Archaeological Landscapes: Constructed, Conceptualized, Ideational

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landscape everywhere in the world is a construct of human beings – whether through human ascription to it of mythological creation, or through physical actions by the humans themselves. ... Whatever the difficulties of recognizing such special sites from the archaeological record – all societies in the past would have recognized, as do all societies in the present, some features of their landscapes (if not all the earth) as special.

(Ucko 1994: xviii-xix)

Introduction and Background

As long as archaeologists have studied the human past, they have been interested in space, and consequently in landscapes. What has changed significantly, however, is archaeological thinking about the nature of landscape, and thereby the perceived nature of its role in archaeological inquiry. In minimalist terms, a landscape is the backdrop against which archaeological remains are plotted. From economic and political perspectives, landscapes provide resources, refuge and risks that both impel and impact on human actions and situations. Today, however, the most prominent notions of landscape emphasize its socio-symbolic dimensions: landscape is an entity that exists by virtue of its being perceived, experienced, and contextualized by people.

Long interest notwithstanding, only recently have archaeologists begun to pay close attention to a domain frequently called “sacred landscapes.” This is only one of several terms used to highlight non-economic perspectives on human–land relations. Whatever the labels used, study of these landscapes is hampered by ambiguity in material clues to social meaning: we know from modern peoples that meaning in
a landscape is not directly related to how obtrusively it has been marked in material, archaeologically detectable ways. Such interpretive challenges have in part inspired the present volume, which offers diverse perspectives on what we distinguish as a continuum of conceptual and constructed landscapes. To consider this continuum, we discuss potential distinctions among conceptual, constructed, and ideational qualities of past landscapes. First, however, we note that several theoretical sources encourage studies of meaning in landscape, in particular historical changes in how archaeologists think about space, and growing applications of social theory in archaeological interpretation.

As already noted, archaeology has traditionally incorporated attention to space and landscape, particularly in what is called settlement archaeology. The difference is that what was once theorized as a passive backdrop or forcible determinant of culture is now seen as an active and far more complex entity in relation to human lives. In part, the change stems from archaeologists’ expanding their interpretive gaze beyond the isolable “hot spots” termed sites, to consider a more comprehensive distribution of human traces in and between loci, now often termed “places of special interest” (Cherry et al. 1991; Given et al. n.d.). The resulting perspectives are variably termed siteless archaeology (e.g., Dunnell 1992), off-site archaeology (e.g., Foley 1981), distributional archaeology (e.g., Ebert 1992), and several approaches that fall under the rubric of landscape archaeology (e.g., Gosden and Head 1994; Knapp 1997; Rossignol and Wandsnider 1992; Yamin and Metheny 1996). In practice, these diverse approaches facilitate the study of diffuse human remains—such as field systems, farms, industrial sites, roads, and the generally more ephemeral traces of non-sedentary peoples—that never fit comfortably within traditional operational definitions of “sites.” In so doing, they also remind archaeologists of how complicated and often subtle people’s interaction with the land can be. At the same time, growing recognition of social meaning of space as place mandates examination of what Western scholars often classify as “natural” places of significance, such as caves, mountains, peaks, woods, rivers and springs, or even physically “empty” spaces (Carmichael et al. 1994: 1; Hirsch 1995: 4). Ascribing significance to a specific configuration of natural or geographic features is never self-evident but rather culturally determined (e.g., Hirsch 1995; Saunders 1994: 172). More important, taking a holistic landscape perspective compels us to stress the interrelationships among people and such traces, places and features, in space and through time.

Architectural mimicry often calls attention to important landscape features, as identified within many societies in the equation of pyramids or other buildings with mountains (e.g., Townsend 1982; Vogt 1969; see also Scully 1989). Sometimes these involve elaborate detailing, such as the artificial watercourses built into the Akapan of Tiwanaku (Kolata and Ponce Sanginés 1992). At other times, architectural assemblages emulate the embracing sweep of local topography, as in the artificial, valley-like depressions within which Chacoan pueblos were set (Stein and Lekson 1992), the landscape mimicry Colin Richards identifies in Orcadian henge monuments (1996; compare Hall 1977), or Arthur Miller’s analysis of Monte Albán (1995: 24–7; compare Broda 1991: 101–2). Perhaps more often than we have yet recognized, the sky provides the cues to spatial order on the terrestrial plane, as argued eloquently by Gary Urton (1981) for the Andes, and by numerous authors with respect to the Maya (e.g., Aveni 1980; 1991; Freidel et al. 1993; Tedlock 1992).

Several fields besides archaeology have grappled with landscape issues, informed increasingly by concerns rooted in social theory. Geographers, historians, anthropologists, urban planners, folklorists, and others have engaged concepts of memory, continuity, discontinuity, and transformation (e.g., Rowlands 1993; Schama 1995), often reflecting on the consequences of accelerated change in the late twentieth century (e.g., Bender 1998; Morphy 1995). Their writings have secured such concepts within the intellectual mainstream. Not surprisingly, geographers became involved quite early with studying the meaningful constitution of landscapes (e.g., Cosgrove 1984; Harvey 1980; Tuan 1977). The American geographer Carl Sauer (1925) first formulated the concept of a “cultural” landscape as fashioned from the “natural” landscape. Human geographers now seek meaning in the landscape as a “repository of human striving” (Tuan 1971: 184), and postmodernist perspectives visualize the landscape as a “cultural image” whose verbal or written representations provide images, or “texts” of its meaning, or “reading” (Daniels and Cosgrove 1988: 1; Head 1993: 489–90). Emerging inquiries by social and cultural anthropologists have yielded rich insights (e.g., Feld and Basso 1996; Hirsch and O’Hanlon 1995; Rappaport 1989). Prominent among these studies are phenomenological approaches and linguistic perspectives, emphasizing “landscape” as constituted by humans’ dwelling in it, a set of potentials instantiated by human choice and action. In Hirsch’s (1995) oft-cited view, landscape is a “process” yielding a foregrounded, everyday social life from a background range of potential social existence.

Archaeological study of landscapes is particularly lively at this time (e.g., Barrett et al. 1991; Bender 1993; 1998; Carmichael et al. 1994;
Knapp 1996a; Parcero Oubiña et al. 1998; Tilley 1994; Townsend 1992), and we may expect such studies to continue expanding in interpretative potential. Within the burgeoning literature, Barbara Bender’s (1993) volume offered the first critical study of landscapes to include archaeologists as well as geographers and anthropologists; the contributors examined landscapes from a subjective, locally situated perspective, as something that not only shapes but is shaped by human experience. Tilley’s (1994) influential study is concerned explicitly with phenomenology, of landscape as experience, but focuses on monuments rather than on more ephemeral traces of human activity. In that respect it is similar to the case studies in Bender’s volume, which deal more with structures and modern-day urban centers than with archaeological space and place. Monuments – like “sites” more generally – make up a real but very limited part of the landscape. However significant a role they played in a community’s ceremonial or public life, a more nuanced analysis requires more comprehensive understanding of the total landscape (Derks 1997: 129). The present volume seeks to expand upon these earlier studies and exemplifies some of the innovative directions in archaeological landscape studies today.

It is important to recall explicitly at this juncture the pronounced differences in archaeological theory and interpretation that persist among intellectual traditions, highlighted especially between “American” and “British” spheres of scholarship, and particularly between processualist and postprocessualist approaches (e.g., Knapp 1996b; Patterson 1990; Preucel 1991; Shanks and Hodder 1995). Debates among practitioners of these various “schools” of thought can be richly productive, but too often become heated confrontation rather than constructive engagement. Archaeologists of diverse backgrounds pursue studies of socially constituted, meaningful landscapes. In so doing, they have tended, not surprisingly, to address the audiences of their closest theoretical peers, and consequently to frame their inquiries in particular epistemic contexts and with reference to interpretive issues most salient in their own traditions. Within the archaeologies of landscapes, we see considerable diversity but also many underlying commonalities of concern and approach. We join those who see landscape study as a domain for fruitful interaction, “cross-cultural” communication in multiple senses. In this volume, therefore, we have sought to include authors who have distinct intellectual approaches, and who also work in varied ancient cultures. We have not sought to resolve artificially the real distinctions among their approaches, but highlight them all as contributions to a larger whole.

Following this introduction, then, are ten chapters, divided loosely into sections that move progressively further from ethnographic and historical grounding into deep prehistory. Each is a substantive consideration of landscapes in a particular part of the world, with specific temporal and cultural referents, and with a perspective conditioned by local as well as global traditions. Chronologically, the chapters range from the present day in Australia back into the Neolithic of the Old World and the Archaic of North America. The geographic scope includes all continents except Antarctica. The third and final section of this volume offers two discussion papers by scholars with established commitments to landscape studies; whereas those discussions assess the relevance and coherence of the individual chapters, we focus instead on introducing key concepts and themes.

Because archaeological writing on ideational, conceptualized or constructed landscapes is relatively new (but see, among others, Drennan 1976; Flannery and Marcus 1976; Hall 1977; Piggott 1937), our introduction outlines what we regard as the theoretical wellsprings and underpinnings to this domain of inquiry. We acknowledge from the outset the concerns of those who feel that any attempt to engage the mindset of prehistoric or of any other past culture – analogically or otherwise – is fraught with problems, in particular the overdetermination of archaeological data or the use of circular reasoning. We feel, however, that the issues are not intractable (e.g., Hodder et al. 1995; Renfrew et al. 1993; Renfrew and Zubrow 1994; Schmidt 1997; Wylie 1991), and that the volume’s case studies speak strongly for themselves. We have given the contributors free reign to express, even celebrate their diversity. We have purposely not imposed our terminology on their work; rather we invited them to present their case studies from the perspective (and with the terminology) out of which their research grew. The volume’s discussants consider critically the resultant diversity as exemplified by the specific contributions. Here we do not review the chapters in such specific fashion. Instead, we present themes that we see as pervading the chapters collectively: landscape as memory, landscape as identity, landscape as social order, and landscape as transformation. We use this thematic discussion to place the volume as a whole in the larger context of landscape studies, archaeological and otherwise. Before turning to the thematic review, however, we look briefly but more closely at the concept of landscape.

Landscapes Considered

All too often the prehistoric landscape is studied for evidence of settlement and subsistence. This is the task of “landscape archaeology”.

Monuments associated with ritual and ceremonial are usually studied separately, and these are the province of 'social archaeology'. Such a division of labour is faint-hearted, and ultimately it is impossible to maintain.
(Bradley 1997: 216)

Although we agree that the schism Bradley describes often holds, we believe the contributors to this volume are among those who seek to remove such a divide, to achieve a more integrated and holistic view. In so doing, they - and we - draw on a rich body of thought concerning landscapes and their roles and meanings. 'Landscape' is variously defined by archaeologists, anthropologists, geographers, historians, social theorists, poets, and philosophers (Knapp 1997: 14–18). Several scholars have traced the etymology and relative recency of the term, and examined the historical and philosophical contexts of Western Europe and America in which it gained currency (e.g., Derks 1997: 127–31; Hirsch 1995; Jackson 1984; Lemaire 1997; Schama 1995; Thomas 1993). We acknowledge that landscape is an 'unstable' concept, moving to and fro along a natural-cultural continuum (Tilley 1994: 37), and that the meaning and understanding of the 'countryside' are relative, the result of specific human preconceptions or the expression of particular artistic and scientific viewpoints (Fowler 1995: 100–1). We accept, furthermore, that concepts of space and place or other binary equivalencies (e.g., visual and hidden, inside and outside) cannot define, alone or collectively, an abstract 'absolute landscape', because the relevance and relationships of such pairs derive from specific historical or cultural contexts (Hirsch 1995: 23). We even concede that landscape is a 'cultural construct of modern European society' and that, in many ways, employing the concept of landscape as widely as archaeologists now do may reveal as much about scholarship today as about society in the past (Lemaire 1997: 6–9). But we would argue that, as a positive consequence, such instability and relativity actually serve to explain the appeal of exploring landscapes, as a catalyst to draw upon diverse approaches and to examine differing domains of human action and experience. There are multiple different ways of "knowing" the earth and the socially recognized places upon it.

Three examples illustrate archaeological definitions for this commonsense term. Drawing on her long involvement with historical ecology, Carole Crumley defines landscape succinctly as "the material manifestation of the relation between humans and the environment" (Crumley 1994: 6). John Barrett (1991: 8, emphasis in original) is more expansive:

Landscape is thus the entire surface over which people moved and within which they congregated. That surface was given meaning as people acted upon the world within the context of the various demands and obligations which acted upon them. Such actions took place within a certain tempo and at certain locales. Thus landscape, its form constructed from natural and artificial features, became a culturally meaningful resource through its routine occupancy.

Going even further, Robert Johnston's "inherent" approach refuses to distinguish between "real" and "perceived" landscapes, and maintains that "there is still no answer to what landscape is [...] it is still very much a case of what it can be." Landscape is, in the broadest sense, contextual (Johnston 1998: 56). Although even this trio of definitions offer clearly divergent perspectives, all recognize or imply the human, social nature of landscape.

Previously archaeologists tended to view the human landscape mainly in terms of demography, social interaction, economic resources and risks (e.g., Carneiro 1970; Sanders 1977; Steward 1955; Willey 1953). That is, they focused on topography, technology, resources, and land use - on what people did to the land and how it aided or constrained them, rather than what they thought or felt about it (Bender et al. 1997: 148). Models of landscape partitioning, which considered the correlation of mounds and monuments with the spread of farming and village life (e.g., Renfrew 1973), were derived from inferences about territorial claims. The social aspects of these inferred claims, in their reifying of group identities through material connections to the land, began to turn archaeological thinking more pointedly toward social relations, with the land as the medium of social expression (e.g., McAnany 1995). The coincident rise of archaeoastronomy turned archaeological thoughts toward another interpretively promising trajectory, namely to the potential for assessing ancient cognition through the landscape (e.g., Aveni 1980; Hawkins 1965; compare Martlew and Ruggles 1996; Renfrew 1982). In these studies, however, landscape was still viewed primarily as a relatively passive index of technology and belief, a background vellum on which stories of the active sky were written.

Ancient peoples were conceived largely as undifferentiated societies and cultural systems, the analytical units of mainstream (processual) archaeology in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g., Fritz 1978; Schmidt 1983). Postprocessual critiques have significantly restructured discussion outside the Americas (with growing impact in the latter as well), focusing attention on the active role of individuals in constructing and interpreting the world around them, and in continually reshaping culture and society. Symbolic expression is central to maintaining communication and social integration, but these shared symbols become reworked in individual use. Structuration (Giddens 1984), practice (e.g., Bourdieu 1977),
and feminist theory (e.g., Conkey and Gero 1997; Wylie 1992), as well as phenomenology (e.g., Gosden 1994; Thomas 1996) have proven useful to many analysts in deciphering the form and meaning of symbolic expressions in the past. As important with respect to landscape, local physiographic features are recognized increasingly as the source and subjects of the symbols, often linked to ancestral beings (Morphy 1995: 186–8). In the archaeologies of landscape, the effect has often been to regard such features and their meanings as mediating the selection, use, modification or avoidance of particular locales. Indeed, archaeologists seem to be moving toward actively recognizing what Keith Basso (1996: 55) calls “interanimation;” implicitly recalling Sir Winston Churchill’s famous dictum (“we shape our buildings and they shape us” – Hall 1966: 106), Basso offers this term to describe the constant mutual molding of landscapes and the people who dwell in them. While we may never know the precise content of stories told from ancient landscapes, we can increasingly infer some of the contours of their telling and the social impact that they had.

Landscape as actively inhabited space, and particularly landscape as the arena for ritual or ceremonial activity, are already prominent themes in archaeology (e.g., Alcock 1993; Bradley 1993; Derks 1997; Stein and Lekson 1992; Thomas 1991; 1993). And whereas an ideational or conceptual landscape might also be a “sacred” landscape, it is also a stage constructed in the mind to convey meaning to those who inhabit it (e.g., Ashmore 1998). This is one illustration of how the specific label “sacred landscapes” captures only part of the domain we target in this volume. A landscape embodies more than a neutral, binary relationship between people and nature, along any single dimension. Space is both a medium for and the outcome of human activity: it is recognized by means of specific places, and in this sense, does not exist apart from that activity (Tilley 1994: 10, 23; compare Casey 1996). Individuals and communities conditioned by different social, politico-economic and ideological forces project differing configurations of meaning onto the landscape, thus implying that measurable economic impacts notwithstanding, no landscape – aesthetic, poetic, moral, material, or surreal – has an objective appearance or significance independent of the beholder (Fitter 1995: 8–9).

Terms and Themes

Within the foregoing sense of landscape, we highlight three non-exclusive, even overlapping aspects important to specifying the range of landscape described in this volume. These are terms we have found useful as we worked on the volume, not ones we asked volume contributors either to adopt or to critique. In defining the terms, we draw both on the preceding theoretical discussion and on practical terminology developed in UNESCO World Heritage work (Cleere 1995). That is, whereas the study of landscapes in archaeology attracts diverse theoretical and methodological viewpoints, both Sherratt (1996: 14) and Derks (1997: 127) attribute much of the current fascination with landscape to the rapid pace and dramatic scale of development or encroachment on traditional landscapes. The emerging focus of “cultural heritage” adopts concepts related to tradition, memory and the cultural landscape in evaluating potentially significant sites. In the urgently pragmatic effort to identify, preserve and unify the study of unique “cultural” or “natural” landscapes, UNESCO has specified criteria (Cleere 1995: 65–6) for recognizing three categories of cultural landscape:

- “Clearly defined” landscapes were “designed and created intentionally.” These include gardens and parklands, often associated with religious or other monumental structures, and Cleere (1995: 65) cites Versailles in France or the Garden Tomb of Humayun (India) as examples.
- “Organically evolved” landscapes began as a particular socio-economic, administrative or religious initiative which evolved subsequently in association with and response to the natural environment. Sub-categories include relict (or fossil) archaeological landscapes such as mines or quarries (e.g., the “Gold Rush” lands of the USA or Australia), or ancient agricultural complexes (e.g., Erickson 1993), and continuing landscapes such as cultivation terraces in Southeast Asia.
- Finally, “associative cultural” landscapes are identified by such features as sacred promontories, or “religious settlements in outstanding landscapes.” Examples include Uluru/Ayers Rock, or Mereora and Mount Athos (see further discussion under “Conceptualized Landscapes,” below).

The UNESCO definitions stem from a need to capture a wide and internally varied set of meaningful landscapes in a single protective net. Although these categories are essential for that context and useful as clarifying refers here, they differ somewhat from the distinctions we offer. What we propose here are three interpretive descriptors – constructed, conceptualized, ideational – for thinking about meaning-laden
landscapes. We acknowledge (see further below) that it is often difficult to differentiate among these aspects of landscape, and emphasize anew that it is we—the editors—who sought to distill these aspects from the contributions to this volume; that is, we did not assign them as structuring principles to the contributors. Furthermore, we would suggest that landscape is essentially all of these things at all times: it is the arena in which and through which memory, identity, social order and transformation are constructed, played out, re-invented, and changed.

**Constructed landscapes**

While the erection of monuments alters the visual character of a landscape to varying degrees, even subtle construction may transform its meaning without radically changing the topography (Bradley 1993: 23–4). In general, mobile human groups create their landscapes by projecting ideas and emotions onto the world as they find it—on trails, views, campsites or other special places. Sedentary people, on the other hand, structure their landscapes more obtrusively, physically constructing gardens, houses and villages on the land, often in the near vicinity of notable natural landmarks (Ingold 1986: 153; Wilson 1988: 50). Several contributions in this volume treat such predominantly constructed landscapes.

Under our rubric of constructed landscape, we would place UNESCO’s “clearly defined” and in part, their “organically evolved” landscapes. In this volume, we would include under constructed landscapes the burial mounds of prehistoric Britain (Barrett), prehistoric cultures in the North American midcontinent (Buikstra and Charles), and the Egyptian state temples as microcosms of the sun or the horizons (Richards). An example of an industrial landscape (sub-category of the organically evolved landscape) would be the towering (modern) spoil heaps and (ancient) slag heaps that dominate the northern Troodos foothills on the island of Cyprus and represent a striking human construction which emulates the foothills that comprise and encompass this very landscape (Knapp, this volume).

Contemporary beliefs, visions and myths can and often do lead to metaphorical and physical (re)construction of the archaeological record, and constructed landscapes are particularly susceptible to such “freezing” of meaning (Ucko 1994: xv–xvi). That is, modernization of landscapes often leads to truncation and impoverishment of their living embodiment of memory, to a rupture in their “cultural biography” — the long interaction between people and their environment

**Conceptualized landscapes**

As earlier discussion should make clear, landscapes offer a variety of images, which are interpreted and given meaning through localized social practices and experience (Richards 1996: 314). These conceptualized landscapes are mediated through and to some extent constitutive of social processes, which in turn are integral to their reproduction as concepts (Morphy 1995: 197).

Our notion of conceptualized landscapes comes closest to UNESCO’s “associative cultural” landscapes. Such landscapes are characterized by powerful religious, artistic or other cultural meanings invested in natural features rather than in material culture or monuments, which are insignificant or absent (Cleere 1995: 66–7). In fact, the first property inscribed on the World Heritage list as a cultural landscape was the inscribed category, the site of Tongariro in New Zealand, a mountain sacred for the Maoris but one where they are forbidden to venture. Although many chapters in this volume describe what we would call conceptual landscapes, the most obvious examples are Buddhist cave temples and mountains (Barnes), Australian Aboriginal Dreaming Tracks (Taçon), and the known but often physically unmarked features of the Inka world (van de Gucht). The other three Native American case studies combine constructed and conceptualized landscapes (Brady and Ashmore; Buikstra and Charles; Snead and Preucel). The principal aim in recognizing these distinctions, however, is less to categorize, per se, than to highlight variation along a continuum of ancient human material intervention in landscapes.
Ideational landscapes

“Ideational” is a term necessarily both comprehensive and vague. The Oxford English Dictionary gives two basic definitions: (1) the formation of ideas or mental images of things not present to the senses; and (2) culture based on spiritual values or ideas. By extension, “ideational” could also mean the formation of a concept or external object correlative with an idea, or more simply something concerned with an idea. Within archaeology, prima facie, “ideational” has been taken to be the simple equivalent of sacred and symbolic, or else—in a happy convergence of metaphor—has been equated with “landscapes of the mind” (Bintliff 1996: 250). Is this “mental landscape” imaginative and emotional, or simply empirical? Is it an insider (emic) or outsider (etic) point of view?

Our answer is that an ideational landscape is both “imaginative” (in the sense of being a mental image of something) and emotional (in the sense of cultivating or eliciting some spiritual value or ideal). The term is also meant to elicit an insider’s perspective, but archaeologists clearly impose ideational notions from the outside. “Ideational” should be regarded as distinct from “ideological” and is intended to be broader than “sacred” or “symbolic.” Ideational landscapes may provide moral messages, recount mythic histories, and record genealogies, but we cannot assume that they always or necessarily comprise the kind of unified, fully articulated doctrine commonly implied by the term “ideology.” And concerning the “sacred” nature of landscapes, Bender, Hamilton, and Tilley (1997: 148; compare Sherratt 1996: 146) suggest that all societies centralize ritual in the reproduction of power and authority. Like many other contributors to this volume, we certainly have found reference to the “sacred” useful for distinguishing these aspects of landscapes in our own work (e.g., our chapters herein). We suggest it may prove helpful, however, to recognize as well an alternative, more encompassing domain, one with fewer specific implications for how particular meanings might have been generated or perpetuated in antiquity. Just as “ideational” is far less linked to an articulated system than are the terms “ideology” or “ideological,” so is it also intended to embrace sacred as well as other kinds of meanings attached to and embodied in landscapes.

Every part of a prehistoric landscape would have been mediated by peoples’ ideas about their world, by their social identities, and by their cognitive understandings (Bender et al. 1997: 150). A fundamental value in the concept of an ideational landscape, in our view, is that it can encompass both the range of meaning archaeologists recognize in landscapes, and the pair of analytic “realms”—conceptualized, and constructed. Indeed, although it is useful to distinguish the latter two analytically, in actuality they often lack a perceptible boundary. If so, then we have in “ideational landscape” a construct approaching Johnston’s (1998) “inherent” notion, where landscape is not separately perceived but embedded within ways of living and being.

Themes

Taking into account these theoretical and terminological considerations, we review four closely interrelated themes in the current archaeological study of ideational, conceptual and constructed landscapes. Expression of these themes varies greatly among particular landscapes and in the writings of individual landscape analysts, including the contributors to this volume. These themes are (1) landscape as memory, (2) landscape as identity, (3) landscape as social order, and (4) landscape as transformation.

Landscape as memory Landscape is often regarded as the materialization of memory, fixing social and individual histories in space. Research in cognitive science suggests that human memory constructs rather than retrieves, and that the past thus originates from the elaboration of cultural memory, which is itself socially constituted (Holtorf 1997: 48–50). The outcome of such a process maps mythic and moral principles for a society, reminders of triumphs and catastrophes in the social past. Schama (1995) points to the many “mythical” elements of the landscape that could be and have been appropriated from our rich, pre-modern heritage. Perhaps the most frequently cited embodiment of memory in land is the intricately conceptualized landscape array of Aboriginal Australians (e.g., Tacon, this volume). In a more recently recognized example, Dietler (1998) examines three “Celtic” (Iron Age) hilltop settlements which in recent history have been symbolically converted into part of the collective memory and national identity of modern France. Without the enduring capacity and institutionalized power of landscape myths and memories, national identity would lose much of its “ferocious enchantment” with contemporary territorial mystiques (Schama 1995: 15; compare Hirsch 1995).

Nora’s (1989) “sites of memory”—which range from cathedrals and cemeteries to concepts, commemorations and symbols—represent media that together help to formulate a nation’s political and ethnic identity. Landscapes are also commonly thought to embody the cosmos...
in miniature, wherein one's own town, home and body occupy the symbolic center of the universe. The concept of an axis mundi is effectively a cultural universal, and "sites of memory" form an integral part of all cultural traditions (e.g., Eliade 1959; Vogt 1969; Brady and Ashmore, this volume; Richards, this volume). But how do we know which elements were significant in the memory of a particular society or at a specific time? Chinese geomancy, or feng shui, is a particularly well-known set of beliefs for situating oneself in harmony with the landscape; although similar beliefs likely pertain elsewhere, feng shui, as such, is not a universal belief system (e.g., Carlson 1980). Nor are archaeological notions about "natural" or "cultural" landscapes universal categories: each society tends to characterize and conceptualize the landscape in its own way (Oosten 1997: 152). Embedded in the collective memory of a community and in the individual memories of its members are mythical or cosmological concepts, as well as folk memories of burial grounds, meeting places, valleys, mountains, and more, all situated in a specific temporal and historical context. Such concepts or memories are not simply reflections of landscape, but also often the means of organizing, using, and living in the landscape (e.g., Brady and Ashmore, this volume; van de Guchte, this volume; compare Basso 1984; 1996; Jackson 1980).

Memory stresses continuity in the landscape, often through re-use, reinterpretation or restoration, and reconstruction. From Stonehenge to Persepolis, from Ayodhya to Ayers Rock (Uluru), to Teotihuacan to Machu Picchu, there is a genre of research and heritage management that seeks to reinscribe past meaning onto a present landscape by demonstrating its social, sacred, or ceremonial langue durée (e.g., Bender 1998; Bradley 1998a; Holotır 1997; Barrett, this volume). Together with this comes the notion that the people who previously lived in such a landscape may well have thought of it in similar terms (Sherratt 1996: 146). But meaning is mutable, with or without tangible change in the physical reminders by which such meaning is remembered (e.g., Kubler 1962; Rowlands 1993: 146; Tilley 1996). Schama (1995: 14) argues passionately and at length that the myths and memories inscribed in contemporary landscapes can contribute dramatically to a better understanding of the complexity and antiquity of local traditions of landscape (compare, for example, Jackson 1980; 1984; Kniffen 1965). Landscape as memory is linked in this sense to the identity of its inhabitants.

Landscape as identity People recognize, inscribe, and collectively maintain certain places or regions in ritual, symbolic, or ceremonial terms; conversely, these places create and express sociocultural identity. Landscape provides a focus by which people engage with the world, and create and sustain a sense of their social identity. The genesis of contemporary cultural or political identity is reflected at least indirectly in the etymology of "landscape," and in the development of interest in landscape as a "piece of land" or a "picture representing such a piece of land" (Lemaire 1997: 5–7). Bradley (1993: 26) suggests that "special attention" markers single out socially significant features in the landscape. Often the locations so identified are visually prominent landmarks; others designate important transitions between what we consider ecological zones. Still others may signal loci of important past events and notable people, political or mythic. The famed Nazca lines, for example, have been interpreted in part as pointing to sources of water in a quintessentially arid land (e.g., Aveni 1986). Prominent features of the Aboriginal Australian landscape mark events in the Dreamtime and embody supernatural ancestors (Ingold 1996: 137; Morphy 1995: 195).

The forms of "special attention" range from rock markings (e.g., Bradley 1991), to deposits of offerings (e.g., McEwan and van de Guchte 1992), to shrine construction (e.g., Aldenderfer 1990; Barnes, this volume) – or they may be as intangible as oral linkage with important events and transitions (e.g., Basso 1984; Bauer 1991; Gell 1995; Snead and Preucel, this volume; van de Guchte, this volume). The most obtrusive and formal markings, of course, are architectural and depictive. Mount Rushmore dominates its landscape with portraits of four US presidents (e.g., Olwig 1993); the ancient Egyptian temple at Abu Simbel is one of many imposing portrait monuments commissioned by Ramses II to identify his domain. These exemplify ready avenues for probing spatial cognition and social identity. But even in societies reliant on strong oral traditions, landscape marking is often evident. The global distribution and deep antiquity of rock marking or "rock art" is ample testimony (e.g., Bradley 1997; Conkey 1980; Flood 1996; Fullager et al. 1996; Marshack 1972). Studies of rock art, in fact, have helped to break down the distinction between an economic archaeology based on settlements and land use, and a social archaeology based on monuments and material culture; Bradley (1997: 215) maintains, accordingly, that "some of the images associated with ceremonial centres also extended to natural places in the landscape."

No matter the form, all these means of identifying the landscape refer to the diachronic constructed or conceptual landscape. At any particular moment in time, certain places become vested with identity, be it supernatural, social, or self-identity (Ucko 1994: xviii). Whereas
Landscapes generally become intensely marked and socialized as time passes, those sites with remarkable “natural signifiers” are the ones considered most powerful by various contemporary groups (Taçon 1994: 126; this volume). Where landscape is identity and memory, a tangibly marked landscape is memory-enhanced. Labels such as “built environment” are useful in this regard, but by reifying bounded categories like built and unbuilt, we have collectively obscured what increasingly appears as an unbroken continuum in how people inhabit and identify with their surroundings. This growing recognition is part of the reason we proposed the three terms outlined earlier.

$Landscape as social order$ Just as landscape maps memory and declares identity, so too it offers a key to interpreting society. This is a question not simply of the spatial ordering of residential, civic and other activities but rather of the broader, conceptual landscape. More than being a metaphor for human actions taking place at some independent level, the land itself, as socially constituted, plays a fundamental role in the ordering of cultural relations (Ashmore 1991; Layton 1995: 229; Schmidt 1997). And, as a community merges with its *habitus* through the actions and activities of its members, the landscape may become a key reference point for expressions of individual as well as group identity (similarly, Derks 1997: 126; Barnes, this volume; van de Gucht, this volume). This theme is much explored in American historical archaeology, especially with respect to the creation of garden landscapes by assertively affluent Colonial landholders (e.g., Leone 1984; Yamin and Metheny 1996; Kealhofer, this volume).

Basso (1984, 1996) describes the moral landscape of the Western Apache, wherein ethical lessons are affixed to natural features, and offer constant ambient cues to right living (compare Kahn 1996). To be absent from the natal landscape is to lose one’s moral bearings. Social roles, relations and identities, too, are mapped on the land, as frequently implied in referential conflagrations of foreignness, chaos, and barbarism. Fear and fascination go hand in hand with concepts of distance and the exotic (e.g., Helms 1988; 1992; Knapp 1998); Janet Richards’ chapter here alludes to the role of ordered Egyptian space in keeping chaos at bay. Social order in the landscape is also implied by Buikstra and Charles’s analysis (this volume), wherein the dead and the ancestors are firmly situated in specific locales marking their roles in the social and natural worlds of the North American Middle Archaic.

In reconstructing past landscapes, archaeologists must avoid imposing their own, often hierarchical notions of social order. The more hierarchical concept of “nested landscapes,” where family, kin, community, gender, and age/experience would have linked land, dwellings and ceremonial spaces (Bender 1998: 60; Bender et al. 1997: 174; compare Chang 1972; Crumley 1979; 1986), offers one possible way out of this dilemma and a means of interpreting prehistoric landscapes. With regard to contemporary landscapes, Morphy (1995) argues that the landscape is central to reproducing the Dreaming as a component of the cultural structure of contemporary Australian Aboriginal society and thus of generating information about the ancestral past of Aborigines (see also Taçon, this volume). As members of social groups, individuals negotiated their interests and manipulated their sociospatial world: it is the closest link we can make between mind, meaning and social order in the prehistoric context. We believe, however, that the interpretive potentials here are far from realized.

Recognizing nested landscapes implies acknowledging diversity in social identity, a challenge embraced by postprocessual, Marxist, and feminist archaeologists. By the latter, we mean not simply those who seek to identify gender-specific individuals in the archaeological record, but rather those who seek to explore more broadly what the existence of such distinctions as gender, sex, age, kin group, class, and ethnicity might imply for understanding and interpreting the archaeological record (e.g., Conkey and Gero 1997). Certainly, ancient women and men have been recognized in the past, and increasingly in terms of space (e.g., Crown and Fish 1996; Gilchrist 1994; Hastorf 1990; Tringham 1994) but seldom yet at the scale of landscape studies. Hodder’s (1984, 1990) structuralist models are perhaps the most widely known, but focus more precisely on communally held gender symbolism. Peter Schmidt (e.g., 1983, 1997) links landscape features with sexual imagery and gender symbolism in East Africa. Thomas Jackson (1990) offers an ethnographically derived model for gendered landscape marking and resource control among the Mono of California. Watson and Kennedy’s (1990) model for development of Native North American horticulture is one that implicitly genders landscape use and experience. We recognize increasingly, however, that gender and other social distinctions do not automatically translate to spatial or landscape maps (e.g., Bodenhorn 1993; Kent 1997); in fact, Bodenhorn (1993: 199) notes provocatively that whereas a modern Iñupiat woman’s place is physically at the hearth, she – particularly the whaling-captain’s wife – is considered metaphorically to accompany her husband to sea, and it is she who attracts the whales to the hunters. The quest to identify gendered landscapes may prove quixotic as often as not. Approaches informed by feminist theory will, nonetheless, fruitfully advance pursuit of “nested landscapes,” by acknowledging
the diversity of experience and meanings held by the socially varied people who co-inhabit the land (compare Meskell 1998a; 1998b).

**Landscape as transformation** In any society, individuals will, for their own reasons, locate themselves in different places, hold differing conceptions of the world and their place within it, and make differing demands on that world: the result can be tension, contestation or transformation (Bender 1998: 63). The transformation of landscapes is most often linked interpretively with cyclical time, and with the perpetuation or change of the social order (e.g., Schmidt 1997). Indeed, rituals re-create the universe on a frequent basis and at nested social and spatial scales, of which landscape is only one (e.g., Bradley 1998a; Derks 1997; Hanks 1990; Vogt 1969; several chapters in this volume). It is the repetitive use and structured modification of an ideational landscape that yields the palimpsest archaeologists study, often sorted analytically into chronological slices, excising from the accumulated whole, arrays of sites pertaining to particular archaeological periods. Virtually all landscape analysts have recognized the intimate and complex relationship between space and time: one of Marx's central tenets on capitalist logic was that space may be annihilated by time (e.g., Hirsch 1995: 15). Perhaps more to the point here is that landscapes embody time at different scales as well. Philosopher Edward Casey (1996: 36, emphasis in original) notes that, phenomenologically, "space and time come together in place;" since landscapes embody multiple times as well as multiple places, they thereby materialize not only continuity and sequence, but potentially change and transformation as well.

Ingold (1993) draws particular attention to the annual round of human activities linked to different places and conditions in the landscape. On a short time scale, the daily transit of the sun and other celestial bodies is a potent orienting device for human activity and for using the landscape to chart, celebrate and perpetuate this fundamental cycle (e.g., Aveni 1980; 1991; Carrasco 1991; Richards, this volume). On a long time scale, landscapes embody social continuity, the most frequently cited traces of which are monuments to mortuary ritual and ancestor veneration (e.g., McAnany 1995; Renfrew 1973; Buikstra and Charles, this volume). As Barrett, Bradley, Buikstra, Charles and others have argued, however, changes in the designated use of the landscape may indicate disruptions to cyclical time, or within the society invoking time cycles.

Archaeologists tend to focus on monuments when they were built and while they remained in active use, but the "afterlife of monuments" (Bradley 1993) remains under-appreciated. We forget that a seemingly abandoned monument is still part of an active landscape. Ancient sites, monuments and even entire landscapes may be transformed and re-used as people encounter and interact with particular places, as they re-create the past (Bender et al. 1997: 149). Teotihuacan, for example, remained a powerful place of pilgrimage and ritual in Aztec times, nearly a millennium after the core of the city was burned; today, of course, it continues to draw thousands of visitors annually as an emblem of Mexico's pre-Columbian past. Monument afterlife can have different sources and take different forms (Bradley 1998a); even geological formations may have been understood as ancestral monuments, maintained and embellished by later generations living in the same space (Bradley 1998b: 20–1; Morphy 1995; Brady and Ashmore, this volume). Here, the constructed and conceptualized landscapes become inextricably merged.

Landscape transformation takes many forms, with many instigating causes. Conquest frequently involves the destruction of history or destiny for the vanquished, through obliteration of their monuments (e.g., Chapman 1994; Crumley and Marquardt 1987; Low 1995): the landscape is remade, its symbolic markings no longer visible, and society becomes disoriented. Resistance can likewise be expressed in landscape destruction, as in the toppling of the Berlin Wall, or rebellious settlers' trampling of a governor's estate in seventeenth-century South Africa (Markell 1995; Yentsch 1996). Less catastrophic fates for monuments and landscapes may be no less socially profound, as John Barrett argues in this volume, inasmuch as what we might call benign neglect may signal a fundamental change in the social perception of the landscape, its past, and the society it represents (consider Buikstra and Charles, this volume; Kealhofer, this volume). Like all human realities, the landscape has a plurality of coda by which it may be interpreted; inventing a tradition or re-writing a tradition is also re-writing the landscape (Parceró Oubiña et al. 1998: 174).

**Archaeological Landscapes in Contemporary Perspective**

Like any other human product, landscape objectifies an intention, meaning and rationality. These result in specific formal elements which should reflect in some way the contours of that rationality.

(Parceró Oubiña et al. 1998: 159)

We may assume, for the sake of discussion, that contemporary, etc., archaeological perceptions of the landscape were not those used by
prehistoric or early historic societies to conceptualize their environments. If current concepts of landscape have any validity, then, they do so only if archaeologists remain fully aware of their own cultural or historical configuration and mediation. The problem, according to Lemaire (1997:11-12), is that we have to think of the past using concepts associated with the rise of modernity, without falling victim to their distortions. However, as Cosgrove (1997:25) points out, the relationship between modernity and landscape is complex, ambiguous, and negotiated, especially when one accepts that landscape is “a nexus of community, justice, nature and environment, a contested territory that is as pertinent today as it was when the term entered the modern English language at the end of the sixteenth century” (Olwig 1996, cited by Cosgrove 1997:25).

In pre-modern, non-Western societies, landscape may have been regarded as largely mythic space, but one in which humans actively participated. Contemporary interpretations or reconstructions of past landscapes often implicate a rupture in history—the invention of landscape—that not by chance, coincided with or derived from catastrophic disruption to this mythical ordering of space (e.g., Denevan 1992; Olwig 1993:334). This is most obvious in areas of colonial expansion. Archaeology, after all, became popular only when the modern world emerged, when nation-states became the political norm, and when people attempted to validate their presence in the world by excavating and exposing the ancient substrates of modern dwellings (Lemaire 1997:19). There are significant, ongoing differences in both the meanings and uses of landscape, the result of diverse social and environmental histories within different regions of the world (Cosgrove 1997:25).

In their recent field work at Leskernick in Cornwall, Bender, Hamilton, and Tilley (1997:165) confronted a landscape that was “somehow the equivalent of a tropical jungle, with stones substituting for trees, in which the huts looked like stone and the stones like huts, a seamless web of the cultural and natural.” To polarize nature and culture, perception and interpretation, is commonplace, but in fact hinders conceptualizing past landscapes (Tilley 1994:23). Whatever our own traditional views, it is now clear that landscape is neither exclusively natural nor totally cultural: it is a mediation between the two and an integral part of Bourdieu’s habitus, the routine social practices within which people experience the world around them. Beyond habitus, however, people actively order, transform, identify with and memorialize landscape by dwelling within it. The environment manifests itself as landscape only when people create and experience space as a complex of places. People’s sense of place, and their engagement with the world around them, are invariably dependent on their own social, cultural, and historical situations.

As archaeologists, we have chosen to explore the meaning and legacies of individual ideational landscapes. We have argued in this introduction that the study of archaeological landscapes is at a critical point in the development of both theory and practice. Heightened global awareness of landscapes and their mutability, changes in theorizing space within archaeology, and recent archaeological applications of social theory, all have converged in the past few years to ignite several dynamic and creative efforts in understanding ancient landscapes; the already large literature continues to grow steadily. We have outlined here what we see as the formative developments in forging the current state of interpretation, and have proposed that by recognizing constructed, conceptual and, more abstractly, ideational landscapes, archaeologists may find it possible to sharpen reference to landscape phenomena. Others, including some volume contributors, would not always agree with what we have asserted or proposed. But we believe they would join us in optimism about the prospects of further critical growth in studying social meaning in ancient landscapes.

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REFERENCES


**ARCHAEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPES**


