts to interpret the significance of the cultural modification and use of hill boulders and stone masses, previously regarded by archaeologists and geomorphologists as being entire

The living and the dead: layered landscapes in late prehistoric Menorca

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The west Mediterranean island of Menorca was settled relatively late in prehistory (perhaps c.2500BC), but by the early 1st millennium BC it had developed a complex and distinctive culture named after its characteristic monuments, cyclopean stone towers known as talayots.

A study of Talayotic culture sites over a large part of the island demonstrates a marked territoriality, which exploited and adapted natural features of the Menorcan landscape, including the coastal bays and the gorges that dissect the southern part of the island. one aspect of the human landscape of this time is a distinction between “landscapes of the living” and “landscapes of the dead” a distinction which is marked spatially in both horizontal and vertical planes. The sites of the living, which consist of individual talayots and village sites often with two or more talayots, are characterised by inland distribution, prominent locations and a high level of visibility. The sites of the dead, mostly natural and modified caves, are situated both peripherally to the settlement sites, and at a lower level, in the cliffs of the coast and the gorges. In contrast to the settlement sites, the burial locations are hidden and secret. The paper interprets this landscape in terms of ritual practice, religious idealo...