

CREATING SPACE

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It may be argued that what has been called space in archaeology is, at best, something to be conceived, as opposed to something unequivocally given. Although this is a proposition out, no doubt, in rather simplistic terms, we have found it all-embracing enough to account for the various and disparate issues that the archaeology of space has dealt with until now.

Under the single term of "spatial studies", however, there exist a wide range and diversity of techniques, methods of analysis, theoretical assumptions, interpretive issues, and other beliefs.

Such differentiation in perspective and objectives is by no means discouraging. On the contrary, it may point to the indispensable and decisive character of the notion of space in human and, therefore, archaeological action. This point gains in importance when we remember that there are works that have been entirely devoted to a description of culture in spatial terms. Clarke's (1977) paper on micro, semi-micro and macro levels is an example of the perception of culture as a compilation of factors, such as individual, social, economic etc., which manifest themselves spatially and are thus archaeologically recoverable; however, depending on our perspective or interest, these factors manifest themselves differently in those levels so that it is believed that individual traits emerge fully in the micro level and economic factors have been suggested to shade individual behaviour in the macro-level. No matter how controversial or disputable these ideas might be, the need to spatialise culture is difficult to avoid, either in this study or in other ones that have developed different interests. Kent's (1984) analysis of the Navajo *hogan* and *regada* types of shelter has tried to introduce a holism-segregation dichotomy as a conceptual scheme specific to the Navajo that also permeates their domain of spatial organisation and is therefore recoverable.

It would be an immense task to try to give a full account of spatial studies in the archaeological, let alone anthropological, literature. For the purpose of this volume, however, it will suffice to say that what archaeologists have come to mean by "space" is either the distribution of artefacts in a static space, conventionally plotted on a flat surface, or different systems of metrics that measure the dimensions of artefacts (eg. rooms, walls, columns etc.) in this space. As soon as such distributions or measurements are carried out, they acquire, or rather they are given, a significance which relates to the questions they set out to answer. It is on the basis of such reasoning that distribution plots may suggest interpretations of function (Hietala 1984), kinship ties (Longacre and Ayres 1968), to elucidate post-depositional processes and to read symbols in action (Hodder 1982). It is on the same basis that units of metrics are supposed to illuminate religious and social change (Glassie 1975), cognitive dimensions

(Doxiadis 1972) and even aspects of behavioural adaptation (Fletcher 1977).

No matter how desirable such multistranded orientations might be, as has earlier been observed, their contribution is somehow blurred by the very fact that generated it: the divergence in perspective has grown at the expense of a common frame of reference that would render diversity intelligible in comparative terms. To put this another way, what we perceive as lacking in the different perspectives that archaeological space has been seen from is an epistemological framework that would account for the relative validity and interpretative range that each perspective is supposed to encapsulate. For example, kinship ties have been mostly worked out on the basis of particular distributions of certain artefacts; symbolic qualities have been attested again on the basis of artefact distribution, but also in studying architectural layout (Eliade 1954); the notion of wealth has been treated in an analogous way (Kramer 1982); the correlation between space in settlements and population densities has been viewed in two mutually exclusive frameworks (Naroll 1962 and Fletcher 1981), where area has been treated as a neutral and a subjective referent for population densities respectively.

Given the state of spatial archaeology at present, we feel that the following three issues are real and therefore worthy of further attention.

Firstly, it has not been clear to us how far the deployment of so-called spatial variables and respective social meaning is strengthened by its combination with any other type of evidence, or whether such a deployment is simply a result of the process of interrogation.

Secondly, and partially overlapping with the first, is to what extent the interpretation attained by, say, a particular distribution, is corroborated or weakened by another type of distribution or conclusion so that we gain some insight about the possible redundancy of our methods, or, if the opposite is true, about the social significance of contrasting archaeological interpretations.

Thirdly, given the vast amount of co-ordinated research necessary for the clarification of the above issues, we suggest that an initial step in this direction would be towards works that are concerned with the study and explication of the assumptions on which their methods and theories are founded. This is indeed the central theme to which this issue is devoted. The ideas therefore presented in the following articles have largely concentrated on the ways different assumptions affect interpretation, covering areas of research spanning a good number of years, and on modes of reasoning that assumptions can be eventually evaluated. Furthermore, the subject matter of each article deals with the notion of "spatial" in such a manner that our initial remarks about the diverse methodological and theoretical issues of spatial archaeology, as well as about the extent and kind of assumptions kept latent in

spatial interpretations, could not have been underlined in a better way in the short space available.

Specifically, the widely held view of space and time in archaeology as mere backgrounds against which human action is plotted is put into question by Paul Lane. He holds that such a conception has gone hand in hand with a particular way of understanding action in archaeological and ethnoarchaeological terms, namely the establishment of material correlates between behaviour and material culture. The assumed direct link between the last two factors has directed research on human action towards the delineation of the mechanical properties of bodily movement at the expense of perceiving action as context specific, intentional and intersubjective. Such a tendency has affected the interpretation of assemblages in built structures and consequently the identity, let alone the social significance of the structures themselves. These ideas are discussed in relation to the site of Mount Pleasant Farm, Nottage, where the deployment of a domestic -- ritual dichotomy, thought by the excavator as appropriate to interpret the sequence, has been found to lack sufficient explication of the way this dichotomy has been formulated and therefore justifiably or efficiently used.

In the case of the Great Rebuilding, Matthew Johnson has again stressed the determinant role that assumptions exert on interpretation. In particular, it has been argued that the changes in architectural layout, house equipment and population density attested in 16th and 17th century rural England have been interpreted differentially, depending on what has been considered to be the most significant or explanatory framework on each occasion. It has been shown that, in this case, economic and functional criteria have been employed in such a way so as to underplay or even obscure the influence that historical tradition and culturally specific values exert on spatial arrangement and variability. Conversely, a framework of spatial organisation that accounts for and is conditioned by social relations has been put forward as a more promising option to illuminate an old problem.

Similarly, Eugenia Yiannouli and Steve Mithen are interested in the way in which the spatial might relate to the social in connection with a group of modern houses from the Aegean island of Siphnos. Their starting point has been a fairly recent conception of the notion of space, as developed by the work of Hillier and Hanson (1984). In that work space has been defined as a three-dimensional relational entity, whose organisation is conditioned by, and conditions in turn, social aspects of the community that generated it. Special attention has been given to a methodological variable of this approach, that of relative asymmetry (RA) which is formulated to work out the degree of relative integration/segregation of areas within a particular building. A simulation program was written to test whether RA values were indeed significant values or whether they could have arisen by chance. It was found that the obtained RA values pointed out significant organisational properties of the Siphnian domestic space which were further related to other aspects of the same society. The archaeological significance of the results was finally attested.

It is interesting to note that the same analogy between spatial and social organisation, and in particular between spatial segregation and social differentiation, was also observed by George Erdosy in Indian settlement layout. It was also stressed, however, that the employment of a single scale of measurement to explain status differentiation is an insufficient and therefore misleading process. Wealth, for example, which has been a most common archaeological variable to describe and interpret social ranking, may be used in such a way as to preclude or disregard the influence of other parameters, such as kinship, religion or political power. In the case of classical Indian treatises on architecture as well as modern rural settlements, it seems that status can be evaluated on the basis of competing systems of values, materialised spatially in a correspondingly complex system of architectural organisation.

Last but not least, Robin Boast and Chris Evans have argued that there has been a shift of emphasis from formal to relational aspects of space in the archaeological writings over the last ten years, which has accordingly affected the general interpretative frameworks of built structures. They hold that formal and relational measures are the results of different ways employed to categorise space. In the case of an Iron Age Fen site, it was shown that both formal and relational criteria must have played an active role in the organisation of domestic and public space as well as in the location of the site within the landscape. The significance of formal and locational attributes in addition to relational ones was further stressed in the case of Neolithic burial monuments.

We believe that this brief outline of concerns and reasoning has brought us back to our starting point, where space was termed a conception. Given our understanding that space is a conception, it follows that space is also a creation. Alternatively, a created space is a space built in time: as building techniques, materials and forms may differ from one archaeological period to another, or within the same period and area, so do our archaeological techniques, methods and sets of assumptions come to differentiate themselves from one historical period to another, or even within the same historical period and area. That space is a creation means that archaeological space is built according to different conceptions of the knowledge of the world available at any one time, combined with intuition or lack of intuition, whatever might be favoured on each occasion.

The process of creating space is a relative, never-ending and open-ended process of knowledge, dependent, to an extent, on the history of any relevant discipline: hence the cover of our issue. The world in the age of Homer is conceived and designed as a flat disc, with the known parts of Eurasia and Africa on it and with Ocean around the edge, the surrounding world limit. This image, a secure referent at that time, has been transcended long ago and replaced by other secure referents, in this case our current archaeological paradigms. Since our studies are historic, that is in time, we believe that it is important to work with the possibility in mind that flat discs may be round after

all, and that spatial creations should be construed in such a way as to allow the possibility of contrary evidence. An initial step towards such orientations would be a study of our building devices, and this is exactly what the present issue of Archaeological Review from Cambridge sets out to explore.

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ASSUMPTIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS IN THE STUDY OF THE GREAT REBUILDING

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Introduction

The study of vernacular architecture, defined as the description and analysis of buildings of any area or period that are "ordinary, common, regional and small" (Mercer 1975, 1), can be seen as a sub-discipline lying on the fringes of archaeology. Its subject matter obviously lies firmly within the scope of archaeology if one's definition of the latter does not confine itself to prehistoric periods or below-ground evidence. Its practitioners, however, have come from a wide variety of intellectual backgrounds, ranging from folklife studies, through social and economic history and historical geography, to architecture and, of course, archaeology itself.

It is of little surprise that, when researchers of such varying backgrounds meet, the ensuing debates throw up many interesting issues stemming from the initial assumptions made about the nature and form of built space, and how this may be analysed and interpreted. Such debates are of potential interest to any archaeologist concerned with the theme of this issue, but are often conducted in an implicit and obscure form. Researchers in this field have generally given a cool reception to explicit theorising (see Mercer's (1984) and Hutton's (1984) reaction to Lawrence (1983)) and key papers (e.g. Hoskins 1953, see below) have often appeared in historical rather than archaeological journals.

The purpose of this article is therefore to outline some of these methodological and interpretive issues to an audience who, it is assumed, have little or no specific contact with this field. It will attempt to do this by tracing the troubled history of one such debate, that concerning the nature and existence or otherwise of a "Great Rebuilding" of ordinary houses in rural England in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. The outline of an alternative approach will be suggested, starting from a rather different set of initial assumptions, and an attempt will be made to show how this may provide a more fruitful understanding of the wider issues at stake. It is hoped that some implications for the study of space in archaeology as a whole will emerge as the argument unfolds.

W.G. Hoskins and the "Rebuilding of Rural England"

The "Great Rebuilding" is, or perhaps was, one of the most influential concepts in the development of vernacular architecture as a sub-discipline. The idea was first put forward in W.G. Hoskins' seminal paper (Hoskins 1953): its argument is worth summarizing in some detail.