There are many different ways in which humans have marked, mapped, and managed territory, and a concern with relationships to land appears to be an ancient as well as contemporary activity (see Taçon 2002 for detailed list). When we look around the world today we see recent evidence of humans defining, dividing, and describing parcels of land almost everywhere, from fences to garden beds, from patrolled borders to lines on maps, from elaborate signposts to subtle changes in architecture. In the archaeological record multiple overlapping layers of boundary marking have accumulated to form historical patterns of group and individual relationships to place, space, and landscape. Some areas are convoluted and complex, challenging to decipher or to tease apart. Others are subtle or contain forms of territorial association that quickly dissolve into the dust, forests, jungles, or deserts that take over when humans move off.

The active defense of territory, including through both prominent boundary marking and warfare, is commonly associated with agriculturalists, cities, states, and organized religion. However, both recent and ancient hunter-gatherers also engaged in these activities, with evidence emerging in various parts of the world. In this chapter, some of the archaeological and ethnographic signatures of territorial marking, defense of territory, and relationships to territory are briefly explored for parts of Australia and southern Africa. Territorial association during times of change is a major focus.

**Northern and Southeastern Australia**

One of the ways Aboriginal people have and sometimes continue to connect to both land and to other people right across Australia is through Dreaming tracks, original paths and travel routes of powerful Ancestral Beings (e.g., see Taçon 2005a). There also were hundreds, possibly thousands, of shared ceremony sites, sacred sites, and special meeting places in the recent and more distant past. As well, we know of at least 125,000 rock art sites that contain imagery and depictions reflecting Aboriginal identity, experience, and relationships to land, to other creatures, to other people, to the past, and to Ancestral Beings who are said to have created all these things. There is debate as to how old aspects of the Dreaming cosmology might be, with some arguing it is of relatively recent origin (e.g., David 2002), whereas others maintain at least some aspects have great antiquity (e.g., Layton 1992, 2005; Taçon 2005b; Taçon and Chippindale 2001; Taçon, Wilson, and Chippindale 1996). Across much of Australia, links to land are also commonly expressed through kinship. Kinship and other land relationships are encoded into recent and contemporary painting across northern and
central Australia, as well as parts of the southeast, and knowledgeable elders suggest that many sites also feature people-place connections in aspects of their rock art imagery.

The late Big Bill Neidjie, for instance, once told me that in more traditional times most fights and battles between large groups of Aboriginal people were over land and women. In reference to a large mural-like painted rock art panel, with dozens of opposed human figures arranged in two groups and armed with spears, Bill made special note of a prominent crack in the rock between the two troops. This natural feature, that divides one of the largest and most spectacular recent Kakadu warrior panels in half, represented the nearby East Alligator River, according to Bill, and the scene depicted a major battle of 200 years ago. This led to a major study of western Arnhem Land rock art with depictions of fighting, battles, and, arguably, warfare (Taçon and Chippindale 1994). Several previously unknown and quite early panels were discovered in the process, at least 4,000–6,000 years of age, with rows of armed stick figures arranged in opposing formations and volleys of spears shown in flight overhead. Some figures on the front lines are riddled with spears while a few farther back are also injured. These are the oldest battle scenes from anywhere in the world and are quite different from instances of formalized ritualized combat recorded ethnographically.

Rock art can be used to elucidate changing relationships to land in many parts of the country, for instance, shifts from more “shamanistic” to “totemic” orientations beginning about 4,000 years ago (Taçon and Chippindale In press) and changes in views about caves between the Pleistocene and Holocene (Taçon et al. In press). One of the main ways we can examine some aspects of the Aboriginal response to early contact with Europeans is also through rock art, perhaps the most enduring indigenous archival record from the early colonial period. However, rarely have contact period rock art images been studied comprehensively in order to gain insight into how Aboriginal people depicted their responses to the arrival of Europeans. Layton (1992) was the first to provide useful summaries of contact rock art of various areas, and Frederick is one of the few in Australia who has focused research on early contact imagery, but her work has largely been confined to a small area of central Australia, Watarrka (Kings Canyon) National Park (1997, 1999) and to depictions of ships (2003). As Frederick notes: “Contact and cross-cultural studies remain a relatively unexplored theme in Australian
rock art research" (1999: 133), yet "the rock art of
contact provides generous scope for a convergence
of archaeological, anthropological, and historical
research designs" (1999: 132). Few studies have built
on Frederick’s pioneering work, although McNiven
and Russell (2002) have noted a focus by most
rock art researchers on secular interpretations of
contact rock art and contact material culture (2002:
32–33), when it has been interpreted by previous
researchers at all. They conclude that "by extend-
ing a counter-reading of sketchy historical sources
to include archaeological evidence such as contact
rock art, we have revealed the existence of a post-
contact Indigenous landscape that was regulated by
ceremonial strategies and systems of place marking
designed to combat European colonization" (2002:
37; see also David and Wilson 2002: 57–58).

It did not take long for Europeans to dramatic-
ally change the landscapes of Australia after their
arrival in the late 1700s. Fences, boundary markers,
signposts, forts, buildings, and other domineering
expressions of possession, conquered territory,
and defense soon popped up like a plague of
invading mushrooms that eventually swept across
the continent. Historic records, historical archaeol-
ogy, and oral history provide dramatic accounts
of the affects on Indigenous populations but also
traditional Aboriginal Australian relationships to
land were. There is an extensive and fast-growing
literature on colonialism, especially Aboriginal
responses and impacts on Australian landscapes.
This is not the place to review these in detail, but a
few particular aspects should be highlighted.

First of all, although the effects of the early con-
tact period on rock art production have not been
well studied in southeast Australia, and only slight-
ly and selectively elsewhere, it is becoming evident
that there were a range of Aboriginal responses to
colonization. These include not only the incorpo-
ration of introduced subject matter into rock art
bodies—such as Europeans, ships, horses, sheep,
cattle, rifles, and hand guns—but also an increase
in depictions of Ancestral Beings and other spiritu-
al subject matter.

In much of southeast Australia, people were
removed from their traditional lands and banned
from ceremonial sites. Restricted to reserves, mis-
sions, and jails, rock and ground-based art motifs
were transferred to wooden objects (e.g., Kleinert
1997; Taçon, South, and Hooper 2003) or sheets
of paper (e.g., Sayers 1994). Both scenes of tradi-
tional and contemporary life were depicted, and
many decorated wooden objects, such as boome-
rangs and shields, were made both to express

Figure 20.2 Part of one of two known complex Simple Figure battle scenes, Arnhem Land plateau, N.T.,
Australia, between 4,000 and 6,000 years of age.
meager rations. A strong attachment to land can be found throughout this iconography, and it continues in much contemporary urban Aboriginal art. Today, it also is more strongly political, with protest art, land rights themes, and statements about living conditions mixed with other land and identity expressions.

Today rock art sites, ceremonial grounds, middens, camping places, meeting places, missions, and massacre sites are all important places for Aboriginal people of southeast Australia, with each telling a different story about territory, attachment to land, combat, dispossession, and change. Massacre sites and battlefields are probably the most contentious for Aboriginal Australians right across the country (e.g., see Elder 1988; Grassby and Hill 1988; as well as extensive recent literature by dueling historians such as Keith Windschuttle [2002] and Henry Reynolds [e.g., 1981, 1987, 1995]). Among other things, these sites highlight the profound differences between Aboriginal and invading European senses of territoriality, land attachment, land use, and each other. As Elder (1988: 200) concludes:

In the case of Aborigines, their “reason to exist,” both as individuals and as an entire race, has been systematically leached away by 200 years of dispossession. The intimate love of the land, the subtle ecological balance that recognized that there was a time to pick bush fruits and kill animals and a time to refrain from picking and killing, the careful response to the seasons, the powerful acknowledgment of the land’s spirituality, the careful cycle of ritual and initiation that was at the centre of every life, the clear definitions of tribal land, these were all part of an elaborate and beautiful part of every Aborigine’s “reason to exist.”

We, the invaders, took all that away. We destroyed it. We took the land as if it was our own. We destroyed the native fruit-bearing trees to create pastures for cattle and sheep. We killed native wildlife so that it would not compete for the pastures. We replaced ecology with aggressive 19th-century exploitation capitalism. We built roads over sacred sites. We deforested the land its spirituality. We killed off Aborigines with guns and poison and disease. We refused, through ignorance and arrogance, to see any tribal differentiation in those Aborigines who survived our insidious, long-term holocaust. Those Aborigines who survived were herded into reserves or “allowed” to live in humpies on the fringes of when, in their despair, they took to the bottle or simply threw up their hands in hopelessness and gave up life, we had the arrogance to accuse them of drunkenness and laziness.

Southern Africa

As in Australia, the arrival of Europeans in southern Africa very quickly and radically transformed the land, but there had already been a long history of arrivals with farmers, raiders, and herders from the north settling “Bushman” or “San,” here referred to as “Bushfolk” following recent precedent (e.g., Walker 1996; see also Taçon and Ouzman 2004: 42), lands beginning over 2,000 years ago. When early invaders from the north arrived, Indigenous Bushfolk already had a long history of land marking, and this continued in new ways in response to resulting changes that occurred to their lands. At least 100,000 painted rock shelters and open-air engraving sites can be found across southern Africa. As with the rock art of any area, there were many motivations and forms of meaning associated with imagery (including gender, identity, landscape, and politics to name a few), although there are convincing arguments that much of it is also associated with aspects of spirituality, belief, and ritual (e.g., Lewis-Williams 1981). And although the marking of landscapes with rock art always involves some form of connection to place and expression of individual and group identity, the particular boundaries that indigenous Bushfolk were most interested in marking were those between their everyday world and the spirit world.

Lewis-Williams and Dowson (1990), along with many others since, have noted this particularly for the painted sites. However, many engraved sites are also concerned with this form of boundary marking (Taçon and Ouzman 2004). In both cases, depictions of symbolically important animals, such as eland, mythical composite beings, and sometimes human-like figures, are arranged so that they appear to be moving into or out of cracks in the rock. In some cases they are aligned next to cracks with some body parts missing, giving the appearance that they are frozen in a state of transition—in the process of passing from one world to the next. Given that there are so many painted and engraved sites illustrating this phenomenon, spread right across southern Africa, it obviously was particularly important for the Bushfolk to mark these boundaries and to use these focal points to interact with other dimensions. Indeed, much of the early rock art of southern Africa seems to be oriented to this
Figure 20.3 Two painted rhinos from Tsodilo Hills, northern Botswana, were deliberately placed to suggest that they are moving toward a crack in the rock face. If the observer moves from left to right, they appear to disappear inside the rock.

sorts of locations, such as high peaks, large rock holes, and a range of other prominent landscape features, marked with imagery that emphasizes boundaries with another world.

When new groups of people arrived in southern Africa they brought very different marking traditions with them, and there are now four other traditions recognized alongside that of the Bushfolk. Each group marked the landscape in different ways and in different contexts, and with differing concerns about boundaries. For instance, recent research has identified a widespread primarily geometric form of rock art. Much of it is engraved, whereas some is finger painted. Smith and Ouzman (2004) have presented compelling evidence to link this geometric rock art to the Khoekhoen herders, rather than to Bushfolk, Bantu-speaking farmers, Korana raiders, or European colonists. This geometric rock art is “banded along watercourses” (Smith and Ouzman 2004: 509) that herders are thought to have followed south, mostly in the central interior. At many locations, both herder and Bushfolk rock art is found, superimposed over each other in varying combinations. Herder rock art techniques and motifs, such as finger painting or fat-tailed sheep, are sometimes incorporated into Bushfolk art and vice versa. This shows, among other things, that both groups were using some of the same sites during certain periods and that cultural interaction and change were resulting in various ways. Whether the superimpositioning of one culture’s
land possession and dispossession is debatable, but certainly this is an area of research worth exploring now that the Khoekhoen tradition has been isolated and defined.

Bantu-speaking farmers also produced rock art, but oral history has revealed it was mainly made in the context of initiation, protest, and Late Iron Age settlement (Smith and Ouzman 2004: 502). Finger-painted rock art was made by the Korana, usually in hidden cavelike locations. Over 450 paintings at 31 of these locations show influence from a range of ethnic groups; it primarily appears to be related to magic and military conquest (Ouzman 2005; Wadley 2001) and in this sense reflects concerns over possessing land. Bushfolk responses to invading black farmers and herders varied, with rock art indicating that some became enemies while others were “trading partners, friends and relatives” (Jolly 1998: 247), especially within southeastern Nguni and Sotho communities (Jolly 1995, 1996, 1998).

The rock art of European colonists is more letter- and number-based, with “the names and dates of early travelers seeking to inscribe themselves on the land, inscriptions made during the Anglo-Boer War (Ouzman 1999), quotidian images made by workers during the Great Depression, and prison inscriptions” (Smith and Ouzman 2004: 502). Some of it, such as that of early settlers and travelers, is very much concerned with possession of and connection to land, whereas other forms, such as the Anglo-Boer War inscriptions, reflect the acquisition, division, possession, and fighting over land more directly. As Ouzman (1999: 4) notes for the latter: “The art is found over a wide area—virtually everywhere the War was fought.” However, it does not glorify war and is not deeply symbolic. “Rather, it shows how ordinary people experienced a brutal war that claimed at least 70,000 lives and cost in excess of £250 million” (Ouzman 1999: 5).

A war over land of a different kind is reflected in the final phase of Bushfolk rock art, which is a pale, ghostly white that depicts the end of a way of life. Violence, death, and destruction are key themes, along with distorted and grotesque imagery. “Images of the Apocalyptic Phase are found not only in large, spectacular rock shelters but also in small, often scrappy sites hidden behind boulder tumbles or tucked away deep in river valleys . . . Human and animal figures are combined in impossible

Figure 20.4 This purposely incomplete engraving of an eland appears to emerge from the edge of a boulder. It is one of four incomplete animal engravings around a central peak at Wildebeestkuil, South Africa (see Taçon and Ouzman 2004: 54–56).
ways. frightening hallucinatory visions and explicit sexual scenes are recorded. Bizarre monsters with vicious teeth and protrusions from their heads lurk menacingly on shelter walls" (Ouzman and Loubser 2000: 41–42). About 800 paintings are associated with this phase, and Ouzman and Loubser argue that they represent a "millenarianism movement" that followed a failure of armed resistance against Black and White colonists, spear and rifle, cattle and horses: "Like the paintings, they faded into hidden rock shelters. They became an insubstantial presence in their homeland. Their previously stable spirit world became moribund even as the ordinary world became strange and violent" (Ouzman and Loubser 2000: 44). Some of this violence is reflected both historically and symbolically in rock art battle scenes, as Jolly (1998: 247) notes:

Unambiguous depictions of black farmers in the rock art of the Drakensberg and adjacent areas can be found in the scenes of battle between San and these people. . . . The differences in weaponry and physical sizes of the groups have made it relatively easy to distinguish black farmers from San here, although we cannot be certain that all figures with bows and arrows in the art are San.

Many parallels with Australia can be drawn, especially in terms of both symbolic/spiritual and actual physical resistance to the invasion of traditional hunter-gatherer lands, showing that concepts of "territory" and "defense of territory" were common to hunter-gatherers of both regions. This pattern is also reflected in other aspects of the material culture/archaeological records (e.g., see Akerman and Brockwell 2007; Harrison and Williamson 2004; Mitchell 2002; Murray 2004; and various papers in Stahl 2004). Important parallels can also be made with North America. One of the best examples is "Writing-On-Stone," in the province of Alberta, Canada, a rock art complex with more than 280 panels at 93 sites in the proximity. There are numerous scenes of combat: horses, armed warriors, arrows in flight, and figures with shields, guns and spears. Many sites show figures engaged in fighting, whereas other complex panels contain narrative battle scenes. Michael Klassen (1995, 1998; Keyser and Klassen 2003) has convincingly demonstrated that the area was long considered a sacred place by local peoples and that "cosmic and historical conceptions of the world structured and controlled pictorial expression within Plains cultures, leading to the presence of both iconic and narrative imagery in rock art and narrativity in the rock art of Writing-On-Stone occurred during the equestrian period, underlying continuities allied even the most narrative scenes to an overarching cosmic conception of the world" (Klassen 1998: 68). In other words, in Australia, southern Africa, and parts of North America, land was actively defended by Indigenous peoples physically, spiritually, and symbolically, all of which is evident in their rock art.

**Conclusions**

These case studies highlight many aspects of an archaeology of landscape that need to be better researched and understood. First, is the importance of rock art as sign, symbol, expression of identity, reflection of experience, and boundary marker all in one. Each of these signals the physical marking of the landscape as a social phenomenon, one that leaves behind a material trace. In particular times and places, one of these might be emphasized more than others, but in essence all rock art functions at these and other levels at the same time. This makes specific interpretation difficult without informed knowledge from artists and/or their direct descendants, but more general interpretation, mainly accessible through formal analysis, including "landscape archaeology," can be undertaken (Taçon and Chippindale 1998).

Second, there are many different ways in which people have used rock art in Australia and southern Africa to express relationships to, and sometimes possession of, land. These need to be researched further, especially in relation to periods of culture contact and change. For instance, Akerman and Brockwell (2007) have recently linked the results of excavation, an analysis of change in point technology and rock art depictions of hunting in the Top End of the Northern Territory, showing that other forms of archaeological investigation support aspects of rock art interpretation. The implications of such research can then be applied to other areas, such as the Americas, northern Africa, Asia, and even Europe, in order to develop fresh hypotheses about ways in which people depicted culture change and their relationships to land. Indeed, the examples from Australia, southern Africa, and Alberta, Canada, suggest that people of very different backgrounds react in a similar range of ways to the invasion of their land and resulting culture change.

Third, the warfare rock art panels of western Arnhem Land, Australia, are significant for many reasons—especially because of their age, their territorial theme, and the fact the two opposing
Until their discovery, it was thought that ancient hunter-gatherers rarely, if at all, engaged in organized territorial disputes, such activity being more characteristic of agriculturalists, kingdoms, city-states, and modern nations. The evidence from Arnhem Land suggests that arguments over land, resources, and perhaps ethnic difference may be very old human problems. This leads us to wonder if the earliest modern humans who ventured out of Africa over 100,000 years ago were also territorial from the start (see Keeley 1996; LeBlanc and Register 2003; van der Dennen 1995) and, if so, whether this helped them overwhelm and replace Neanderthals and Homo erectus across Europe and Asia. Evidence of territorial behavior prior to the arrival of people in Australia from any part of the world would be extremely important in confirming or refuting whether organized aggression over land is a recent phenomenon or something that began with the rise of modern humans, perhaps helping to make them so successful at occupying diverse and extreme environments.

Finally, in these times of ever-increasing culture contact, climate change, and communication, what can we learn from the ways people have coped with rapidly transforming worlds in the past? Will we build bigger barricades? Will we unite to fight problems of poverty, ignorance, climate instability, and political domination, or will we fight to defend concepts of territory and freedom? Will we descend into madness and militarism, with monsters, violence, and distortion increasingly dominating our environments? Some people might say that this is already happening, with a range of media delivering us the grotesque in many ways on a daily basis. Perhaps we need to develop new ways of looking at and relating to land. Instead of possessing, hoarding, and sectioning off land, we should focus on big pictures and landscapes, like Australian Dreaming tracks that remind us of where our sustenance comes from (Taçon 2005a). Indeed, we need to stop the slaughter, rape, and pillage of not only the land and other creatures but also ourselves. Ultimately, long-term human survival may well depend on it.

Acknowledgments

Bruno David and Julian Thomas are thanked for the invitation to contribute to this remarkable handbook. The Indigenous peoples of northern Australia, southeast Australia and southern Africa are especially thanked for sharing knowledge, time, friendship, and experience. David Canari, Shaun Hooper, and many Indigenous Australians and Africans, past and present, contributed to my growing knowledge of Indigenous time, place, relationship, and expression. I am also indebted to Christopher Chippindale, Ken Mulvaney, Sven Ouzman, and Wayne Brennan for both fieldwork and campfire/conference discussions in many parts of the world. The Australian Museum (Sydney) and Griffith University (Gold Coast) supported research and writing that led to this chapter.

References


———. 1999. At the centre of it all: Constructing contact through the rock art of Watarrika National Park, central Australia. Archaeology in Oceania 34: 132–44.


———. 1996. Symbiotic interaction between black


