


Interpreting Space and Place: An Introduction to Archaeological GIS

Lecture 02

Today's Topic: Processual, Cognitive and Marxist Archaeologies




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Marxism, Structuralism and Vulgar Marxism

Friedman 1974

Marxism – social formations based on infrastructure and superstructure as historically contingent things

- Infrastructure – forces and relations (social) of production
- Forces of Production – means and organization of production
- Superstructure – Juridico-political and ideological

Ideology is a largely hidden (implicit) force affecting the conscious mind

Dialectic – the back-and-forth, tension of existence, things are rarely unidirectional

Cultural Materialism (Marvin Harris) – a vulgar interpretation, it privileges harmony as a starting position and looks for disruption; regardless of what cultural materialists claim, this stance remains deterministic

Structuralism – for Friedman, this is useful because the relations of production are social and structuralism's ability to model intra-systemic characteristics (e.g. class)

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Paradigms, Systematics, and Archaeology

Binford and Sabloff (1982)

Lewis Binford – father of processual archaeology, a nomothetic/positivist archaeology which he called the New Archaeology

Examined the New World and Old World Paradigm

New World = cultures as static, geographically-restricted

Old World = ethnic view of the past that fuelled nationalistic archaeology

The New Archaeology

- Examined archaeological cultures as systems
- science should result in predictive (therefore testable) conclusions
- as a scientific archaeology, should create comparable datasets
- push archaeologists to understand the dynamic nature of the past
- must be OBJECTIVE!!!
- utilize middle-range theory
- ethnography

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Cognitive Archaeology  
Flannery and Marcus (1998)

- Began popping up by the 1970s as a way to move away from the dehumanizing types of archaeology
- Cognitive Archaeology – is the study of all things intellectual and symbolic within human behavior as recorded by the archaeological record

In examining this framework, argue against the position that such things are epiphenomenal (i.e. unknowable)

Cosmology – theory of the universe; knowable through settlement patterns,  
Religion – set of beliefs concerning the supernatural; best if known through ethnohistorical records used to examine ritual sites

Ideology – specific to a group (e.g. political, cultural); knowable through diachronic analysis of archaeological record

Iconography – representing things in art; knowable through numerous archaeological contexts and their comparison

Ultimately, cognitive archaeology should result in holistic archaeologies

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Critical Archaeology  
Leone (1998) & Leone et al (1987)

Utilizing a critical theory framework will allow archaeologists to better manage the political life of the knowledge they produce

Central Role of Ideology - masks relationships by naturalizing them

- 1) archaeologists' unaware of political meanings in their work
- 2) current history is the only way history could have happened

Source Criticism – interrogates conclusions by questioning the sources of information drawn upon (e.g. Historical documents, archaeology)

Using public archaeology with a critical self-awareness is geared towards awakening the public to the knowledge that the modern world has a hidden intentionality

Such naturalized, but human-created (not natural), relationships have real-world consequences for people in the everyday and archaeology is uniquely situated to investigate (*lit. uncover*) such formations and make them realized

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