

Territoriality: the transcendental, primordial feature of modern societies*

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ABSTRACT. This article argues that one feature of all societies is territoriality and that one element of territoriality is the transcendental, primordial attachment. Consequently, the article is critical of arguments which view territoriality, including that of modern society, as primarily a post-Cartesian strategy of control or access. The phenomenon of the territoriality of modern societies and the this-worldly, transcendental referents in the collective self-consciousness which it presupposes also call into question the assumption of the putatively pervasive, contractarian individualism of modern society.

In the so-called secular and individualistic twentieth century, millions and millions of human beings have given their lives for a land and a country which they believe to be their own. These and other events, especially recent ones in Eastern Europe, tragic though they are, vividly indicate that territorial integrity and territorial sovereignty remain extremely important in the organisation of human society. Indications of this importance may be seen in the continuing emasculation of the Maastricht treaty and the continuing attacks on the increasingly irrelevant European monetary system; or in the recent victory of the queen of Poland, the Virgin Mary, against her mortal enemy, Russia (Davies 1982: 401); or in events in the former Soviet Union or in what was once Yugoslavia; or in events in Sri Lanka, India or Quebec; or in the establishment of the state of Israel; and in many, many other events – not to mention two world wars. Such events indicate that the significance which is attributed to territoriality remains a fundamental, constitutive element of modern society. As such, territoriality calls into question the widely held assumption of the complete secularisation and individualism of our time as described, for example, by Constant (1988), Tönnies (1940), Simmel (1971; 1978), Troeltsch (1986; 1991), and Weber.¹

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Critics might object to my initial observations with the claim that these recent events to which I have referred are, in fact, 'responses' to both the secularisation and the utilitarian calculation required by the modern market. It is my belief that such an objection is little more than a sleight of hand; for what requires explanation is precisely the 'unmodern' nature of these all too pervasive 'responses'. Even as responses, these events have something to do with the fundamental order of society and the resistance of that order to the 'twisting of the tails of the sacred cows of society'.

One of these 'sacred cows' is the primordial attachment to one's own country, one's own land and one's own way of life. By the term primordial, I do not mean a racial or genetic predisposition; rather it refers to the significance of vitality which man attributes to and is constitutive of both nativity and structures of nativity, whether that structure be the relation of lineage, for example, the family, or the relation of area, for example, the locality in which one is born and in which one is sustained.² Man has recognised and continues to recognise these two relations or lines of descent as life-giving and life-determining structures of nativity; or as Saint Augustine acknowledged the phenomenon, those relations which bear 'the miraculous power of the seed'.³

The sociological, anthropological and phenomenological puzzle of territoriality and its related phenomenon of nationality is that the attachments to the territory of the national state is to a structure considerably more extensive than that of a family or a locality. Nevertheless, the fact is that throughout history man has considered, albeit with variations, environments which are considerably more extensive than those of the family and the home to be his 'own', hence, integral to his life. It is this historically persistent primordial pattern of attachment to relatively extensive environments, for example, to the territory of the national state, which is my concern here.

How is the continuing significance of territory as shown in recent events to be understood? The eminent geographer, Robert Sack (1980: 193; 1986) apparently thinks that 'the attachment to nation-states in fact may be the clearest expression of mythical-magical consciousness (what Lévy-Bruhl (1985) called primitive mentality) of place in the twentieth century'. However, if Sack is correct, and given the continuing significance of territoriality and nationality, what does his observation say about the nature of the territorially bounded societies of our time? This question poses a number of problems for us to consider. The particular problem I wish to consider is the nature of territory or, for lack of a better term, 'territoriality'.

II

One constitutive prerequisite for the existence of a territory is the existence of boundaries. These boundaries are not always precise and they do not always remain stable. How 'stable' a boundary is and the reasons

for its stability are important problems. Indeed, stability is a most important and most difficult historical, political and sociological phenomenon to understand.

The existence of boundaries and the area, the territory, within those boundaries imply that this area is conceived as being relatively homogeneous in some way. This relative, internal homogeneity is an essential element of territoriality. By virtue of being designated as an area which exists within boundaries, the entire designated land is considered in certain respects to be relatively homogeneous or uniform – not, of course, topographically homogeneous, but sociologically homogeneous. Each and every particular, smaller area of ground within the boundaries is only a part of the more extensive territory; as such, these different areas within the boundaries are in certain respects relatively similar to each other in contrast to those areas which are outside the boundaries.

Often it has been argued that an area of land is a single, homogeneous area by virtue of the propinquity of its parts within natural topographical boundaries like seas, oceans and mountains. That is, that different areas of land should be considered uniform, one and the same, by virtue of their being contiguous with one another. This was certainly one argument for the territorial expansion of the United States from the Atlantic to the Pacific under the banner of ‘manifest destiny’.⁴

One problem with this argument is that we must account for the apparent deviations from the recognition of territoriality as a consequence of bounded propinquity. A striking exception was the Ottoman empire. Rather than the area of land within the Ottoman empire being considered uniform or homogeneous, it was in fact quite heterogeneous and was accepted as such. It was divided up into different communities, usually religious – the *millet* system – each with its own laws. As a matter of fact, it is precisely this heterogeneity which is implied by our very use of the term ‘empire’. This heterogeneity is one of the essential characteristics which distinguish an empire from a national state.

Furthermore, we need only think of the recent examples of Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Cyprus, and now the Balkans where propinquity evidently has been less salient as a constitutive element of territoriality – or, as the case may be, a more circumscribed propinquity has been a factor in the attempt to constitute a new territory. Clearly, these examples force us to reconsider the constitutive elements of boundaries and in what way these elements influence the nature of the relative homogeneity, or lack thereof, of the area, the ‘territory’, within those boundaries.

One of the things at stake here is the nature of and apparent limits to the expansion of familiarity – that is, the nature of and limits to what we consider to be our own; our own land and our own people. While it is clear that the scope of ‘interaction’, influenced by modern means of communication and transportation, and the existence of extensive markets for agricultural and industrial goods are factors which

affect the range and intensity of familiarity, they are most certainly not decisive.

The examples of the Ottoman empire, Cyprus, Sri Lanka and the Balkans indicate that historical, sociological, anthropological – choose whatever term you wish, we can avoid this minor terminological difficulty by using the German *geistige* – factors have also influenced the distinctive features of the boundaries of a territory, hence, the distinctive features of any particular territory. Thus, territorial boundaries may also correspond to linguistic boundaries; or territorial boundaries may correspond to the boundaries of a religious collectivity; or territorial boundaries may indicate demographic cleavages (Watkins 1991: 112, 138); or, most importantly, territorial boundaries may indicate the extent of the jurisdiction of the *lex terrae*, the codified and promulgated law of the land.

Indeed, the law of the land, which implies recognition of a bounded uniformity in subjection to the law – that is, what has sometimes been referred to as the formal rationalisation of the law (Weber 1954) – is a very important element in the establishment and, above all, the stability of the territorial boundaries of a society. This is the case because one element of the stability of a society is its consciousness of itself, that is, its self-image which guides its continual self-regulation and self-renewal. When a society is conscious of itself, the existence of that society is an object of the imagination and reflection of its individual members often through contemplation of the events of its territorially bounded history, but also especially through the recognition of the legitimacy of the territorially bounded law of the society.

It is precisely this formal rationalisation of the law which historically has been an essential factor in the formation of a 'people' with 'their' territory. Because the *millet* system of the Ottoman empire recognised rather than undermined distinct legal communities, it was a retarding influence on the emergence of stable 'peoples' with their own territories. That is, the *millet* system retarded rather than contributed to the existence of that relative homogeneity required for the existence of a territory, above all, a national territory. We are witnessing today in the Balkans the legacy of this legal heterogeneity of the Ottoman empire. In this sense, the *millet* system was relatively irrational, in contrast to the more rational territorial legal codes which emerged in and contributed – to be sure, often violently – to the formation of the various societies of Western Europe. The connection between the rationalisation of the law and the consolidation of the relatively extensive primordial structures of a 'people' and a territory is just one of the many paradoxes of territoriality and its related phenomenon of the national state. This connection may be observed in such historically diverse circumstances as the probable constitution of the putative lineage of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob through adoption of the ancient Israelite covenant, or the continuing territorialisation of the law during the Middle Ages in Europe. That such a connection exists between formal rationality

(of the law) and primordiality is a cautionary reminder that human activity at any particular time cannot with any explanatory accuracy be subsumed under only one descriptive category of behaviour. Perhaps this paradox has become sharpest in several liberal democratic societies as they are constituted by both a recognition of the universal rights of man and a territorially delimited exercise of those rights.

The image of territorial boundaries also contains connections with the relations of centre and periphery (Shils 1975); certainly stable territorial boundaries do, for such a stability indicates an achieved determination of what is appropriately the periphery. Here, I indicate only a few of the many possible *geistige*, or transcendental, factors which have influenced the nature of the boundaries of any particular territory and, thus, the distinctive features of that territory.

III

This brief digression into the different, possible constitutive elements of territorial boundaries, which in turn indicate the distinctive features of the society within those boundaries, means that these territorial boundaries do not merely imply territorial jurisdiction. They also imply the jurisdiction of distinctive patterns of human conduct. Now, the idiom commonly employed within the social sciences is that within territorial boundaries different individuals 'interact'. But is this so?

The term 'interact' has overly behavioristic, atomistic connotations. It also suggests temporal simultaneity. That is, the use of the term implies a relation where there is nothing outside the two interactors which has any bearing on the interaction; it is as if each actor is entirely self-contained; it is as if each calculating actor only takes into account his or her own maximisation of pleasure. Such an implication greatly misrepresents both the nature of human action and the mind of the individual. A great deal of human activity is rarely – almost never – a phenomenon of simply or primarily two or more persons 'interacting'. Individuals orient their actions in ways that are meaningful to one another; their actions are guided by the norms engendered by the shared beliefs constitutive of the territorially bounded society. Territorial boundaries imply the existence and usually indicate the jurisdiction of such substantive orientations.

We do not interact, but we *participate* in patterns of activity which are valid within certain territorial boundaries. Thus, territory is not primarily the spatial location of interaction; rather, it is *in* the image of the territory, that is, in the substantive patterns constitutive of a territory, that the individual members of the collectivity participate. It is the distinctive features of this participation in this image of the territorially bounded community which indicates in what way the designated area within the boundaries is sociologically relatively uniform. It is a participation (to be

sure with varying degrees of saliency across different strata of society at any particular time) in the territorially bounded customs, traditions, laws, historical knowledge and often even the language – what Durkheim referred to as the collective consciousness – of a society. It is precisely this phenomenon of participation in a realm of these symbolic objectifications which raises questions about the validity of the allegations about the pervasive ‘tremendous individualism’ of modern society.

Rarely are these bounded patterns ‘negotiated’, although often specific actions within these patterns are. These bounded patterns are given, rather than negotiated; they are there; they have a relatively independent, *a priori* existence. The force of life exists not only within the individual; there are relatively independent, stabilised expressions of life around the individual as well. That is precisely what these substantive orientations, these bounded patterns of action and beliefs, which are constitutive of a territory, are: language, custom and law. They are all stabilised, objectified expressions of life in which the individual participates. As such, these beliefs and the patterns of human conduct which they imply are life-ordering and life-sustaining. By no means is this merely a recognition that these stabilised, objective patterns in which the individual participates function as ordering and sustaining channels of human activity. The very fact that these substantive orientations are life-ordering and life-sustaining means that they are likely to be recognised as containing charismatic properties. That is why most human beings revere their own language, customs, laws and traditions in general. Because these life-ordering and life-sustaining stabilised patterns have charismatic attributes, they may be viewed as being somewhat similar to the powerful, life-determining ‘mana’ of the primitive mentality, as described by Lévy-Bruhl, in which the individual participates.

I believe that Karl Popper (1972: 106–90; 1977) and Edward Shils (1981) were correct to characterise these bounded patterns in which we participate as having an ‘objective’ existence. In addition to the recognition of their objectivity, these bounded patterns, once again, have charismatic attributes: they order and sustain life. Therein lies the key to our understanding the phenomenon of patriotism. Therein lies the key to our understanding the problem of why, during the twentieth century, millions of human beings have been willing to risk their own lives to defend their own countries, their own pattern of life. Thus, there would appear to be a suggestive parallel between Lévy-Bruhl’s ‘law of participation’ and Popper’s and Shils’ understanding of the participation of the individual psyche, constitutive of what Popper called ‘World Two’, in the symbolic configurations and bounded patterns, constitutive of what Popper called ‘World Three’. Of course, not all the symbolic configurations within World Three have charismatic properties, for example, a mathematical proposition does not; but many of those configurations constitutive of territoriality and nationality do. These all too brief remarks lead us to conclude that much of our use of the word ‘territory’ refers not merely to a geometrically delineated space; it rather

refers to the transcendental significance of that space; it refers to the life-ordering and life-sustaining significance of a space which makes that space into a meaningful structure.⁵

IV

It will be helpful if we proceed by making a distinction between two general categories of factors constitutive of territoriality. On the one hand, the existence of a territory implies an area of the earth's surface, the physical characteristics of the land, etc. Moreover, it also implies, as we have observed, a bounded, intricate patchwork of patterns of relationships in which life is carried on. These two factors are both objective and may be studied with the appropriate scientific procedures; the former using many of the techniques employed in, for example, cartography and topography, the latter using techniques employed in demography and social surveys.

However, to turn to the second category of factors, territoriality also implies: (a) how the land is conceived by those who live within the territory, and (b) the consciousness of – or we may say the shared significance attributed to – these bounded patterns of relationships. This second aspect of territoriality is also objective, albeit its nature is more difficult to study. As this consciousness is a consequence of a complicated historical development, we may say that it is a product of the human imagination, but it is not imaginary. It has acquired reality. The recognition of this complicated historical development of this collective consciousness makes explicit what was implicit in our use of the term 'participation'; namely, that territoriality is a phenomenon of bounded temporal depth – what Dilthey (1989) referred to as a structure of 'duration'. This is by no means merely to say that the collective self-consciousness constitutive of territoriality is an historical structure. It does mean that current elements of the structure of a territory are references to past events which provide meaning to and, hence, order our activities in the present.⁶ A territory is a temporally deep structure.

If we agree that these are both aspects of territoriality, then a number of further problems arise, in particular involving the relation between this bounded shared attribution, this collective consciousness, and the corresponding area of the earth's surface. If territoriality does imply the existence of collective self-consciousness (in fact, several collective self-consciousnesses, for those within the territory are recognised as such by those outside the territory and vice versa), then what is the nature of those attachments formed by the collectivity of human beings not only among themselves, such that they are a collectivity, but also to the inanimate space, such that the latter becomes a territory?

How does the animate, human beings, and the connections between them – both cognitive beliefs and affectual feelings – 'penetrate', as it were, the

inanimate, the soil? That this, in fact, occurs seems clear from the phenomenon of 'familiarisation': in our common vernacular we rarely speak of a territory; rather, we often speak of 'home', 'homeland', even 'fatherland'.⁷ Nor are these accidental or historically vestigial expressions; for one needs only to consider for a moment one's own continual use of the terms 'house' and 'home' and what makes a house into a home. Is it that when something is enveloped by the mind of man, when it has become 'familiar' to us, we have turned our attention to the thing, made it some way our own, possess it; and by so doing 'animate' the thing, 'familiarise' it? Is the act of possession, both by the individual and the collectivity, of the inanimate an expression of the realisation of the will to live (Van Der Leeuw 1963)? If it is, then it is perhaps more understandable why we not only tend to 'animate' the inanimate, but also tend to describe those inanimate things which we possess, with which we are familiar, and which have an explicit bearing on the ordering and sustaining of life in terms of familial relations – the latter being the most immediate, most familiar and obvious vehicle of life.

A territory is not simply an area within which certain physical actions are performed; rather, it refers to a structural, symbolic condition which has significance for those who act within it and towards it. Thus, the phenomenon of territoriality is not to be considered primarily within the context of such behaviouristic categories as the 'range' or the 'habitat'. In this regard, Hans Gadamer (1988: 402) was entirely correct when he observed that to have a 'world', in this case, a territory, is to have an attitude towards it. However, as has already been suggested, one can not be content merely to insist that what is significant to the individual and to the collectivity necessarily implies the existence of an attitude which shares in the meaning of the particular structure. What is the nature of the 'attitude' involved in territoriality such that millions of human beings in the twentieth century have sacrificed and are willing to sacrifice their lives for their 'own' land, their territory? It appears that in historically diverse situations, man has believed that his own life is dependent upon the continued existence of the territorial sovereignty of 'his' country. Once again, the puzzle of territoriality is the attribution of this primordial, life-giving, and life-sustaining significance to an environment which is considerably more extensive than that recognised by the relatively more immediate actions of the family.

As a consequence of the various, historically conditioned, objective achievements of the mind which are constitutive of a territory and its boundaries, it has been noted that territoriality is a spatial structure of temporal depth. It has also been noted that the individual participates in the image of this temporally deep, that is historically produced and tradition-bearing structure.

There is a phenomenological vagueness to this use of the term 'participation'. The spatial structure of a territory and the objective image

of that structure must not be viewed as being exclusively external to the individual who participates in that structure. To view participation in this manner is to adopt a misleading dichotomy which will never be able to help us understand why many different individuals believe a territory to be their own, and why, further, they are willing to sacrifice their lives for their territory and their country. In contrast, it must be emphasised that the image of the territory is also an object of the consciousness of the individual about the individual. The individual, too, has temporal depth – both physically, that is, developmentally – but also, and more relevant here, in the very constitution of his own image of himself, in the very constitution of his own ‘mental environment’. There is an ‘intermingling’ here between the objective image of the territory in which the individual participates, and the image which the individual has of himself. This ‘intermingling’ may be observed in the fact that from the moment of birth the individual is never merely a member of the family into which he or she is born; the individual is also a member of the larger collectivity into which he or she is born.

Whatever phenomenologically takes place in this relation between the self-consciousness of the individual and the territorially bounded collective self-consciousness of the society, there appears to be an historically persistent, albeit with variations, tendency to describe different associations and relations even to inanimate objects in terms of biological connectedness – for example, through the use of certain adjectives like ‘home’ and ‘father’ in respectively ‘homeland’ and ‘fatherland’ or simply through the use of possessive pronouns and adjectives, male and female. This tendency to conflate the animate with the inanimate has often been described as an expression of ‘primitive mentality’. The facts of the twentieth century demand that we conclude that an important part – I do not say all, but an important part – of the modern *Weltanschauung* is this so-called primitive mentality.

There is a wide variability in patterns of action; obviously not all activities are about the generation and sustenance of life, nor do they all include the phenomena of ‘animation’ or ‘familiarisation’. Nevertheless, I doubt that any territory can exist that is not to one degree or another ‘animated’. Employing the phrase of the geographers John Kirtland Wright (1966: 250–85) and Yi-Fu Tuan (1976), ‘geopiety’ is an historically pervasive phenomenon. Now the specific task for historical and sociological research is to determine which factors facilitate a ‘familiarity’ with an area of land such that it becomes a territory. How does the image of an extent of land become a constitutive part of what Max Scheler suggestively called the ‘mental environment’ both of the individual and of the collectivity which the individual ‘falls in with’ (Scheler 1954); or, as I, in an allusion to Lévy-Bruhl’s ‘law of participation’, have formulated the phenomenon, in which the individual ‘participates’? These are the extraordinarily difficult and perhaps overly ambitious questions before us. Here, I will limit myself to a few observations, primarily of a negative or cautionary nature.

V

Clearly there is much merit to Henry Sumner Maine's (1970: 165) conclusion that 'the movement of the progressive societies has hitherto been a movement from status to contract', or in the terminology of Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils (1951), a movement exhibiting an increasing emphasis on individual achievement at the expense of ascription with qualities derived from membership in primordial collectivities. I will even risk the hoary accusation of 'evolutionism' by stating that the history of the Occident exhibits a development of the recognition of the distinction of the individual with rights and duties specific to himself. However, we must object to Maine's insistence that the first and sole possible criterion for membership in the status-dominated collectivity was the attribution of kinship of blood and that only later when the status-bound society was a thing of the past did there arise a recognition of common locality – territoriality – as a basis for membership in society. Maine refused to acknowledge any territorial component in the constitution of the collective self-consciousness of the historically earlier, status-dominated societies.⁸ Apparently, it did not occur to Maine that the fiction of common ancestry, of an original brotherhood, could be attributed by the members of the status-dominated, primordial collectivity to those with whom they shared residence in a territory. In this regard, Robert Lowie's (1927: 51–73) criticism of Maine was definitive. The well-known existence of deities of locality and the 'god of the land' of these relatively small societies, and their common worship indicate the existence of what Lowie called the 'territorial tie'.

Although Maine was correct about territoriality in modern contract-bound societies, that is to say, the recognition of membership based on co-residence, he did not see that territoriality is a limitation on the contractualism of modern society. I shall return to this point in a moment. Here, let us merely note the fact that there is a fiction of kinship implied in our use of the term 'people'.

The point I wish to emphasise here is that we cannot successfully segregate the phenomenon of territoriality historically, that is, under the rubric of a distinction between antiquity and 'modernity'. A more differentiated attempt than that of Maine to depict a historical cleavage and development of territoriality was presented a number of years ago by Marshall Sahlins (1968: 6). He argued that while territories clearly existed in ancient and tribal societies, it was only in the modern era of the state where society was established as a territory. I believe this argument to be historically misleading.⁹ For example, obviously territoriality was an essential, explicit component in the constitution of the society of ancient Israel (Grosby 1993). This is especially so if the system of the twelve tribes corresponds to and is a consequence of the administrative, territorial division of ancient Israel under Solomon (Lemche 1985: 285–88). In any

event, the tribal names Judah, Ephraim, Benjamin and Naphtali clearly indicate that they refer to territorial location (Noth 1960: 56–67). Furthermore, the land of ancient Israel is described in Numbers 34 as having rather remarkably precise, designated boundaries. We also find throughout the long history of ancient Egypt a persistent conception of territorial boundaries – boundaries which were understood to separate the Egyptians from the ‘Asiatics’, ‘Sand-dwellers’ and ‘Nubians’.¹⁰ I note in passing that there are distinctive terms in hieroglyphics for ‘the land of Egypt’ and ‘the people of Egypt’ (Morenz 1973; Gardiner 1916; Bullock 1978).¹¹ Many other examples could be adduced.¹² In these examples from antiquity, we are justified in recognising the existence and importance of territorial boundaries and not merely frontiers.

We must reject any argument that insists that territoriality is a product of post-Cartesian ‘modernity’. However, modern means of communication and transportation, and markets for agricultural and industrial goods have been factors which have facilitated the emergence and stability of territories larger than what typically existed in antiquity.

Regarding territoriality and the related phenomenon of nationality in the Middle Ages, it is already a number of years since Ernst Kantorowicz (1957: 232–72), Gaines Post (1953) and Joseph Strayer (1971: 312–13) showed that by the early fourteenth century (1) custom, law and descent were assumed to go together; (2) that law had become territorialised; and (3) ‘peoples’ came to be perceived in territorial terms.¹³ That is, medieval ideas about kingdoms and peoples were very like modern ideas about nations (Reynolds 1984: 9, 262). This is abundantly clear from the fourteenth century English law definition of ‘alien’ as someone not born in the territory of England (Pollock and Maitland 1968). Moreover, recent research has indicated that the term *patria* was used as early as 700 AD as a political term designating (1) a *regnum* (2) the geographical area of the *regnum* and (3) even the name of the people of that area (Eichenberger 1991). Furthermore, it is surely significant that the images of the promised land and the chosen people of the Old Testament clearly and repeatedly reappear in fourteenth-century France (Strayer 1971; Schneidmüller 1987) and, of course, seventeenth-century England.¹⁴ The relevance of these latter observations is not merely that extended territoriality is a phenomenon of the Middle Ages in Europe, but also that it has not been undermined by universalistic Christianity. That the two coexist, exerting influence on one another, is surely paradoxical; but it has been historically shown not to be a contradiction. That this is so is abundantly clear from the existence of ‘national’ Christian churches: the Gallican, Anglican, and the entire history of Eastern Christianity.

For too long now much of the historical and sociological research on territoriality and nationality has been marred by the adoption of obfuscatory and simplistic dichotomies. Typical of such an adoption are such groundless assertions as that there was no conception of bounded territory in antiquity (Giddens 1985: 50–51), or that extended territoriality or

nationality are exclusively modern phenomena. In contrast to these kinds of assertions found, for example, in the many works of Hans Kohn, or in Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism*, or in Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, or in E. J. Hobsbawm's *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, stands the refreshing observation of the medievalist Susan Reynolds (1984: 255–56).

There is no foundation at all for the belief, common among students of modern nationalism that the word *natio* was seldom used in the middle ages except to describe the *nationes* in which university students were divided. It was used much more widely than that, and often as a synonym for *gens* ... There is no reason to believe that words of this kind [for example, *populus*, *natio*, *gens*] were used more precisely and consistently through the centuries than they are today ... like a *gens* or a *natio*, a *populus* [a people or a country or a nation] was thought of as a community of custom, descent and government.

Her observations and the evidence which supports them (Eichenberger 1991; Schneidmüller 1987) have been ignored often as a consequence of the adoption of a rigid distinction between antiquity and 'modernity' or a variant of that distinction, between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. One consequence of such an ill-founded approach is to assume that a territory of a nation exists only when there is some kind of 'homogenised *Gesellschaft*'.¹⁵ If that homogeneity does not exist, so the argument goes, then a territory (or a nation) is said not to exist. Such a procedure is to erect a straw man only to knock it down.

Earlier, I argued that the existence of a territory assumed a *relative* homogeneity or uniformity. No territory can be sociologically completely homogeneous. For example, the relation between the centre and the periphery, a necessary constitutive factor of extended territoriality, is a paradoxical relation of relative homogeneity. Often the periphery is resentful of the centre; in any event, the periphery is different from the centre. Yet while it is different, the periphery is nonetheless tied to the centre in various ways which an area outside the boundaries of that territory is not. It was also observed earlier that individuals exhibit a primordial attachment to their family and to the locality in which they are born and in which they live. Yet, these attachments somewhat paradoxically and sometimes uneasily coexist with attachments to the larger, life-sustaining territory of the society in which those individuals also live. In this sense, many smaller 'territories' may and usually do exist within a necessarily only relatively homogeneous, larger territory.

The relation between these smaller 'territories' within a larger territory may be stable or unstable depending upon innumerable factors. The existence of the former does not deny the existence of the latter or vice versa. Sometimes the attachments to local areas may be and often are considerably more salient and intense than those to the larger area of that territory which encompasses the smaller areas. For example, the allegiances

to locality in seventeenth and eighteenth-century France were certainly powerful. Yet such allegiances coexisted with an awareness, sometimes very vague indeed, that there was a centre, i.e. the king or Paris, and that the king merited one's deference. On the other hand, it may be only during a war that the patriotic attachment to the larger area of the territory clearly takes precedence over the attachment to the locality within that territory.

Of course, the ability to be aware of a centre of a territorially extensive society has been heightened by education and by modern means of communication and transportation. However, in the absence of such technological developments, there still exists the possibility of allegiance to a geographically distant centre. To take two, rather graphic examples: the Jews of the Diaspora of antiquity annually sent a half-shekel to Jerusalem; for almost two millennia now, Catholics have looked toward Rome. Moreover, Catholics have often done so while also, paradoxically, worshipping local saints at local sacred sites.

Sometimes it is argued that the expression of territoriality differs dramatically depending upon the particular civilisation. Although there appears to be some variability, for example, the relative lack of significance of nationality in Islamic civilisation (Lewis 1991), this argument must be pursued with caution or risk being too facile. For example, we may certainly speak of an Egyptian nation; and the Palestinians have demanded a land of their own so that they can live as a nation. Furthermore, one may also observe territoriality in civilisations which have developed under the influence of one of the more 'other-worldly' of all religions, namely, Buddhism. This may be observed even very early in the history of Buddhist civilisation, for example, in the account of Duṭṭhagāmaṇī (approximately 100 BC) in the Mahāvamsa (Geiger 1986). (The question of the historical reliability of the Mahāvamsa does not in any way invalidate this point.) In chapter 25 of the Mahāvamsa, the warrior-king Duṭṭhagāmaṇī is described as having unified the land of Laṅkā, putatively in the service of spreading the doctrine of Saṃbuddha. In this account, we observe an image of Sri Lanka as a territory unified through the adoption of the Buddhist religion. It is difficult to imagine the current Sinhalese nationalist perspective in the absence of this 2,000 year old tradition. I note in passing that the Mahāvamsa (1.20) also states that in order for Laṅkā to become a territory proper for Buddhism, the 'Canaanites' of Laṅkā, the Yakkahs, had to be first put under the *herem*, the ban. Were the mythological Yakkahs an allusion to the Tamils?

Territoriality is not by any means distinctive of modern times, or of advanced modern states. It is a fundamental feature of all human societies. We may even observe rather stable territorial attachments in the phenomenon of nomadism. In a series of extraordinarily interesting articles, M. B. Rowton examined the nomadism of Western Asia and particularly of the ancient Near East. Drawing upon Lattimore's *Studies in Frontier History* and Johnson's *The Nature of Nomadism* and the work of Fredrik Barth

(1961; 1981), Rowton (1974) concluded that what actually takes place in this area is not nomadism, but 'enclosed nomadism'. The latter is characteristic of pastoralists who are a part of a tribe which includes a sedentary element, and who also seasonally migrate within sedentary regions. Moreover, there is a link formed between nomad and sedent, between tribe and town such that it was not uncommon in, for example, the ancient Near East for town and tribe to share the same name.¹⁶ In these instances, while there may not be stable territorial boundaries, there is a clear, persistent attachment, probably constitutive of the collectivity, to locality. Territorial attachments may even be observed among the camel nomads of the Arabian peninsula of the twentieth century. The nomadic Al Murrah, who sometimes travel 1,000 km looking for desirable water pasturage, have a tribal territory, *dirrat al murrah*. The Al Murrah even claim to have a home town, Najran in south-western Saudi Arabia (Cole 1973).

VI

It is sometimes conceded that while there may have been expressions of extended territoriality in antiquity and in the Middle Ages, territoriality today is of a radically different nature.¹⁷ Such an argument stresses the transformative significance of democratic citizenship on the emergence of a relatively more uniform territory. There can be no doubt that, in this case, an even further development of the formal rationalisation of the law has contributed mightily to the existence of a sociologically more homogeneous territory. Nevertheless, such an argument minimises the past and continuing significance of 'representation' as an essential factor contributing to the cohesion of a territorially extensive society – where an individual represents the collectivity and whose actions are attributed to the members of the collectivity. Of course, historically the king is the classic example of such representation – a king who is also subject to the law (Kern 1939).¹⁸ In any event, to understand territoriality today as primarily a democratically acceptable, modern mechanism or 'strategy' for the attribution of citizenship is to overlook its more profound and ethically often very troublesome aspects.

The question remains as to why human beings attribute significance to what outwardly seems like merely a physical fact. Even in societies of democratic citizenship, there is an important primordial element constitutive of these societies. For example, while it is of course obvious that economic considerations have been a factor in the recent French, German and American¹⁹ restrictions on immigration, there is still more to these restrictions than merely such considerations. Moreover, an attempt to account for these restrictions on immigration among Western, democratic countries as consequences of recent shifts in the political landscape of these

countries is certainly much too facile. One ought to remember that the United States has had numerous restrictions on immigration for the past hundred years. On the contrary, the territories of these societies have never been nor are they now merely locations of residence. For better or for worse, these territories are 'homes' for those who are born and dwell within them. The entire territory of the national state is recognised in some way to be your 'own'; it is where you were born; it is the jurisdiction of that with which you are familiar: your customs and language – your way of life.²⁰ One saw an expression of this recognition when in 1989–90 thousands of Germans took to the streets demanding *Einheit*: one people, one land. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that membership in the territorially circumscribed society of the United States, which has assimilated so many immigrants, is, for the most part, determined by birth in the territory. The *ascriptive* criterion of birth, even if it is no more than birth in the territory, is a primordial criterion for the determination of membership in a collectivity.

I have raised objections to the widely accepted, putative historical sequence of first kinship or blood ties, then territoriality – the one 'pre-modern', the other 'modern'. It must not be overlooked that, in many modern societies, kinship is attributed, in various ways, to those who are considered 'related' by virtue of birth in and coresidence in a territory. It is not quite accurate to assert as Simmel and Tönnies did that this modern relation, in contrast to earlier ones, is qualitatively different by virtue of its 'impersonality', its *gesellschaftliche* quality. On the contrary, membership in the territorially extensive national state is *impersonally personal*. This quality of the 'impersonally personal' can be readily observed by considering briefly one's own reaction to *your fellow* countrymen who were held as hostages. You have never met these individuals; you have never spoken to them; you have never had any 'face to face' relations with them. To this extent, your relations with these people are, in fact, impersonal. Yet, you also experience a deeply felt sense of outrage because *your fellow* countrymen have been taken hostage – it is a rather 'personal' affair, there is an aspect of a *gemeinschaftliche* relation. It is precisely in the above use of the possessive adjective 'your' and the adjective 'fellow' where we may observe the immediacy of the primordial attachment, and its extension.

Our understanding of modern society, above all of territoriality, will be improved if we put aside the distinction of a pre-modern *Gemeinschaft* and a modern *Gesellschaft* as a rigid analytical and historical dichotomy; and, instead, view both as patterns of activity which often interpenetrate one another in various ways throughout history. This is the conclusion I draw from the observation of the geographer Robert Sack with which I began. The time is long overdue to question the explanatory merit of what is in my view too simplistic a distinction between what is modern and what is not, irrespective of the obvious validity of some aspects of the distinction and irrespective of where one draws that distinction (for example, with Machiavelli or Hobbes, or with Bacon or Descartes or even Abelard (Kolakowski 1990)).

There is a fundamental, primordial feature in modern societies. Territory is life-sustaining. It sustains biologically the life of the individual and the life of that individual's collectivity by providing the necessary physical nutrients. It also sustains life by providing the locus for those memories and psychic patterns necessary for the ordering of life. As such, a territory is recognised by its inhabitants to be significant as a primordial structure of vitality. This is only one of the consequences of the consideration of the nature of territoriality.

Notes

1 See, for example, Weber's (1946) use of the term 'secularisation', and, of course, his general treatment (1930) of the *Entzauberung* of the world.

2 My use of the term primordial follows the earlier and somewhat similar use by Edward Shils (1957) and Clifford Geertz (1963). See also Grosby (1994).

3 Saint Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* (1955), Book 22, chapter 24, lines 7–8, '*vim mirabilem seminum*'.

4 Note Albert K. Weinberg's (1935: 43–71) suggestive phrase, 'geographical Predestination'. Note also the emphasis on territorial contiguity in Carl Schurz (1893), and the reference to territorial 'propinquity' in 'Progress in America', *The United States and Democratic Review*, February 1846.

5 To be sure, territoriality does not imply, to employ Max Weber's categories, an 'other-worldly' transcendence, but rather a 'this-worldly' transcendence. The phrase 'this-worldly transcendence' refers to the primordial objects of the shared beliefs, the collective self-consciousness, constitutive of a territory, namely the objects of a trans-local territory and a 'related' people. There are numerous implications of paramount importance of the 'this-worldly' transcendental character of territoriality which we must resist delving into here, for example, how the transcendental, primordial element of territoriality is influenced by especially an 'other-worldly', universal transcendence, for example Christianity and vice versa, or why Protestant countries are more territorially homogeneous than Catholic, Hindu and even, surprisingly, Buddhist countries. As to the territorial heterogeneity of Buddhist societies, see R. Gombrich and G. Obeyesekere (1988), specifically the discussion of the so-called spirit religion.

Such considerations eventually would lead us to contemplate the possible proclivities of the human mind, for example, man's ability to disengage himself from the immediate surroundings of the natural environment, that is, the environment he can see or touch, and the various directions that disengagement from these particular, immediate 'interests' subsequently takes (Scheler 1928; Gehlen 1988). All that I am attempting to indicate here is that the phenomenon of territoriality is not a plain empirical fact; it has an 'objective', transcendental character; and, further, there is a charismatic, primordial element to that character. This does not mean that territoriality or, for that matter, nationality is 'imaginary' as Benedict Anderson (1983) incorrectly argues, but that it is, in part, a very real, objectively concrete consequence of an act of the imagination.

6 Numerous examples, varying in salience, of the temporal depth constitutive of territoriality may be adduced. For example, consider the Battle of Kosovo which remains significant for Serbs today, or Cześćstochowa for the Poles. That memories of such events and locations have been sustained through historiography is obvious enough. The more important problem remains as to the nature of the significance of these particular locations and the past events which are associated with them.

7 Jean Gottman (1973) referred to territoriality as a 'psychosomatic phenomenon of the community'. See also Tuan (1974).

8 As is well known, a conception of a congruence of territory, language, and people can be found in Genesis 10: 5; 10: 19–20; 10: 30–31.

9 A careful reading of Sahlins' *Tribesmen* reveals a number of ambiguous formulations which, in turn, raise questions about his apparent historical or developmental dichotomy. For example, formulations like: 'so empowered in the district, *which is its main focus*, the conical clan presents itself simultaneously as a descent group and a unit of political order' (p. 50); 'involved in this way as the *basis of territorial grouping*' (p. 54); 'membership is decided by a *combination of residence and descent*' (p. 54); "'descent" in major *residential groups*' (p. 55) (my emphases) – these formulations indicate that even certain tribes were constituted as territorial societies.

10 Note that the territorial possessions of ancient Egypt outside these borders, e.g. *Retenu* (Canaan), were considered by the Egyptians not to be a part of Egypt.

11 See also A. Erman and H. Grapow (1921) for 'Egypt'.

12 For example, see the description of the boundaries of Upper and Lower Aram in the Sefire Stelae, J. A. Fitzmyer (1967).

13 More recently, see Anthony D. Smith (1994).

14 See Cromwell's speeches of 4 July 1653 to the Nominated Parliament (the Barebones Parliament) and of 4 September 1654 (Abbot 1945).

15 This is the essence of, for example, Gellner's argument in *Nations and Nationalism*.

16 There is even some indication that the Assyrian scribes may have thought that most tribal names were town names (Rowton 1973a; 1973b).

17 Perhaps the most thoughtful argument along these lines is that of S. N. Eisenstadt (1973; 1987: 1–11). Briefly, Eisenstadt argues that what characterises the uniqueness of modernity is, in part: (a) the secularisation of the centre and (b) a revolutionary shift in the relation between centre and periphery, an expression of which is citizenship, which, in turn, indicates a congruence between cultural and political identities of territorial population.

18 An aspect of the significance of representation for the existence of a nation may be observed in the continuing fascination of the English people with the activities of the politically powerless royal family. For an analysis of the significance of the monarchy for the England of today, see Shils and Young (1956). It should also be noted that even the ruthlessly materialistic and scientific regime of the Soviet Communist Party, whose putative aim was to eliminate all forms of superstition, recognised the importance of representation through such actions as the entombment and display of the body of Lenin.

19 Proposition 187 in the State of California – a proposal which would prohibit all social services to illegal immigrants and, further, which would make it a criminal offence not to report illegal immigrants to the authorities.

20 As is well known, the general citizenry of the United States remains strongly patriotic. Moreover, one should remember that the putative internationalists of the Soviet Communist Party marshalled support for the defence of Russia during the Second World War under the slogan 'defence of the motherland'.

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