
THE BIRTH OF TERRITORY

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
CHICAGO AND LONDON

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The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 60637
The University of Chicago Press, Ltd., London
© 2013 by The University of Chicago
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Printed in the United States of America

22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 I 2 3 4 5

ISBN-13: 978-0-226-20256-3 (cloth)
ISBN-13: 978-0-226-20257-0 (paper)
ISBN-13: 978-0-226-04128-5 (e-book)

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book has been in gestation for many years, and would have taken many more had it not been for the award of a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship. I am extremely grateful to the Leverhulme Trust for this wonderful opportunity. Although I have been employed by Durham University for almost all of the time I have been working on this project, research leave and the Leverhulme award have meant that I have spent time elsewhere in visiting posts. I would like to thank the University of Virginia; University of Tasmania; University of British Columbia; University of California, Los Angeles; New York University; National University of Singapore; Queen Mary, University of London; University of Washington, Seattle; and the Australian National University for being excellent hosts. Libraries at all of the above institutions and in addition the British Library, Senate House Library, Warburg Institute, Columbia University, and University of York provided the materials I have used. The Geography Department at Durham University provided some financial assistance to help with the costs involved in this book's publication. Chris Orton, Amy Kuttner, and the Palace Green Library helped with images.

I have greatly benefitted from the enthusiasm, support, and advice of a number of people, of whom I would like to particularly mention John Agnew, Suzanne Conklin Akbari, Luiza Bialasiewicz, Neil Brenner, Jeremy Crampton, Veronica della Dora, Elgin Diaz, Colin Gordon, Laurence Hemming, Barbara Hooper, Emma Hutchinson, Engin Isin, Keith Lilley, David Livingstone, Jeff Malpas, Eduardo Mendieta, Alec Murphy, Nisha Shah, Charlie Withers and Haim Yacobi. At Durham I have a number of excellent colleagues, of whom Louise Amooore, Ben Anderson, Angharad Closs Stephens, Ray Hudson, Joe Painter, and Martin Pratt deserve special mention. Abby Collier at the University of Chicago Press has been an ex-

cellent and supportive editor, and Susan Cohan an exceptionally careful copyeditor. I am grateful for the reports from three anonymous referees for suggestions and pushing me to justify my approach. Above all, I am grateful to Susan for her love and support.

I have given talks on this project over many years, including in Australia (University of Tasmania; University of Western Sydney; University of New South Wales; Australian National University); Canada (University of Toronto; University of British Columbia; University of Victoria); Cyprus (University of Cyprus); Finland (University of Turku; Lapland University); Denmark (Danish Institute of International Studies); Germany (Technische Universität Berlin; Friedrich-Alexander Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg); Holland (Radboud University Nijmegen); Israel (Ben Gurion University); Hong Kong, China SAR (Hong Kong Baptist University); Italy (University of Palermo; Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna Pisa); Japan (Kyoto University); Macau, China SAR (University of Macau); Singapore (National University of Singapore); the United States (Association of American Geographers, San Francisco, Boston, and Washington, DC; New School for Social Research; University of Pittsburgh; University of Virginia; University of Washington, Seattle; Ohio State University; University of Oregon; University of California, Los Angeles; University of California, Berkeley; University of Arizona; New York University; Yale University); and the United Kingdom (Heythrop College, University of London; Durham University; Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution; Staffordshire University; University of Salford; Swansea University; University of Leicester; University of Lancaster; Royal Holloway, University of London; Queen Mary, University of London; Open University; University College London; University of Cambridge; Queen's University Belfast; Newcastle University; University of Westminster; Aberystwyth University; Royal Geographical Society; University of Birmingham; King's College London; Leeds University).

An earlier and longer version of the introduction was published as "Land, Terrain, Territory," *Progress in Human Geography* 24 (2010): 799–817. Parts of chapter 1 appeared in "Another Sense of *Demos*: Kleisthenes and the Greek Division of the *Polis*," *Democratization* 10 (2003): 135–56; and a section of "The Place of the *Polis*: Political Blindness in Judith Butler's *Antigone's Claim*," *Theory and Event* 8 (2005). One section of chapter 3 draws on the second half of "Place Symbolism and Land Politics in *Beowulf*," *Cultural Geographies* 16 (2009): 447–63. The Leibniz discussion in chapter 9 develops claims first made in "Missing the Point: Globalization, Deterritorialization and the Space of the World," *Transactions of*

the Institute of British Geographers 30 (2005): 8–19. I am grateful to Sage, Taylor & Francis, Johns Hopkins University Press, and Wiley-Blackwell for permission to reuse this material.

All primary texts are referenced back to the original language, with English translations noted where available. I have frequently modified existing translations. With primary texts, references are made to book, chapter, and section, where possible, to facilitate reference to different editions.

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the second book of his discourse on inequality, Jean-Jacques Rousseau declares:

The first man who, having fenced off a plot of land [*enclos un terrain*], thought of saying, *this is mine*, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. How many crimes, wars, murders, how many miseries and horrors might the human race had been spared by the one who, upon pulling up the stakes or filling in the ditch, had shouted to his kind: Beware of listening to this impostor; You are lost if you forget the fruits of the earth belong to all and that the Earth [*Terre*] belongs to no one.¹

Conflict over land, at a variety of spatial scales, is a major factor in human affairs, and, as Rousseau suggests, its effects have been almost entirely negative. Yet his argument here is twofold. First, that this event was the foundation of civil society—which, at the time he was writing, still meant *civilized* society, that is, society with some form of structure and power relations. Civil society was, effectively, a society with some form of government, some form of state. It was opposed to the idea of a “state of nature,” rather than civil society and state being contrasted, as they were only after Hegel.² Second, that if the consequences of this event were to be prevented, the time to challenge was at that precise moment. It was not something to contest subsequently, lest the challenge be seen as a rival plan for division rather than to see division itself as the problem. To believe the impostor was to mean all was lost. Yet, as Rousseau immediately concedes:

But in all likelihood things had by then reached a point where they could not continue as they were; for this idea of property, depending as it does on many prior ideas which could only arise successively, did not take shape all at once in the human mind: Much progress had to have been made, industry and enlightenment acquired, transmitted, and increased from one age to the next, before this last stage of the state of Nature was reached. Let us therefore take up the thread earlier, and try to fit this slow succession of events and of knowledge together from a single point of view, and in their most natural order.³

Several things might be said of this continuation. He recognizes that the question of property in land did not arise all of a sudden, but as a stage in a complicated set of relations that would stretch back in time. As he later notes, "From the cultivation of land [*terres*], its division [*partage*] necessarily followed; and from property, once recognized, the first rules of justice necessarily followed."⁴ Similar questions can be asked about a very particular understanding of property and political power over land, that of the relation between the state and its territory.



Territory continues to matter today in a whole range of registers. Take, for example, the post-1989 territorial changes within central and eastern Europe, where successor states to the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia emerged and in many instances fought over the delineation of their boundaries. Kosovo, Trans-Dnistra, Chechnya, and the breakaway areas of Georgia show the continuation of these issues. We could also look at the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea in east Africa; Somalia's fragmentation into *de facto* but unrecognized states; the independence of South Sudan and the ongoing border tensions; the Arab-Israeli conflict; the territorial dimensions of the "war on terror," environmental disasters, resource ownership, migration, and climate change, especially in terms of melting sea ice in the Arctic and the need to delimit maritime boundaries. Self-determination movements, such as the campaign for an independent Kurdistan, the independence of East Timor, the long-running disputes in Western Sahara, Tibet, East Turkistan, and many other areas show that numerous groups seek control of territory occupied by a state.⁵ Yet what are these groups claiming? What is being fought over, divided, mapped, distributed, or transformed? But where did this idea of exclusive owner-

ship of a portion of the earth's surface come from? What kinds of complexities are hidden behind that seemingly straightforward definition? Is the standard story that it emerged with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 sufficient? What different elements made up the modern notion of "territory," and what roots do they have in different historical lineages? Why is it, as Pascal suggests, that "three degrees of latitude upset the whole of jurisprudence and one meridian determines what is true. . . . It is a funny sort of justice marked by a river! True on this side of the Pyrenees, false on the other."⁶

While there are some excellent and important investigations of particular territorial configurations, disputes, or issues,⁷ and some valuable textbooks on the topic,⁸ there is little that investigates the term *territory* conceptually or historically. This is, in part, because it is generally assumed that territory is self-evident in meaning, and that its particular manifestations—territorial disputes, the territory of specific countries, etc.—can be studied without theoretical reflection on *territory* itself. Although it is a central term within political theory, geography, and international relations, the *concept* of territory has been underexamined.⁹ Where it is defined, territory is either assumed to be a relation that can be understood as an outcome of territoriality, or as a bounded space, in the way that Giddens described the state as a "bordered power-container."¹⁰ In the first, the historical dimension is neglected; in the second, the conditions of possibility of such a configuration are assumed rather than examined. Both take the thing that needs explaining as the explanation.

There is a range of reasons for the comparative neglect of territory. First, there is the turn away from reflection on the state, with a rejection of terms associated with territory, such as "boundedness, identity, integrity, sovereignty and spatial coherence."¹¹ Second, there is the fear of what John Agnew identified as the "territorial trap,"¹² summed up by his admonition that "the spatiality of power . . . need not be invariably reduced to state territoriality."¹³ While he was right to insist that territory is only one kind of spatiality,¹⁴ all too often his warnings have not led to a more careful examination of what territory is, and its intrinsic limits, but rather to an avoidance of the topic altogether. It is through a historical conceptual examination that moving beyond "the territorial trap," rather than simply skirting around it, is possible.¹⁵ Third, there is an unhealthy degree of conceptual imprecision regarding the terms *territory* and *territoriality*. This makes it appear that, because there is a wide-ranging literature on territoriality, there is plenty of discussion of territory.

The first thing to note with regard to territoriality is that unlike, say, “spatiality,” which is generally understood as a property or condition of space, something pertaining to it, *territoriality* has today a rather more active connotation. The other, older sense of *territoriality*, as the condition, or status of territory, rather than a mode of operating toward that territory, is generally lost, though it would be good to retrieve it. It is equally important to recognize that there are conflicting traditions in the use of the term, in this more modern sense: the first biological, the second social. These may not actually be distinct, and care should be taken to suggest an implied nature/culture divide, but advocates of territoriality do present them in this way. There is therefore a logic to approaching these works under their own terminological division. Earlier work outlined ways in which territory can be understood through a basis in a fundamental biological drive and as a form of animal association.¹⁶ Their work often covers a great deal of ground, within a broad historical sweep, but they continually blur territory and territoriality together, seeing territoriality as a constant human element, played out in different contexts. What is interesting about their work is that they trade on work in animal ethology—itsself taking a term from the analysis of humans—in order to understand human behavior.¹⁷ The problem with this is that while it can tell us something about human behavior in space, it is not at all clear that it can tell us something about “territory.” In part this is due to the obvious point that human social organization has changed more rapidly than biological drives.

A rather different approach is offered by Robert Sack in *Human Territoriality*.¹⁸ Despite its title, Sack does not suggest a purely biological, determinist approach. He suggests that territoriality is a geopolitical strategy and not a basic vital instinct. Sack claims that while he sees “territoriality as a basis of power, I do not see it as part of an instinct, nor do I see power as essentially aggressive.”¹⁹ Sack labels the area or place delimited and controlled through territoriality a *territory*. This means that he uses the term in a very general and nonspecific way. A place can be a territory at times but not at others; “territories require constant effort to establish and maintain”; and as a corollary of the previous definition, they are “the results of strategies to affect, influence, and control people, phenomena, and relationships.”²⁰ Indeed, in his later *Homo Geographicus*, Sack conceives of the general “role of place as territory,” suggesting that “the meaning of place in this current book is then very much like that of territory.”²¹

Sack effectively argues that territoriality is a social construct, forged through interaction and struggle, and thoroughly permeated with social

relations. While his work has some excellent analyses, none of it really gets to grips with the complexities in the term *territory* itself. The problem with this mode of analysis—a problem it shares with the biological approach—is that it is both historically and geographically imprecise. These kinds of understandings seem to transcend historical periods and uneven geographical development, and also function beyond geographical scale. Territories seem to exist at all times and in all geographical contexts: there is no sense of a history of the *concept*. Perhaps this is only to be expected given that the focus is on “territoriality” instead of territory. Specific territories have histories, and Sack is at his best when he approaches the question of territoriality historically, such as in the passages on Renaissance thought, or on the role of capitalism in shaping understandings of space and time.²² But this is to reduce the complexity to different historical arrangements of the same questions rather than address the much more challenging question of the very concepts themselves having histories. As Soja notes, “Neither my earlier work nor Sack’s however, provide a satisfactory social ontology of territoriality.”²³ Soja rightly points to the lack of a fundamental basis to the inquiries that were being pursued. How did the concept of territory emerge?

A related analysis to Sack can be found in some of the writings of the Swiss geographer Claude Raffestin. Like Sack, Raffestin is cautious about assuming too straightforward a relation between animal and human territoriality.²⁴ Rather, he develops a rich account grounded in a reading of Foucault and Lefebvre together. While this has become more common in recent years, Raffestin was pioneering in reading them together in his 1980 book *Pour une géographie du pouvoir*. Raffestin develops Foucault’s theory of power, suggesting that “relational space-time is organised by a combination of energy and information.”²⁵ In a sense, energy can be read alongside power; and information with knowledge, the other two terms of the Foucauldian triad of space, knowledge, and power. For Raffestin, “population, territory and authority” are the three elements of the state, and he suggests that “the entire geography of the state derives from this triad.”²⁶

Raffestin contends that *space* and *territory* are not equivalent, and that using them indiscriminately has led to a lot of confusion. Space is, for Raffestin, the anterior term, because territory is generated from space, through the actions of an actor, who “territorialises” space.²⁷ This is the potential danger, in that while Raffestin wishes to make an argument for the conception precision of territory, he invokes territoriality as the way into this term. The displacement of territory by territoriality blunts the

potential of his analysis.²⁸ What it means is that space becomes something transformed, rather than something that is itself socially produced, of which territory is a specific, historically limited, form. Yet at times Raffestin offers some very valuable insights, particularly evident in his careful and historical examination of the notion of the frontier.²⁹



In identifying some of the reasons why territory has been neglected as a topic of examination, Painter has suggested that "'territoriality' is often treated as complex and dynamic; 'territory' as more straightforward and not in need of sophisticated analysis."³⁰ While it is difficult to dispute the complexities surrounding territoriality, its dynamism appears not to be historical. Indeed, given that territoriality is so widespread in animal and human behavior, it can only help us to understand territory if that is a term without a history. Rather, it is territory that is conceptually prior to territoriality, even if existentially second. Linguistically the historical record certainly supports this. Strategies and processes toward territory—of which territoriality is but a fraction—conceptually presuppose the object that they practically produce. It is therefore more fruitful to approach territory as a concept in its own right.

The best general study of *territory* remains Gottmann's *The Significance of Territory*, published in 1973. It trades on his earlier book *La politique des États et leur géographie*, in which he claims that "one cannot conceive a State, a political institution, without its spatial definition, its territory."³¹ Nonetheless, both there and in *The Significance of Territory*, he also tends to employ the term in an undifferentiated historical sense, as a concept used throughout history.³² Thus, while he makes a detailed and valuable analysis, he is still perhaps too willing to see territory existing at a variety of spatial scales and in a variety of historical periods. This tends to create an ahistorical, and potentially ageographical, analysis. Recent works by Saskia Sassen and Jeremy Larkins have recognized that territory has a history.³³ Yet unlike both these books, the current study takes "territory" as a concept to be historically examined rather than simply differently ordered at different times. In examining the relation between *place* and *power*—to use these terms as relatively neutral for the moment—in a wide range of historical settings and texts, I show how the concept of territory *emerged* within Western political thought and practice. The history of the concept provides the basis for the more radical claim that the

term *territory* became the way used to describe a particular and historically limited set of practices and ideas about the relation between place and power.

Territory therefore requires the same kind of historical, philosophical analysis that has been undertaken by Edward Casey for another key geographical concept, that of place.³⁴ This is not to suggest, course, that territory is the privileged object of social/spatial theory, but rather that compared to other dimensions, it has been underexamined. There is simply no study of territory comparable to Casey's for place; it is conceptually much less examined than network; and other terms, such as *landscape* and *nature*, have received much more careful historical analysis.³⁵

As the following chapters demonstrate, a range of questions need to be considered in thinking about the emergence of territory. One is that territory is a word, a concept, and a practice, and the relation between these can only be grasped historically. Bishai has suggested that territory can be "examined in a similar fashion as sovereignty—through conceptual history."³⁶ Conceptual history, *Begriffsgeschichte*, pioneered by Reinhart Koselleck and his colleagues, offers a valuable emphasis on the use of terminology.³⁷ As Koselleck suggests, "Through the alternation of semasiological and onomasiological questions, *Begriffsgeschichte* aims ultimately at *Sachsgeschichte*."³⁸ Translated, this suggests that the alternation needs to be between which concepts are implied by words (meaning) and what words are used to denote specific concepts (designation), and thus conceptual history enables us to speak of material history. Yet this work is weak on practices, and has not, with partial exceptions, been turned toward the question of territory explicitly.³⁹ One of the very few attempts to offer a conceptual history of territory, aside from Bishai herself, is found in the work of Paul Allières. His book *L'invention du territoire* was originally a thesis supervised by Nicos Poulantzas in 1977, entitled "Le territoire dans la formation de l'Etat national." Allières suggests that "territory always seems linked to possible definitions of the state; it gives it a physical basis which seems to render it inevitable and eternal."⁴⁰ It is precisely in order to disrupt that inevitability and eternal nature that an interrogation of the state of territory is necessary.

The work of the Cambridge school of contextualist approaches to the history of political thought, of which Quentin Skinner and J. G. A. Pocock are perhaps the most significant figures, offers some guidance on methodological principles, but only tangentially in terms of its focus.⁴¹ It is helpful through its insistence on trying to read texts back into the frames in

which they were forged, and to avoid imposing retrospective concerns on them. As such, there is a great deal of emphasis here on language, and the specific words and formulations used. Equally, attempts are made to render these arguments contextually specific. As Skinner stresses, it is important to understand what purpose was being served by a text, and we need to know why someone was writing, and often whom the person was writing against. Otherwise, he suggests, "We shall find ourselves in a position comparable to that of someone listening to prosecution or the defence in a criminal trial without having heard the other side's case."⁴²

Important though such methods are, the approach employed here is closer to a genealogical account, of the type Foucault developed from Nietzsche and Heidegger's work.⁴³ Foucault makes it clear that though the relation between words and things is important, we should not mistake one for the other. Foucault's insistence on the relation between knowledge and power is crucial, as it enables us to move beyond simply the word-concept relation and bring in practices. That said, most of what Foucault says about territory specifically is at best misleading, as the more thorough treatment here demonstrates.⁴⁴ Genealogy, though, understood as a historical interrogation of the conditions of possibility of things being as they are, is helpful for a number of reasons. There is no need to choose exclusively between genealogy and these other accounts.⁴⁵ Genealogy, as I practice it here, makes use of the kinds of textual and contextual accounts offered by *Begriffsgeschichte* or the Cambridge school but is critical of notions that the production of meaning is reliant on authorial intent.⁴⁶ It makes use of the full range of techniques—including etymology, semantics, philology, and hermeneutics—that should inform the history of ideas but pairs them with an analysis of practices and the workings of power. Such a study cannot simply function as a counterhistory, running up against and challenging the established overview. While that might be possible in some instances, for different concepts where a standard history exists, it would be reductive to what a genealogy is. But such a way of writing is wholly inappropriate for a concept whose substantive history does not exist, such as territory. This history needs to be reconstructed, and in detail, in order to provide the foundation upon which the story I am telling can be situated. There is a fundamental need to return to the texts that reveal the concepts that inform the practices. The approach employed is thus both textual, with all references traced back to their original languages, and contextual, in which texts are resituated in their time and place. And it is avowedly political, undertaking this work as part of a wider project that aspires to be a "history of the present."⁴⁷



Territory should be seen as inherently related to, yet ultimately distinct from, two different concepts: land and terrain. Land is a relation of property, a finite resource that is distributed, allocated, and owned—a political-economic question. Land can be bought, sold, and exchanged; it is a resource over which there is competition. Some of Marx's work recognizes the three-way relation of "land-capital-labor," but his comments are relatively cursory.⁴⁸ This theme has been picked up by other writers, perhaps most fundamentally in Perry Anderson's *Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism* and *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, which provide a large-scale analysis of state development from within this broad perspective, concentrating on the material forces and economic conditions for different political formations.⁴⁹

Property is important as an indicator, but as Anderson and other writers recognize, conflict over land is twofold: both over its possession and conducted on its terrain.⁵⁰ Land is both the site and stake of struggle. In this it differs from conflict over other resources. Strategic-military reasons thus become significant. These can be understood through a notion of terrain, a relation of power, with a heritage in geology and the military, the control of which allows the establishment and maintenance of order. As a "field," a site of work or battle, it is a political-strategic question. While terrain is seen as land form rather than process—that is, as something that is acted upon rather than itself active—work on military uses has recognized the importance of terrain analysis to military success.

Max Weber's analysis of the historical development of the state, and Michael Mann's study of the changing dynamics of power,⁵¹ where they do discuss territory, could be seen to be operating in a way that sees territory as terrain, a political-strategic relation. In his interview with the geographers of the *Hérodote* journal, Foucault deflects their inquiry about his use of spatial categories, suggesting that they are not primarily geographical but instead shot through with power. As he declares, "*Territory* is no doubt a geographical notion, but it's first of all a juridico-political one: the area controlled by a certain kind of power."⁵² As his interviewers respond, "Certain spatial metaphors are equally geographical and strategic, which is only natural since geography grew up in the shadow of the military." They make the explicit linkage between the region of geographers and the commanded region, from *regere*; the conquered territory of a province, from *vincere*; and the field as battlefield. Foucault then notes how "the politico-strategic term is an indication of how the military and adminis-

tration actually come to inscribe themselves both on a material soil and within forms of discourse."⁵³

Land and terrain are obviously important notions, and political-economic and political-strategic understandings of territory have considerable merit. Yet, like the approach through territoriality, they tend to fail the historically specific test. As a political-economic relation, the importance of property in land is clear from as far back as there is recorded human history. Political-strategic concerns about conflict over terrain can be similarly seen in a range of contexts. Territory in distinction, at least in its modern sense, but the case can be made for the term *in itself*, seems to be dependent on a number of techniques and on the law, which are more historically and geographically specific. In taking these dimensions into account, this approach exceeds merely *conceptual* history but begins to fold the analysis of practices into its genealogical narrative. Land, terrain, and territory need to be conceptually distinguished, even if in many instances they are practically intertwined. Of course it would be unusual or reductive to see the political-economic, political-strategic, legal, or technique-based models in strict isolation. Political-economic accounts often indicate a strategic relation; strategic work recognizes the dependence on measure and calculation. Yet it is only in seeing the elements together, and in privileging the legal and the technical, that an understanding of territory can be usefully attained. To concentrate on the political-economic risks reducing territory to land; to emphasize the political-strategic blurs it with a sense of terrain. Recognizing both, and seeing the development made possible by emergent techniques, allows us to understand "territory" as a distinctive mode of social/spatial organization, one that is historically and geographically limited and dependent, rather than a biological drive or social need. "Territory" needs to be thought of in its specificity.



This book therefore seeks to offer an account of the emergence of the concept of territory in Western political thought. It does so primarily through a contextualized reading of the texts of that tradition with one key question: what is the relation between place and power? It is therefore historical in its execution, philosophical in its interrogation of texts, and political and geographical in its significance. Taking a broad historical period—ancient Greece to the seventeenth century—it traces the relation between politics and place in a range of different texts and contexts. This historical period looks at the key moments that led to the formation of our modern

concepts. The account shows in detail how elements from classical, medieval, and Renaissance thought differ from our own time, and yet how they came together, were reread in new situations, and were transformed to give the idea of territory we have today. As such, the majority of the book does not discuss “territory” in a narrow, modern sense. The category is foreign to ancient Greek thought, and even the very rare instances of the Latin word *territorium* do not straightforwardly map onto our modern notion. The point is to look at how place and power were understood in these different texts and contexts, and to trace how the modern concept of territory emerged out of these debates.

Chapter 1 begins with discussion of Greek myths of autochthony, the idea that founders of cities were born from the very soil they are situated upon. It offers readings of a range of historians and poets, including Homer, Euripides, and Aeschylus, but particularly concentrates on what Sophocles’s *Antigone* can tell us about the relation between place and the *polis*. The chapter then moves to a detailed discussion of Kleisthenes’s urban reforms of Athens, and readings of Plato’s *Laws* and Aristotle’s *Politics* for their determination of political rule and its geographical basis. While Plato was concerned with outlining a design for the *polis*, Aristotle’s intent was much more to adumbrate its manifestations and to derive some more general rules. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how we should understand the *polis* as simultaneously a site and a community, in the Greek sense of a *koinon*, a place and the people who inhabit it.

Chapter 2 offers detailed readings of the writings of Julius Caesar and Cicero, the former treating the question of terrain and the military-geography terms he uses and the latter the *res publica*. These are followed by a discussion of the Latin historians, and the spatial vocabulary they used, with a specific focus on Tacitus. The chapter then proceeds with substantial analyses of two key terms: *imperium* and *limes*. This helps establish the understanding of the political and that of boundaries or frontiers in ancient Rome. The Romans understood spatial relations in a rather different way to contemporary politics, even though modern notions are often read back into the earlier period. The question of how we should translate *territorium* is not straightforward: it means lands surrounding a place, usually a city. The lands so described are outside the city walls, predominantly agricultural lands. Yet, on the other hand, the Romans had plenty of ways to describe lands belonging to people or towns: *terra*, *ager*, or the area within *fines*, boundaries. The discussion of the *limes*, the edges or limits of the empire, raises the question of how Rome saw the rest of the world. The chapter discusses the civil war, practices of land reform,

the founding myth of Rome, the names of Octavian/Augustus, and ends with a discussion of practices of land surveying that are outlined in the *Corpus Agrimensorum Romanorum* and of the later historian Ammianus Marcellinus.

Chapter 3 begins with a reading of Saint Augustine's two cities, and reads him, along with Jerome and Paulus Orosius, in the context of the barbarian invasions. It moves to an analysis of the work of Boethius and Isidore of Seville and their attempts to preserve the classical heritage. The political context of the time is the fracturing of the West following the collapse of the Roman Empire. Yet this time is unfairly characterized as the "dark ages." Christianity was in the ascendant, and there was a flowering of national histories of various Germanic tribes, including Gregory of Tours on the Franks, Bede on the English, Isidore on the Goths, and Saxo Grammaticus on the Danes. These texts are not merely accounts of these people but actively shape their sense of identity and consequent political practice. The chapter also provides an analysis of the land politics inherent in the *Beowulf* poem, both in terms of the economics of exchange, gifting, and inheritance, but also a more "geopolitical" sense of conflict over land.

Chapter 4 looks at the establishment of the Carolingian Empire. It begins with a discussion of the Donation of Constantine, which claimed to be a text from the fourth century, was forged in the late eighth century, and finally exposed as such in the fifteenth century by Nicholas of Cusa and Lorenzo Valla. The chapter then moves to a discussion of the crowning of Charlemagne and the practices of political ritual and naming that accompanied it. A range of works are analyzed to show what precisely was being established: a new Roman Empire, a political form of Christendom, or more simply a Frankish kingdom. The position of Europe, particularly in relation to the rise of Islam, is discussed. The chapter moves to a discussion of cartography from Rome to the medieval period. Cartography is a key political practice that both represents and produces political space. Jerusalem is often centrally located on maps of this time, providing a context in which to understand the Crusades undertaken to recapture it. The chapter ends with a discussion of feudalism, stressing the political-economic importance of property in land and practices that went alongside it.

Chapter 5 provides a reading of the organic idea of the body politic in the work of John of Salisbury. It examines the idea of the "two swords," in which the pope claimed both temporal power (over the span of human life on the earth) and spiritual power (over sin, salvation, and people's eternal souls). The pope laid claim to supremacy in the latter by right, and

appointed or anointed secular rulers such as kings or emperors to act on his behalf in the former. However, this split, originally proposed by papal theorists, began to articulate a scope and purpose of a separate kind of power, which secular rulers and theorists started to develop. The chapter also discusses in detail the rediscovery of Aristotle's political writings and their translation into Latin, initially through the Arabic. Translation is not simply a textual question, but one of practice, because the availability of these texts changed both the language and the substance of political thought. Here there is a particular focus on the work of Thomas Aquinas and Ptolemy of Lucca, and in particular their guidance on how to act politically.

Chapter 6 begins with a discussion of the dispute between Pope Boniface VIII and King Philip the Fair of France. This was concerned with whether the king could tax clergy within his kingdom and who had jurisdiction if members of the clergy committed a crime. Administrative practices therefore have a direct impact on the shaping of the terms of political discourse. The dispute was also directly productive of some extremely important political theory, notably the writings of Giles of Rome and John of Paris. These took opposing views over the respective competencies of the spiritual and temporal rulers. The chapter then moves to detailed readings of three theorists of temporal power: Dante, Marsilius of Padua, and William of Ockham. Dante, better known as the poet of the *Commedia*, was author of the important *Monarchia*, which argued for a resurgent empire free from papal control. Marsilius offered a defense of the smaller political unit of the city. Ockham, who became a political theorist late in life, was an advocate of the Franciscan vow of poverty and believed that the church should be poor. Yet this was not simply a view about property, but a view that the church should absent itself from all worldly concerns.

Chapter 7 discusses the importance of Roman law, and in particular its compilation and codification under the Byzantine emperor Justinian. These texts were unknown to the Latin West for centuries, and when they were discovered, much academic labor by the so-called glossators was needed to make them intelligible. The focus of the chapter is on the two most important Post-Glossators or commentators: Bartolus of Sassoferrato and Baldus de Ubaldis. Bartolus and Baldus put the law to work in fourteenth-century Italian cities, and crucially made the argument that *territorium* and jurisdiction went together. In establishing a spatial determination of legal power, they took the notion of land, or land belonging to an entity, as the thing to which jurisdiction applies, thus providing the extent of rule. Crucially, *territorium* becomes not simply a property of a

ruler but the object of rule itself. This was an inherently practical set of arguments: Bartolus and Baldus both made their living from offering legal opinions on cases presented to them, and indeed Bartolus's work on river boundary law is a combination of legal argument and practical techniques. The final part of the chapter looks at how this work provided a missing basis for assertions of temporal power: in distinction to the universal aspirations of the papacy, temporal power was geographically determined. Within his kingdom, the king had the same power as the emperor in the empire. The legacy of this work is found in the reform of church law of Nicholas of Cusa and in secular legal theorists such as Francisco de Vitoria's writing on colonization and Hugo Grotius's work on the law of the sea and the rights of war and peace. Again, these texts are all interventions in contemporary political issues.

Chapter 8 looks at the relation between the Renaissance and the conquest and mapping of the New World. These political events provide an essential background to the texts from this time. Despite how Machiavelli is often read, and translated, he did not have a concept of territory and did not see political power as preeminently related to land. Instead, we need to make sense of his ambiguous notion of *lo stato*. The second part of the chapter looks at the Reformation, and in particular the political writings of Erasmus, Thomas More, and Martin Luther. The establishment of polities with different confessions to Catholicism produced a political as well as religious fracturing within the Holy Roman Empire. Some of these issues are worked through in the writings of Jean Bodin and Giovanni Botero, the former known for his discussions of sovereignty and the latter for the notion of reason of state. But Bodin's work is complicated by looking at the French and Latin versions of his *Six Books of the Republic*, and Botero's writings on the city and the world also need to be interrogated. The chapter concludes with a reading of the role of property in and struggles over land in Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

Chapter 9 begins with a detailed discussion of some unjustly neglected thinkers of the early seventeenth century whose work was integral to thinking through the political and geographical legacy of the Reformation. These include Richard Hooker, Andreas Knichen, and Johannes Althusius. The next part of the chapter offers a reading of the political implications of the scientific revolution, with special focus on Descartes, Spinoza, and the Newton/Leibniz dispute. Hobbes, Filmer, and Locke are then discussed in terms of the relation between politics and land (or at times territory) in their work. The colonial context is particularly crucial to understanding Locke. But the chapter ends by suggesting that Gottfried

Leibniz is the most important political thinker on territory of this period. Leibniz, like Theodor Reinking, Bogislaw Philipp von Chemnitz, and Samuel Pufendorf, is trying to make sense of the fractured political geographies of the Holy Roman Empire, especially in the wake of the Peace of Westphalia. In distinguishing between the majesty of the emperor and the territorial supremacy of the princes, Leibniz provides a strikingly modern definition.

The coda returns to Rousseau and suggests that he comes conceptually too late. He suggests that the time to challenge the person putting up a fence or ditch was at the very moment it was established. But by the time he was writing, the state of territory was widely assumed: it had become almost the static background behind the action of political struggles. His own writings operate within that context. Subsequent thinkers such as Montesquieu, Hume, and Kant all effectively work within the framework of state-territorial politics. For this reason, the book conceptually ends here. Yet state practices and techniques of cartography, surveying, and statistics all continue to develop, and there are many particular histories of states and their territories. The coda therefore outlines ways in which territory came to be understood and practiced as a political technology. This political technology is one of the means by which we can understand the emergence and development of the modern state. The book's aim is to reinscribe the history of space both in the history of political theory and in the history of the state. In this respect, this book is both a history of space and a spatial history, in which questions of space function as both an object and a tool of analysis.⁵⁴ It therefore offers an alternative history of the emergence of the modern state from the perspective of its territory. Taking the story of the birth of territory as a lens allows us to shed new light on the history of political thought.



It is important to stress that this is an approach derived from, and directed toward, Western political thought. The problematic term *West* is of course open to question, but it is intended here to be read in relation to a chronology of thought that can be traced from ancient Greece to Roman appropriations and late medieval Latin rediscoveries, providing the conceptual frame within which the emergence of the modern state and its territory occurred. Other traditions would have very different histories, geographies, and conceptual lineages. The specificity of the analysis begun here militates against generalization and pretensions to universalism.⁵⁵ None-

theless, it is hoped that the historical conceptual approach and its specifics would be useful in other such analyses, even if it would need to be supplemented, developed, and critiqued.

The definition of political thought has been widely debated.⁵⁶ There is something of an established canon of great thinkers—Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Hobbes, etc.—all of whom receive due attention here, even if some of the most familiar are revealed to be less than central to the development of territory. But there are a number of other important thinkers who are known either for work in other areas (Descartes or Leibniz, for instance) or barely at all (writers such as Bartolus, Baldus, and Knichen). Not all of these would have self-identified as “political theorists,” but their work offers valuable insights into political questions. A whole range of other texts and practices—legal documents, constitutions, papal bulls, treatises, histories, and works of literature—are utilized along the way. In this sense, I take a catholic approach to the question of genre. Sophocles’s *Antigone* is not just a work of great literature that can be read politically, but a political work of literature. *Beowulf* reveals something of attitudes of the time toward questions of land ownership, transfer, and conflict. Shakespeare’s greatest works reveal, comment upon, and engage with the politics of his time, even as they speak beyond them.

Territory contains a mix of political, geographical, legal, technical, practical, and relational questions. These are arranged in a particular way in the modern notion. Where these different elements come from is, however, not straightforward, as they have different lineages, emergences, and descents. How different elements were arranged in other political systems, and how they were labeled is the point of this study. In examining the relation between place and power, this study looks at the history of Western political thought to try to trace the emergence of this political technology.

It is a political technology not because it is merely technical. While advances in geometry, land surveying, navigation, cartography, and statistics play a crucial role in the development of territory, the question of technique is broader than this. As Heidegger argued, the essence of technology is not, in itself, technological. Rather, it is a way of grasping and conceiving of the world. These ways of conceiving, which make possible the narrowly defined technological, are crucial to this study. Yet by techniques it is also meant to imply the broader sense of the Greek *techne*, which Foucault examined in his last decade. These techniques, or arts, of governance have an important bearing on the development being examined

here. These techniques include legal systems and arguments; political debates, theories, concepts, and practices; colonization and military excursions; works of literature and dictionaries; historical studies, myths, and—the technical in the narrower sense—geometrical instruments, statistical handbooks, maps, land-surveying instruments, and population controls.

Territory is not simply an object: the outcome of actions conducted toward it or some previously supposedly neutral area. Territory is itself a process, made and remade, shaped and shaping, active and reactive. Just as David Harvey argued we should think of the urban process, so too should we think about territory as process or the territorial process.⁵⁷ But this may not be enough. One approach of more recent times that is helpful in beginning to broaden the scope of process is the idea of the urban assemblage.⁵⁸ While assemblage is a somewhat misleading translation of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of *agencement*, it seeks to capture the plural, heterogeneous, contested, and multiple elements that coalesce only to break apart and re-form in the urban fabric, its continual transformation and contestation. But this work has been neglected for the sometimes absence of the political—not merely the political-economic—from its analyses.⁵⁹ The idea of a political technology seeks to capture the processual, multiple, and conflictual nature of the bundle of political techniques—in that expanded sense—that make up and transform the contested and diverse notion of territory. Territory cannot simply be understood as the political-economic notion of land, nor even as a political-strategic sense of terrain, but instead comprises the techniques used to—among other elements—measure land and control and manage terrain. The different elements that make up our modern notion can be found in translations of Greek political thought, compilations and rediscoveries of Roman law, struggles in German political action, and the advances of the scientific revolution, among other practices.

At times, the question of territory, or even the more general and plural notion of the place of power, will seem to disappear from the study. One key example is the discussion of the relation between temporal and spiritual power in the late Middle Ages. Yet this does not mean that the debates here have no bearing on the wider inquiry of this study. Indeed, one of the key arguments of this book is that seemingly unconnected discussions are sometimes recoded in significant ways. The temporal-spiritual, or secular-religious, division of power—a distinction based in part on an understanding of time—has important implications for how later thinkers discussed the understanding of space in relation to politics. Crudely

put, and to anticipate a discussion that will be made later in much more detail in subsequent chapters, spiritual power, as the power of the church and the pope, becomes understood as power that knows no earthly limits, whereas temporal power, by its nature plural, is divided, limited, and spatially constrained. That latter form of power will come to be understood as exercised over and limited by territory, and eventually as the idea of territorial sovereignty. But this is to anticipate a very long and involved story, or set of stories.

The Birth of Territory builds on the analysis of this topic developed in *Terror and Territory: The Spatial Extent of Sovereignty*. That book demonstrates why territory continues to matter in global politics today, taking the post-Cold War world generally and the “war on terror” specifically as its focus. This book, in distinction, is a far more historical and conceptual study of this crucial topic. The approach is to try to grasp how political-geographical relations were understood in different times and places rather than to assume that the categories with which people in other times and places thought were the same as our own. The idea of a territory as a bounded space under the control of a group of people, with fixed boundaries, exclusive internal sovereignty, and equal external status is historically produced. This book seeks to understand how and why. There is, of course, a danger of presupposing the thing we are looking for, which we then find. But the intent here is more to examine the relation between what is named *territory* and cognate terms, on the one hand, and what particular politics-power-place-practices are labeled, on the other. These semasiological and onomasiological questions—the relation between meaning and designation, between concepts and practices—allow us to trace the birth of what we now, unproblematically, call *territory*.

We hope you have enjoyed this short preview. The birth of Territory by Stuart Elden can be purchased from Amazon here:

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