

Interpreting Space and Place: An Introduction to Archaeological GIS

Lecture 09

Space, Place and Landscape: Social Order



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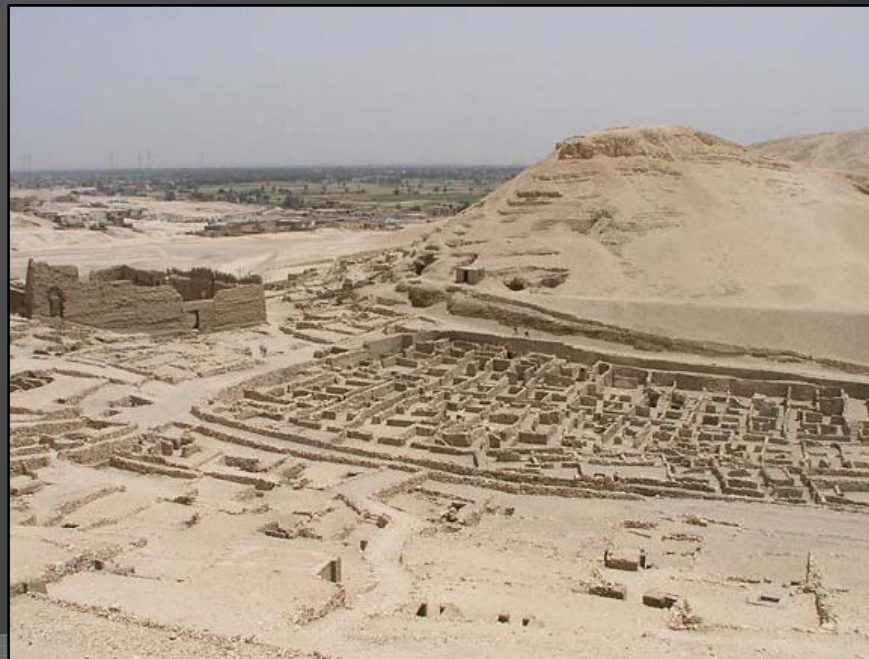
Meskell – Social Relations on the Landscape

an archaeology of individuals and social relations in ancient Egypt

Interested in individuals instead of nomothetic groups (e.g., women)

This paper is specifically interested in elite women and men, as well as their space within a household

When examining space and movement, streets and alleyways not the only routes



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Meskell – Social Relations on the Landscape

Materiality and Intentionality

materiality = the stuff, such as decorations and emplacements

social = texts, documents, relations

intentionality = the trends of what a thing meant, not reality (at every moment)

While structures list primarily men's names, documents state that women were more often in control of domestic space b/c men were often absent

Beds – birthing spot or much more?

Divan stela = conductors for transactions between this world and others

First room = woman

Second room = man

Other rooms = servants

While a general pattern of a room's role can be assigned (intentionality);
archaeology, common sense and documentary records show that a room's
use will change from time to time (Meskell's reality)

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Buikstra and Charles – Centering the Ancestors

Using ritual features of the landscape to find the sacred parts of nature

Positioning themselves along the processual/postprocessual divide

- sites of death are more for the living than the dead
- cross cultural comparison is valid
- not all burials = ancestor cult/worship/etc.

By the Middle Woodland (~200BC – AD500) monuments re-created the cosmos and associated social order; burials were contextualized as part of cosmic renewal and structured by kinship

By the time Cahokia reached its apex (~AD1100), burials had become a way for elites to horde their power and the hierarchical elite social structures were consecrated on the landscape

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Schmidt – Alternatives to Strictly Materialist Perspectives

After reviewing other approaches, stresses the importance of ethnohistory and oral traditions in African archaeology as a way to foreground the interests and historical identities of African peoples, not Western archaeologists

Prehistory as pejorative conceptualization *deployed* against Africans

Africa offers a unique chance to examine ancient symbolic systems that are to some extent alive in today's populations; African Archaeology must have oral tradition as part of the research

At the heart of this approach is the idea that African groups have often used symbolic systems as ways to control the real-world; in other words, if you control a symbolic/religious/supernatural site you are able to capitalize on its symbolic power in order to control others – looking for these changes in the archaeological record is most productive when using ethnographic methods

While this is a review article, it does a good job of suggesting a future practice in African archaeology that combines material and ideational viewpoints

Think about the word mnemonic, we'll explore this more next week...