

## Introduction

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Human territoriality is a powerful and pervasive element in our lives, but serious scholarship has only skirted its perimeters. This book attempts to help redirect research towards the core of territoriality by conceiving of it as an often indispensable means to power at all levels: from the personal to the international. Since the subject is vast and the uses of territoriality so varied, I can do no more in a single volume than offer a sketch and hope that the picture will serve to stimulate further research. In order to prepare the reader for the approach taken in this book, I would like to say a few words about the contexts in which I think a fruitful discussion of territoriality does and does not belong.

Perhaps the most well-publicized statements on human territoriality have come from biologists and social critics who conceive of it as an offshoot of animal behavior. These writers argue that territoriality in humans is part of an aggressive instinct that is shared with other territorial animals. The view presented in this book is quite different. Although I see territoriality as a basis of power, I do not see it as part of an instinct, nor do I see power as essentially aggressive. The power that a parent exercises over a child may be for the child's good, and that power may or may not be territorial. A parent may decide it is safer to keep the child indoors and away from the wet and cold of the rain. Keeping the child at home, as we shall see, is a territorial restraint. It may be a convenient strategy, but it is not the only means of keeping the child warm and dry. The parent could allow the child to play outside if he is well bundled up in warm rain gear.

Humans can use territoriality for a variety of often abstract reasons, few if any of which are motivations for animals. In fact, because territoriality in humans supposes a control over an area or space that must be conceived of and communicated, one can argue that territoriality in this sense is quite unlikely in most if not all animals. Territoriality in humans is best understood as a spatial strategy to affect, influence, or control resources and people, by controlling area; and, as a strategy, territoriality can be turned on

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and off. In geographical terms it is a form of spatial behavior. The issue then is to find out under what conditions and why territoriality is or is not employed.

This book will examine human territoriality in the context of human motivation. But there remains the fact that the popular image of territoriality is drawn from works emphasizing biological links. Thus the efforts at drawing attention away from such a connection can be confounded by using a term that connotes them. Despite such drawbacks to the term territoriality (and that it is not a pretty sounding word), I have not been able to find a better one. Sovereignty, property, and jurisdiction are too restricted in scope to be suitable alternatives. Although an awkward term, I will use territoriality and trust that its former connotations will not draw attention away from what I believe to be its true signification: *a human strategy to affect, influence, and control*.

Territoriality in humans is best thought of not as biologically motivated, but rather as socially and geographically rooted. Its use depends on who is influencing and controlling whom and on the geographical contexts of place, space, and time. Territoriality is intimately related to how people use the land, how they organize themselves in space, and how they give meaning to place. Clearly these relationships change, and the best means of studying them is to reveal their changing character over time. Territoriality thus lies squarely within two geographical traditions: social geography and historical geography. We can of course claim that these are really interconnected and form a single approach – a social–historical one. Whereas few would deny that the two should be linked, and some have been able to incorporate both traditions in their work, it is not easy to combine both to everyone's satisfaction. The problem centers on the complex differences between the particularistic approaches of historical geography and the generalizing approaches of social geography and its theoretical component – spatial analysis. The differences between the particular and the general are confronted over again in the rest of social science.

Historical geography, which is closely allied with history, tends to undertake detailed examinations of places at certain periods. It may employ generalizations from social geography and other social sciences and it may arrive at general descriptions of people and society, but its primary focus is an understanding of the particular relationships that pertained at a particular place during a particular period. It is often 'long' on facts and descriptions, but 'short' on theory. In terms of the philosophy of geography, it tends to be 'ideographic.' Social geography (and its most generalizing component – spatial analysis), on the other hand, is closely allied to such systematic social sciences as economics, sociology, and political science, and tends to form abstract models of social–geographical relations and to test them usually in contemporary settings, though occasionally data from the past are

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used. In geographic terminology these approaches are called 'nomothetic.'

Clearly these can be conceived of as forming a continuum, and thus they need not in principle represent very different approaches. History and historical geography can use social theories and help reformulate them, and social theories can be made more precise and pertinent under the scrutiny of historians. Yet in practice – due perhaps to personal preferences in research, to styles of analysis, to gaps between fact and theory – the continuum has been a bit thin in the middle. Historians and historical geographers often criticize systematic social science models as a-historical and claim that when the models are tested on the past, we learn very little about the period because these over-generalized models, rather than the historical contexts, select the facts to be explained. Social geographers and social scientists counter that many historical geographers and historians are too unwilling to generalize and to accept the fact that even detailed descriptions must be based on generalizations about behavior and about the past. And of course, when one tries to bridge these differences by practicing in the middle of the continuum, one runs the risk of not satisfying either end.

So it is within the tradition of human geography, and somewhere between the traditions of social and historical analysis, that this work on territoriality lies. The following contains both theory and history with perhaps a heavier emphasis on the former because my training has been in the spatial-analytic part of social geography. By theory I do not mean the full-blown positivistic conception of a series of nomothetic relationships linked together axiomatically and which can be used to predict human actions. Rather by theory I mean an interrelated group of characteristics which can be used to explain or make sense of behavior. This more flexible meaning is intended to suggest less than the positivistic ideal, but more than just some loosely connected notions. An important characteristic of territorial theory is that it is designed to disclose potential reasons for using territoriality. Which ones are used in fact depend on the actual context. Some of the reasons or effects will be used in practically any situation, and others will be used only under particular contexts. In this respect, the theory is phrased generally or abstractly drawing on social structure, but its specification and exemplification depends on particular historical context and on individual agency. The purpose of the book is not simply to test, exemplify, or illustrate generalizations. It is hoped that the book will also deepen our understanding of certain historical contexts by demonstrating how and why territoriality is used. Territoriality can shed light especially on the rise of civilization and on critical facets of modernity.

Territoriality then is an historically sensitive use of space, especially since it is socially constructed and depends on who is controlling whom and why. It is the key geographical component in understanding how society and space are interconnected. In exploring these issues, the book not only uses the past

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to illustrate the theory but also reconstructs parts of the history of territoriality in order to shed more light on past and present social organizations. But in combining theory and history, the book makes no pretense at disclosing new historical facts or sources. Rather it attempts to place old and well-known facts in a different light.

## 1

## The meaning of territoriality

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Territoriality for humans is a powerful geographic strategy to control people and things by controlling area. Political territories and private ownership of land may be its most familiar forms but territoriality occurs to varying degrees in numerous social contexts. It is used in everyday relationships and in complex organizations. Territoriality is a primary geographical expression of social power. It is the means by which space and society are interrelated. Territoriality's changing functions help us to understand the historical relationships between society, space, and time.

This book explores some of the more important changes that have occurred in the relationships between society and territoriality, from the beginning of history to the present. It does so by analyzing the possible advantages and disadvantages that territoriality can provide, and considering why some and not others arise only at historical periods. Exploring the advantages and disadvantages leads us to the theory of territoriality. Exploring when and why these come to the fore constitutes the history of territoriality and its changing relationships to space and society.

The history of territoriality and territoriality's relationship to space and society are informed by the theoretically possible advantages that territoriality can be expected to provide. After introducing the meaning of territoriality in this chapter we will explore in Chapter 2 the theoretically possible advantages of territoriality. The subsequent chapters will consider how and when these advantages are used historically and the effects they have on social organization. Chapter 3 will sketch the major changes in the relationships between territory and society from primitive times to the present and focus on the most important periods: the rise of civilization and the rise of capitalism. Chapter 4 will analyze the pre-modern development of territoriality within a complex organization – the Catholic Church. Chapters 5 and 6 will consider the development of territoriality in the modern period: Chapter 5 will explore the rise of the four-hundred-year-old political territorial organization of North America; Chapter 6 will explore the

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development of territoriality within work environments for the same span of time.

These periods and contexts are selected to illustrate the most important historical developments in the uses of territoriality. They will permit us to see that some territorial effects are universal, occurring in practically any historical context and social organization, that others are specific to particular historical periods and organizations, and that only modern society tends to use the entire range of possible effects. Exploring how modern society employs this range and especially why it employs territorial effects that were not of use to pre-modern societies, will help to unravel the meanings and implications of modernity and the future role of territoriality.

### **Examples of territoriality**

Before we consider territoriality's theory and history, we must first describe what it is and what it does. To familiarize ourselves with the range of our subject, let us sketch territorial uses in three contexts. The first concerns the Chippewa Indians of North America and their contact with Europeans and serves to illustrate differences in territorial uses between pre-modern and modern societies. The second concerns territoriality in the modern home and the third considers territoriality in the modern work place. Both explore contemporary territorial uses in familiar small-scale contexts and point to the ubiquity of territoriality in modern life.

#### *The Chippewa*

Consider the group of American Indians, called the Chippewa (Ojibwe), who, in the early days of European contact, occupied a large area surrounding the western half of Lake Superior.<sup>1</sup> The Chippewa belong to the Algonkian language group which covered much of the north central and north eastern sections of the United States and the south central and eastern portions of Canada. There were well over 20,000 Chippewa at the time of first European contact. Although the Chippewa possessed a common language, culture, and system of beliefs, they did not possess a central political organization. They were more of a collection of bands than a 'tribe.'

The Chippewa were primarily hunters, gatherers, and collectors. They lived on berries, nuts, roots, wild rice, fish, and game. Those who lived in the south and west portions of Lake Superior in areas having approximately 100 frost-free days or more per year were able to supplement their diets by cultivating corn and squash. Their material artifacts included canoes, bows and arrows, spears, traps, and baskets; and their shelters ranged from wooden tepee-like constructions to lean-tos and dugouts. Some within the

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community were better able than others to make these artifacts, but knowledge of how to construct them was available to all. Those who had superior abilities were looked upon as leaders. Leadership was earned. A leader would not impose his decision on his people and could not prevent a person from obtaining a livelihood. In economic terms, these people were egalitarian.

The size of Chippewa social units beyond the family varied seasonally. During the spring, summer, and early autumn, when berries, roots, wild rice, and fish were readily at hand and the larger game were plentiful, families would gather together to form a village of perhaps 100 to 150 people. During the winter months, when food was scarce, the families would normally disperse into smaller units, with an individual household occasionally going it alone. Even though single families could survive a season by themselves, they were rarely out of reach of others during the winter, and in the warmer months reconstituted their villages to undertake those numerous cultural and economic activities that required sustained cooperation. When together, band members hunted, gathered, and shared their produce. Friendships were established and marriages planned. Membership in bands seems to have been voluntary. If tensions arose, or if needs changed, a family could leave one band and join another.

What can be said about Chippewa territorial organization? It is clear that as an entity the Chippewa occupied a vast area. But their habitation was never clearly bounded and fluctuated from year to year. On the east the Chippewa were interspersed among the closely related and friendly Ottawa and Potawatomi; in the north they were intermingled among the normally friendly Cree; in the west with more Cree, and Assiniboin.<sup>2</sup> The Chippewa had their greatest difficulty with the eastern and prairie Dakota who were along their southern and western frontiers. But a large tract of unoccupied no-man's land provided a buffer zone between them and their Dakota neighbors. Even if the perimeter of the Chippewa 'nation' had been stable, it is doubtful that it would have been circumambulated by a single Chippewa, or that many among them would possess a map-like representation of their collective domains.<sup>3</sup>

Chippewa bands, too, occupied particular areas, but their sites shifted after several years as did their social compositions. A band's encampment at a particular site and its use of the resources of the surrounding area must have been known and accepted by neighboring bands. But this does not mean that a band needed to claim a specific territory exclusively for its own use and defend it against incursions by other Chippewas. Population was sparse enough and food abundant enough so that when a band used an area it is unlikely it would be to the exclusion of confreres. Individuals and families within these egalitarian bands did not themselves 'own' land. The land was the community's to use, and band members were allowed to share

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in its use. A band could apportion part of an area to a particular family, but this did not mean the family owned the land or excluded others from it. This applies to the use of land for agriculture as well as for hunting and gathering.

The growing season north of the Great Lakes was too short for the Chippewas there to practice agriculture, but south and west of Lake Superior the cultivation of corn and squash formed an important supplement to Chippewa diet. These Indians had their fields nearby their villages. Each family may have had its own garden which it cleared, planted, and tended alone, or the process may have been collective. In any case these gardens were not clearly demarcated and fenced-in territories.

At the time of European contact, then, these people were hardly territorial as a 'nation,' although they may have been occasionally territorial as individual bands or as families within bands. Yet even here their assertion of control over an area was often imprecise, seasonal, and strategic. Bands or families may have laid claim to an area only if they were reasonably confident that the resources they were after would be there and if they knew there would be competition for these resources from other groups. Imagining these very conditions to predominate allows us to consider how a group 'such as' the Chippewas might alter and intensify their territorial use. We say 'such as' because some of the factors we will consider, although important causes of changes in territorial use in other pre-literate societies, and although present in Chippewa society, were not in fact the primary ones to alter Chippewa territorial use. Yet entertaining them as possibilities will help us understand how in general a simple pre-literate society can develop primarily internal pressures to alter relationships between territoriality and social organization.

In this vein suppose that game becomes scarcer and for those Chippewa in the south more time must be devoted to agriculture. Suppose also that for some in Minnesota and Wisconsin the horse becomes part of their culture. Members of the community may still collectively clear the fields, plant, and tend crops, but how are these now vital crops to be protected from the wild animals, from the very young children, and from the horses? It is possible that these are minor difficulties and that no special precautions are needed. The threat from wild animals may be negligible; the adults can closely supervise the children and their access to the crops; and the horses may find enough grass to graze on so that they will not forage in the gardens. But it could also be the case that even if these are not serious problems, the community finds it more convenient either to fence off the fields or to fence in the horses, or both. The purposes of these clear territorial demarcations would be to establish different degrees of access to things in space. Yet little else need change. The community may still maintain its original goals.

But it is not difficult to have our imaginations go a step further to consider conditions of greater crowding, making unavoidable more complex ter-



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ritorial partitions within the band. The size of the community itself may grow to the point where casual community work efforts become unmanageable, and population pressure from other groups may make it impossible for a family simply to leave one band for another. Even though the community may still be egalitarian – even though the land is still the community’s – the fields may now be allocated to families on the basis of need, and family plots may have to be demarcated and access restricted simply to prevent inadvertent trampling. The possibilities for territoriality can multiply within this egalitarian society. But there is a point at which some of these possibilities may actually interfere with the values of community sharing and cooperation. This is not to say that different uses of territoriality alone can transform social relations from, in this case, an egalitarian to a class structured society. But territoriality can be a catalyst in the process of change and can be used differently and to as much advantage by a class divided as by an egalitarian society. If for example a Chippewa ruling family were to emerge claiming access to some or all of the community’s resources, territoriality would be an extremely useful device to affect its claims.

These speculations point to the possibility of territorial changes occurring largely from forces within the society. Such transformations have in fact been documented for several pre-literate societies and will be examined more closely in a subsequent chapter. But for the Chippewa, most of the social and territorial transformations were imposed upon them by European and American economy and polity.

The European fur trade soon strained social relationships within the bands. It strained egalitarian and communal efforts. It affected hunting habits and an ecology of the area, and it may have increased individual and family territorial control at the expense of communal access. But the adoption of private property was selective. Some have claimed that as a result of the fur trade individual families among Woodland Indian tribes, including the Chippewa, appeared to own hunting grounds that were passed down from father to son. But upon close inspection of the evidence it seems that private territorial control may have been exercised only over access to furs and not to other resources. According to Leacock these hunting territories, at least for the Montagnais, ‘did not involve true land ownership. One could not trap near another’s line, but anyone could hunt game animals, could fish, or could gather wood, berries, or birchbark on another’s grounds as long as these products of the land were for use, and not for sale.’<sup>4</sup>

European settlement east of the Alleghenys also increased population pressure throughout the upper Mid-West as tribes moved farther west to find new land. Population pressure and reliance on trade further strained communal social-territorial relationships of bands; many families became both dependent on and skillful in the fur trade. This adaptation actually helped extend the Chippewa domain until by the 1840s Chippewa settlement

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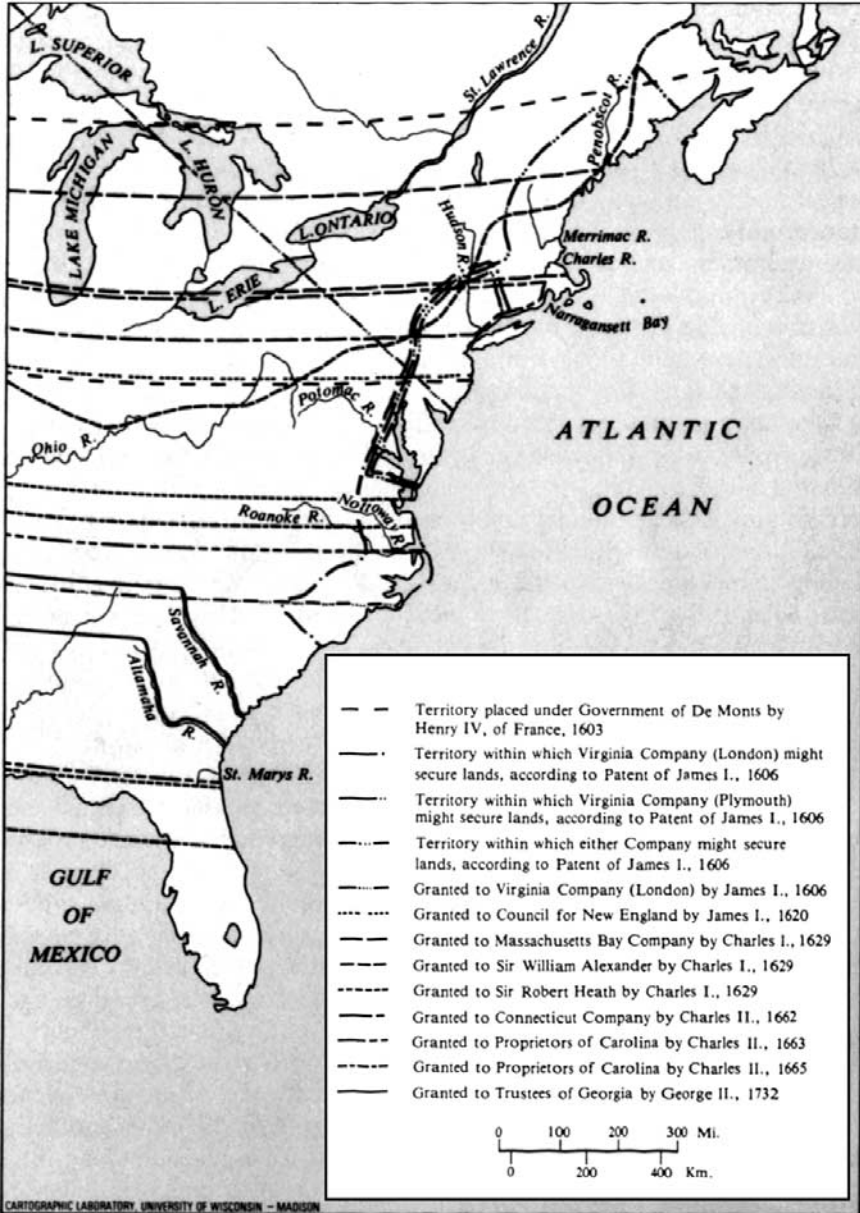


Figure 1.1 Colonial land grants, 1603–1732  
 Source: *Atlas of the Historical Geography of the United States*, ed. Charles O. Paullin and J. K. Wright (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1932).