Reimagining Regional Analyses

Reimagining Regional Analyses:
The Archaeology of Spatial and Social Dynamics

Edited by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

REIMAGINING REGIONAL ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

REIMAGINING REGIONAL ANALYSIS IN ARCHAEOLOGY

RODERICK B. SALISBURY

Introduction

What is regional archaeology? Does it comprise statistical analyses of object distributions or static site locales, or is it the study of more complex social and cultural interactions? With this volume, we attempt a fresh look at regional analyses in archaeology, reimagining what regional archaeology can be, and how these objectives can be pursued: away from study of mere physical environment and inclusive of the multitude of new approaches to human-land interactions. The authors focus on understanding individual trajectories and the historically contingent relationships between the social, the economic, the political and the sacred as reflected regionally, while attempting to bridge particularistic micro-regional studies to the larger world without resorting to generalizing 'covering law' approaches of the past. Among the topics considered are the social construction of landscape, use of spatial patterning to interpret social variability, human impacts on ancient environments, and the spatiality of social memory and social practice.

Regional analyses in archaeology have a long affiliation with the characterization of spatial distributions and the relatedness of objects and sites through quantitative map-based approaches. Since the 1960s and 1970s, aspects of the physical environment have often been included, and a suite of techniques such as Thiessen polygons, rank-size distributions, catchment analysis, central-place models, and spatial statistics have been applied to produce more complex models of resource distributions and potential interactions (e.g. Earle 1976; Hodder and Orton 1976; Johnson 1981; Vita Finzi and Higgs 1970; Washburn 1974). Many of these studies were conducted at a single and fairly large scale, having focused on

patterns of settlement, often in relation to resources, and were conducted by archaeologists using traditional 'artifacts' as indicators of group affiliation or boundary markers. Since this time, a number of fallacies integral to many such approaches have been revealed, and both the definition of 'region' and the methods for studying them have shifted dramatically.

Reimagining regional analysis as a multi-scalar, multi-disciplinary practice, inclusive of both natural and cultural landscapes (or inclusive of a landscape that is both cultural and natural), as well as avoiding the errors now associated with equating styles or production methods with 'cultures' or 'peoples' is a fundamental goal of this volume. Great strides have been made toward this objective in many world regions; in Europe, this trend has been much more uneven.

In global perspective, over the past decade there have been a number of regional studies published as monographs, edited volumes and articles, and informative summaries of trends in regional analysis (Galaty 2005; Kantner 2008; Kowalewski 2008). These have alternately focused on one region (Gaffney and Stančič 1996; Bennet and Galaty 1997; Wilkinson 2000; Whalen and Minnis 2001; Patterson 2004), one period (Peterkin and Price 2000; Montmollin 2004) or one area during one period (Amick 1996). In a few cases, such as Beck (1995) and Delcourt and Delcourt (2004), the analytical subjects are specific cultural practices rather than static objects. The chapters in this volume aim to inject a pan-European context into this corpus, with individual contributions targeting specific regions and periods, through inclusion of a multitude of analytical elements.

Conceptualising regions

A necessary question, addressed in nearly every discussion of regional analysis, is how to define a region. Should we try to include "all the area occupied by people likely to have been in frequent close contact", as stated by Cowgill (1990:251)? If we adopt this meaning, where do the interactions end, and how does one define "close interaction"? Alternatively, should we use this definition, given in the same paragraph (ibid.) and "include all the sites occupied by reasonably well-defined social units during the period of interest"? Both of these definitions suggest a temporal dimension as well as a spatial one, with an emphasis on a specific period or culture. Frequently, regional analysis focuses on one or two periods,

although this does not necessarily need to be. It is also the case that modern political boundaries often force the acceptance of specific analytical boundaries. For example, consider the modern border between Hungary and Romania. To date, strong collaborations between Hungarian and Romanian prehistorians have not developed, and the result it that understanding of regional settlement patterns in places like the Körös River valley is incomplete and limiting. Thus, when we say we are working in the Körös River territory (e.g. chapters by Gyucha et al., Salisbury and Morris, and Kasper), we really mean that we are working in the Hungarian Körös. Similarly, Thurston et al. (Chapter 3, this volume) point out the problematic nature of studying Viking Age "Denmark", when it is currently distributed across both modern Denmark and Sweden, two countries whose national archaeological traditions are substantially dissimilar. This situation is repeated again and again in European archaeology. A call for greater cross-border collaboration is easy to make; enacting it will require a significant outlay of time and diplomacy.

Issues of Scale

As with the question of defining 'regions', we must acknowledge issues of scale. The discussion of scale in archaeology is not new (e.g. Lock and Molyneaux 2006; Wandsnider 1998), and does not need comprehensive revisiting here. However, one point does deserve recognition. The various scales at which we conduct regional analysis can result in diverse and possibly contradictory interpretations. The authors here argue that we must proceed at multiple scales, using a particular scale only as a point of departure, or a point of arrival, or both, rather than seeing the region as the single and privileged analytical objective (e.g. in this volume Daly; Gyucha et al.; Salisbury and Morris; Thurston et al.). Levels of scale may include the supra-region, macro-region, region, micro-region and local, and even this list is not exhaustive. In Central Europe, for example, the supra-regional scale could be the Carpathian Basin, and within it, a macro-regional scale of Transdanubia or the Great Hungarian Plain. Micro-regional analyses focus on specific landscapes within the larger region. Finally, what is often referred to as site-focused analysis can be conceived of as the local scale, but instead of focusing on the site alone, the site and its environs, including microenvironments, are considered. Larger units can also be envisaged; Galaty (2005) suggests that in case of the spread of agriculture, for example, all of Europe could be the analytical region.

In some cases, we bring inspiration from outside of Europe to shed new light on regional issues. In their study of the northern San Juan region of the U.S. Southwest macro-region, Muir and Driver (2002) apply multiple scales of analysis to identify use and discard patterns of faunal remains. In order to decipher economic and social complexity, as well as environmental trends, they work from the household up to the regional level. Similarly, the Körös Regional Archaeological Project (Gyucha et al. this volume; Parkinson et al. 2004) employs multiple analytical scales to examine sociopolitical and socioeconomic changes at the end of the Neolithic in eastern Hungary. In this volume, Daly, Gyucha et al., Salisbury and Morris, and Thurston et al. also view regional analysis as an explicitly multi-scalar approach. In these sections, use of multiple scales helps to connect site-level studies to problems and patterns observed at the regional or macro-regional scale.

A Brief History of Regional Studies

A complete summary of regional approaches in archaeology is outside the scope of this introductory chapter, and readers are directed to Parsons (1972), Johnson (1977), Galaty (2005), Kantner (2005, 2008), and Kowalewski (2008) for more comprehensive reviews from various eras, which in themselves give an indication of the historicity of the concepts. The brief synopsis here is intended to provide background for the work in this book, which encompasses the regional flavors of scholars from diverse intellectual backgrounds across Europe and America.

One of the earliest European attempts to interpret regions developed in late nineteenth century Austria through the work of early cultural geographers whose goal was to reconstruct ancient history through both archaeological and ethnological evidence. Ratzel's anthropogeography led to the Vienna culture-historical school of ethnography, *Kulturkreis* or culture-circle, and the cultural theories of ethnographers Schmidt, Graebner, and Menghin. Ratzel explicitly opposed evolutionary theories (Köb 1996:37), believing that the spread of cultural elements was best explained historically, by cultural contact and diffusion. Like Ratzel, Menghin denied evolutionism, while Schmidt incorporated it into diffusionism (Klejn 1993:52). The Kulturkreis as a basic concept of cultural-historical ethnology became popularized through the work of Graebner, who defined "*Kulturkreislehre*" as a complex of cultural elements typical for a certain area, including not only the settlement patterns and material culture, but also religious and mortuary practices.

The concept of culture circles was later applied in Argentina by Menghin, and is clearly implicated in Wissler's culture-area and age-area models.

The history of archaeology as presented by most Anglo-American faculties has culture-historical approaches gaining ascendancy in the first half of the twentieth century, largely rising from the ashes of antiquarianism. The dismissal of both antiquarianism and unilinear nineteenth century social-evolutionism marks the beginning of an anthropological archaeology, especially explicit in America. Following the widespread acceptance of Wissler's archaeological culture-area concept (Kroeber 1931), archaeologists began documenting archaeological culture areas, building material culture taxonomies, and pursuing the evidence for diffusion and migration.

This was followed, in the Anglo-America world, by the New Archaeology (Binford 1962, 1968; Clarke 1973), which eventually transformed into so-called processual archaeology, a hypothetical-deductive based attempt to create a social-science archaeology. Again, this involved a paradigmatic shift, with earlier concepts largely rejected, this time in favor of anti-historicism, ecological approaches, the study of site formation processes and the treatment of cultures as systems. This served to broaden the range of hypothetical causal factors for prehistoric people's choices regarding settlement location and land use (Jarman et al. 1972; Vita Finzi and Higgs 1970). Studies predicated upon regional surveys of settlement proliferated during the 1960s and 1970s (Parsons 1972; Read 1975). At that time, issues of scale, sampling and cultural connections provided more than enough problems to occupy researchers. Unfortunately, while offering detailed analyses of scores of environmental and technological variables, those using such approaches also projected the impression of scientific omniscience, as well as de-humanizing and de-historicizing the archaeological record in favor of mechanistic models of 'resources procurement' and 'optimizing behavior'.

The 1980s saw the rise of several strong critiques against processualist assertions of objectivism and the valuation of empiricism over or to the exclusion of humanistic approaches. Called post-processualists, to suggest a move beyond positivist assumptions, such scholars emphasized context, methodological individualism, and the symbolic nature of material culture. With their focus on the contextually embedded and the historically contingent, these new approaches frequently neglected to acknowledge patterns and interactions on very broad scales, or to connect the local with

the regional and super-regional – as if there were no connections at all. As the twenty-first century unfolds, a number of scholars have attempted to apply the best of these various approaches while avoiding the self-destructive tendencies toward negative polemic that characterized earlier paradigmatic shifts, and which have splintered academic departments and continue to contribute to the continuing rift between academic "pure" archaeology and the applied archaeology of Cultural Resource Management.

During this era of upheaval in Anglo-American archaeology, scholars on the Continent, following an unbroken tradition of culture-historical archaeology, continued to conduct such research with the addition of advanced scientific and technological methods. The association of regional patterns and studies with National Socialism, particularly the adoption of Kossina's work by the Nazis (Trigger 1989: 161-163), left many European prehistorians preferring the term landscape to refer to the larger distribution of settlements, avoiding any overt reference to identifying ethnic groups (Kossack 1992; Galaty 2005).

The descriptor 'landscape' is gaining popularity across Europe but is often used as a substitute for 'region', rather than a real application of the landscape theoretical approach. Upon examination, many European regional studies typically are limited to analysis of settlement at the local scale and intrasite patterning (Cherry 2002). Elsewhere, however, theoretical landscape archaeology has become a popular form of understanding regions (Ashmore and Knapp 1999; Bender 2002; Bradley 1998, 2000; Brück 2001; Chapman and Dolukhanov 1997; Clark et al. 1998; Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995; Muir 1999; Tilley 1994; Ucko & Layton 1999). Landscape archaeologists typically treat the entire landscape under study (which could be presented at any of many different scales) as one large and ever-changing artifact, and include every trace of human activity as well as theorizations of how the landscape was imagined, mythologized, experienced and perceived. While some archaeologists appear to find such less empirically situated and non-'data-driven' analyses threatening to 'proper' interpretations (e.g. Fleming 2006), there is much precedent within archaeology for the pursuit of highly specialized approaches.

Despite these theoretical conflicts, during the late 20th and early 21st centuries, technological advances have significantly transformed our ability to understand regions. Perhaps the most conspicuous example of the impact and availability of geospatial technology is the integration of geographic information technologies and digital data sets such as satellite

imagery (at the regional scale) or 3D laser scanning and geophysics (at the local scale). Efforts continue to find ways to use these technologies to present qualitative data as well. Aerial photography has been used for reconnaissance since the early 20th century (Wilson 2000; Brophy and Cowley 2005), and is now augmented by space-based remote sensing, which began with the application of radar and IKONOS satellite imaging in the late 20th century (Madry and Crumley 1990) and has recently become much more sophisticated (Parcak 2009; Wiseman and El-Baz 2007). The utility of this data is greater now than ever before, with a wide variety of multi-spectrum data available at varying levels of precision from both government and private industry sources. As Branting and Trampier (2007: 276) note, available data now makes it easier "to get a handle on larger conceptualizations of interrelations and interactions at larger and larger scales". For example, one recent development is the use of aerial images in conjunction with fractal geometry to explore patterning of settlements in relation to landscape features (e.g. Brown and Witschey 2003; Zubrow 2007). Daly (Chapter 1) uses aerial imagery and remote sensing, along with detailed excavation, to explore the relationships between changing patterns of social and political organization and changing scales of landscape use in South Central Britain.

These methods are best when combined with consideration of indigenous meanings of space and place, and the roles of practice, agency, memory and perception in innovative ways. Analytical methods and interpretive frameworks have been developed that incorporate the dynamic nature of social space and social interactions. Regional studies now combine settlement patterns, ecological data, cultural landscapes and awareness of human impacts, along with both the intended and unintended meanings and consequences of action (for example, see Chapman and Gearey 2000 for a discussion of methods in perception and palaeoecology).

As summarized above, the last 100 years have seen archaeologists continually repositioning their perspectives on both culture and nature in regional perspective. Various approaches have included descriptions of how people were distributed across the land, questions concerning how the environment constrains and affords human agency and social organization, and consideration of the practices through which people socialize the natural world and create their place within it (Biersack 1999). At each of these turns, some aspect of prehistory has become more dynamic, albeit at times to the detriment of other aspects.

Reimagining Regional Analysis

Perhaps the clearest origin of the differences between various approaches to the study of regions lies in each scholar's theoretical orientation: European archaeologists often reside firmly within the Humanities, while American counterparts fall within the Social Sciences. In Britain, archaeologists have traditionally divided, theoretically, between these domains. Humanists desire to understand the trajectory of a unique group, while Social Scientists hope to uncover generalities and patterns. Both of these approaches have merits and pitfalls, and over the course of the 20th century, both merits and pitfalls have been explored and experienced, often feeding cross-disciplinary conflicts. Today, having survived the triumphalism of both approaches, the difficult but worthwhile integration of these very different approaches is finally being attempted.

Thus, the greatest positive development of recent debates has been the creation of diverse approaches to archaeology at the regional scale, and the increased connections between these approaches, through landscape theory, local history, palaeoecological studies, large-scale archaeological surveys, and heritage management efforts, among others. The contributors in this volume explore the interplay between different methodological and theoretical approaches to regional analysis in archaeology, in an effort to bring the dynamic nature of society and space to light. Yet new conceptual frameworks and advances in quantity and quality of data require contextualized theoretical frameworks that are at least as dynamic as the past we are attempting to understand. Much as we can approach analysis of regions from multiple scales, we can also start our approach from different ideas and multiple data sets. For example, Chapters by Plunkett (Chapter 2), by Gyucha et al. (Chapter 4) and by Fábián and Serlegi (Chapter 7) approach regional social issues partly through environmental reconstruction; Plunkett through pollen analysis, Gyucha and colleagues combine palaeohydrology, soil data, vegetation and settlement patterns, and Fábián and Serlegi use climate data. Kasper (Chapter 6) begins from archaeobotanical analysis of seed remains from a single site to pose questions about society and food. Valera (Chapter 8), and Perez and Odriozola (Chapter 9) examine connections between ideology, materiality and social/spatial boundaries of communities on the Iberian Peninsula. All seek to situate past societies within the fullness of their historical contexts while also attempting to uncover connections at the regional level, addressing experience, memory and intention while remembering that nothing happens in a vacuum: structures, institutions and environment are

also important components of human life (e.g. Salisbury and Morris, Chapter 5). We, as have others, hope to help bridge the differences between concepts of regional studies in the various traditions (Galaty 2005: 294). Combining these conceptual threads permits a reimagining of the potential of regional archaeology in the twenty-first century. Today, although we cannot claim to have resolved this issue, we have made enough progress to move in new directions, and the chapters in this volume contribute toward this new trend. A blending of several theoretical and methodological traditions now seems both possible and desirable.

We explore these perspectives in conjunction with recent advances in spatial analysis and the measurement of human impacts on ancient environments, with the goal of opening a discourse around the spatial patterning of the contingent, recursive relationships among the landscape and sociopolitical, ritual, and economic activities. A continuing challenge for the archaeology of the twenty-first century will be integrating particularist, micro-regional studies that have informed on so many aspects of human life with reasonable comparative studies that might answer questions about changes in social, political and economic organization. As we overcome obstacles in both our thinking and in recovering the physical remains of the past, we constantly uncover new problems that should remind us humbly that those who came before constantly had to overcome as well. Parsons' statement regarding the contribution of L. H. Morgan to settlement studies (Parsons 1972:128) can be re-phrased today to refer to regional studies of the past 35 years. Whatever the criticisms we find easy to direct at their work today, the fact remains that real efforts were made to grapple with complex questions, questions and efforts that form the basis for a reimagined regional analysis.

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NORTHERN EUROPE

CHAPTER ONE

PLACING EXCAVATIONS IN A DIGITAL LANDSCAPE: TOWARDS HOLISTIC REGIONAL ANALYSIS

PATRICK DALY

In archaeology, the parameters of regional analysis have been closely related to discipline-wide theoretical shifts and methodological changes linked with technological advancement (Zubrow 2006). The constant project of re-thinking regional analysis is in part a function of appreciating different ways of thinking about space and the enactment of social practices within it. Over the past two decades, there have been broad changes in how archaeologists place people within landscapes, and conceptualise spatial analysis (Barrett 2001; Tilley 1994.). In fact, the basic concept of "regional analysis" has largely been replaced by an increasingly all-encompassing "landscape archaeology", which has clear implications for the scope and foci of research[1]. Additionally, it is possible to see parallel changes in the analytical tools used by archaeologists, and how this has factored into the development of archaeological theory (Zubrow 2006). The use of Information Technology (IT), fuelled by the surge of interest in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing has had an undoubted impact on landscape archaeology research programmes and modes of regional analysis (Evans and Daly 2006). Regardless, archaeology is still largely separated into site specific and landscape/regional studies, and there is a notable lack of both theoretical approaches and methodological solutions for this problem.

In this chapter, I focus upon the different scales of data that make up the archaeological record and ways to employ digital techniques to incorporate them within holistic regional studies of human activity. This is in part a response to the separation that continues to widen between site-specific and landscape/regional studies. I argue that this dichotomy is grounded in both theoretical and methodological limitations that are no

longer binding, and that there are suitable ways to bring together various scales and types of archaeological and environmental information within one framework. My main concern is marrying data derived from landscape survey with excavation data in a way that does not compromise the resolution or integrity of either. All forms of regional analysis have long been restricted by an inability to find a suitable interface between typical landscape data (surface based information) and data derived from excavation – thus suppressing the full contextuality of material culture and our interpretations.

To approach archaeological landscapes holistically, all scales of material need to be considered, for sherds of pottery are just as potentially significant for shedding light on past social practices as the earthworks of an enclosure. Likewise, the depositional characteristics of pits at a number of sites across the landscape are just as important as the physical distance between sites or the visibility of monuments from different places in the landscape. An approach is needed that can deconstruct the nature of "site" as a focal point for inquiry by tracing the relationships that occur across time and space, within and between scales of material (Daly and Lock 2004; Frachetti 2006). The methodology explored in this chapter seeks to better understand how different scales of both social practice and material participate within mutually informing sets of processes. This is based upon the premise that landscapes are the outcome of accumulative engagements between people and their material settings. For archaeologists to unpack this, we need to better understand how the relationships between different scales of material culture that we have access to in the present reflect patterns of human activity that are simultaneously meaningful in both site specific and regional contexts.

Holistic landscapes and structure

> "the landscape is an anonymous sculptural form always already fashioned by human agency, never completed, and constantly being added to, and the relationship between people and it is a constant dialectic and the process of structuration: the landscape is both medium for and outcome of action and previous histories of action." (Tilley 1994: 23)

Cultural landscapes can be usefully conceptualized as a nexus of connections between people and the material world. Gosden refers to this as a system of reference in which all social acts exist within an interconnected network of activity across time and space (Gosden 1994). Actions have meaning through their relations with other actions; the key

point being that *all* social actions are referential. I suggest that the same general principle applies to material culture, whereby meaning is intimately connected with both human action, and other material elements. Landscapes consist of a wide range of material components, from the naturally endowed physical characteristics of the environment, to socially created, maintained, and empowered monuments. It is overly simplistic and even misleading to isolate elements in the landscape for selective interpretation without considering the complex networks of relationships that exist beneath every aspect of social practice. Towards this end, my research explores the ways that different scales of material may have structured, and/or been structured by social practices around them through their availability as physical and/or cultural resources. The construction of cultural landscapes is the product of all levels of human behaviour – from the construction, use and discard of ceramic vessels, and construction of dwelling structures, to the building of massive monument complexes and settlement sites – and all are predicated upon the same underlying principles. This basic idea steers away from the notion that it is useful to separate site specific and regional studies, as it is impossible to fully understand one without appreciation of the other. The research here focuses more on the importance of seeing different scales of material culture, and by proxy social practices, as mutually constitutive.

This is influenced by the re-working of the broader theory of structure (i.e. Giddens 1984) by archaeologists such as Bradley, Barrett, and others. Such authors argue that the accretion of material residue in the landscape can be seen as a concrete manifestation of the principle of structuration. The material world, draped in social meaning, is a precondition, and influences the practices that subsequently lead to the alteration of the physical characteristics of the material world. This in turn modifies the very preconditions upon which actions were initially based. A successful approach to practice through material culture has to be holistic, and recognize the complexity of multi-scalar (of both practice and material) interplay as a fundamental aspect of the composition of material contextuality. As both social practice and material culture occur at a number of scales, which exist in a network of relationships with other scales across time and space, giving substance and cohesion to the landscape, all have to be considered within the same framework. However, there have been serious methodological limitations that have served to reinforce the distinction between site and landscape/regional studies. It is important to explore this foundation now before presenting a different approach.