

**'Sited' Movements in the Landscape:
Preliminary Findings from an Archaeological Survey of Saru Maru
Buddhist Stupa and Monastic Complex, Madhya Pradesh, India**

L. Lamminthang Simte¹

The archaeological engagement with 'landscapes of movement' is beset with some fundamental incongruities. The conundrum presented by the reliance on the use of static, material signatures to represent the active passage of agencies in/through space in the past, further compounded by the limitations of our heuristic devices (transects, sites), restricts the attempts to understand and appreciate the dynamics of events at a site over time. Understandably, there is a tendency to emphasize certain parts and places; and significant points in a terrain may be marked in special ways—by painting, petroglyphs, or even by the creation of monuments—but this does not happen everywhere.

While the direct correlation of organization of material space as a reflection of social organization has been more or less debunked; archaeological practice continues to take for granted that the material component of human behavior does have pattern in its own right. At the heart of this lays the issue of the relationship between social action and space and time. As all action must be located in space and occur at some point in time and since human action is inextricably attached to meaning, it must also follow that meaning engages with space and time, as is most apparent in rituals. (Fletcher 2006: 110-140)

Therefore, landscapes, and the monuments which they contain, are symbolic and meaningful. So, in order to understand a landscape it is necessary first to understand people's attitudes, meanings, and values. If people 'encode' their ideas about the landscape according to a given cultural code/limit, understanding these ideas implies a process of 'decoding'. Thus, the idea of space is one concept which is closely linked to the conceptualization of landscape. (Ashmore and Knapp 1999) An increasingly popular approach to landscape archaeology in recent years is quite understandably the phenomenological approach where individual experience and the perception of landscapes has been central (See, Bradley 1991; Tilley 1994, 2004); the common factor within all these studies of landscape is that they relate monuments in relation to landscape, and how monuments are perceived 'today' in the present landscape. Monuments, like other artifacts, lead people to create a past through active remembrances within the social context in which they live.

Moreover the increasing significance of the social meaning of space as 'places' also mean that hitherto neglected sites like caves, woods, rivers, and springs or even physically empty places which were simply classified as 'natural' places are being increasingly probed and analyzed. Skirting therefore the whole intractable issue of defining landscape, Ashmore and Knapp, maintains that it is essentially the 'arena in which and through which memory, identity, social order and transformation are constructed,

¹Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India.