

Colonization of Time: Some Problems in Identification of Archaeological Sites in Sri Lanka

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Humans use and occupy the space dimension on different scales. In the past, it varied from open-air campsites to complex constructions. Within the varied range of space utilization, some had used natural space without causing any alterations to signify their cognitive dimensions, whilst in most instances there is serious violation of his environment. Due to this behavioural complexity of the use of space, today we are faced with a wide range of problems in archaeology in the identification and interpretation of archaeological sites.

Identification and interpretation of archaeological sites embody three major problems. The first problem exemplifies the understanding of the functional aspect of sites. There are sites which reflect different functions during different periods. Some sites are multi-functional and belonging to a single period of time. Determination of function of an archaeological site for identification is a complicated exercise and most of the time it remains incomplete. The second problem signifies the site formation process. A site can be transformed through a number of human activities. Notable among them are ploughing and tilling in agricultural societies. Long-term ploughing and tilling may cause a considerable disturbance to the archaeological content of a given site. Most crucial are the complete disappearance of surface indicators and splitting of single assemblages into formation of a number of widely scattered 'artefact patches' through these processes. The third problem is the degree of influence by the archaeologist's own idiosyncrasy about his definition of what is an archaeological site.

This paper discusses the relevance of considering the cultural context of a given society to define its human spatial behaviour of the past and to quantify the degree of intervention through the post occupational interventions to the site content.

Key Words: Colonization; Archaeological; Cultural context; Multi-functional; Natural space

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