

**TERRITORIALITY IN INDIGENOUS SOCIETIES:
AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW***

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INTRODUCTION

Asking "what is territoriality" has become like asking "what is culture:" both terms have acquired an enormous range of definitions. An argument is made, below, for an alternative, broader view of territoriality more appropriate, especially, to non-sedentary peoples. This argument rests on eight points:

1. researcher bias number one: competition vs. cooperation in definitions of territoriality;
2. researcher bias number two: territoriality as defined from the perspective of sedentary peoples;
3. fixed vs. mobile attachment to space: moving peoples and moving territories
4. exclusive vs. overlapping territories;
5. resource-specific territorial definitions (differential rights to exploit specific resources);
6. common property and common access to resources;
7. territories based on cultural context rather than specific social relations;
8. non-spatial territories: time and knowledge;

Meir has stated that "while most early discussions (of territoriality) have attempted to draw analogies from animal behavior, arguing that human and animal territoriality are homologous, there is presently wide agreement that this is not the case." The statement is largely true in an empirical sense, and the overt analogizing that so characterized work by such popularizers of environment-behavior research as Ardrey (1966) is now largely repudiated. What has not disappeared, however, are the underlying thought processes and value systems that informed such a view. That is, territoriality is often still thought of as competition, actual or symbolic, over space or resources- the model for territorial behavior among infrahuman animals provided by Lorenz (1966), among others, several decades ago.

The foregoing -in subtle ways the "stickleback model" of spatial defense- as the defining characteristic of territoriality, including human territoriality, is still very much with us. Even the "trade-off" between social hierarchy and territory stems from ethological studies of chickens and domestic cats: roosters are territorial, hens have a "pecking order;" female cats are territorial and free-ranging males hierarchically ordered (as medical bills for injured unaltered males testify). This rather narrow view of territoriality still appears dominant, while pluralist models once provided by sociology (e.g. Lyman and Scott, 1967) seem to have vanished into academic prehistory.

RESEARCHER BIASES, AND OTHER POINTS OF VIEW

The continuing popularity of the above competitive model may relate to researcher bias number one: the fact that those who formulated models of territoriality as well as those doing research

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on it have been largely from North American or northwest European backgrounds, where value systems based on competitive individualism still hold sway.

Exposure to a plurality of cultures and a broader base of reading has forced a number of researchers from solid positivist backgrounds (e.g. Altman and Chemers, 1980), including the present writer, to question their earlier acceptance of the foregoing model. Such less-cited writers as Kropotkin (1901) and Allee (1931) earlier pointed the way along a path less traveled; their legacy now suggests a need to consider cooperative as well as competitive models of territoriality. With few exceptions (e.g. Altman and Chemers, 1980), the concerns of such researchers as Campbell (1975) and Wilson (1975) with altruistic manifestations and helping behavior have rarely been incorporated into discussions of territoriality.

A cooperative model accords well with definitions of territoriality in terms of social relations, especially intra-territorial social relations. Such a model would consider the sociopetal forces holding groups together as well as the sociofugal forces separating them, but the emphasis may in some societies be different from that suggested by Sack (1983a,b).

It may be, therefore, that inward-focused territoriality characterizes some groups as much or more than outward-directed territoriality; that intra-territorial (as opposed to inter-territorial) relations are what, for such groups, really define territory. Such inward-focused territoriality may define other forms of space than those we normally consider: territory among some traditionally nomadic and semi-nomadic groups may be defined, then, by the range of mobility (coincident territory and home range) rather than by fixed occupancy. For nomadic pastoralists, predictable movement patterns rather than stasis may thus be the source of territorial definition: most pastoral nomadic groups follow quite regular patterns and routes in their seasonal migrations. The "walkabouts" of non-pastoral Native Australians (Ross, 1992), while in no way territorial, apparently have their lawful nature too: aimless or random to the outsider, "walkabouts" are said to be related to Dreamtime tracks. What these also have in common is that they are group, not individual, manifestations of territoriality.

The role of cooperation in territoriality has been mentioned above. It is tempting -but misleading- to hypothesize that some groups are competitive and others cooperative, that competitive groups such as New Zealand Maaori tribes (Cox, 1993), once warriors, defended exclusive territories, with sharp territorial boundaries -frontier "edges"- while cooperative groups, such as American Pueblo Indians (Swentzell, 1993), concerned with mutually supportive interactions, may have established overlapping territories with diffuse (and, hence, more difficult to identify) territorial boundaries -frontier "seams." However, the fact that the moderately competitive semi-nomadic Navajo raiders-turned-pastoralists (Rapoport, 1969) define territoriality more narrowly than the neighboring, cooperative, sedentary Hopi, casts doubt upon this hasty generalization.

Further indication that such a generalization is a gross oversimplification comes from other work (e.g. Hawley, 1986), some calling into question whether there really exists a unilineal dimension with "individualism" and "collectivism" as its polar extremes, along which cultures can be arrayed (Thomas, 1994). Rather, it may be that individualism and collectivism constitute orthogonal axes of a two-dimensional space. As with "individualism" and "collectivism," "competition" and "cooperation" are both relational terms; their non-relational counterparts "non-competitive" and "non-cooperative" allow for the possibility of groups with little or no relation at all among individuals or family units- or even of active avoidance which takes non-territorial form.

Researcher bias number two relates to "norms." Most investigations of territoriality are performed by sedentary people, people, that is, to whom sedentary life appears normal and nomadism as universally anachronistic and therefore vaguely deviate. It is in part because of the existence of this bias that only in recent years has the adaptive economy of at least some forms of nomadism been

acknowledged. But such recognition is still not universal, and many people -development "experts" in particular- still tend to see rural groups engaged in other than sedentary market agriculture as practicing deviate life "styles" requiring normalization. As this extends beyond cloistered academic into the political arena, policy-makers tend to see groups they regard as anachronistically "deviate," as devoid of what "normal" people regard as normal- such as consensually recognized expressions of territoriality.

RETHINKING TERRITORIALITY: SOME NEGLECTED DIMENSIONS

Territoriality involves not just rights to occupy space, but to exploit what that space contains: its resources. Basehart (1967), for example, unites some aspects of cooperation and rights of resource exploitation in the Mescalero Apache "resource-holding corporation:"

Mescalero viewed territory primarily in terms of the resources offered for their...exploitation rather than in relation to geographical boundaries...

Mescalero, then, thought of themselves as free to roam on extensive territory utilizing...whatever resources were available. (Basehart, 1967, pp. 285-86)

Further, a perspective on territoriality that emphasizes only permanent spatial-occupancy with rights to exploit all resources effectively negates the existence of territories that are resource-specific, user-specific, or time-specific. In the category of resource-specific territoriality, rights to exploit a specific space may be confined to a single resource, or exclude specific resources. This is especially true of trees, or forest resources (Fortmann and Bruce, 1988). As one observer indigenous to the area has noted:

Contrary to what most outsiders think of as 'the law of the jungle,' we knew that the law permitted us to help ourselves to eat any fruit on or under the trees, but forbade us to carry any away without first paying for it or to bother any part of the harvest that was being processed in some way. (Weatherford, 1988, p. 90)

In West Malaysia, the occupant of a piece of residential land often owns the earth but not its trees, or may own a certain species of tree and not others. The British "Crown Lands" concept differentiates between surface and subsurface rights. Cronon (1983) also documents different rights of exploitation as well as overlapping territories among east coast American Indians during the early British colonial period.

User-specific territories are spaces treated by one set of occupants as territory while others may pass through with impunity- often oblivious that territorial claims of the first set even exist. The classic American illustration is urban gangs, who will defend their "turf" fiercely against age cohorts, but allow older adults to pass with impunity. The sanitary "tourist corridor" established through central Guatemala allowed tourism to proceed completely oblivious of the guerrilla warfare taking place.

Time plays several roles in territoriality. First, claims to space may vary with time (time-specific territoriality, or sequence-occupancy): here, territory is shared among territorial groups, but not simultaneously. Occupants of time-specific territories may change diurnally. The classic example is the "warm bed" boarding house, in which several people may occupy the same bed in a

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single day; less well-known is the practice, in certain Central American churches serving indigenous populations, of allowing a traditional religious observance to follow Mass, using the same space. Occupants may also rotate among days, months, or seasons: certain summer pastoralists may share or overlap territories with winter hunters, for example. Finally, time-specific territorial sharing may be also be symbiotic: agricultural activities of one group may support pastoral activities of the same group (Shiva, 1989) or contribute to the hunting success of others (Cronon, 1983), the latter a form of sequentially cooperative territoriality.

Second, time itself may be territorialized, especially in the West. Westerners are as accustomed to slicing time into small units and buying and selling them as they are to slicing space into small squares and marketing those. Figures of speech reflect non-monetary temporal territoriality: we speak of someone "having a claim" on our time, of "owing" or "being owed" time, etc. Sharing temporal territoriality is looked down upon by Westerners, who do "one thing at a time." Such people are unable to tolerate the Arab or Latin American tendency to deal with several people at once in the same office.

Knowledge, too, is territory, and the expression "intellectual property" is gaining currency. Such knowledge is usually assumed to be explicit, formal, and Western. Non-Western knowledge systems, when these are valued at all, are assumed to be public, and free of any fiscal or referential encumbrance: it is assumed that no need exists to credit or recompense the source, to quote it accurately, nor to honor any traditional restrictions on the use of the information. The concept of intellectual territory, in other words, was itself territory of the West. But some non-Western knowledge in quite specific forms -that of the New Zealand/Aotearoa Maaori, for example- is now coming to be recognized as "intellectual property."

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Having argued for an expanded view of territoriality, the author is now in the paradoxical position of suggesting more restricted practical applications of the term. Ironically, as territoriality is denied by outsiders to some groups, it is imposed upon others, often with pejorative connotations. The movements of indigenous hunter-gatherers, especially those engaged partly in horticulture, may at one time have been smaller in extent than at present. However, as firewood and potable water have been depleted, the range of such movements has increased. The potential for conflict with neighboring groups has also increased, yielding what strongly resembles "innate" or "culturally-determined" territoriality in these groups, which are assumed to be the agents responsible for the resource depletion which surrounds them.

However, since the environmental changes which bring about this "territoriality" are often the indirect results of "development" activities by external agents (Cernea, 1988), the resulting conflictual behavior is neither innate nor determined by any culture in its pristine form. It is not a result of a breakdown of conventional territorial regulation due to ignorant overexploitation of resources. Nor is it a manifestation of the well-known but badly misconceived "tragedy of the commons" (Hardin, 1968): the conflict results not from the invasion of an unregulated commons but by the breakdown, under externally-imposed stress, of traditional systems for regulating that very commons (Bromley and Cernea, 1989; Cannon, undated).

Imposition or distortion of territoriality is a powerful political tool for the intensification and extension of governmental control over indigenous peoples. The U.S. government understood this well when it carved out Indian Reservations -although "the chickens came home to roost" during the energy crisis of the 1970s (Stea, 1984) when these lands, thought to be valueless in the nineteenth century,

were found to be repositories of vase deposits of coal and uranium. Former South African governments, having learned the "American way," showed even more refined understanding of the "territorialize and conquer" principle in the creation of Bantustans. Nomads are only considered non-territorial while still nomads; once sedentarized, wherever they have been (often forcibly) settled is declared their "territory," justifying the expropriation of all other lands once supporting their accustomed migrations.

Such territorial expropriation has often been accompanied by the "individualization" of communal territory, as happened when the U.S. General Allotment (Dawes) Act divided reservation lands into individual holdings, beginning in 1887 (Johansen and Maestas, 1979), and is about to happen as a result of the breakup of Mexican ejido lands under the 1992 "reform" of Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution. In fact, communal territory is simply unrecognized by many nation states, as the following quotation, concerning Moi, an Ecuadorian Huaorani, indicates:

Days before Moi was scheduled to testify, the (U.S.) Embassy denied him a visa, arguing that because he had no tangible assets tying him to Ecuador, there was a risk that he would disappear inside the United States as an illegal immigrant. It could be argued that, on the contrary, Moi's assets run deeper than just about anybody else's in Ecuador, for the Huaorani hold legal title to a good chunk of the territory they have always occupied. But they hold that title communally, and by Embassy standards, this...makes Moi a landless peasant. (Kane, 1994, p. 76)

Fragmenting formerly collective territory often reduces the size of agricultural holdings below sustainability, and allows taxes to be imposed: both lead to forced land sales, or to abandonments and out-migration. Until quite recently, when the size of a New Zealand Maaori land holding dropped below a certain minimum, due to partitioning through inheritance, such territory suddenly and mysteriously became "European land" (Maaori Land Court, 1978).

In other cases, the opposite occurs: separated plots of land are consolidated under the assumption that one moderate-sized piece of territory always produces better than several small ones:

The economic rationale behind consolidation was that, if the fragments of land a cultivator owned...could be gathered together in one piece, he could farm more efficiently...On the other hand, consolidation of all the holdings of an individual farmer was seldom feasible because the different plots vary in quality. Owning various types of land allows...cultivation of diverse crops which need different amounts of rainfall... this way a farmer minimizes his risk of losing all his crops in one year. (Dandekar, 1986, pp. 134-135)

As indicated elsewhere (Stea, 1993), the bearers of traditional, indigenous wisdom must often undergo extinction before the fact that they once existed -but are now, sadly, lost- is recognized.

In sum, while the concept of territory needs general broadening, its application must be broadened selectively. As much with terrestrial space as with monetary systems, the question "who benefits and who pays" is never out-of-line.

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FOOTNOTE

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